÷Job 1.20

JOB’S RESIGNATION  
NO. 2457

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 22, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“Then Job arose, tore his clothes, and shaved his head, and fell to the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there: the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away;  
blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this  
Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.”  
Job 1:20-22.**

JOB was very much troubled and he did not try to hide the outward signs of his sorrow. A man of God is not expected to be a stoic. The Grace of God takes away the heart of stone out of his flesh, but it does not turn his heart into a stone. The Lord’s children are the subjects of tender feelings—when they have to endure the rod, they feel the smart of its strokes—and Job felt the blows that fell upon him. Do not blame yourself if you are conscious of pain and grief, and do not ask to be made hard and callous. That is not the method by which Grace works—it makes us strong to bear trials, but we have to bear them! It gives us patience and submission, not stoicism. We feel and we benefit by the feeling—and there is no sin in the feeling—for in our text we are expressly told of the Patriarch’s mourning, “In all this Job sinned not.” Though he was the great mourner—I think I might truly call him the chief mourner of Scripture—yet there was no sin in his mourning. There are some who say that when we are heavy of heart, we are necessarily in a wrong spirit, but it is not so. The Apostle Peter says, “If need be you are in heaviness through manifold trials,” but he does not imply that the heaviness is wrong. There are some who will not cry when God chastises them and some who will not yield when God strikes them. We do not wish to be like they—we are quite content to have the suffering heart that Job had—and to feel the bitterness of spirit, the anguish of soul which racked that blessed Patriarch.

Furthermore, Job made use of very manifest signs of mourning. He not only felt sorrow within his heart, but he indicated it by tearing his clothes, by shaving his head and by casting himself prone upon the ground, as if he sought to return to the womb of mother earth as he said that he would. And I do not think we are to judge those of our Brothers and Sisters who feel it right to wear the common tokens of mourning. If they give them any kind of solace in their sorrow, let them have them. I believe that, at times, some go to excess in this respect, but I dare not pass sentence upon them because I read here, “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” If the black band should be worn for a very long while and if the sorrow should be nursed unduly, as others judge, yet we cannot set up a standard of what is right for others—each one must answer for his conduct to his own Lord. I remember the gentleness of Jesus towards mourners rather than His severity in dealing with them—He has much pity for our weakness—and I wish that some of His servants had more of the same spirit. If you who are sorrowing could be strong. If the weeds of mourning could be laid aside, it might indicate a greater acquiescence in the Divine will, but if you do not feel that it should be so with you, God forbid that we should rebuke you while we have such a text as this before us, “Job arose, tore his clothes, and shaved his head, and fell to the ground.” And, “in all this Job sinned not.”

I want you, however, to notice that mourning should always be sanctified with devotion. It is very pleasant to observe that when Job had torn his clothes after the Oriental custom and shaved his head, (in a manner which, in his day, was not forbidden, but which under the Mosaic law was prohibited, for they might not cut their hair by way of mourning as the heathen did), and, after the Patriarch had fallen to the ground, he “worshipped.” Not, he grumbled. Not, he lamented—much less that he began to imprecate and use language unjustifiable and improper—but he, “fell to the ground and worshipped.” O dear Friend, when your grief presses you to the very dust, worship there! If that spot has come to be your Gethsemane, then present, there, your “strong crying and tears” to your God! Remember David’s words, “You people, pour out your hearts”—but do not stop there, finish the quotation—“You people, pour out your hearts before Him.” Turn the vessel upside down! It is a good thing to empty it, for this grief may ferment into something more sour. Turn the vessel upside down and let every drop run out—but let it be before the Lord. “You people, pour out your hearts before Him: God is a refuge for us.” When you are bowed down beneath a heavy burden of sorrow, then take to worshipping the Lord and, especially, to that kind of worshipping which lies in adoring God—and in making a full surrender of yourself to the Divine will—so that you can say with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” That kind of worshipping which lies in the subduing of the will, the awakening of the affections, the bestirring of the whole mind and heart and the presentation of oneself to God over, again, in solemn consecration, must tend to sweeten sorrow and to take the sting out of it.

It will also greatly alleviate our sorrow if we then fall into serious contemplations and begin to argue a little and to bring facts to bear upon our mind. Evidently Job did so, for the verses of my text are full of proofs of his thoughtfulness. The Patriarch brings to his own mind at least four subjects for earnest consideration, out of which he drew great comfort. In like manner, you will do well, not merely to sit still and say, “I shall be comforted,” but you must look about you for themes upon which to think and meditate to profit. Your poor mind is apt to be driven to and fro by stress of your sorrow, but if you can get an anchor hold on some great clearly ascertained Truths of God, about which you can have no possible doubt, you may begin to derive consolation from them.

“While I was musing,” said David, “the fire burned,” and it comforted and warmed him. Remember how he talked to himself as to another self, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.” There are two Davids, you see, talking to one another, and cheering one another! A man ought always to be good company for himself—and he ought to also be able to catechize himself! He who is not fit to be his own schoolmaster is not fit to be schoolmaster to other people. If you cannot catechize your own heart and drill a Truth of God into your own soul, you do not know how to teach other people. I believe that the best preaching in the world is that which is done at home. When a sorrowing spirit shall have comforted itself, it will have learned the art of consoling other people. Job is an instance of this kind of personal instruction. He has three or four subjects which he brings before his own mind and these tend to comfort him.

I. The first is, to my mind, THE EXTREME BREVITY OF LIFE. Observe what Job says, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there.” He came forth and he expected to go back to mother earth and there to lie. That is Job’s idea of life and a very true one it is, “I come forth, and I go back again.” One asked a man of God, one day, “Will you tell me what life is?” The man of God stopped just a moment and then deliberately walked away. When his friend met him the following day, he said to him, “Yesterday, I asked you a question and you did not answer it.” “But I did answer it,” said the godly man. “No,” rejoined the other, “you were there and you were gone.” “Well, you asked me what life was, and that was my answer. Could I have answered your question better?” He answered and acted wisely, for that is a complete summary of our life here below—we come, and we go! We appear for a brief moment and then we vanish. I often, in my own mind, compare life to a procession. I see you, dear Friends, going by me, one by one, and vanishing—and others come on behind. But the point that I am apt to forget—and you do the same—is that I am in the procession and you are in it, too. We all count all men mortal but ourselves—yet all are marching towards that country from whose stream no traveler returns.  
Well now, because life is so short, do you not see where the comfort comes? Job says to himself, “I came, and I shall return; then why should I worry myself about what I have lost? I am going to be here only a little while, then what need have I of all those camels and sheep?” So, Brothers and Sisters, what God has given us is so much spending money on our journey, to pay our fares and to help our fellow travelers. But we do not, any of us, need as much substance as Job had. He had seven thousand sheep. Dear me! What a task it must have been to drive and to feed such a large flock! “And three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen!” That is, a thousand oxen. “And five hundred she asses, and a very great household.” Our proverb says, “The more servants, the more plagues,” and I am sure it is true that the more camels, the more horses, the more cows, the more of such things that a man has, the more there is to look after and to cause him trouble! So Job seems to say to himself, “I am here for such a little time, why should I be carried away, as with a flood, even when these things are taken from me? I come and I go—let me be satisfied if other things come and go. If my earthly stores vanish, well, I shall vanish, too. They are like myself—they take to themselves wings and fly away—and, by-and- by, I, too, shall take to myself wings, and I shall be gone.” I have heard of one who called life, “the long disease of life.” And it was so to him, for, though he did a great work for his Master, he was always sickly. Well, who wants a long disease? “There’s the respect that makes calamity of so long life.” We need, rather, to feel that it is not long, that it is short, and to set small store by all things here below and to regard them as things which, like ourselves, appear but for a time, and soon shall be gone.  
Further, Job seems especially to dwell with comfort upon the thought, “I shall return to the earth, from which all the particles of my body originally came. I shall return there.” “Ah,” said one, when he had seen the spacious and beautiful gardens of a wealthy man, “these are the things that make it hard to die.” You remember how the tribe of Gad and the tribe of Reuben went to Moses and said, “If we have found grace in your sight, let this land be given unto your servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan.” Of course, they did not need to cross the Jordan if they could get all their possessions on the other side. But Job had not anything this side Jordan, he was cleaned right out, so he was willing to go. And, really, the losses that a man has, which make him “desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better,” are real gains! What is the use of all that clogs us here?  
A man of large possessions reminds me of my experience when I have gone to see a friend in the country and he has taken me across a plowed field and I have had two heavy burdens of earth, one on each foot, as I have plodded on! The earth has clung to me and made it hard walking. It is just so with this world—its good things hamper us, clog us, cling to us like thick clay—but when we get these hampering things removed, we take comfort in the thought, “We shall soon return to the earth from where we came.” We know that it is not mere returning to earth, for we possess a life that is immortal! We are looking forward to spending it in the true land that flows with milk and honey, where, like Daniel, we shall stand in our lot at the end of the days. Therefore we feel not only resigned to return to the womb of mother earth, but sometimes we even long for the time of our return to come!  
A dear servant of God whom you would all recognize if I mentioned his name, was talking with me concerning our dear departed brother, Hugh Stowell Brown, and he said, “All the Brethren of my age and yours seem to be going Home. They are passing away. The fathers and the leaders are going and I could almost wish,” he added, “that our Heavenly Father would put my name down as the next to go.” I said that I hoped the Lord would not do so, but that our Brother might be spared to labor a while longer but that, if I might put in another name, I would plead for my own to go in there instead of his! Happily, we have nothing to do with the date of our going Home—it is out of our hands—yet we are glad to feel that when the time of our departure shall arrive, it will be no calamity, but a distinct advancement, for the Master to bid us to return to the dust from where we came! “Return, you children of men,” He will say, and we will joyfully answer, “Yes, Father, here we are, glad to stretch our wings and fly straight to yonder world of joy, expecting that even our poor bodies, by-and-by, at the trump of the archangel, shall come back to You, and we shall be like Your only-begotten Son, when we shall see Him as He is.”  
II. Secondly, Job seems to comfort himself by noticing THE TENURE OF HIS EARTHLY POSSESSIONS. “Naked,” he says, “came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there.”  
He feels himself to be very poor, everything is gone, he is stripped. Yet he seems to say, “I am not poorer, now, than I was when I was born.” I had nothing then, not even a garment for my back but what the love of my mother provided for me. I was helpless then—I could not do anything for myself whatever.” One said to me, the other day, “All is gone, Sir, all is gone, except health and strength.” Yes, but we had not as much as that when we were born. We had no strength, we were too weak to perform the least, though most necessary offices, for our poor tender frame. David often very sweetly dwells upon his childhood and still more upon his infancy—and we shall do well to imitate him. Old men sometimes arrive at a second childhood. Do not be afraid, Brother, if that is your case! You have gone through one period, already, that was more infantile than your second one can be—you will not be weaker, then, than you were at first!  
Suppose that you and I should be brought to extreme weakness and poverty—we shall neither be weaker nor poorer than we were when we were born! “But I had a mother,” says one. Well, there are some children who lose their mother in their very birth, but if you had a mother to care for you then, you have a Father to care for you now and, as a child of God, you surely feel that your mother was but the secondary agent to watch over you in your weakness! And God who gave that love to her and moved her to care for you will be sure to find that same love which flowed out of Him into her still stored up in His own bosom—and He will see you through. Do not be afraid, my Brother, my Sister, the Lord will see you through! It is amazing that after God has been gracious to us for 50 years, we cannot trust Him for the rest of our lives! And, as for you who are 60, 70, or 80 years of age—has He brought you this far to put you to shame? Did He bear you through that very weakest part of your life and do you think He will now forsake you? David said, “I was cast upon You from the womb,” as if then he had none but God to help him! And will not He who took care of us, then, take care of us even to the end? Yes, that He will! Therefore let us be of good courage and let the poverty and weakness of our infancy, as we think of it, cheer us if we are weak and poor now.  
Then Job adds, “However poor I may be, I am not as poor as I shall be, for naked shall I return to mother earth. If I have but little, now, I shall soon have still less.” We have heard of a rustic who, when dying, put a crownpiece into his mouth because he said that he would not be without money in another world—but he was a clown and everyone knew how foolish was his attempt thus to provide for the future! There have been stories told of persons who have had their gold sewn up in their shrouds, but they took not a penny with them for all their pains. Nothing can be taken with us—we must go back to the earth, the richest as poor as the poorest, and the poorest no poorer, really, than the richest! The dust of great Caesar may help to stop a hole through which the blast blows and the dust of his slave cannot be put to more ignoble uses. No, poor and weak as we may be, we are not as poor and weak as we shall be, by-andby, so let us just solace ourselves with this reflection. The two ends of our life are nakedness—if the middle of it should not always be scarlet and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day, let us not wonder. And if it should seem to be all of a piece, let us not be impatient or complaining.  
I want you to notice, also, what I really think was in Job’s mind, that, notwithstanding that he was but dust at the beginning and would be dust at the end, yet, still, there was a Job who existed all the while. “I was naked, but I was. Naked I shall return there, but I shall be there.” Some men never find themselves till they have lost their goods. They, themselves, are hidden away like Saul, among the stuff—their true manhood is not to be seen because they are dressed so finely that, though people seem to respect them—it is their clothes that are respected! They appear to be somebodies, but they are nobodies, notwithstanding all that they possess. The Lord brought His servant Job to feel, “Yes, when I had those camels, when I had those she asses, when I had those sheep, when I had those men servants, they were not myself. And now that they are gone, I am the same Job that I ever was. The sheep were not a part of myself, the camels were not a part of myself. I, Job, am still here, lying in my wholeness and integrity before God as much a servant of Jehovah in my nakedness, as I was when I wrapped myself in ermine.”  
O Sirs, it is a grand thing when God helps us to live above what we have and above what we have not! Then it is that He brings us to know ourselves as we are, in our God, not dependent upon externals, but maintained and strengthened by food of which the world knows nothing, which comes not from milk of cattle! Then are we robed in a garment that comes not from fleece of sheep and we possess a life that depends not on the swift camel—a true existence that is neither in flocks, nor herds, nor pastures, nor fields—but delights itself in God and keeps itself on the Most High. “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there,” says Job, but, “still it is I, the blessed of God, His same devoted servant who will trust Him to the end.” That was good talk for Job’s heart, was it not? Though it may not all have been said in words, I doubt not that something like it, or something much better passed through the Patriarch’s mind and thus he solaced himself in the hour of his sorrows and losses.  
III. But now, thirdly, and perhaps the most blessed thing, is what Job said concerning THE HAND OF GOD IN ALL THINGS—“The Lord gave, and the

Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”  
I am so pleased to think that Job recognized the hand of God everywhere giving. He said, “The Lord gave.” He did not say, “I earned it all.” He did not say, “There are all my hard-earned savings gone.” “Ah, me,” he might have said, “all the care for those sheep, the dreadful expense of those camels and the trouble that I have been at with those oxen—and now they are all gone, it does seem hard.” He does not put it so, but he says, “The Lord gave them to me. They were a gift and though they are gone, they were a gift from Him who had a right to take them back, for all He gives is only loaned. ‘A loan should go laughing home,’ and if God loans me these things, and now has called them back, I will bless His name for having let me have them so long.”  
What a sweet thing it is, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you can feel that all you have in this world is God’s gift to you! You cannot feel that, you know, if you came by it dishonestly. No, it is not God’s gift, then, and it brings no blessing with it. But that which is honestly the result and fruit of your cheerful industry, you may consider has come from God and if, in addition, you have really sanctified your substance and have given your fair proportion to help the poor and the needy, as Job did—if you can say that you have caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy when you relieved her needs, then all that you have is God’s gift! God’s Providence is man’s inheritance and your inheritance has come to you from God’s Providence. Look at it all as God’s gift—it will even sweeten that little loaf of bread and that tiny pat of butter which is all you may have to eat today or tomorrow—if you regard it as God’s gift! It will soften that hard bed upon which you lie, wishing that you were somewhat better covered from the cold, if you think of it as God’s gift. A slender income will give us much contentment if we can see that it is God’s gift.  
Let us not only regard our money and our goods as God’s gifts, but also our wife, our children, our friends. What precious gifts they often are! A man is truly rich who has a good helpmeet! He is really rich who has godly children about him. Even though they may cost him much care, he is abundantly repaid by their affection. And if they grow up in the fear of the Lord, what a choice gift they are! Let us look at them all as God’s gifts—let us not see them or anything else about the house without feeling, “My Father gave me this.” Surely it will tend to draw the teeth of every sharp affliction if, while you have enjoyed the possession of your good things, you have seen God’s hand in giving them to you.  
Alas, some of you do not know anything about God! What you have is not counted by you as God’s gift. You miss the very sweetness and joy of life by missing this recognition of the Divine hand in giving us all good things richly to enjoy.  
But then, Job equally saw God’s hand in taking them away. If he had not been a believer in Jehovah, he would have said, “Oh, those detestable Sabeans! Somebody ought to go and cut to pieces those Chaldeans.” That is often our style, is it not—finding fault with the secondary agents? Job has nothing to say about the Sabeans or the Chaldeans, or the wind, or the lightning. “The Lord,” he said, “the Lord has taken away.” I believe that Satan intended to make Job feel that it was God who was at work when his messenger said, “The fire of God is fallen from Heaven and has burned up the sheep.” “Ah,” said Satan, “he will see that God is against him!” The devil did not succeed as he thought he had done, for Job could see that it was God’s hand and that took away the sting of the stroke. “The Lord has taken away.” Aaron held his peace when he knew that the Lord had done it. And the Psalmist said, “I was dumb with silence, I opened not my mouth, because You did it.” And Job felt just that. “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him.” Never mind the secondary agents! Do not spend your strength in kicking against this bad man or that—he is responsible to God for all the evil he has done. But at the back of these free agents there is a Divine Predestination, there is an over-ruling hand and even that which in men is evil may, nevertheless, in another light, be traced up distinctly to the hand of the Most High! “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.”  
Will you remember that with regard to your children? If Job had lost only his eldest son, he might have needed much Grace to say, “The Lord gave him, and the Lord has taken him away.” Job had lost his eldest son, but he had lost six more sons, and he had lost his three daughters as well. I have known a mother say, “My two dear boys sickened and died within a week—I am the most tried woman who ever lived.” Not quite, not quite, dear Friend—there have been others who have excelled you in this respect. Job lost his 10 children at a stroke. O Death, what an insatiable archer you were that day, when 10 must fall at once! Yet Job says, “The Lord has taken away.” That is all he has to say about it—“The Lord has taken away.”  
I need not repeat to you the story of the gardener who missed a choice rose, but who could not complain because the master had plucked it. Do you feel that it is just so with all that you have, if he takes it? Oh, yes! Why should he not take it? If I were to go about my house and take down an ornament or anything from the walls, would anybody say a word to me? Suppose my dear wife should say to the servant, “Where has that picture gone?” and the maid replied, “Oh, the master took it!” Would she find fault? Oh, no! If it had been a servant who took it down, or a stranger who removed it, she might have said something, but not when I took it, for it is mine. And surely we will let God be Master in His own house—where we are only the children—He shall take whatever He pleases of all He has loaned us for a while. It is easy to stand here and say this, but, Brothers and Sisters, let us try to say it if it should ever come to us as a matter of fact that the Lord who gave should also take away.  
I think Job did well to call attention to this blessed Truth of God, that the hand of God is everywhere at work, whether in giving or in taking away. I do not know anything that tends more to reconcile us to our present sorrows, losses and crosses than to feel, “God has done it all. Wicked men were the agents, but still, God, Himself, has done it. There is a great mystery about it which I cannot clear up, and I do not need to clear it up. God has done it and that is enough for me. ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.’”  
IV. Job’s last comfort lay in this Truth, that GOD IS WORTHY TO BE BLESSED IN THINGS—“Blessed be the name of the Lord.”  
Dear Friends, let us never rob God of His praise, however dark the day is. It is a funeral day, perhaps, but should not God be praised when there is a funeral, as well as when there is a wedding? “Oh, but I have lost everything!” And is this one of the days when there is no praise due to God? Most of you know that the Queen’s taxes must be paid—and our great King’s revenue has the first claim upon us. Let us not rob our King of the revenue of His praise. “From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord’s name is to be praised.” “Oh, but I have lost a child!” Yes, but God is to be praised. “But I have lost my mother.” Yes, but God is to be praised. “I have a bad headache.” Yes, but God is to be praised. One said to me, one evening, “We should have family prayer, my dear Sir, but it is rather late. Do you feel too tired to conduct it?” “No,” I said, “I was never too tired, yet, to pray with my Brothers and Sisters, and I hope I never shall be.” If it is the middle of the night, let us not go to bed without prayer and praise, for we must not rob God of His Glory! “There is a mob in the street,” but we must not rob God of His Glory. “Our goods are getting cheaper and cheaper—we shall be ruined in the market.” Yes, but let us not rob God of His Glory! “There is going to be, I do not know what, happening, by-and-by.” Yes, but we must not rob God of His Glory.  
“Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Job means that the Lord is to be blessed both for giving and taking. “The Lord gave,” blessed be His name. “The Lord has taken away,” blessed be His name! Surely it has not come to this among God’s people, that He must do as we like or else we will not praise Him! If He does not please us every day and give way to our whims, and gratify our tastes, then we will not praise Him? “Oh, but I do not understand His dealings,” says one. And are you really such a stranger to God and is God such a stranger to you, that unless He enters into explanations, you are afraid that He is not dealing fairly with you? O Sir, have you known the Lord for 20 years and cannot praise Him for everything? Brothers and Sisters, some of us have known him 40 years, now. Perhaps some of you have known the Lord for 50 years—are you always needing to have chapter, verse and explanations from Him before you will praise Him? No, no, I hope we have gone far beyond that stage!  
God is, however, especially to be praised by us whenever we are moved by the devil to curse. Satan had said to the Lord concerning Job, “Put forth Your hand, now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face.” And it seemed as if God had hinted to His servant that this was what the devil was aiming at. “Then,” said Job, “I will bless Him.” His wife suggested afterwards that he should curse God, but he would do no such thing, he would bless Him! It is usually a wise thing to do the very opposite to what the Evil One suggests to you. If he says, “Curse,” you bless! Remember the story of a man who was going to give a pound to some charitable institution? The devil said, “No, you cannot afford it.” “Then,” said the man, “I will give two pounds. I will not be dictated to in this way.” Satan exclaimed, “You are a fanatic!” The man replied, “I will give four pounds.” “Ah,” said Satan, “what will your wife say when you go home and tell her that you have given away four pounds?” “Well,” said the man, “I will give eight pounds, now, and if you do not leave me alone, you will tempt me to give sixteen.” So the devil was obliged to stop because the more he tempted him, the more he went the other way. So let it be with us! If the devil would drive us to curse God, let us bless Him all the more, and Satan will be wise enough to leave off tempting when he finds that the more he attempts to drive us, the more we go in the opposite direction!  
This is all meant to be sweet, cheery talk to suffering saints. How I wish that everybody here had an interest in it! What will some of you do—what are some of you doing, now that you have lost all? Wife dead, children dead and you are growing old, yet you are without God? O you poor rich people who have no interest in God! Your money must burn your souls! But you poor, poor, poor people who have not anything, here, and have no hope hereafter, how sad is your case! May God in His rich mercy give you even a little commonsense, for surely, commonsense would drive you to Him!  
Sometimes in distributing temporal relief, we meet with persons who have been out of work and full of trouble. They may not have any bread to eat and we say to them, “Did you ever cry to God for help?” “No, Sir, we never prayed in all our life.” What is the matter with you? Here is your child crawling about the house, shivering for lack of bread and clothes. “Did you never ask your Father for anything?” “No, never.” Come, Friend, did God make you, or did you grow without Him? Did God create you? If He made you, He will have respect unto the work of His hands. Go and try Him, even on that low ground. Go and seek His face, even as His creature, and see whether He does not help you! O unbelief, to what madness do you go, that even when men are driven to starvation, they will not turn to God! O Spirit of God bless the sons of men! Even through their fears, sorrows and losses, bless them, and bring them in penitence to the Savior’s feet, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**JOB 1:6-22.**

Verse 6. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. Angels and all kinds of intelligent spirits had, as it were, a special, solemn, general assembly—a great field-day, or levee. Perhaps, in stars far remote, in various parts of the universe, there was celebrated, that day, a high festival of honor unto Jehovah, but since sin has come into the world, since even among the 12 Apostles there was a Judas, so in every assembly, even though it is an assembly of the sons of God, there is sure to be a devil—“Satan came also among them.” If he is not anywhere else, he is sure to be where the sons of God are gathered together. Yet what impudence this is on his part, that he dares to come even into the assemblies of the saints! And what hardness of heart he must have, for he comes in as a devil and he goes out as a devil! The sons of God offer their spiritual prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit, but the devil offers diabolical petitions suggested by his own malice.

7. And the LORD said unto Satan, From where do you come? He is obliged to give an account of himself. He cannot go a yard from his door without Divine permission.

7. Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. Satan is always busy, never quiet—he cannot be still.

8. And the LORD said unto Satan, Have you considered My servant Job—You see, Job is a man whom God calls His servant even in speaking to the devil, “Have you considered My servant Job?”

8. That there is none like he in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and shuns evil? God Himself gives Job that high character! He is a non-such, he stands alone among mankind—“There is none like he in the earth.” “Have you reckoned him up? Have you taken his measure, O you accuser of the Brethren?”

9. Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Does Job fear God for nothing? Even the devil could not bring a charge against Job’s conduct, so he insinuated that his motives were not pure.

10. Have not You made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? “He finds that it pays, it answers his purpose to be devout.”

10-11. You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face. See, the devil measures Job’s corn in his own bushel, but, happily, it was the measurement of a liar, so he measured amiss! There are still some who say, “Yes, it is a fine thing to be good when you are rich. It is a very easy thing to behave yourself aright when all goes smoothly with you. Would the man who is such a devout servant of God, now, be like that if he were in poverty, or if he were cruelly slandered, or if he were tested with contempt? Would the Grace of God carry him over those rough bridges? His religion is a fine thing, no doubt, but if he were tried and tested, we would see what he would do.” Now, the Lord delights in proving the Graces of His people, for it brings great Glory to His name when experiments are made upon them to test them and try them—and to let even their greatest adversary know how true they are and what a Divine work it is which God has worked upon them!

12. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself put not forth your hand. Satan could go so far, but no farther. There is an, “only,” in the permission granted to him— “Only upon himself put not forth your hand.”

12, 13. So Satan went forth from the Presence of the LORD. Now there was a day when Job’s sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house. That was a bad day for trouble to come. Satan selected that day because it was a joyful day and, therefore, it would make the trials of Job the more startling. Moreover, if Job could have had his choice, he would have preferred that his trouble should come when his sons and his daughters were praying, not when they were feasting.

14, 15. And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: and the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yes, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and only I am escaped alone to tell you. The bad news comes to him all of a sudden, just when he is thinking of something very different. There is only one servant left to tell the tale—he was spared that Job might know that the news was true. If that one other servant had been killed, the tidings could only have reached Job as a rumor that might or might not be true, but now, one of his own servants tells him the sad story, so there is no mistake about it. Ah, the devil knows how and where to strike when he strikes! Yet this was only the first blow for poor Job, and there were heavier ones to follow.

16. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from Heaven, and has burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and only I escaped alone to tell you. Now, if that lightning had fallen on the Sabeans while they were robbing and plundering, one might not have wondered! But to fall on the flocks of a man of God who had clothed the naked with the fleece of his sheep and had presented many of the fat of the flock unto God in sacrifice—that did seem strange. This trial, too, comes right upon the back of the other— and this one appeared to be more severe than the former one because it seemed to come distinctly from God. “The fire of God”—the lightning, “is fallen from Heaven, and has burned up the sheep.”

17. While he was yet speaking there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yes, and slain the servants with the edge of the word; and I only am escaped alone to tell you. Three such heavy blows will surely be enough to test the Patriarch, but a fourth messenger came with the direst news of all!

18-19. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house: and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell you. Did any other man ever have to endure such a complication of trouble, such agonies piled, one upon another, with no respite? Job must have felt wellnear stunned and choked by these consecutive griefs!

20-22. Then Job arose, tore his clothes, and shaved his head, and fell to the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there: the LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. Oh, the triumphs of Almighty Grace! May God grant us such patience, if He sends us such trials, and unto Him shall be the glory evermore!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3025 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 1.21

FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER!  
NO. 3025

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY FIRST, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 11, 1869.

[This title has been selected in order to call special attention to the fact that the Sermon is published exactly 15 years after the beloved preacher was “called Home” on January 31st, 1892. The subject is as singularly appropriate to the anniversary of that never-to-be-forgotten period as the Sermons which were issued at the time of Mr. Spurgeon’s death and funeral—Sermons No. 2242, (All Volume 38)—GOD’S WILL ABOUT THE FUTURE; No. 2243, HIS OWN FUNERAL SERMON; No. 2244, MEMBERS OF CHRIST and No. 2245, “LIVING, LOVING, LASTING UNION”—

Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

*“The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”  
Job 1:21.*

OR, as some read it, “The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” So that the text is not only concerning the past, but it may rightly be considered as relating also to the present. Some of the rarest pearls have been found in the deepest waters and some of the choicest utterances of Believers have come from them when God’s waves and billows have been made to roll over them. The fire consumes nothing but the dross and leaves the gold all the purer. In Job’s case, I may truly say with regard to his position before God, he had lost nothing by all his losses, for what could be purer and brighter gold than this which gleams before us from our text, revealing his triumphant patience, his complete resignation and his cheerful acquiescence in the Divine will? “The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

There are two points to which I ask your earnest attention while we meditate upon this subject. The first is the exhortation drawn from the text—learn to see the Lord’s hand in everything—in giving and in taking. And, secondly—and this is a harder lesson—learn to bless the Lord’s name in everything—in giving and in taking.

I. First, LET US LEARN TO SEE THE LORD’S HAND IN EVERYTHING. Our whole history seems to be divided, as our text divides itself, into a beholding of God’s hand in giving and then a beholding of it in taking.

We are then, first of all, to behold God’s hand as a giving hand. If we are Believers, all the comforts and mercies that we have are to be viewed by us as coming from the hands of our gracious Heavenly Father. Job confessed that the Lord had given him the camels, the sheep, the oxen and that the Lord had given him his seven sons and three daughters. Everything which he had ever possessed he looked upon as having been the gift of God. Job did not say, “I worked hard to obtain all that stock that I have now lost.” He did not complain, “I spent many weary days and many anxious nights in accumulating all those flocks and herds that have been stolen from me.” He did not ascribe any of his wealth either to his own wit, or to his own industry, but he said of it all—“The Lord gave it to me.” In his mind’s eye, he took an inventory of all that he once had and of all that he had lost—and he said of the whole, “It was all the Lord’s gift to me.”

Now, Beloved, whatever may be the possessions which you have at the present time. Whatever may be the number of those who are the comfort of your life—husband or wife, parents or children, kinsfolk of any sort— say of all of them, “The Lord gave them to me.” And, as a Christian, learn the wisdom of never ascribing any earthly comfort to any earthly source. The worldling may not always be able to say what Job said concerning his possessions. Some of what he has may not have been obtained honestly—the Lord did not give any of that to him. Some of what he has may turn out to be a curse rather than a blessing, but the Believer in Christ may say with the utmost truthfulness, with regard to all that he has, “It is all the gift of my loving and tender Heavenly Father.”

And, Brothers and Sisters, there is associated with this fact that all our possessions are God’s gifts, the remembrance that they are all undeserved gifts. They are gifts in the fullest sense of the word—the gifts of God’s Grace. They are not given to us because we have merited them, for we have never deserved even the least of all the mercies which the Lord has so bountifully bestowed upon us. We may say of the whole river of His favor which continually flows side by side with us as we journey along the pathway of our pilgrimage, that there is not a drop of it which comes to us of debt or by law, but all comes through the free gift of God’s Grace! All that we have, over and above what would have been our portion in the pit of Hell, is the gift of God’s mercy towards us. It is of the Lord’s mercy and because His compassions fail not, that we are not consumed. Every Believer can truly say with Job, “‘The Lord gave,’ yes, the Lord gave even to me, an unworthy one who sat as a beggar at His gate and received from His own hand countless tokens of His Infinite loving kindness.”

And I may add, with regard to those gifts, that they have been given to us with wondrous kindness and thoughtfulness on God’s part. Some here, I think, will have to say that they have found themselves provided for by God’s forestalling their needs. He has gone before them in the way of His Providence and mysteriously cleared a path for them. Before they have felt the pinch of poverty, the pinch has been averted. There are others of God’s servants here who have sometimes been brought very low, yet they can bear witness that up to now their bread has always been given to them and their waters have been sure. And while God’s mercy comes to us very sweetly when forestalling our needs, there is equal sweetness if it comes when the need has been felt. No food is so palatable as that which has hunger for its sauce! To know what it is to be poor will make us more grateful if God ever gives us abundance. But time would fail me to tell you the love and care of God towards each one of us, every day of our lives, and to recount how He not only continues but even multiplies His favors. It is impossible for us to count them, for they are more in number than the hairs of our head, or the sand on the seashore, or the stars in

the midnight sky! [See Sermon No. 3022, Volume 53—GOD’S INNUMERABLE MERCIES— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Now, as everything we have is freely and graciously given to us by God, this should make us feel, in the first place, that this Truth sweetens all that we have. I daresay there is many a little thing in your house that is of no great value in itself, but it was given to you by someone who was very dear to you. How much a child values that Bible that was given to her by her mother who wrote her name in it! Many a man has, in his house, things which an auctioneer would appraise at a very small amount, but which the owner prizes very highly because they were given to him by someone whom he intimately esteemed and who gave them to him as a token of his love. In like manner, look at the bread on the table of a Believer as a love token from God. The Lord gave it to him—and if there were upon his table nothing but that bread, it would be a token of God’s gracious condescension in providing for his needs! Let us learn to look thus at everything that we receive in this life, for such a view of it will sweeten it all. We shall not then begin to calculate whether we have as much as others have, or as much as our own whims or wishes might crave, but we shall recognize that all we have comes from the hand and heart of our Heavenly Father—and that it all comes to us as a token of our Father’s love and with our Father’s blessing resting upon it!

This fact should also prevent any Believer from acting dishonestly in his daily avocations, or even from wishing to obtain anything that is not his own by right. All of you who belong to God have what God has given you—so mind that you do not mix with it anything that the devil has given you! Do not go into any worldly enterprise and seek to gain something concerning which you could not say, “The Lord my God gave it to me.” Men of the world will engage in such transactions and they will say that you are not as sharp as you might be because you will not do the same. But you have a good reason for refusing to gain even a shilling upon which you cannot ask God’s blessing. A sovereign, dishonestly procured, though it might gladden your eyes for a little while and help to fill your purse, would certainly bring a curse with it—and you do not want that. You would not like to have to confess to yourself, concerning anything you possessed, “I dare not tell my Heavenly Father how I got it, though He knows. And I dare not ask His blessing upon it, nor do I think He would ever give it to me. He will probably turn it into a rod and sharply scourge me for having dared to use such unholy means to get what I ought not to have even wished to possess.” Some of God’s people might have been very happy if they had not been greedy and grasping. He that hurries to be rich will soon find that he will fall into many snares and abundant temptations. It is an evil thing when people cannot be content although they have enough for all their necessities, for even the world’s proverb says that, “enough is as good as a feast.” Yet many stretch out their arms, like wide-encircling seas, and try to grasp in them all the shore! Such people, sooner or later, begin to rob others right and left, and very many of them come down to poverty and the Bankruptcy Court, disgraced and dishonored. Let it not be so with you, Beloved, but be content with such things as you have, whether God gives you little or much and, above all things, pray that you may have nothing but what He gives you, nothing in your house or shop but what comes in at the front door in the light of day, nothing but what may be seen coming in if any eyes should be watching. That man is truly happy who can say of all his substances, be it little or be it much, “The Lord gave it to me.”

Further, as it is the Lord who gives us all the wealth that we possess, how very foolish are those people who are proud of possessing a little more of this world’s wealth than others have! There are some who seem to be thoroughly intoxicated by the possession of a larger income than their neighbors enjoy. They even seem to fancy that they were made of better material than was used in the creation of ordinary mortals. Did not a broad grin appear on the faces of many aristocrats when someone said, in Parliament, that we were all made of the same flesh and blood? Of course all those who were in their right senses knew that it was true— but insanity in high places seemed to be moved to utter contempt at the bare mention of such a thing! When a man is poor, unless he has brought his poverty upon himself by extravagance, or idleness, or his own wrongdoing, the man is a man for all that, and none the worse man for being poor! Indeed, some of the best of men have been as poor as their Lord was. I have known many who have been very poor, yes, who have been the excellent of the earth, in whom a true saint of God might well take delight! There always will be various ranks and conditions among man and there is a certain respect which is due from one to another which should never be withheld where it is rightly due, but, at the same time, whenever a man begins to say that because God has given him more than He has given to another, therefore he will despise his poorer brother and look down upon him, it must be dishonoring and displeasing to God and it is extremely likely that He will turn round and make the proud man bite the dust! How often those who have held their heads so very high have been rolled in the mud—and how easily that might be made to come to pass with others!

A further inference arising out of this Truth that God gives us all that we have, is that it ought never to be difficult for us to give back to God as much as we can. As He has given us all that we have, it is but right that we should use it to His Glory and if, under the rule of His Grace, and under the Gospel, He does not so much claim a return from us as a matter of right, but leaves our liberality to be awakened by the love which constrains us, rather than by the Law which compels us, yet let us not give God less because He gives us more! Under the Mosaic dispensation, the Jew gave his tenth by compulsion, but let us willingly give to God more than that and not need to be forced to do it except by the sweet constraint of love. Do I owe every penny that I have in this world to the bounty of God’s hand? Then, when God’s cause and God’s poor are in need, let no one have to beg of me to give to them! I always feel ashamed when I hear people say that we are “begging for God’s cause.” God’s cause has no need to be a beggar from those who would be beggars if it were not for God’s Grace! Oh, no, no! It must never be so! We ought to be like the children of Israel in the wilderness who gave so generously towards the building and furnishing of the Tabernacle that Moses had to restrain their liberality, for they had already given “much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to make.” Let us try to imitate the liberality which God has manifested toward us in the gift of His well-beloved Son and in all the Covenant blessings which come to us through Him. All those who have received so much from God should count it their privilege and delight to give back to Him all that they can!

These reflections might suffice for this part of the subject, but I shall add one more. “The Lord gave”—then we must worship the Giver and not His gifts. How can we so degrade ourselves as to worship that which God has given to us? Yet you know that many make idols of their gold, their lands, their husbands, their wives, their children, or their friends! It is no unusual thing for a little child to be the god of the family—and wherever that is the case, there is a rod laid up in store in that house. You cannot make idols of your children without finding out, sooner or later, that God makes them into rods with which He will punish you for your idolatry! “Little children, keep yourselves from idols,” was the injunction of the loving Apostle John. And he wrote thus in love because he knew that if God sees us making idols of anything, He will either break our idols or break us. If we really are His people, He will, in some way or other, wean us from our idols, for He wants our love to be given wholly to Himself. So it is best for us to keep the creature in its right place and never to let the joys or comforts of this life usurp God’s rightful position in our hearts! God has been pleased so to fashion the world that it should always be under our feet and, as Christians, we should always keep it there. The dearest thing we have on earth should always be estimated by us at its proper value as a gift from God but as nothing more than that—and never be allowed to occupy our heart’s throne which should always be reserved for the Lord alone.

But now we are to think, for a while, of the Lord’s hand taking away from us as well as giving to us. Job said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.” Some of you have come to this service very sad and heavy of heart because that dear child of yours is dead. Well, I do not blame you for sorrowing over your loss, but I pray you also to remember that it is the Lord who has taken your child away from you. You say that it was the fever that took away your dear one—and perhaps that was the immediate cause of your child’s death—but if you can realize that the fever was only the instrument in God’s hands to remove the dear little one from your care to His own, surely you will dry your tears. And as for that substance of yours, which has almost melted away under the fiery trial to which it has been subjected, so that poverty seems, now, to stare you in the face, you will be able to bear even that when you remember that it is the Lord’s hand that has taken away what His hand had first given!

As long as we look at the secondary causes of our trouble, we see reasons for sorrow. But when our faith can pierce the veil and see the Great First Cause, then our comfort begins! If you strike a dog with a stick, he will try to bite the stick because he is a dog. But if he knew better, he would try to bite you—not the stick! Yet that is the way that we often act with the troubles that come to us—we fly at the second causes and so are angry and petulant with them! But if we would always remember that it is God who takes away, as well as God who gives—that He is at the back of all our trials and troubles—that His hand weighs out our shame of grief and measures our portion of pain—then we would not dare to rebel and bewail, but, like David, we would say, “I was dumb. I opened not my mouth because You did it.” Even if we could not get up higher, and say with Job, “The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Further, when once we know that God has done anything, that fact forbids any question concerning it. It must be right because He did it. I may not be able to tell why, but God knows why He did it. He may not tell me the reason, but He has a reason, for the Lord never acted unreasonably. There never was any action of His, however sovereign or autocratic it might appear to be, but was done “after the counsel of His own will.” Infinite Wisdom dictates what absolute Sovereignty decrees. God is never arbitrary, or tyrannical. He does as He wills, but He always wills to do that which is not only most for His own glory, but also most for our real good. How dare we question anything that God does!

My dear Sister, rest assured that it is better that you should be a widow and seek to glorify God in your widowhood. My dear young Friend, believe that it is better that you should be an orphan—otherwise God would not have taken away your parents. It is better that you, dear Friends, should lose your eyes. It is better that you should be poor, or diseased, or else the Lord would not let you be so, for, “no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” If health and wealth were good things for you, God would let you have them. If it were a good thing for saints to never die, they would never die. If it were a good thing for them to go to Heaven at once, they would go there at once. If you are walking uprightly, you may know that you have all things, which, all things considered, would be good for you. Some things which might be good in themselves, or good for others, might not be good for you and, therefore, the Lord, in love, withholds them from you. But, whatever He gives, or takes away, or withholds, raise no questions concerning it, but let it be sufficient for you that the Lord has done it!

Besides, when we know that the Lord takes away our possessions, the knowledge that they are His effectually prevents us from complaining. Suppose you are a steward to a certain nobleman and that his lordship has been pleased to entrust you with ten thousand pounds of his money? By-and-by he withdraws it from your charge and invests it somewhere else. Well, it never was your money—you might have complained if it had been. But you are only a steward and if your lord pleases to withdraw his own money, are you going to be out of temper with your master because he does what he wills with his own? Suppose you have a banker—and we are, as it were, the Lord’s bankers—and suppose that a week or two ago you paid into the bank a thousand pounds, or more, and the clerks or those in authority were pleased to take charge of your money. But suppose that you went to the bank, today, and drew it all out? They did not get angry with you, did they? You would not like to trust a banker who was only civil to you when you were paying in money! And if we are God’s bankers, He sometimes puts His treasure into our keeping and sometimes takes it out—but it is not our treasure any more than our money is the banker’s when we entrust it to his care! It is on deposit with us and we ought to be paying God good interest upon it! Whatever God has given to us, He never gave it as our own freehold. It was always on a lease—a lease, too, that had to be renewed every moment, for if God chose to cancel it, He could do so whenever He pleased. How dare we, then, complain?

To use another figure, our position is like that of a nurse into whose care a mother placed her baby and the nurse dandled the child, and was glad to have charge of it. But when she had to return it to its mother, she cried over the loss of the little darling! Yet it was not the nurse’s child, given to her to keep—it was only hers to nurse. So it was with your children whom God has taken Home to Himself—they were not yours to keep. The Lord put each one of them, for a while, into your charge and said to you, “Christian mother, take this child and nurse it for Me, and I will pay you your wages.” So, when He called the child back to Himself, why should you complain as though He had wronged you? Or, to use another illustration, which has been frequently employed in this connection—a gardener had been especially careful in tending one particular rose which was very fair to look upon. But, when he went, one morning, to his favorite rosebush, he found that the flower of which he had taken such care, was gone! He was very vexed, for he thought that some bad boy had stolen into the garden and taken away his best flower. He was complaining very bitterly of his loss when someone said, “The master has been down in the garden this morning, and he has been admiring this rosebush, and he has taken away that fine bud of which you were so proud.” Then the gardener was delighted that he had been able to grow a flower that had attracted his master’s notice and, instead of mourning any longer, he began to rejoice! So should it be with anything upon which we have set our hearts! Let each one of us say to our Master, “My Lord, if it pleases You to take it, it pleases me to lose it! Why should I complain because You have taken from me what is really Your own?—

*‘If You should call me to resign  
What most I prize—it never was mine!  
I only yield You what was Yours—  
Your will be done!’”*

II. The second part of my discourse must be briefer than the first part, yet it is equally important. It is this, LEARN TO BLESS THE LORD’S NAME IN EVERYTHING. Learn to ring the bells of His praise all day long and, for that matter, all night long, too!

First, bless the name of the Lord when He reveals His hand in giving. “Ah,” you say, “that is an easy thing to do.” So it ought to be, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and it is a neglect of our duty when we do not do it. We come down to our breakfast in the morning rejoicing in health and strength, and we go out to our day’s engagements but, I hope not without thankfulness that we are in health and that we have food to eat, and raiment to put on! We are out all day and things prosper with us, but I trust that we do not accept all this as a matter of course—but that we praise the Lord for it all day long—and then when we go home again at night, and God is still with us, I hope we do not fall asleep before we again praise Him. John Bunyan used to say that the very chickens shame us if we are ungrateful, for they do not take a drink of water without lifting up their heads, as if in thankfulness, for the refreshing draught. If we, who are the Lord’s children, do not bless Him for the mercies which so constantly come to us from Him, we are, of all people, the most ungrateful! Oh, for a grateful frame of mind, for I am sure that is a happy frame of mind. Those who are determined to murmur and to complain of God’s dealings with them, are sure to find plenty of things to complain of—while those who are of a thankful spirit will see reasons and occasions for gratitude in everything that happens!

Do you remember a touching story, told some years ago, of a poor mother with her two little fatherless children? On a cold winter’s night they discovered an empty house into which they went for shelter. There was an old door standing by itself, and the mother took it, placed it across a corner of the room, and told the children to creep behind it so as to get a little protection from the cold wind. One of the children said, “Oh Mother, what will those poor children do that haven’t got any door to set up to keep out the wind?” That child was grateful even for such a poor shelter as that! Yet there are some who have thousands of greater blessings than that, and yet do not see God’s hand in them—and do not praise Him for them. If that has been the case with any of us, let us turn over a new leaf and ask God to rule it with music lines and then let us put on them notes of thanksgiving, and say to the Lord, with David, “Every day will I bless You; and I will praise Your name forever and ever.” Or say with one of our old poets—

*“My God, I’ll praise You while I live,  
And praise You when I die,  
And praise You when I rise again,  
And to eternity.”*

Praising God is one of the best ways of keeping away murmuring! Praising God is like paying a peppercorn rent for our occupation of our  
earthly tenement. [See Sermon No. 3021, Volume 53—LANDLORD AND TENANT— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] When the

rent is not paid, the owners generally turn the tenants out—and God might well do so with us if He were like earthly landlords. If we are not grateful to Him for all the bounties which we constantly receive from Him, He may make the stream stop—and then what would we do? Ungrateful mind, beware of this great danger! Thankfulness is one of the easiest virtues for anyone to practice and certainly it is one of the cheapest! So let all Christians especially comply with the Apostolic injunction, “Be you thankful.” It is a soul-enriching thing to be thankful. I am sure that a Christian, with gratitude for a small income, is really richer than the man who lives a graceless life and is plentifully endowed with worldly wealth. David spoke truly when he said, “A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked.” So, let others do as they will, we say, “Give us, Lord, whatever You will, whether it is little or much, so long as You give with it the light of Your Countenance, our souls shall be abundantly content!”

Thus are we to bless the name of the Lord for all that He gives us. But, it is a much more difficult thing to bless the name of the Lord for what He takes away from us. Yet, difficult as it is, I venture to say that many Believers who have forgotten to praise God while He was giving to them, have not forgotten to praise Him when He was taking away from them! I do not know how thankful Job had been before this trying period in his history, but I do know that his trials brought out this expression of his thankfulness. It is his first recorded praise to God. Some of us need to lie a little while upon a sickbed in order to make us thankful for having had good health for so long. And we need to be brought low and to have our spirits depressed in order to make us grateful that we have had such cheerful spirits and been blessed with so many comforts. It is not natural or easy for flesh and blood to praise God for what He takes away, yet this painful experience often wakes up the gratitude of the Christian and he who forgot to praise the Lord, before, makes up for it now!  
Brothers and Sisters, praise is God’s due when He takes as well as when He gives, for there is as much love in His taking as in His giving! The kindness of God is quite as great when He smites us with His rod as when He kisses us with the kisses of His mouth. If we could see everything as He sees it, we would often perceive that the kindest possible thing He can do to us is that which appears to us to be unkind. A child came home from the common with her lap full of brightly shining berries. She seemed very pleased with what she had found, but her father looked frightened when he saw what she had and anxiously asked her, “Have you eaten any of those berries?” “No, Father,” replied the child, to his great relief. And then he said to her, “Come with me into the garden.” And there he dug a hole, put the berries in, stamped on them and crushed them, and then covered them with earth. All this while, the little one thought, “How unkind Father is to take away these things which pleased me so much!” But she understood the reason for it when he told her that the berries were so poisonous that if she had eaten even one of them, she would in all probability have died in consequence! In like manner, sometimes, our comforts turn to poison—especially when we begin to make idols of them—and it is kind on the part of God to stamp on them and put them right away from us so that no mischief may come to our souls. Surely that child said, “Thank you, Father, for what you have done. It was love that made you do it.” And you, also, Believer, can say, “Thank God for my sickness, for my poverty, for that dead child of mine, for my widowhood, for my orphanhood—thank God for it all! It would have been ruinous to me to have left me unchastened. Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept His Word. Blessed be His name for all that He has done, both in giving and in taking away.”  
It is a grand thing when we do not judge God’s dealings with us simply by the rules of reason. From the first moment when the love of God is revealed to us, right on to the hour when we shall be in the Presence of the Father in Glory, we may depend upon it that there is Infinite Love in every act of God in taking from us, just as much as in giving to us! Jesus said to His disciples, “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.” The Father always loved Jesus with Infinite Love—He loved Him as much when He was on the Cross as He did when He was on His Throne. And, in like manner, Jesus always loves us with an unchanging love—a love which can never fail us. He loves us as much in the furnace of affliction as He will love us when we shall be with Him in Glory, so let us bless His name whether He gives or takes away! I invite every mourning soul here to bless God’s name at this moment.  
“Ah,” says one, “I wish I could get a little more happiness to sustain me under my many trials.” Well, let me just remind you of the poor widow woman who went out to gather a few sticks to make a fire, that she might bake some cakes for herself and her son. When the Prophet Elijah met her, what did he say to her? He told her to make him a little cake, first, and afterwards he added, “make for you and for your son. For thus says the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah.” Notice that he said to the woman, “Make me a little cake first.” And God seems to say to you, “Praise Me first, and then I will bless you.” Say, as Job did a little later in his history, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.” I believe it marks the turn of the tide, with a saint, when he or she can say to the Lord, with good old John Ryland—  
*“You, at all times, will I bless!  
Having You, I all possess!”*  
The sky soon begins to clear when the Christian begins to say, “The Lord’s will be done.” “Not as I will, but as You will.” This is a sign that the chastisement has had its due effect—the rod will now probably be put away. You mourning souls, take down your harps from the willows and sound forth at least a note or two to the praise of the Lord your God! Praise Him with such notes as these—“Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart...I will not fret myself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass...O my God, I believe that all things are working together for my good and that You are my gracious Heavenly Father, full of compassion and overflowing with love.” If you talk like this, Christian, and mean what you say, it will be a blessing to you, a comfort to others and an honor to your God!  
As I speak thus, I am reminded that these comforting Truths of God belong only to true Believers. And as I send you away, I dare not put the words of my text into all your mouths, for, alas, some of you cannot see our Father’s hand in anything that happens to you! You are without a parent, except that wicked one of whom Christ said to the Jews, “You are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.” Yet, remember, you who cannot claim God as your Father, that the door of His Grace is not yet shut. He is still willing to receive you! If you will come to Him, confessing your sins and seeking mercy through the precious blood of Jesus, He is both able and willing to give you a new heart and a right spirit—to save you here and now—and to adopt you at once into His family! Then will you also be able to see His hand both in giving and in taking away—and you will also learn to bless His name at all times!  
If God the Lord shall deal thus graciously with you, His shall be the praise forever and ever. Amen.

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÷Job 1.22

PATIENT JOB AND THE BAFFLED ENEMY  
NO. 2172

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 28, 1890, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” Job 1:22.**

THAT is to say, in all this trial and under all this temptation, Job kept right with God. During all the losses of his estate and the deaths of his children he did not speak in an unworthy manner. The text speaks admiringly of “all this.” And a great “all” it was! Some of you have many troubles—but what are they compared with those of Job? Your afflictions are mole-hills contrasted with the Alps of the Patriarch’s grief. “All this”! He was suddenly reduced from a peer to a pauper—from a man of great wealth to a person in absolute poverty—from a happy father to a childless mourner! Who can measure or fathom “all this”? Yet, “In all this Job sinned not.” Here was the triumph of a gracious spirit. Ah, dear Friends, if God could uphold Job in all this, you may be sure that He can support you! Look to Him for this Divine support.

“All this” also alludes to all that Job did and thought, and said. He was full to bursting with swelling grief. He shaved his head and tore his garments. And he lifted up his voice unto the Lord his God—but, “In all this Job sinned not.” He rose up, for he was a man of action, a man of a sensitive and powerful mind, a man of poetic energy who could not fail to express his emotions in striking symbols—but “In all this Job sinned not.” This is a great deal to say of a man when you see him in the extreme of trial. If in patience he can possess his soul when all the arrows of affliction are wounding him, he is a man, indeed.

May we ourselves so live that it may be said of us in the end, “In all this he sinned not. He swam through a sea of trouble. The roll of his life story is written within and without with lamentations—but in all this he did not dishonor the name of his Lord. He did and said many things—but in them all he was patient, resigned, obedient and never uttered a rebellious word.” Let us think of the wonderful case of Job in a practical way, desiring the Holy Spirit to make us like he was!

I. Our first head shall be, IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS THE MAIN THING IS NOT TO SIN. It is not said, “In all this Job was never spoken against,” for he was spoken against by Satan in the presence of himself and very soon he was falsely accused by men who should have comforted him. You

must not expect, dear Friend, that you will pass through this world and have it said of you in the end, “In all this no one ever spoke against him.” I heard say of one man, “He was a man who never had an enemy.” I ventured to add, “nor a friend.” He has no friend who never had a foe.

Those who secure zealous lovers are pretty sure to call forth intense adversaries. A man who is such a chip in the porridge that he never offends, is pretty sure to be equally flavorless in the other direction. The trimmer may dodge through the world without much censure, but it will seldom be so with an out-and-out man of God. Because he is not of the world, the world will hate him! The blessed and holy Lord Jesus was slandered to the utmost. God, the Ever-Blessed, was Himself libeled in Paradise, itself, by an old servant who had turned into an old serpent! Therefore you must not wonder if you are also abused!

To go through life without calumny is not a thing to be expected—but it is anxiously to be desired that we may go through every phase of joy or of sorrow without falling into sin. Neither is it a chief point for us to seek to go through life without suffering, since the Lord’s servants, the best of them, are ripened and mellowed by suffering. Amos, the herdsman, was a bruiser of sycamore figs—a kind of fig that never ripened in Palestine unless it was struck with a rod and thus was bruised. I fear there are very few of the godly who will fully ripen without affliction. The vine bears but little fruit unless it makes the acquaintance of the knife and is sternly pruned. I fear that much fruit will seldom be forthcoming without much tribulation.

A high character might be produced, I suppose, by continued prosperity, but it has very seldom been the case. Adversity, however it may appear to be our foe, is our true friend and, after a little acquaintance with it, we receive it as a precious thing, the prophecy of a coming joy. It should be no ambition of ours to traverse a smooth path without thorn or stone. Rather let us ask—

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

Dear Friends, I think, also that it should not be our ambition to go through the world without sadness of heart. It is true that heaviness of heart is worse than bodily suffering—“A wounded spirit who can bear?” Some persons, however, seem to endure terrible trouble without much feeling. They are case-hardened, stout-hearted, thick-skinned persons— and truly I have half envied them at times and almost prayed to lose that sensitiveness which causes fear—but it would be a very doubtful blessing. We need to be tender that we may feel the slightest touch of God’s hand. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.”

The Apostle says, “Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” Many read it as if there were a necessity for the trial and so, indeed, there is. But the necessity in the passage has reference to being in heaviness. If you can bear trial without ever being heavy, it is scarcely a trial to you. “The blueness of a wound cleanses away evil.” It is the ache of the ache—it is the sting of the wasp which works effectively on the heart. If we do not smart under the rod, what is the use of it to us? Therefore I would not have you ask that you may be kept from sadness of soul—but I would have you pray seven times a day from the very heart of your being, “Lord, keep me from sin.” May it be said at the last, of every one of us, that in all this we sinned not!

Remember, if the Grace of God prevents our affliction from driving us into sin, then Satan is defeated. Satan did not care what Job suffered, so long as he could but hope to make him sin. And he was foiled when he did not sin. He must have regretted that he tried him, when he found that he could not make him sin. I think I hear the Fiend muttering, “Give him back his camels. Give him back his sheep, if by the loss of these his patience and resignation are made manifest.” If he could not extract a rebellious speech from Job, the Tempter had lost all his cruel efforts—his malice had spent itself without result. If he could not make the good man sin, nor charge God foolishly, he was defeated and God was glorified!

If in enduring your particular trouble, my dear Friend, you do not fall into sin, you are more than a conqueror over him that hates you. The arch-enemy will fly away confounded from you if you are able to resist him while darkness covers your soul. If you conquer him in your hour of grief, you conquer, indeed! May your conflict with Apollyon be like that of Christian in “Pilgrim’s Progress,” and to you, also, may a monument be erected, bearing this inscription—

*“The man so bravely played the man,  
He made the Fend to fly;  
Whereof a monument I stand  
The same to testify.”*

If you do not sin while under the stress of heavy trouble, God will be honored. He is not so much glorified by preserving you from trouble as by upholding you in trouble. He allows you to be tried that His Grace in you may be tested and glorified.

When one Winstanley, years ago, built a lighthouse on the Eddystone

Rock, he said that he was sure that it would stand any storm that ever blew and he should himself like to be in it in the fiercest tempest that ever drove adown the Channel. It came to pass that he was in his own lighthouse one night and there came a tremendous blast which swept him and his lighthouse clean away so that he was never heard of again. He courted trial because he believed in his work—God permits trial because

He knows that His wisdom and Divine Grace have made us able to bear it. The lighthouse which was afterwards built on the Eddystone has had all manner of storms beating upon it but it has outlived them all, and therefore its builder’s name is held in honor.

Even thus our God is glorified in every trial of His saints when their grace enables them to endure with patience. “There,” says He, “see what Grace can do, what suffering it can endure, what labors it can perform!” Grace is like an athlete performing before the great King and His heavenly court. A cloud of witnesses look down upon the feats of Faith and note with joy how it achieves everything which the Lord appoints it to perform. It even enters into contest with Satan, the fiend of Hell, and gives him a signal overthrow—and He that made the athlete and trained him for the contest is honored thereby. If you do not sin in your trouble, your endurance of trial will bring glory to God!

Remember, furthermore, that if you do not sin, you yourself will be no loser by all your tribulations. Sin alone can injure you. But if you remain steadfast, though you are stripped, you will be clothed with glory! Though you are deprived of comfort, you will lose no real blessing. True, it may not seem a pleasant thing to be stripped and yet if one is soon going to bed it is of no great consequence. It is no easy thing to part with wealth— but if thereby you are unburdened—the loss is a gain. A child of God may have the knife sharply cutting him, but if it only removes the superfluous wood, it may be of the utmost benefit to the fruitage of the tree—and that is the main thing.

If the metal in the pot loses none of its gold, all that it does lose is well lost and is, indeed, really gained. Though you are reduced in circumstances, what does it matter if you are enlarged in spirit? Though you are sick in body, what does it matter if your soul’s health is furthered? To sin would be terrible—to abide in holiness is triumph! In all our affliction may there be no defection. The Lord may send us a ton of trouble, but this will be better than an ounce of sin! Do not let all your prayer run after deliverance from sorrow, but first of all pray, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” Seek first the kingdom of God and obedience to Him, and then deliverance shall be added unto you.

We are permitted to say, “Lord, keep us from trouble,” but we are commanded to pray, “Deliver us from the Evil One.” Should trials come to us, even like those which happened to Job, it shall be well with our souls if our hearts are not drawn or driven into sin.

II. And, now, a second thought arises out of the text. IN ALL TIME OF TRIAL THERE IS SPECIAL FEAR OF OUR SINNING. It is well for the child of God to remember that the hour of darkness is an hour of danger. Suffering is fruitful soil for certain forms of sin. Hence it was necessary for the Holy Spirit to give a testimony to Job that, “In all this he sinned not.” It looked as if he must sin but yet he did not sin—and this is recorded by Inspiration as a memorable fact. He still held fast his integrity and bowed before the will of the Lord.

Dear Friends, if you are approaching a season of trouble, watch and pray that in entering upon trial you may not also enter upon sinning. Many have sorely grieved their God by what they have said and done in the hour of sorrow. For instance, we are apt to grow impatient. We murmur against the Lord. We think our trial is too long, or that prayer is not answered when it ought to be. If God is faithful, why does He not hasten to deliver His child? In the olden time He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind—why are His chariots now so long in coming? The feet of His mercy seem shod with lead.

Petulance and complaining are sins which easily beset those who are severely tried. Men are apt to have bitter thoughts of God when He puts His hand into the bitter box and brings out the quinine of sorrow. Of the two sexes, women usually carry the prize for patience, especially in bodily sickness. As for us, who are made of rougher stuff, it is to our shame that we are, as a rule, very impatient of pain. We do not so much lose our patience as show that we have none! Job, under his first set of trials was not swift to complain, for you have heard of the patience of Job which the Holy Spirit takes care to mention in the New Testament.

We are even tempted to rebellion against God. I have met with cases in which rebellious words have been uttered and even spoken again and again. One said in my hearing, “God has taken away my mother and I shall never forgive Him. I can never think of Him as a God of love as once I did.” Such words will cause a child of God more pain than the loss, itself, would have occasioned. I heard one say of his dying child, whom I was called in to visit, that he could not believe that God would be so unjust as to take his daughter from him. Indeed, he spoke so rebelliously that I, with all gentleness, but with deep solemnity of soul, admonished him that I feared the Lord would visit him for such proud speeches.

It was clear that his child would soon die and I feared that he would die himself, when the shock came, because he so stoutly quarreled with the Lord. I said to myself, “A child of God cannot speak in this way about his Father without coming under further chastisement.” It came to pass as I expected and he, himself, was laid low. Grieved as I was, I was by no

means surprised. How can we rebel against God and hope to prosper in that rebellion? With the stubborn He will show Himself stubborn and we shall find out what a world of misery that will bring us! Oh, for Divine Grace not only to yield because we must, but because we trust! May we say, “It is the Lord—let Him do what seems good to Him”! Before that temptation Job did not fall, for in this respect he sinned not.

We may also sin by despair. An afflicted one said, “I shall never look up again. I shall go mourning all my days.” Dear Friend, why not be cheerful again? Are God’s mercies clean gone forever? You are bid to believe always. “Who is among you that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” In the dark is the place for trust, not for despair! A child that is sullen will probably make for himself 10 times more misery than the rod, itself, would cause him. Who dares despair while God bids him trust? Come, if you are as poor as Job, be as patient as Job and you will find hope ever shining like a star which never sets.

Many sin by unbelieving speeches. I have repeated one or two naughty things that God’s children have said, but Job said nothing of the kind. He bravely said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Men have been driven into a kind of atheism by successive troubles. They have wickedly argued—“There cannot be a God, or He would not let me suffer so.” Beloved, you must not speak as the foolish do—and such speech is sheer folly. Your mouth would be greatly defiled if you were thus to vex the Holy Spirit. Has the Lord saved you and will you speak against Him?

I have no time to say more where so much might be added. The Lord preserve us in trying times from sinning either with heart, or hands, or lips.

III. Notice, thirdly, that IN ACTS OF MOURNING WE NEED NOT SIN. Listen—you are allowed to weep. You are allowed to show that you suffer by your losses. See what Job did. “Job arose and tore his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped.” And “in all this Job sinned not.” The mother wept much over her child and yet she may not have sinned—a mother’s grief and a mother’s love are sacred things. When a dear child is mourned over, those may have been not only perfectly natural tears, but even holy tears.

The husband lamented sorely when his beloved was taken from him. He was right. I should have thought far less of him if he had not done so. “Jesus wept.” But there is a measure in the expression of grief. Job was not wrong in tearing his garment—he might have been wrong if he had torn it into shreds. He was not wrong in shaving his head—he would have erred had he torn out his hair, as some have done whom despair has turned into maniacs. He deliberately took the razor and shaved his head— and in this he sinned not. You may wear mourning—saints did so in other times. You may weep, for it may, perhaps, be a relaxing of your strained emotions. Do not restrain the boiling floods. A flood of tears without may assuage the deluge of grief within.

Job’s acts of mourning were moderate and seemly—toned down by his faith. I wish that Christians did not so often follow the way of the world at their funerals, but would try to make it clear that they sorrow not even as others that are without hope. You may wear black as long as it does not become the ensign of rebellion against the will of the Lord. Job’s words, also, though very strong, were very true—“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return.” If we say no more than the truth, we may say it if the tone is not that of murmuring, although, perhaps sometimes it might be better to be altogether silent, like Aaron, who held his peace.

David said, “I opened not my mouth; because You did it.” If we cannot maintain a golden silence, yet let our speech be silver—we must use nothing less than precious metal. Job mourned and yet did not sin, for he mourned and worshipped as he mourned. This is what I commend to you who are mourning at this time. If you must fall on the ground, worship there before the Lord! If your heart is bowed down, emulate the holy ones who fall on their faces and worship God! I believe that some of the truest, purest, sweetest and strongest devotion has come to God from hearts that were breaking with grief. Remember, then, that in acts of mourning there is not, of necessity, any sin.

IV. But, fourthly, IN CHARGING GOD FOOLISHLY WE SIN GREATLY. “Job sinned not” and the phrase which explains it is, “nor charged God foolishly.” Here let me say that to call God to our judgment seat at all is a high crime and felony! “No, but, O man, who are you that replies against God?” Woe unto him that contends with his Maker! The Lord is absolutely Sovereign and He gives no account of His matters. We are usurping fools when we pretend to sit in judgment upon the Judge of all the earth!

In the next place, we sin in requiring that we should understand God. What? Is God under bonds to explain Himself to us? Do we threaten to revolt unless He will put Himself right with us? Blessed be His name, He is inscrutable and I am glad to have Him so! Do you want your God to explain His dispensations? Are you not content to believe Him? The demand for explanation is unbelief! This is, indeed, making yourselves to be wiser than God! Let us bow before Him without a question. He is Jehovah and that ends the matter! He would have His children feel that what He wills is always best. Bow before God and prostrate your desires and thoughts and judgment before His Throne. What He does is wise and true and kind—

and of this we are sure. We can very easily charge God foolishly, but we had better not charge Him at all, for who are we that we should call the Eternal to account?

We charge God foolishly when we imagine that He is unjust. “Ah!” said one, “When I was a worldling I prospered. But ever since I have been a Christian I have endured no end of losses and troubles.” Do you mean to insinuate that the Lord does not treat you justly? Think a minute and stand corrected. If the Lord were to deal with you according to strict justice, where would you be? If He were now to call you to account for your sins and lay bare the naked sword of Justice, what would become of you? You would be at once in despair and very soon in Hell! Never charge upon the Lord a failure of justice, for this is to sin with a vengeance.

Some, however, will bring foolish charges against His love. “How can He be a God of love if He permits me to suffer so?” You forget that word—“As many as I tenderly love,” (for that is the Greek word), “I rebuke and chasten.” The more the Lord loves you, the more surely He will rebuke any and every evil that He sees in you! You are so precious to Him that He desires to make you perfect in every good work to do His will. God prizes you much, my Sister, or you would not have to be so often ground upon the wheel to take away all your warts and make the jewel of your soul to shine.

“Oh,” said a worldling to me when I was in great pain and weakness of body, “is this the way God treats His children? Then I am glad I am not one.” How my heart burned within me and my eyes flashed as I said that I would take an eternity of such pain as I endured sooner than stand in the place of the man who preferred ease to God. I felt it would be Hell to me to have a doubt of my adoption and whatever pain I might suffer was a trifle so long as I knew that the Lord was my God. Every child of God under such a taunt would feel exceedingly jealous for the honor of his Lord.

Beloved, we are willing to take the Divine love with every possible drawback that can be concerned—for the love of our Father is a weight of Glory—and all the sorrows of time are but “light afflictions” and they last but for a moment. How sweet to hear the Lord say—

*“In love I correct you your gold to refine;*

*To make you, at length, in My likeness to shine”!*Alas, at times, unbelief charges God foolishly with reference to His power! We think that He cannot help us in some peculiar trial. Throw to the winds such fears—they are unworthy of us and dishonoring to our Lord! Is anything too hard for the Lord? Through flood and fire He will bring us in safely.

We may be so foolish as to doubt His wisdom. If He is All-Wise, how can He suffer us to be in such straits and to sink so low as we do? What folly is this? Who are you, that you would measure the wisdom of God? Shall an owl begin to compute the light of the sun? Or an ant estimate the eternal hills? Shall some tiny animalcules, sporting with myriads of others in a drop of water, begin to trace the bounds of the sea? What are you? Who are you, that you should set your judgment against that of the Lord God Almighty? Less than nothing, will you censure the Infinite? A worm of the dust, will you arraign the mighty God? Be this far from you! Job did not so, for he sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

V. Lastly—as I must close in haste—TO COME THROUGH GREAT TRIAL WITHOUT SIN IS THE HONOR OF THE SAINTS. If we are tried and come forth from it naked as when we were born, we need not be ashamed. And if we come out of it without sinning, then the greatness of the affliction increases the honor of our victory. “In all this Job sinned not”—the, “all this,” is a part of the glory with which Grace covered him.

Suppose that your life was all ease. Suppose that you were brought up tenderly from a child. Suppose that you were well educated, left with a sufficient fortune to gratify every wish and happily married. Suppose that you were free from sickness, lifted above care, grinding labor and heavy sorrow—what then? Assuredly you could never be noted for patience! Who would ever have heard of Job if he had not been tried? None would have said of him, “In all this Job sinned not.” Only by his patience could he be perfected and immortalized!

Suppose that your record should be—from birth a sufferer, throughout life a struggler. At home a wrestler and abroad a soldier and a crossbearer—and, notwithstanding all this, full of joy and peace, through strong believing—tried to the uttermost, yet found faithful. In such a chronicle there is something worth remembering! There is no glory in being a feather-bed soldier, a man bedecked with gorgeous regimentals, but never beautified by a scar, or ennobled by a wound. All that you ever hear of such a soldier is that his spurs jingle on the pavement as he walks. There is no history for this carpet-knight. He is just a dandy. He never smelled gunpowder in his life, or if he did, he fetched out his scent-bottle to kill the offensive odor.

Well, that will not make much show in the story of the nations. If we could have our choice and we were as wise as the Lord Himself, we should choose the troubles which He has appointed us and we should not spare ourselves a single pang. Who wants to paddle about a duck pond all his life? No, Lord, if You will bid me go upon the waters, let me launch out into the deep! Those who are uplifted to the heavens by the billows and then go down again to the deeps as ocean yawns—these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep! Discomforts and dangers make

men of us and then we deal no more with childish things, but with eternal matters!

If we had no troubles, we should in the end be dumb for lack of themes to speak upon—but now we are storing up incidents worth the telling to our Brothers and Sisters when we join the family circle before the Throne! Tried souls can tell of the infinite mercy and love of God, who helped them, and delivered them! Give me an interesting life, after all, and if it is to be an interesting life, then it must be one that has its full share of trouble as Job’s had! Then shall it be Heaven to hear the verdict of the great Judge—“In all this My servant sinned not.” The honor of a Christian, or, let me say, the honor of God’s Divine Grace in a Christian, is when we have so acted that we have obeyed in detail, not forgetting any point of duty. “In all this Job sinned not,” neither in what he thought, or said, or did—nor even in what he did not say, and did not do—“In all this Job sinned not.”

We are apt to purpose that we will shut ourselves up in our own room and never go out into the world again, or attempt to speak or act any more. Surely, that would be a great blank and a blot upon our lives. No! No! No! We must not say, “I will speak no more in the name of the Lord.” Go on speaking! Go on acting! Go on suffering! Breast the wave, Christian! Swim to the other shore and may God’s infinite mercy be seen in bringing you there! Crowd your life with action and adorn it with patience, so that it shall be said, “In all this he sinned not.” God grant us a detailed obedience, a following of the Lord fully, a perfect working out of the minute points of service!

I feel that I must add just this. As I read the verse through, it looked too dry for me and so I wet it with a tear. “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly,” and yet I, who have suffered so little, have often sinned and, I fear, in times of anguish, have charged God foolishly. Dear Friends, is not this true of some of you? If so, let your tears follow mine. But yet the tear will not wash out the sin! Fly to the Fountain filled with blood and wash there from sins of impatience, sins of petulance, sins of rebellion, sins of unbelief! These are real sins and they must be washed away in the blood of the Lamb. Oh, how dear that Fountain is to us! How dear to you who have often to lie in bed and suffer—for you still sin! How dear to us who have health and strength to serve God, for we see sin in our holy things and we need to be purged from its defilement! You that go into business every day and mix up with all sorts of persons, how much you have need of daily washing! Come, Beloved, let us go together and say, “Lord, forgive us.”

I should like to say a little to some of you who are not God’s people. Suppose I were to sum up your lives and wrote it out in this fashion: “Was fond of gaiety. Spent many days in frivolous amusement. Was sometimes drunk. Occasionally would use profane language,” and so on? How falsely should I speak if I were to say, “In all this he sinned not”! Why, in all this you have done nothing else but sin! God has loaded your tables, clothed your backs, kept you in health and prolonged your lives—and in all this you have done nothing else but sin and act foolishly towards God! I want you to come, then, to that same Fountain of which I spoke, and cry tonight, “Wash me, Savior, or I die.” You have been the very opposite of Job. You have sinned in all your comforts and your mercies, and have never shown due gratitude to the blessed God! You have only done evil against Him! The Lord bring us all to His feet and then may He help us in all future troubles to stand firm and not to sin.

I know that some of you are entering upon fierce trials. You have the prospect of it on your minds, tonight, and sitting here you feel depressed about it. Do not begin to despond, but be doubly diligent in prayer! Be more concerned to be kept from sinning than from suffering and pray daily, “Lord, if You will lead me by this rough road, yet keep my feet that I stumble not, and preserve me even to the end with garments unspotted from the world! I will ask no more of You but this one thing. Holy Father, keep me as a dear child, obeying and serving You with all my heart, soul and strength, till I go up higher to dwell with You forever!”

May the Lord hear you all in the day of trouble and preserve you to life’s last hour, without spot and blameless! Then shall He be glorified in you and you shall have joy. Amen, and Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Job 1.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—758, 744.  
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÷Job 1.4

A MERRY CHRISTMAS  
NO. 352

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 23, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

**“And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that**

**Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.**

**Thus did Job continually.  
Job 1:4, 5.**

JOB was an exceedingly happy man before his great trial. He was as much blessed in the fruit of his body as in his basket and in his store. Our text gives us a very pleasing picture of Job’s family. He was a happy man to have had so many children all comfortably settled in life. For you will perceive that they all had houses. They had left his roof. They had all established themselves and had so prospered in the world that there was not one of them who had not enough of the world’s goods to entertain all the rest. So it seemed as if Job’s prosperity in his business had attended his children in the different places where they had settled

To add to his comfort they were an undivided family—not like Abraham’s household, where there was an Ishmael who mocked Isaac. Nor like Isaac’s household, where there was an Esau and a Jacob who sought to supplant him. Nor like Jacob’s household, where there was a Joseph and all the rest of his brethren were envious and jealous of him. Nor like David’s household, where there was perpetual strife and bickering between the one and the other. Job’s descendants were a large tribe. But they were all united and knit together in bonds of perfect happiness.

And moreover they seem to have had a great desire to preserve their unity as a family. Perhaps Job and his family were the only ones who feared God in the neighborhood. They wished therefore to keep themselves together as a little flock of sheep in the midst of wolves, as a cluster of stars in the midst of the thick darkness. And what a brilliant constellation they were—all of them shining forth and proclaiming the Truth of God! I say it was their desire not only to enjoy pleasantness and peace, but to maintain it. For I think that these annual meetings at the different houses were intended to knit them together so that if any little strife had arisen, as soon as they met at the next brother’s house all might be settled. And the whole host might go on again shoulder to shoulder and foot to foot—

as one phalanx of soldiers for God.

I think Job must have been a right happy man. I do not know that he always went to their feasts. Perhaps the soberness of age might have a little disqualified him for joining in their youthful enjoyments, but I am sure he commended their feasting. I am quite certain he did not condemn it. If he had condemned it he would never have offered sacrifice to God, lest they should have sinned, but he would have told them at once it was a sinful thing and that he could give no countenance to it. I think I see the happy group, so happy and holy that surely if David had been there, he would have said, “Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”

Job was a godly man and so godly that unlike Eli he brought up his household in the fear of God. He was not only quick to observe any known sin but was exceedingly jealous over his children lest secretly and inadvertently in their hearts—while they were at their loaded tables, they might have said or thought anything which might be termed blaspheming God. He therefore as soon as the feasting was over, called them all together and then as a preacher, told them of the danger to which they were exposed. And as a priest, (for every Patriarch before the Law was a priest), he offered burnt sacrifices lest any sin should by any possibility remain upon his sons and daughters.

So says the text. I pray that now we may have grace to listen to it. And may what we shall now hear abide with us during the coming week, when some of you shall meet together in your own houses! May God grant that our parents, or we, if we are parents, may be as Jobs and when the feasting is over, may there come the sacrifice and the prayer, lest we should have sinned and blasphemed God in our hearts!

I shall divide my sermon thus. First, the text and that is festive: so we will ring in a merry bell. Secondly, that which is in the text and that is instructive: so we will ring the sermon bell. And, thirdly, that which follows the text and that is afflictive: so we will ring the funeral bell.

I. First, then, the text itself and that is festive. Let us therefore RING THE MERRY BELL. I think I hear distinctly three notes in its merry peal. First, the text gives a license. Secondly, it suggests a caution. And thirdly, it provides a remedy.

First, the text gives a license. Now, you souls who would deny to your fellow men all sorts of mirth, come and listen to the merry bell of this text while it gives a license to the righteous especially—a license that they meet together in their houses and eat and drink and praise their God. In Cromwell’s days the Puritans thought it an ungodly thing for men to keep Christmas. They, therefore, tried to put it down and the common crier went through the street announcing that Christmas was henceforth no more to be kept, it being a Popish, if not a heathen ceremony. Now, you do not suppose that after the crier had made the proclamation any living Englishman took any notice of it! At least I can scarcely imagine that any did, except to laugh at it. For it is idle thus to strain at gnats and stagger under a feather! Albeit that we do not keep the feast as Papists—nor even as a commemorative festival—yet there is a something in old associations that makes us like the day in which a man may shake off the cares of business and disport himself with his little ones.

God forbid I should be such a Puritan as to proclaim the annihilation of any day of rest which falls to the lot of the laboring man. I wish there were a half-a-dozen holidays in the year. I wish there were more opportunities for the poor to rest. Though I would not have as many saint’s days as there are in Roman Catholic countries—yet if we had but one or two more days in which the poor man’s household and the rich man’s family might meet together—it might perhaps be better for us. However, I am quite certain that all the preaching in the world will not put Christmas down. You will meet next Tuesday and you will feast and you will rejoice and each of you, as God has given you substance, will endeavor to make your household glad.

Now, instead of telling you that this is all wrong, I think the merry bell of my text gives you a license to do so. Let us think a minute. Feasting is not a wrong thing, or otherwise Job would have forbidden it to his children. He would have talked to them seriously and admonished them that this was an ungodly and wicked custom to meet together in their houses. But, instead of this, Job only feared lest a wrong thing should be made out of a right thing and offered sacrifices to remove their iniquity. But he did by no means condemn it. Would any of you ask a blessing upon your children’s attendance at the theater? Could you say, when they had been in such a place, “It may be they have sinned?” No, you would only talk thus of a right thing.

I think I can prove to you that this was a good thing. First you will notice they met in good houses. They did not go to an ale-house to feast. They had no need to enter the tavern. But they met in their own houses— houses where prayer and praise were made. How much better for the working man to spend his money on his family than upon liquor sellers! And then it was in good company. They did not scrape together all the ruffians of the place to feast with them. But they kept to their own kith and kin. And feasting is good when good men feast—especially when they spare for the poor—as no doubt Job’s children did or else they were quite unworthy of their generous ancestor.

They feasted in good houses and in good company. And they observed during their feasting good behavior. Job never heard of a wrong expression they had used. No one ever told him that they had become riotous, or that they had uttered one wrong word, or else Job could not have said, “It may be,” but he would have said, “It is so.” He must be a good son of whom a father could say, “It may be he has erred.” All that he had was a

fear lest secretly they might have done wrong. But it appears that openly their feasting had been such that even the busy tongue of scandal could not find fault with them. And besides, their feasting was a good thing, because it had a good intent. It was for amity, for cheerfulness and family union. It was that they might be bound together as a bundle of rods— strong and unbroken—that they might be as a strongly intertwined cord, interwoven by these their family greetings and meetings.

Now, I say that if in their case the thing was not wrong—and I think I have proved in four respects that it was right—it was in good houses, in good company, with good behavior and for a good purpose—the text gives a license for us to do the like and to meet in our houses, in the company of our kith and kin, provided we feast after a good sort and do it with the good intent of knitting our hearts the one towards the other.

But again— good men of old have feasted. Need I remind you of Abraham’s making a great feast in his house when his child Isaac was weaned? Shall I tell you of Sampson and his feasts, or of David, or of Hezekiah, or of Josiah and of the kings who gave to every man a loaf of bread and a good piece of flesh and a flagon of wine and they cheered their hearts and made merry before God?

But let me remind you that feasting, so far from being evil, was even an essential part of Divine Worship under the old Law. Do you not read of the Feast of Trumpets, the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of the Passover, the Feast of the New Moons and how many other feasts besides? Come they not over again and again? Now if the thing were wrong in itself God would certainly never employ it as an emblem and token of the Divine, the pure and the heavenly doctrines of His grace. It is impossible that God should have taken a wrong thing to be the type of a right thing. He might take a common good and make it the type of a special favor—but not an evil thing. It is far from us to suppose such a thing of our God.

Besides, did not the Savior Himself countenance a feast and help to provide the guests with the wherewithal that they might have good cheer? Do you think the Savior out of place when He went to the wedding feast? And do you suppose that He went there and did not eat and drink? Was it not said of Him, “Behold a drunken man and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners”? Not that He was either drunken or a wine bibber, but that He “came eating and drinking,” to dash to pieces the Phariseeism which says that that which goes into a man defiles a man—whereas Christ teaches “not that which goes into a man, but that which comes out of a man, that defiles a man.”

Jesus Christ, I say, was at the feast. And suppose you that He bore a sad countenance? Did He sour with the vinegar of a morose behavior the wine with which He had filled the watering pots? I think not. I believe at that marriage feast He joined with the guests. And if He were indeed “a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief,” as He certainly was, yet did He not keep His griefs to Himself, for if He came to suffer Himself, He came to make others glad and I doubt not that at the feast He seemed the most glad of the guests. Most glad because He was really the Master of the feast and because He saw in the wedding the type of His own marriage— His own Divine espousal with the Church—which is “the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”

And let me add once more—God has certainly made in this world provision for man’s feasting. He had not given just dry bread enough for a man to eat and keep body and soul together. The harvests teem with plenty and often are the barns filled to bursting. O Lord, You did not give simply dry bread and water for mankind but You have filled the earth with plenty and milk and honey have You given to us. And You have besides this laden the trees with fruit and given to men dainties. You are not illiberal, You do not dole out with miserable hand the lean and scanty charity which some men would give to the poor, but You give liberally and You upbraid not!

And for what purpose is this given? To rot, to mold, to be trod on, to be spoiled? No, but that men may have more than enough. That they may have all they want and may rejoice before their God and may feed the hungry, for this indeed is one essential and necessary part of all true Christian feasting. My text, I say, rings a merry bell and gives us license for sacred feasting.

2. But now the same merry bell suggests a caution. Job said—“It may be.” They were good sons. Good, godly young men, I am sure, or else Job would not have said, “It may be.” But “it may be,” said he, “it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” Or, as some translate it, “have blessed God too little in their hearts.” They may not have been grateful enough for their prosperity and for the enjoyments which God had given them. “It may be.” Well, hearken, Brothers and Sisters, “it may be,” too, that you and I may sin and blaspheme God in our hearts and be as Job’s sons may have been—too little thankful. If, though they were true men and true women, though they all had a Job for their father and though their feasting was in their own houses and after a right sort and a commendable sort, yet there was a “may be” that there might be sin.

Am I too careful when I say, Brethren, “it may be”? It may be that in our happiest gathering of our family together, it may be that we shall sin? I think we could not prefer ourselves before the sons and daughters of Job—that were self-righteousness indeed—we are surely not proud enough to think ourselves better than the sons of that “perfect and upright” man “who feared God and eschewed evil.” I think I am not too severe and too strict, when I say, “It may be. “It” may be. Look to it—take heed to yourselves—be careful, be on your watch tower. Let me give you

some reasons and arguments why this caution is not unnecessary.

And first, remember there is no place free from sin. You may set bounds about this mount, but the beast will touch the mountain. You may endeavor as much as you will to keep out Satan. But wherever there were two met together, Satan was ever the third. There was never a company met, but the Evil One somewhere intruded. Does he not come into your business? Do you not find him entering into your very closet? Yes, and the very Table of the Lord—has not Satan sat there and tempted Judas? Yes, and tempted you, too? How, then, can you hope that when your family are met together Satan shall not be there?

Is it not written, “The sons of God came together and Satan came also among them”? I am sure they never invited him. But he does not stay for that. And you will find it so. Never invite him by anything ungodly or unChristian-like. But since there are temptations everywhere, however pure and upright your intentions may be, however excellent your company, think you hear my little bell ringing—“It may be, it may be, it may be.” And it may be a blessed check to you.

Beside this, remember that there is many a special temptation where there is a loaded table. Old Quarles said, “Snares attend my board.” And certainly they do. More men have perished by fullness of bread than ever died by hunger. Hunger may break through stone walls but I have known feasting leap over golden walls—the golden walls of grace. Some men cut their throats with their teeth and many a man has swam to Hell down his own throat. More have been drowned in the bowl, ‘tis said, than ever were drowned in the sea. I trust I need not say anything of that to you. I hope not.

If there is a man here who falls into drunkenness—in God’s name let him tremble—for there is no admittance for the drunkard into the kingdom of Heaven. I am speaking now to Christian men—not to men who fall into these vices—and I say to them where you use the most proper moderation in receiving the things which God gives you, where you even totally abstain from that which might be a temptation, yet even there your table may be a snare unto you. Therefore, take heed to yourself, Believer, lest Satan lie in ambush beneath the family table.

Remember, also, that they who sit at the table are but men and the best of men are but men at the best. Men have so little grace that if they are not on the watchtower, they may soon be overtaken and they may say or do that which they will have to repent of afterwards. I have heard say that there are men who swallow mouthfuls of earth which they will have to digest in Hell and I do not doubt it. There have been times when a happy company have gathered together and the conversation has become trifling, then full of levity. Perhaps it has gone so far that afterwards, when they retired to their homes, they would have recalled their words, if it had been possible. Let this caution, then, sound in all our ears, “It may be—it may be—it may be!”—and let us so act that if Christ were at the feast we should not be ashamed to see Him.

Let us so speak that if Christ sat at our table we should not count it a hindrance to our joy—but rather that we should be the more free, joyous and glad—because of such thrice-blessed Company. Oh, tell me not that Christianity curbs our joy! My Brethren, it shuts up one of its channels— that black and filthy kennel into which the sinner’s joy must run. But it opens another channel, wider, broader, deeper, purer and fills it to the very banks with joy, more lustrous and more full of glory.

Think not that we who follow Christ and seek to walk strictly in our integrity are miserable. We tell you that our eyes sparkle as much as yours and that we have not the redness of the eyes in the morning. We can say to the worldling that our heart, despite its sometimes heaviness, does rejoice in the Lord and we have peace which is like a river and a righteousness which is like the waves of the sea. O Christian Brothers and Sisters! Let not the world think of you that you are shut out here from anything like happiness. But so act and so live at all times, that you may teach men that it is possible to be happy without sin and to be holy without being morose. This, then, is the caution which our merry bell rings out to us.

But, then, in the third place, having given a license and suggested a caution, the merry bell provides a remedy. “It may be”—it may be we have done wrong. What then? Here is a remedy to be used by parents and heads of families and by ourselves.

Job sent for his sons as a father. He sanctified them as a preacher. He sacrificed for them as a priest. By all which I understand, he first bade them come together and then he sanctified them—that is, he first spoke to them—commended them for the excellent and admirable manner in which they had met together, told them how pleased he was to see their love, their union. But then he said, “It may be, my sons, you are like your father—there is some sin in you and it may be you have sinned. Come, let us repent together.”

And so, being, as I believe, all godly persons they sat down and thought over their ways. Then no doubt the good old man bade them kneel down while he prayed with them. And then he expressed his faith in the great coming Mediator and so, though one man’s faith cannot prevail for another, yet the faith of the father helped to quicken the faith of the sons. The prayer of the father was the means of drawing forth the prayer of the sons and so the family was sanctified. Then after that he would say, “There is no putting away of sin, except by the shedding of blood. So they fetched the bullocks, a bullock for every son and for every daughter. The old Patriarch slew the victims and laid them on the altar. And as the smoke ascended—they all thought if they had sinned against God—by His grace the blood shed and the victim offered could, as the type of Christ, take away

their sin.

I think I see the good old man after the sacrifice was all complete— “Now, my children,” he says, “return to your homes. If you have sinned, your sin is put away. If you have transgressed, the atonement made has cancelled your transgression. You may go to your habitations and take a father’s blessing with you.”

Call to your recollection that Job is said to have seen to his sacred work “early in the morning.” It is ill lying in bed when we have sin on our conscience. He that has a sin unforgiven should never travel slowly to the Cross but run to it. So Job would sleep in the morning not an hour till he had seen his sons and his daughters sanctified and the sacrifice made. Mark well, that “he offered according to the number of his sons.” He did not leave out one. If he prayed for the eldest, he prayed for the youngest too—and if he made supplication for the sons, he did not forget the daughters. Ah, parents, never forget any of your children—carry them all before God—let them all be consecrated to Him and let your earnest prayer go up for them all—from your Reuben down to your Benjamin. Leave not one of them out, but pray God to grant that they may all be bound up together in the bundle of life.

And notice once again, “So did Job continually.” As often as they visited, so often was there the sacrifice. I suppose they had ten feasts in the year. And it is supposed by the old commentators that they assembled on their birthdays. They were not always feasting—that were sinful. In fact, that was the sin of the old world, for which God drowned it. “They ate and they drank, they married and they were given in marriage,” all which things are right enough in themselves. But if we are wholly immersed in them, always eating, always drinking, always feasting, then they become sins and indeed at all times they become sin, unless, like Job’s feasts they are sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. If our meetings are thus sanctified, we can in everything give thanks. Then “he that eats, eats to the Lord and gives God thanks.” And being accepted in our thankfulness, the eating is to God’s glory. I say, then, my dear Friends, that Job did this continually which teaches to the parent his duty of continually pleading for his sons and daughters.

The aim of my remarks is just this—you will most of you meet together next Tuesday and keep the household feast. I beg you to imitate Job on Wednesday morning and make it your special and peculiar business to call your children together and sanctify them by prayer and by pleading the precious sacrifice of Christ Jesus. So “it may be” there has been sin. But there will be no “may be” as to the putting away of the sin. For pleading with prayer and laying hold on the sacrifice by faith you shall stand accepted still—both you and your households.

Now, some may think that what I have said upon this point is cessary and that we ought not to speak about such common things as these. Do you suppose that the Christian pulpit was set up by God that we might always talk to you about the millennium, or the antediluvians, or the things that are to happen in Ethiopia or Palestine? I believe that the Christian ministry has to do with you in your daily life—and the more the preacher delivers that which is practically suggestive of profit to our souls—the more closely does he keep to the Master. I am sure if my Lord Jesus Christ were here He would say somewhat in these words to you, “Go your way and eat your bread with a joyous heart, for God has accepted you through My blood. But watch and be you as men that look for their Lord. Still keep your lamps trimmed and your lights burning and your loins girt about. Be steadfast and watch unto prayer, that should I come in the morning, or at cock-crowing, I may find you ready for My appearing.”

As for you young men and women who will be separated on that day from your own parents—having no family circle in which to join—perform this pleasant privilege yourselves. Set apart a season Wednesday morning in which by prayer and supplication you shall make confession of sin. And whenever the feast-time comes round—whenever you are invited to a social meeting, or the like—look upon it as a necessary successor of the social gathering—that there is private supplication, private confession of sin and a personal laying hold anew upon the great sacrifice. If this is done, your meetings, instead of being unprofitable, shall be the beginning of better days to you and you shall even grow in grace through that prayer, that repentance and that faith which have been suggested by your gatherings together.

I think all this is most fairly in my text. And if I ought not to preach from such a passage, then the text ought not to be in the Bible.  
II. And now let us turn to the second head, or what is in the text and that is instructive. We must, therefore, ring the SERMON BELL.  
Well, it will be a short sermon. My sermon shall not be like the bell and preacher of St. Anthony’s church which were said to be both alike, the bell was pulled a long while and was exceeding dreary in its tone and the preacher was precisely the same. The sermon which is fairly in my text is this—if Job found it right with a holy jealousy to suspect lest his sons might have sinned, how much more do you think he suspected himself? Depend on it—he who was so anxious to keep his children clean was himself more anxious that he might always fear his God and eschew evil.  
God said Job was a perfect and an upright man. And yet he was jealous! How much more, then, shall you and I be jealous of ourselves? Say not in your heart, Christian, “I may go here and there and may not sin.” You are never out of danger of sinning. This is a world of mire. It will be hard to pick your path so as not to soil your garments. This is a world of pitch. You will need to watch often if in handling it you are to keep your hands clean. There is a robber in every turn of the road to rob you of your jewels. There is a thief behind every bush. There is a temptation in every mercy. There is a snare in every joy. There is not a stone on which you tread under which there is not a viper’s nest.  
And if you shall ever reach Heaven it will be a miracle of Divine Grace. If you shall ever come safely home to your Father’s house it will be because your Father’s power brought you there. If Job’s sons were in danger at their own tables, how much more are some of you in danger, Christians, when you have to go among the ungodly? It may be that some of you are called to do business where you hear oaths and blasphemy. Your way of life is such that you cannot help being exposed to many temptations. Be on your guard. It was said of a certain great man that he was so afraid of losing his life that he always wore armor under his clothes. Take care you always wear armor. When a man carries a bomb in his hand he should mind that he does not go near a candle.  
And you, too must take care that you do not go near temptation. But if you are called to go through the temptation, how watchful, how anxious, how careful, how guarded should you be! Brothers and Sisters, I do not think that we are any of us watchful enough. I have heard of a good woman who would never do anything till she had sought the Lord in prayer about it. Is that our custom? If we do even a common thing without seeking the Lord’s direction we may have to repent it as long as we live. Even our common actions are edged tools. We must mind how we handle them.  
There is nothing in this world that can foster a Christian’s piety, but everything that can destroy it. How anxious should we be, then, to look up—to look up to God—that He may keep us! Let your prayer be, “Hold me up and I shall be safe.” Let your daily cry be, you young Christians especially, yes and you old Christians too, , “Lord, keep me! Keep my heart, I pray You, for out of it are the issues of my life.” Do not expose yourselves unnecessarily but if called to exposure, if you have to go where the darts are flying, never go abroad without your shield. For if once the devil catches you abroad and your shield at home, then he will say, “Now is my time.” And he will send an arrow which may rattle between the joints of your harness and you may fall down wounded, even though you cannot be slain.  
The Lord grant, then, that this sermon bell of my text may ring in your ears during the next week and as long as ever you live may you hear it saying to you, “Be careful. Be watchful, be vigilant. danger may be in an hour when all seems secure to you.” Inspect the vessel, see to her keel, look to the sails. Look to the rudder bands. Watch every part of the ship for the storm may be coming though the calm rule at present and the rocks may be ahead though the breakers roll not and the quicksand may underlie your keel, though you think all is well. God help you then, Christian, to watch unto prayer! What we say unto you, we say unto all— WATCH!  
III. But now what follows the text—and that is afflictive: and here let us ring the FUNERAL BELL.  
What follows the text? Why hear this, “Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house. And behold there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house and it fell upon the young men and they are dead and I only am escaped alone to tell you.”  
Between the table and the coffin there is but a step, between the feast and the funeral there may be but a day and the very bell that rings the marriage peal tolls the funeral knell. Here is a death’s head for you to put on your table. The old Egyptians set a corpse among the guests—that all might know that they must die. I set the bodies of Job’s sons and daughters at your table—to make you think that you will die. Our very eating is the grave of God’s mercies and should remind us of our own graves. What do we do when we eat but patch the old tenement, put fresh plaster on the dilapidated and naked rafters? So, then, we should remember that the time will come when we can no more do this, but when the tenement itself shall be shaken and be blown down.  
Sinner! Let no joy cross your face till death and you are friends. Saint! Let no joy be in your heart either, till you can say, “Welcome, Death. I gladly go with you.” Do nothing that you would not willingly die doing. Be found in no position in which you would be unwilling to stand forever. Be you today what you would wish to be in eternity. And so live and so act and so sit at the table that if the wind should come and smite the four corners of the house and you should die, yet you fall asleep at one feast, to wake up at another feast where there would be no “may be,” about sin, but where you should eat bread in the kingdom of God and drink the new wine of which Jesus Christ spoke when He rose from the supper and left His disciples.  
Ah, my spirit rises on wings of delight at the solemn tones of that funeral knell—for it has more music in it, after all—than my merry bell. There is a pleasing joy in sorrow and mirth is akin to sadness. Hearken, friends, the bell is speaking, “GONE, GONE, GONE, GONE. “Who is that for? Who is dead in this parish? “That is poor So-and-so.” My God, when it shall be my turn, may my soul behold Your face with joy. O may my spirit, when it receives the last summons cry with delight, “Blessed be God for that sound! It was the merriest sound my soul could have desired, for now I sit with Jesus and eat at His table and feast with angels and am satisfied and have the privilege of John—to lean my head upon my Savior’s breast.”  
Christian! I say never let the thought of dying plague you. Let it be a comfort to you and stand you so ready that when the Master shall say, “Arise!” you will have nothing to do but to rise at His bidding and march to Heaven—leading your captivity captive.  
But you, sinner, when you are sitting at your table, remember my funeral bell tolling in your ears. And if you should step aside and the rest should say, “What ails you?”—if you should be compelled to rise while they are laughing and go upstairs to pray, I shall not mind. Though some may say I have made you melancholy and have marred your feast—Sinner it is no time for you to be feasting while God’s sword is furbished and sharp and ready to divide soul from body. There is a time to laugh, but it is not till sin is pardoned that there is time to dance. It is not till the heart stands with joy before the ark that there is time to make merry—it is not till sin is forgiven.  
Your time is a time to weep and a time to rend your garments and a time to sorrow and a time to repent. May God’s Holy Spirit give you the grace! The time is now. And the grace being given, may you fall before the Cross and find pardon and mercy there and then we may say, in the words of Solomon—“Go your way, eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart. For God now accepts your works.”

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÷Job 1.8

SATAN CONSIDERING THE SAINTS  
NO. 623

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 9, 1865 BY C. H. SPURGEON**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And the Lord said unto Satan, Have you considered My servant Job.” Job 1:8.**

HOW very uncertain are all terrestrial things! How foolish would that Believer be who should lay up his treasure anywhere except in Heaven! Job’s prosperity promised as much stability as anything can beneath the moon. The man had round about him a large household of devoted and attached servants. He had accumulated wealth of a kind which does not suddenly depreciate in value. He had oxen and asses and cattle. He had not to go to markets and fairs and trade with his goods to procure food and clothing, for he carried on the processes of agriculture on a very large scale round about his own homestead and probably grew within his own territory everything that his establishment required.

His children were numerous enough to promise a long line of descendants. His prosperity wanted nothing for its consolidation. It had come to its flood tide—where was the cause which could make it ebb? Up there, beyond the clouds, where no human eye could see, there was a scene enacted which foretold no good to Job’s prosperity. The spirit of evil stood face to face with the infinite Spirit of all good. An extraordinary conversation took place between these two beings. When called to account for his doings, the Evil One boasted that he had gone to and fro throughout the earth—insinuating that he had met with no hindrance to his will and found no one to oppose his freely moving and acting at his own pleasure.

He had marched everywhere like a king in his own dominions unhindered and unchallenged. Then the great God reminded him that there was at least one place among men where he had no foothold and where his power was unrecognized, namely, in the heart of Job. He reminded him that there was one man who stood like an impregnable castle, garrisoned by integrity and held with perfect loyalty as the possession of the King of Heaven. The Evil One defied Jehovah to try the faithfulness of Job. He told Him that the Patriarch’s integrity was due to his prosperity—that he served God and eschewed evil from sinister motives—because he found his conduct profitable to himself.

The God of Heaven took up the challenge of the Evil One and gave him permission to take away all the mercies which he affirmed to be the props of Job’s integrity and to pull down all the outworks and buttresses and see whether the tower would not stand in its own inherent strength without them. In consequence of this, all Job’s wealth went in one black day and not even a child was left to whisper comfort.

A second interview between the Lord and His fallen angel took place. Job was again the subject of conversation. And the Great One, defied by Satan, permitted him to touch him in his bone and in his flesh till the prince became worse than a pauper. And he who was rich and happy was poor and wretched, filled with disease from head to foot and forced to scrape himself with a miserable potsherd to gain a little relief from his pain.

Let us see in this the mutability of all terrestrial things. “He has founded it upon the floods,” is David’s description of this world. And, if it He founded on the floods, can you wonder that it changes often? Put not your trust in anything beneath the stars—remember that “CHANGE” is written on the forefront of Nature. Say not, therefore, “My mountain stands firm—it shall never be moved.” The glance of Jehovah’s eyes can shake your mountain into dust. The touch of His foot can make it like Sinai, to melt like wax and to be altogether on a smoke. “Set your affection on things above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God,” and let your heart and your treasure be, “where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.”

The words of Bernard may here instruct us—“That is the true and chief joy which is not conceived from the creature, but received from the Creator, which (being once possessed) none can take from you: compared with which all other pleasure is torment, all joy is grief, sweet things are bitter, all glory is baseness and all delectable things are despicable.”

This is not, however, our subject this morning. Accept thus much as merely an introduction to our main discourse. The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job?” Let us deliberate, first, in what sense the evil spirit may be said to consider the people of God. Secondly, let us notice what it is that he considers about them. And then, thirdly, let us comfort ourselves by the reflection that One who is far above Satan considers us in a higher sense.

I. First, then, IN WHAT SENSE MAY SATAN BE SAID TO CONSIDER THE PEOPLE OF GOD? Certainly not in the usual Biblical meaning of the term, “consider.” “O Lord consider my trouble.” “Consider my meditation.” “Blessed is he that considers the poor.” Such consideration implies goodwill and a careful inspection of the object of benevolence with regard to a wise distribution of favor. In that sense Satan never considers any. If he has any benevolence, it must be towards himself. All his considerations of other creatures are of the most malevolent kind. No meteoric flash of good flits across the black midnight of his soul.

Nor does he consider us as we are told to consider the works of God, that is, in order to derive instruction as to God’s wisdom, love and kindness. He does not honor God by what he sees in His works, or in His people. It is not with him, “Go to the ant, consider her ways and be wise.” He goes to the Christian and considers his ways and becomes more foolishly God’s enemy than he was before. The consideration which Satan pays to God’s saints is upon this wise—he regards them with wonder when he considers the difference between them and himself. A traitor, when he knows the thorough villainy and the blackness of his own heart, cannot help being astounded when he is forced to believe another man to be faithful.

The first resort of a treacherous heart is to believe that all men would be just as treacherous and are really so at bottom. The traitor thinks that all men are traitors like himself, or would be, if it paid them better than fidelity. When Satan looks at the Christian and finds him faithful to God and to His Truth, he considers him as we should consider a phenomenon—perhaps despising him for his folly—but yet marveling at him and wondering how he can act thus.

“I,” he seems to say, “a prince, a peer of God’s parliament, would not submit my will to Jehovah! I thought it better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven! I kept not my first estate, but fell from my throne—how is it that these stand? What grace is it which keeps these? I was a vessel of gold and yet I was broken! These are *earthen* vessels—and yet I cannot break them! I could not stand in my glory— what can be the matchless grace which upholds them in their poverty, in their obscurity, in their persecution—still faithful to the God who does not bless and exalt them as He did me?”

It may be that he also wonders at their happiness. He feels within himself a seething sea of misery. There is an unfathomable gulf of anguish within his soul and when he looks at Believers he sees them quiet in their souls, full of peace and happiness and often without any outward means by which they should be comforted—yet rejoicing and full of glory. He goes up and down through the world and possesses great power and there are many faithful followers to serve him, yet he has not the happiness of spirit possessed by yonder humble cottager, obscure, unknown, having no servants to wait upon her, but stretched upon a bed of weakness. He admires and hates the peace which reigns in the Believer’s soul.

His consideration may go farther than this. Do you not think that he considers them to detect, if possible, any flaw and fault in them by way of solace to himself? “They are not pure,” he says—“these blood-bought ones—these elect from before the foundations of the world—they still sin! These adopted children of God, for whom the glorious Son bowed His head and gave up the ghost—even they offend!” How must he chuckle with such delight as he is capable of over the secret sins of God’s people! And if he can see anything in them inconsistent with their profession, anything which appears to be deceitful and therein like himself, he rejoices.

Each sin born in the Believer’s heart cries to him, “My Father! My Father!” and he feels something like the joy of fatherhood as he sees his foul offspring. He looks at the “old man” in the Christian and admires the tenacity with which it maintains its hold—the force and vehemence with which it struggles for the mastery—the craft and cunning with which every now and then, at set intervals, at convenient opportunities, it puts forth all its force. He considers our sinful flesh and makes it one of the books in which he diligently reads.

One of the fairest prospects, I doubt not, which the devil’s eyes ever rest upon is the inconsistency and the impurity which he can discover in the true child of God. In this respect he had very little to consider in God’s true servant, Job. Nor is this all, but rather just the starting point of his consideration. We doubt not that he views the Lord’s people and especially the more eminent and excellent among them as the great barriers to the progress of his kingdom and just as the engineer endeavoring to make a railway keeps his eyes very much fixed upon the hills and rivers and especially upon the great mountain through which it will take years laboriously to bore a tunnel, so Satan, in looking upon his various plans to carry on his dominion in the world, considers most such men as Job.

Satan must have thought much of Martin Luther. “I could ride the world over,” says he, “if it were not for that monk! He stands in my way. That strong-headed man hates and mauls my first-born son, the Pope. If I could get rid of him I would not mind though fifty thousand smaller saints stood in my way.” He is sure to consider God’s servant if there are “none like he”—if he stands out distinct and separate from his fellows. Those of us who are called to the work of the ministry must expect from our position to be the special objects of his consideration. When the glass is at the eye of that dreadful warrior, he is sure to look out for those who, by their regimentals, are discovered to be the officers and he bids his sharpshooters be very careful to aim at these, “For,” says he, “if the standard-bearer falls, then shall the victory be more readily gained to our side and our opponents shall be readily put to rout.”

If you are more generous than other saints—if you live nearer to God than others as the birds peek most at the ripest fruit—so may you expect Satan to be most busy against you. Who cares to contend for a province covered with stones and barren rocks and ice-bound by frozen seas? But in all times there is sure to be a contention after the fat valleys where the wheat sheaves are plenteous and where the farmer’s toil is well requited. And thus, for you who honor God most, Satan will struggle very sternly. He wants to pluck God’s jewels from His crown if he can, and take the Redeemer’s precious stones even from the breastplate itself.

He considers, then, God’s people. Viewing them as hindrances to his reign he contrives methods by which he may remove them out of his way or turn them to his own account. Darkness would cover the earth if he could blow out the lights. There would be no fruit to shake like Lebanon if he could destroy that handful of corn upon the top of the mountains. From now his perpetual consideration is to make the faithful fail from among men. It needs not much wisdom to discern that the great object of Satan in considering God’s people is to do them injury.

I scarcely think he hopes to destroy the really chosen and blood-bought heirs of Life. My notion is that he is too wise for that. He has been foiled so often when he has attacked *God’s* people that he can hardly think he shall he able to destroy the *elect.* And remember the soothsayers who are very nearly related to him spoke to Haman in this way—“If Mordicai is of the seed of the Jews, before whom you have begun to fall, you shall not prevail against him, but shall surely fall before him.”

He knows right well that there is a seed royal in the land against whom he fights in vain. And it strikes me if he could be absolutely certain that any one soul were chosen of God, he would scarcely waste his time in attempting to destroy it, although he might seek to worry and to dishonor it. It is however, most likely, that Satan no more knows who God’s elect are than we do! He can only judge, as we do, by outward actions—though he can form a more accurate judgment than we through longer experience—and being able to see persons in private where we cannot intrude. Yet into God’s book of secret decrees his black eyes can never peer. By their fruits he knows them and we know them in the same manner.

Since, however, we are often mistaken in our judgment, he, too, may be. And it seems to me that he therefore makes it his policy to endeavor to destroy them all—not knowing in which case he may succeed. He goes about seeking whom he may devour and, as he knows not whom he may be permitted to swallow up, he attacks all the people of God with vehemence. Someone may say, “How can one devil do this?” He does not do it by himself. I do not know that many of us have ever been tempted directly by Satan—we may not be notable enough among men to be worth his trouble—but he has a whole host of inferior spirits under his command and control.

And as the centurion said of himself, so he might have said of Satan—“he says to this spirit, ‘Do this,’ and he does it. And to his servant, ‘Go,’ and he goes.” Thus all the servants of God will more or less come under the direct or indirect assaults of the great enemy of souls and that with a view of destroying them—for he would, if it were possible—deceive the very elect. Where he cannot destroy there is no doubt that Satan’s object is to worry. He does not like to see God’s people happy. I believe the devil greatly delights in some ministers whose tendency in their preaching is to multiply and foster doubts and fears and grief and despondency as the evidences of God’s people.

“Ah,” says the devil, “preach on! You are doing *my* work well, for I like to see God’s people mournful. If I can make them hang their harps on the willows and go about with miserable faces, I reckon I have done my work very completely.” My dear Friends, let us watch against those specious temptations which pretend to make us *humble*, but which really aim at making us *unbelieving*. Our God takes no delight in our suspicions and mistrusts. See how He proves His love in the gift of His dear Son, Jesus. Banish, then, all your ill surmising and rejoice in unmoved confidence. God delights to be worshipped with *joy*.

“O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His Presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms.” “Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous, and shout for joy all you that are upright in heart.” “Rejoice in the Lord always and again, I say, rejoice.” Satan does not like this. Martin Luther used to say, “Let us sing Psalms and spite the devil,” and I have no doubt Martin Luther was pretty nearly right—for that lover of discord hates harmonious, joyous praise. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, the arch-enemy wants to make you wretched here, if he cannot have you hereafter.

And in this, no doubt, he is aiming a blow at the honor of God. He is well aware that mournful Christians often dishonor the faithfulness of God by mistrusting it and he thinks if he can worry us until we no more believe in the constancy and goodness of the Lord, he shall have robbed God of His praise. “He that offers praise, glorifies Me,” says God. And so Satan lays the axe at the root of our praise that God may cease to be glorified. Moreover, if Satan cannot destroy a Christian, how often has he spoilt his usefulness? Many a Believer has fallen, not to break his neck—that is impossible—but he has broken some important bone and he has gone limping to his grave!

We can recall with grief some men once eminent in the ranks of the Church who did run well, but suddenly, through stress of temptation, they fell into sin and their names were never mentioned in the Church again except with bated breath. Everybody thought and hoped they were saved so as by fire, but certainly their former usefulness never could return. It is very easy to go back in the heavenly pilgrimage, but it is very hard to retrieve your steps. You may soon turn aside and put out your candle, but you cannot light it quite so speedily. Friend, Beloved in the Lord, watch against the attacks of Satan and stand fast, because you, as a pillar in the House of God, are very dear to us and we cannot spare you.

As a father, or as a matron in our midst, we do you honor and oh, we would not be made to mourn and lament—we do not wish to be grieved by hearing the shouts of our adversaries while they cry, “Aha! Aha! So would we have it,” for alas, there have been many things done in our Zion which we would not have told in Gath, nor published in the streets of Askelon lest the daughters of the uncircumcised should rejoice and the sons of the Philistines should triumph!

Oh may God grant us Divine Grace, as a Church, to stand against the wiles of Satan and his attacks, that having done his worst he may gain no advantage over us and after having considered and considered again and counted well our towers and bulwarks, he may be compelled to retire because his battering rams cannot jar so much as a stone from our ramparts and his slings cannot slay one single soldier on the walls!

Before I leave this point I should like to say that perhaps it may be suggested, “How is it that God permits this constant and malevolent consideration of His people by the Evil One?” One answer, doubtless, is that God knows what is for His own Glory and that He gives no account of His matters—that having permitted free agency, and having allowed, for some mysterious reason, the existence of evil—it does not seem agreeable with His having done so to destroy Satan. But He gives him power that it may be a fair hand-to-hand fight between sin and holiness, between Divine Grace and craftiness.

Besides, be it remembered that incidentally the temptations of Satan are of service to the people of God. Fenelon says they are the file which rubs off much of the rust of self-confidence. And I may add they are the horrible sound in the sentinel’s ear which is sure to keep him awake. An experimental Divine remarks that there is no temptation in the world which is so bad as not being tempted at all—for to be tempted will tend to keep us awake. Whereas, being without temptation, flesh and blood are weak— and though the spirit may be willing, yet we may be found falling into slumber. Children do not run *away* from their father’s side when big dogs bark at them. The howling of the devil may tend to drive us nearer to Christ, may teach us our own weakness, may keep us upon our own watchtower and be made the means of preservation from other ills.

Let us “be sober, be vigilant, because our adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour.” And let us who are in a prominent position be permitted affectionately to press upon you one earnest request, namely, “ Brethren, pray for us,” that, exposed as we are peculiarly to the consideration of Satan, we may be guarded by Divine power. Let us be made rich by your faithful prayers that we may be kept even to the end.

II. Secondly, WHAT IS IT THAT SATAN CONSIDERS WITH A VIEW TO THE INJURY OF GOD’S PEOPLE? It cannot be said of him as of God, that he knows us altogether. But since he has been now nearly six thousand years dealing with poor fallen humanity, he must have acquired a very vast experience in that time. And having been all over the earth and having tempted the highest and the lowest, he must know exceedingly well what the springs of human action are and how to play upon them.

Satan watches and considers, first of all, our peculiar infirmities. He looks us up and down, just as I have seen a horse dealer do with a horse—and he soon finds out where we are faulty. I, a common observer, might think the horse an exceedingly good one, as I see it running up and down the road. But the dealer sees what I cannot see and he knows how to handle the creature just in such quarters and at such points that he soon discovers any hidden mischief. Satan knows how to look at us and reckon us up from head to toe, so that he will say of this man, “His infirmity is lust,” or of that other, “He has a quick temper,” or of this other, “He is proud,” or of that other, “He is slothful.”

The eye of malice is very quick to perceive a weakness, and the hand of enmity soon takes advantage of it. When the arch-spy finds a weak place in the wall of our castle, he takes care to plant his battering ram and begin his siege. You may conceal, even from your dearest friend, your infirmity—but you will not conceal it from your worst enemy. He has lynx eyes and detects in a moment the joint in your harness. He goes about with a match and though you may think you have covered all the gunpowder of your heart, yet he knows how to find a crack to put his match through and much mischief will he do, unless eternal mercy shall prevent.

He takes care, also, to consider our frames and states of mind. If the devil would attack us when our mind is in certain moods, we should be more than a match for him—he knows this and shuns the encounter. Some men are more ready for temptation when they are distressed and desponding—the fiend will then assail them. Others will be more liable to take fire when they are jubilant and full of joy. Then will he strike his spark into the tinder. Certain persons, when they are much vexed and tossed to and fro can be made to say almost anything. And others, when their souls are like perfectly placid waters, are just then in a condition to be navigated by the devil’s vessel.

The worker in metals knows that one metal is to be worked at such a temperature and another at a different temperature. Those who have to deal with chemicals know that at a certain heat one fluid will boil while another reaches the boiling point much earlier. So Satan knows exactly the temperature at which to work us to his purpose. Small pots boil as soon as they are put on the fire and so little men of quick temper are soon in a passion. Larger vessels require more time and coal before they will boil—but when they do boil it is a boil, indeed—not soon forgotten or abated. The enemy, like a fisherman, watches his fish and adapts his bait to his prey. And he knows in what seasons and times the fish are most likely to bite.

This hunter of souls comes upon us unawares and often we are overtaken in a fault, or caught in a trap through an unwatchful frame of mind. That rare collector of choice sayings, Thomas Spencer, has the following, which is much to the point: The chameleon, when he lies on the grass to catch flies and grasshoppers, takes upon him the color of the grass, as the polypus does the color of the rock under which he lurks that the fish may boldly come near him without any suspicion of danger.” In like manner Satan turns himself into that shape which we least fear and sets before us such objects of temptation as are most agreeable to our natures so that he may the sooner draw us into his net. He sails with every wind and blows us that way which we incline ourselves through the weakness of nature.

Is our knowledge in matters of faith deficient? He tempts us to error. Is our conscience tender? He tempts us to scrupulosity and too much preciseness. Has our conscience, like the ecliptic line, some latitude? He tempts us to carnal liberty. Are we bold-spirited? He tempts us to presumption. Are we timorous and distrustful? He tempts us to desperation. Are we of a flexible disposition? He tempts us to inconstancy. Are we stiff? He labors to make obstinate heretics, schismatics, or rebels of us. Are we of an austere temper? He tempts us to cruelty. Are we soft and mild? He tempts us to indulgence and foolish pity. Are we hot in matters of religion? He tempts us to blind zeal and superstition. Are we cold? He tempts us to Laodicean lukewarmness. Thus does he lay his traps that one way or the other he may ensnare.

He also takes care to consider our position among men. There are a few persons who are most easily tempted when they are alone. They are the subjects, then, of great heaviness of mind and they may be driven to most awful crimes. Perhaps the most of us are more liable to sin when we are in company. In some company I never could be led into sin—into another society I could scarcely venture. Many are so full of levity that those of us who are inclined the same way can scarcely look them in the face without feeling our besetting sin starting forth. And others are so somber that if they meet a brother of like mold, they are pretty sure, between them, to invent an evil report of the goodly hand.

Satan knows where to overtake you in a place where you lie open to his attacks. He will pounce upon you—swooping like a bird of prey from the sky who has been watching for the time to make his descent with a prospect of success. How, too, will he consider our condition in the world! He looks at one man and says, “That man has property—it is of no use my trying such-and-such arts with him. But here is another man who is very poor, I will catch him in that net.” Then, again, he looks at the poor man and says, “Now, I cannot tempt him to this folly, but I will lead the rich man into it.”

As the sportsman has a gun for wild fowl and another for deer and game, so has Satan a different temptation for various orders of men. I do not suppose that the Queen’s temptation ever will annoy Mary the kitchen maid. I do not suppose, on the other hand, that Mary’s temptation will ever be very serious to me. Probably you could escape from mine—I do not think you could. And I sometimes fancy I could bear yours—though I question if I could. Satan knows, however, just where to smite us—and our position, our capabilities, our education, our standing in society, our calling may all be doors through which he may attack us. You who have no calling at all are in peculiar peril—I wonder the devil does not swallow you outright!

The most likely man to go to Hell is the man who has nothing to do on earth. I say that seriously. I believe that there cannot be a much worse evil to a person than to be placed where he has no work. And if I should ever be in such a state, I would get employment at once for fear I should be carried off, body and soul, by the Evil One. Idle people tempt the devil to tempt them. Let us have something to do! Let us keep our minds occupied, for, if not, we make room for the devil! Industry will not make us gracious, but the want of industry may make us vicious. Have always something on the anvil or in the fire—

*“In books, or work, or healthful play, I would be busy, too, For Satan finds some mischief still   
For idle hands to do.”*

So Watts taught us in our childhood and so let us believe in our manhood. Books, or works, or such recreations as are necessary for health should occupy our time. If I throw myself down in indolence, like an old piece of iron, I must not wonder that I grow rusty with sin.

Nor have I done yet. Satan, when he makes his investigations, notices all the objects of our affection. I doubt not when he went round Job’s house he observed it as carefully as thieves do a jeweler’s premises when they mean to break into them. They very cunningly take account of every door, window and fastening—they fail not to look at the next-door house—for they may have to reach the treasure through the building which adjoins it. So, when the devil went round, jotting down in his mind all Job’s position, he thought to himself, “There are the camels and the oxen, the asses and the servants—yes, I can use all these very admirably.”

“Then,” he thought, “there are the three daughters! There are the ten sons and they go feasting—I shall know where to catch them and if I can just blow the house down when they are feasting—that will afflict the father’s mind the more severely, for he will say, ‘O that they had died when they had been *praying*, rather than when they had been feasting and drinking wine.’ I will put down, too, in the inventory,” says the devil, “his wife—I dare say I shall need her,” and accordingly it came to that. Nobody could have done what Job’s wife did—none of the servants could have said that sad sentence so stingingly—or, if she meant it very kindly—none could have said it with such a fascinating air as Job’s own wife.

“Bless God and die,” as it may be read, or, “Curse God and die.” Ah, Satan, you have plowed with Job’s heifer, but you have not succeeded! Job’s strength lies in his *God*, not in his *hair*, or else you might have shorn him as Samson was shorn! Perhaps the Evil One had even inspected Job’s personal sensibilities and so selected that form of bodily affliction which he knew to be most dreaded by his victim. He brought upon him a disease which Job may have seen and shuddered at in poor men outside the city gates. Brethren, Satan knows quite as much in regard to you. You have a child and Satan knows that you idolize it. “Ah,” he says, “there is a place for my wounding him.” Even the partner of your bosom may be made a quiver in which Hell’s arrows shall be stored till the time may come—and then she may prove the bow from which Satan will shoot them.

Watch even your neighbor and her that lies in your bosom, for you know not how Satan may get an advantage over you. Our habits, our joys, our sorrows, our retirements, our public positions—all may be made weapons of attack by this desperate foe of the Lord’s people! We have snares everywhere—in our bed and at our table—in our house and in the street. There are dangers and traps in company. There are pits when we are alone. We may find temptations in the House of God as well as in the world!

There are traps in our high estate and deadly poisons in our abasement. We must not expect to be rid of temptations till we have crossed the Jordan and then, thank God, we are beyond gunshot of the enemy! The last howling of the dog of Hell will be heard as we descend into the chill waters of the black stream—but when we hear the hallelujah of the glorified, we shall have done with the Black Prince forever and forever!

III. Satan considered but THERE WAS A HIGHER CONSIDERATION WHICH OVERRODE HIS CONSIDERATION. In times of war the sappers and miners of one party will make a mine and it is a very common counteractive for the sappers and miners of the other party to counter-mine by undermining the first mine. This is just what God does with Satan. Satan is mining, and he thinks to light the fuse and blow up God’s building, but all the while God is undermining him and He blows up Satan’s mine before he can do any mischief.

The devil is the greatest of all fools. He has more knowledge but less wisdom than any other creature. He is more subtle than all the beasts of the field but it is well called subtlety, not wisdom. It is not true wisdom—it is only another shape of folly. All the while that Satan was tempting Job, he little knew that he was answering God’s purpose—for God was looking on and considering the whole of it and holding the enemy as a man holds a horse by its bridle. The Lord had considered exactly how far He would let Satan go.

He did not, at first, permit him to touch his flesh—perhaps that was more than Job at that time could have borne. Have you ever noticed that if you are in good strong bodily health you can bear losses and crosses and even bereavements with something like equanimity? Now that was the case with Job. Perhaps if the disease had come first and the rest had followed, it might have been a temptation too heavy for him. But God, who knows just how far to let the enemy go, will say to him, “Thus far and no farther.”

By degrees he became accustomed to his poverty—in fact, the trail had lost all its sting the moment Job said, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.” That enemy was slain—no, it was buried and this was the funeral oration—“Blessed be the name of the Lord.” When the second trial came, the first trial had qualified Job to bear the second. It may be a more severe trial for a man in the possession of great worldly wealth to suddenly be deprived of the bodily power of enjoying it, than to lose all first and then lose the health necessary to its enjoyment.

Having already lost all, he might almost say, “I thank God that now I have nothing to enjoy, and therefore the loss of the power to enjoy it is not so wearisome. I have not to say, “How I wish I could go out in my fields and see to my servants,” for they are all dead. I do not wish to see my children—they are all dead and gone—I am thankful that they are—better that than that they should see their poor father sit on a dunghill like this. He might have been almost glad if his wife had gone, too, for certainly she was not a very particular mercy when she was spared. And possibly, if he had had all his children about him, it might have been a harder trial than it was.

The Lord who weighs mountains in scales, had meted out His servant’s woe. Did not the Lord also consider how He should sustain His servant under the trial? Beloved, you do not know how blessedly our God poured the secret oil upon Job’s fire of Divine Grace while the devil was throwing buckets of water on it. He says to Himself, “If Satan shall do much, I will do more. If he takes away much, I will give more. If he tempts the man to curse, I will fill him so full of love to Me that he shall bless Me. I will help him. I will strengthen him—yes, I will uphold him with the right hand of My righteousness.”

Christian, take those two thoughts and put them under your tongue as a wafer made with honey— you will never be tempted without express license from the Throne where Jesus pleads and, on the other hand, when He permits it, He will, with the temptation, make a way of escape, or give you Grace to stand under it. In the next place, the Lord considered how to sanctify Job by this trial. Job was a much better man at the end of the story than he was at the beginning. He was “a perfect and an upright man” at first, but there was a little pride about him. We are poor creatures to criticize such a man as Job—but still there was in him just a sprinkling of self-righteousness, I think—and his friends brought it out.

Eliphaz and Zophar said such irritating things that poor Job could not help replying in strong terms about himself that were rather too strong, one thinks. There was a little too much self-justification. He was not proud as some of us are, of a very little—he had much to be proud of, as the world would allow—but yet there was the tendency to be exalted with it. And though the devil did not know it, perhaps if he had left Job alone, that pride might have run to seed and Job might have sinned. But Satan was in such a hurry that he would not let the ill seed ripen, but hastened to cut it up and so was the Lord’s tool to bring Job into a more humble, and consequently a more safe and blessed state of mind.

Moreover, observe how Satan was a lackey to the Almighty! Job all this while was being enabled to earn a greater reward. All his prosperity is not enough—God loves Job so much that He intends to give him twice as much property—He intends to give him his children again! He means to make him a more famous man than ever—a man whose name shall ring down the ages—a man who shall be talked of through all generations. He is not to be the man of Uz, but of the whole world! He is not to be heard of by a handful in one neighborhood, but all men are to hear of Job’s patience in the hour of trial. Who is to do this? Who is to fashion the trump of fame through which Job’s name is to be blown? The devil goes to the forge and works away with all his might to make Job illustrious! Foolish devil! He is piling up a pedestal on which God will set His servant Job, that he may be looked upon with wonder by all ages.

To conclude. Job’s afflictions and Job’s patience have been a lasting blessing to the Church of God and they have inflicted incredible disgrace upon Satan. If you want to make the devil angry throw the story of Job in his teeth! If you desire to have your own confidence sustained, may God the Holy Spirit head you into the patience of Job. Oh, how many saints have been comforted in their distress by this history of patience! How many have been saved out of the jaw of the lion and from the paw of the bear by the dark experiences of the Patriarch of Uz!

O Arch-Fiend, how are you taken in your own net! You have thrown a stone which has fallen on your own head! You made a pit for Job and have fallen into it yourself! You are taken in your own craftiness. Jehovah has made fools of the wise and driven the diviners mad. Brethren, let us commit ourselves in faith to the care and keeping of God—come poverty, come sickness, come death—we will in all things through Jesus Christ’s blood be conquerors, and by the power of His Spirit we shall overcome at last. I would God we were all trusting in Jesus. May those who have not trusted Him be led to begin this very morning and God shall have all the praise in us all, forevermore. Amen.

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÷Job 3.23

THE SORROWFUL MAN’S QUESTION  
NO. 2666

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 18, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 8, 1882.

**“Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?”  
Job 3:23.**

I AM very thankful that so many of you are glad and happy. There is none too much joy in the world and the more that any of us can create, the better. It should be a part of our happiness and a main part of it, to try to make other people glad. “Comfort you, comfort you My people,” is a commission which many of us ought to feel is entrusted to us. If your own cup of joy is full, let it run over to others who have a more trying experience. If you, yourself, are privileged to have flashing eyes and elastic steps, and a bounding heart, be mindful to speak words of good cheer to such as are in bonds! Feel as if you were bound with them and try to revive their drooping spirits. That is what I am going to aim at, tonight, so you will excuse me if I bid, “good-bye,” for a while to you joyous ones! I want to seek after those who have no such delight as you now possess— those who are, on the contrary, suffering from extreme depression of spirit. Sometimes, we must single out the wounded ones of the flock. That is what I am about to do, yet I feel sure that while some few will be distinctly sought after, there will be something that may be of use to the many who are in a less sorrowful condition. The 99 shall get their full portion although the shepherd goes especially after the lost one.

The question of our text was put by Job when he first opened his mouth in the extreme bitterness of his anguish. “Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?” His case was so sad and so trying that life itself became irksome to him. I suppose that by, “light,” here, he means the power to see the Light of God, the life which lives in the light. “Why,” he asked in his agony, “is that continued to a man when God has filled him with sorrow upon sorrow?” The verses preceding our text are to the same effect—“Therefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul which long for death, but it comes not; and dig for it more than for hidden treasures; which rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they can find the grave.”

The Patriarch was weary of living and, perhaps, we shall not wonder so much at his pitiful lamentation if we remember the extreme distress into which he had been brought. He had lost all his property. Stroke by stroke all his wealth had been taken away from him. He might have borne that if it had been his only loss, but close upon the heels of it had come sore bereavement. His happy children, for whom he daily cared and whom he had tenderly loved, were all destroyed in a moment—while they were feasting in the house of one of their brothers. The calamity seemed all the greater because it came in the very midst of their joys. Then, as if that was not trial enough, Job was, himself, smitten from head to foot with boils. If you have ever seen a person in that condition, I am sure that you must pity him. There is a dear friend of ours, now with God, whom I visited when he was in much the same state as that. Perhaps he had not to endure quite all that Job suffered, but something exceedingly like it had befallen him. The irritation, the pain and the depression of spirit that come with that particular form of disease all tend to make us treat very gently the petulant expressions of Job.

We may not excuse them, but only he among us that is without fault may take up the first stone to cast at him. I will warrant that if we had suffered as he did, been brought to poverty, left childless, and then been tortured as he was, from head to foot—and even his wife rendering him no comfort, but, on the contrary, adding to his grief and woe—we might have said even worse things than Job did! For remember, dear Friends, that he said nothing against God in the time of his deepest sorrow. He cursed most vehemently the day of his birth and wished that he had never existed, or that he might speedily pass away to sleep with the generations that are dead. He used unwise and foolish expressions—but any of us might have used far worse words if we had been in his case, so we will not condemn him, but we will see what lessons we can learn from his experience.

I think that Job’s experience teaches us the very small value of temporal things. To have spiritual blessings and to enjoy them, is one thing, but to have earthly things, and to enjoy them, is quite another. You may have an abundance of them and yet they may be utterly tasteless to you, or they may even be bitter as gall to you—and you may curse the day that gave them to you. I am sure that it is so, because Job speaks thus concerning life, which is the chief of all earthly things. It is true, although Satan said it, “All that a man has will he give for his life,” yet we may be brought into such a condition that we may wish that we had never been born! Life itself may become so wearisome to us that we may even wish to escape from it, that we may be at rest, as we hope.

Job had once enjoyed every comfort that heart could desire and he still had this blessing of life left to him. But even that had become curdled and soured—the last thing to which a man usually clings had become distasteful and disgusting to him—so that he set no store by it, but longed to get rid of it. O Beloved, seek eternal treasures, for there is no moth that can eat them, no rust can mar them, no fermentation or corruption can injure them. But, as for the things of time and sense, if you do possess them, use them as though you had them not and never make them your gods, for they are but as a shadow that passes away in a moment. They come, and they are gone. And if you make idols of them, the Lord may permit you to retain them, but take away from you all power to enjoy them. You may have abundance and yet not be able to relish even the bread you eat, or the drink that refreshes you! You may have a loss of health, or a loss of all power to be happy, though everything that men think to be the cause of happiness may be laid abundantly at your feet.

With this as a preface, I now come to my text and ask you to notice, first, the case which raises the question. Secondly, the question itself. And, thirdly, answers which may be given to the question—“Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?”

I. First, notice THE CASE WHICH RAISES THE QUESTION. “Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?”

That is to say, “Why does God permit men to live when their souls are under deep depression and gloom? Why does He not let them die at once? When their days are spent in weariness and their nights yield them neither rest nor refreshment—when they look upward and see nothing to give them hope, or onward, and behold nothing but that which is even more dreadful than the present—why is it that God continues life to those who are in such sad circumstances?” Well, dear Friends, if life were not continued to any but those who are bright of eye, fleet of foot and joyous of heart, how few would live! And if the first time that darkness fell upon a man’s pathway, he were to be permitted to die, well, then, the whole population of the globe would soon be swept away! If our murmuring and petulance demanded that we should die rather than suffer, then we should soon pass away and be gone. And that is the case which is supposed in Job’s question—If a man finds himself entirely in the dark, if God’s Presence is completely hidden from him and he can find no joy in anything whatever, and his spirit is tossed to and fro with worries and perplexities, the question is—“Why does he continue to live”

Yet, further, the man here described is in such trouble that he can see no reason for the trouble. His “way is hidden.” Job could not perceive, in his case, any cause for the distress into which he had been plunged. As far as he knew, he had walked uprightly. He had not sinned so as to be now suffering the result of his sin. He had not committed a crime, otherwise he would have understood the punishment when it came upon him. He looked back upon all that he had done and he could not, at first glance, see in himself any cause for his affliction. Nor, indeed, dear Brothers and Sisters, was there any cause why all these things should have happened to Job by way of punishment, for the Inspired record concerning him is that he was “perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil.”

Even the devil, himself, who kept a sharp lookout with his malicious eyes, could not find any fault whatever with which he could charge Job. He deserved the character which God had given to him, though Satan did insinuate that he had acted from interested motives. He asked, “Does Job fear God for nothing?” That question has always seemed to me to be a very crafty one, yet very foolish, for if it could have been proved that Job had feared or served God for nothing, then the devil would have said at once that God was a bad Master and that there was no reward for those who served Him. But now that he finds God putting a hedge of roses round about Job, and sheltering him on every side, he declares that Job was only pious because he found it profitable! He could find no other fault with him—and even that accusation was not true.

Job, on his part, remembered how he had fed the widows and succored the fatherless—how he had acted justly towards his fellow creatures in the midst of an unjust generation and how, amidst a mass of idolaters, he had worshipped God and God alone. He had never kissed his hand in adoration to the moon, as she walked along her shining way in all her queenly brightness, nor had he ever bowed himself down to the host of heaven, as nearly all around him had done. He stood alone, or almost alone, in that age, as a true and faithful servant of Jehovah—yet his sorrows and trials were multiplied. And so, his way was hidden, he was hedged in by God, and he could not make it out. You know, dear Friends, that it is often a great aggravation of our troubles when we do not know why they come. A man, when he is ill, usually wants to know what is the nature of his disease and how he came to be attacked by it. When we see a person suffering, we generally ask “Where did you catch that cold?” or, “What was it that brought on that congestion?” We always like to know the cause of the complaint—and Job, too, wanted to ascertain the reason for his trouble, but he could not find out—and this rendered it all the more mysteriously grievous to him. And therefore he enquired, “Why do I continue to live, when I have come into such darkness as this?”

It was equally trying to Job that he did not now what to do. There seemed to be nothing that he could do. He was stripped of all his earthly possessions. Those ashes where he sat formed his uncomfortable couch. And the only property that remained to him was a potsherd, with which, in his desperation, he began to scrape himself because of his boils. What could he do in such a case as that? There was no physician there to cure him of his sad complaint.

True, there were his three friends, but all that they could do, or, at least, the best thing they did, was to sit still and say nothing. When they opened their mouths, it was only to pour vinegar into his wounds and to increase his agony tenfold! What could poor Job do under such circumstances? His very helplessness tended to increase his wretchedness.

Am I addressing anyone who is in that kind of perplexity? I think I hear someone moaning, “I don’t know which way to turn. I have done everything I can think of and I cannot tell what is to come next. I sit in darkness and can see no light. Why I am brought to this pass, I cannot tell. Or what is the reason for it, I cannot make out. If I could light upon some great and grievous fault which had brought me where I am, I could understand it. But as it is, I am in thick Egyptian night about it all and I know not what to do. Why does a man continue to live when his way is thus hidden, or hedged up.” If that is the way you talk, you are in very much the same sort of plight that the Patriarch was in when he uttered the mournful question which forms our text.

What was still worse to Job was that he could not see any way out of his trouble. He said that God had hedged him in, not with a hedge of roses, but with a barrier of briars. Whatever he tried to do, he found himself obstructed in doing it. And there are now men in this world whose sorrows are the more grievous because everything they do to alleviate their distress seems only to increase it. Their efforts are all fruitless. They are like men who have become entangled in a bog—the more they struggle to get out, the deeper they descend. They strive to their very utmost, but it is all in vain. They rise up early, they sit up late, and they eat the bread of carefulness mingled with their tears, but there is a blight on all that they do. Nothing prospers with them. They are at their wits end. Then they begin to cry, “Oh, that we had never been born, rather than that we should have been born to such trouble as this! ‘Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?’”

I have thus stated the case which gave rise to Job’s question and I should not wonder if I have, at the same time, stated the case of some who are here. Do not think it has been a waste of time for any of you to hear this sorrowful description of a very sad condition of heart and mind. If I should only have been describing one such individual, let us all feel sympathy for him or for her—and let us unite in breathing the silent petition, “Lord, bring Your servant out of prison.”

II. Now, secondly, we are to consider THE QUESTION ITSELF. “Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?” In other words, Why is the light of life given to him who is in the darkness of misery?

Well, first, let me say that it is a very unsafe question for anyone to ask. Brothers and Sisters, we are sure to get into mischief as soon as we begin catechizing God and asking, “why?” Such questioning comes not well from our lips. He is the Potter and we are the clay in His hands. “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?” God’s eternal purposes are a great deep and when we try to fathom them, we utterly fail. Divine Sovereignty is an ocean without a bottom and without a shore—and all we can do is to set our sail and steer by the chart which He has given us and all the while believe that, as we sang just now—

*“Even the hour that darkest seems,  
Will His changeless goodness prove;  
From the mist His brightness streams,  
God is Wisdom, God is Love.”*

Voyaging in that fashion, we shall be safe, indeed!

But to try to cross such a sea without rudder, or chart, or compass— this is a venture—some piece of sailing which we had better not undertake! I tremble whenever I have to think of the wondrous ways of God. I mean when I have to think of them after the manner of the reasoner and not after the style of the Believer! Well did Milton describe the fallen spirits sitting in little groups, discussing predestination and the counsels of the Eternal. You know how Paul answers the man who calls in question the dealings of God either in Providence or in Grace—“No but, O man, who are you that replies against God?” Job received his answer when the Lord spoke to him out of the whirlwind and said, “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” What God said to him was not so much a vindication of the ways of Providence, but a revelation of His matchless power as the Creator and the Ruler of the universe. And, though men may not like to hear it, yet there is, in the thunder of God’s power, an answer which, though it may not always answer the skeptic, but ultimately overpower and silence him! As for God’s child, he sits down in the shadow of that black cloud which is the canopy of Deity, and he is well content to be still in the Presence of the Lord of the whole earth! Imitate him, my Brothers and Sisters, and do not keep asking God the why and the wherefore of what He does. It is an unsafe thing to ask such questions!

Next, it reflects upon God. In this question of Job, there is really a reflection upon the wisdom of the Almighty. He has given the Light of Life to a man whose way is hidden and whom He has hedged in, yet Job asks, “Why did He do it?” I think that far too often we indulge our questionings of Divine Providence. Is God to stand and answer to you and me for what He does? Is He bound to tell us the reason why He does it? Job’s friend, Elihu, said, “God is greater than man. Why do you strive against Him? For He gives not account of any of His matters.” If there is His equal anywhere, let him meet Him in the field and they shall speak together. But to us worms of the dust, answers shall not be given if we haughtily put questions to Him of, “what?” and “why?” To accept the Lord’s will with absolute submission is after the manner of the Son of God, Himself, for He prayed, in the hour of His greatest agony, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.” But to quibble and to question is after the manner of the prince of darkness who is always seeking to dispute the Sovereignty of God. Therefore, Beloved, let no question of ours reflect upon the Lord’s love, or the dispensations of His Providence.

Further, we may rest quite certain that there must be an answer to this question, a good answer, and an answer in harmony with the Character of God. If there are men and women to be found still sitting in the darkness of grief and sorrow and we ask why they are allowed to continue to live, there is a reply to that enquiry, and a reply consistent with boundless Grace and infinite compassion, but, mark you, that reply may never be given, or, if it is given, we may be incapable of understanding it! There is much that God does that cannot be understood, even by those great men of modern times who would gladly sit on the Throne of the Eternal and judge Him—

*“Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,*

*Rejudge His judgments, be the god of God.”*I say that there are some answers which God might give if He pleased, but which even they could not comprehend with all their wit and wisdom! And you and I must often come to a point where we have to stop and say, “We cannot understand this.” And we shall be still wiser if we add, “Nor do we wish to do so.”

Brothers and Sisters, I, for one, have had enough of searching into reasons! I am perfectly satisfied to accept facts. I am ready to bow my reason before the Lord and to accept whatever He says. If I do not, how little shall I ever know! What is there that I really understand? I confess that I see profound mysteries about the most common phenomena around me. I cannot fully comprehend anything when I get right to the bottom of it. There is, on every hand, a deep which I cannot fathom. How, then, shall I understand the ways of God and measure Him with my finite mind, comparing so many inches with the Infinite, weighing so many ounces against the Omnipotent and reckoning so many seconds in contrast with the Eternal? No, Brothers and Sisters, for such calculations you have nothing to measure with! You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep, yes, bottomless! So, the less of such questions as Job’s, any of us ask, the better, for, even if we had the answer to them, we might not be able to understand it.

Let me remind you, also, that however important this question may seem to be, it is not the most profitable question. I have heard of a farmer, whose boy said to him, “Father, the cows are in the corn; however did they get there? Boy,” he replied, “never mind how they got there—our work is to get them out as soon as we can.” That is our main business, also—to get the cows out of the corn! How they got there is a matter that can be thought of, by-and-by, when we have nothing else to do. The origin of evil is a point that puzzles a great many people, but I hope you will not worry your brain over that question. If you do, you will be very foolish. But if you are wise, you will not trouble yourself so much about the origin of evil, as about how to conquer it, in yourself, and in others! Get the cows out of the corn, and then find out how they got in, if you can, and, by so doing, prevent their getting in again.

There will be space enough and time enough, and better Light to discuss these questions when we get up yonder before the Throne of the Eternal. If their solution is of any real consequence to us, we shall get them solved, but, meanwhile, we are colorblind, or, if we are not, it is so dark and so misty here—and we have so many other more pressing matters to attend to—that we had better leave these whys and wherefores, and rely on the Infallible wisdom and the Infinite love of God. If He has done anything, it is quite certain that it is right and just! Yes, if it has come from His dear hands, it is also gracious and kind. There is more sublimity in being like a little child in the Presence of the Eternal than there is in trying to imitate the Deity, for that is but a mockery—a thing to be despised! No, more, it is the greatest insult we can offer to God and it is a pity and a shame that any of us should so live and act. Put aside everything of the kind, I implore you, and in very truth submit yourselves unto God.

III. But now, in the last place, speaking to the sorrowful person, I want to mention SOME ANSWERS WHICH MAY BE GIVEN TO HIS QUESTIONS. “Why do I continue to live,” he asks, “in such sorrow as this? Why does not God take from me the light of life when He does not permit me to enjoy the light of comfort?”

Supposing that you are a child of God, I will give you one answer which ought to satisfy you, though, perhaps, it will not if your spirit is rebellious. God wills it. If you are one of His true children, that is all the answer that you will require—and you will say, with those early Christians, “The will of the Lord be done.” And with your Lord, Himself, “Not My will, but Yours be done.” It was enough for Christ that His suffering was in accordance with the Father’s will, so He bowed before Him in unquestioning submission. And shall not you, the disciple, be content to fare as your Master did? Will you not be perfectly satisfied with that which satisfied your Lord? It is the will of the Lord—then what need is there of any further question if you are His child?

But supposing that you are an unconverted person, and you say, “I cannot bear to live in such sorrow as this, why is my life prolonged?” The answer is, “Because of God’s mercy to you.” Where would you go to be better off than you are here? You who have no hope in Christ and yet who say, “I wish I were dead,” you know not what you are wishing! You wish you were dead? But what would be your portion after death? What? Do you really wish to hear that dread sentence which must be passed upon you if you die unregenerate—“Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”? Do you really desire to feel the full weight of Divine Justice! Ah, I hope that you are not so foolish! You have spoken in petulance and do not mean what you have said. It may be hard for you to live, but it would be harder far for you to die—and then to live forever in a death that never dies! God grant that you may never know that awful doom!

Moreover, the answer to your question is that the Lord spares you because He would gladly save you. You are kept alive that you may hear again that voice of mercy which says, “Repent and be converted.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” God comes to you in this time of suffering, that He may stop you in your sin and make you think! Even to the most careless and giddy among you, during the poignancy of your grief, He says, “Now, My prodigal child, you have wasted your substance in riotous living, your belly is hungry and you have nothing with which to fill it. Arise and go unto your Father, for He will receive you.” Come then, sorrowful one, it may be that your sorrows will end when your sins end. Certainly, when you come to Christ to be forgiven, you shall find Divine consolation, even if all your griefs do not at once disappear. Anyhow, it would be better to be whipped all the way to Heaven than to be carried down to Hell “on flowery beds of ease.” Pray this prayer, “O Lord, let me enter into life with one eye and one hand, halt or maimed, rather than, having two eyes and two hands, to be cast into Hell!”

This is one answer to your question—The Lord lets you live, even though it is in pain and grief, because He has purposes of love and mercy towards you. Therefore, be not anxious to die, but be thankful that you are still permitted to tarry upon Gospel ground! No, do not be content to tarry there, but fly at once to the God of Grace! Look this very instant to Jesus, for—

*“There is life for a look at the Crucified One; There is life at this moment for thee!  
Then look, Sinner—look unto Him and be saved! Unto Him who was nailed to the tree.”*

One believing glance of the eyes to Him who is the sinner’s Substitute and all transgression is forgiven! Therefore, yield yourself unto Him. Trust to His finished work and eternal life is yours! And when you have that unspeakable blessing, why need you sorrow more?

As for the child of God, to whom I now again speak, if you ask, in a timid, childlike way, “Why do I continue to live in such sorrow as I have to endure?” I would, as your Brother, try to answer you. First, it may be that all this trouble has come upon you to let you know what is in you. None of us know what there is in us until we are put to the test. We are wonderfully sweet-tempered until somebody touches one of our sore places—and then, ah, me—there is not much sweetness of temper left after that! We are remarkably patient until we get a sharp neuralgic pain, perhaps—and then where is all our boasted patience? We are very generous until we, ourselves, are somewhat pinched—and then we become as tight-fisted as others whom we have condemned. We do not know what is really in us while all goes smoothly and well. But sickness, sorrow, bereavement, poverty and hunger will soon let us see what we are! They make a mental or moral photograph of us and when we look at the picture we say, “Oh, no! That cannot be our likeness.” But we look again and again, and then we say, “Alas, it is even so. But we did not know we were like that. Now we see our faults and our follies. O Lord, You have searched us, and tried us, and shown us the wicked ways that are in us. Now purge us from them and make us clean and pure in Your sight!” That is one reason, and a very good reason, for sharp affliction—to let us see ourselves as we really are.

The next is that, often, our trials bring us very near to our God. Your children run down the meadow to play and they get a good way off from home in the sunny day, as they ramble along, gathering their buttercups and daisies. But by-and-by, the sun sets, and night comes on—and now they cry to be at home. Just so. And you, in all your pretty ways of pleasure in your happy home, though you are a child of God, sometimes forget Him. Sorrowfully must you remember that sad fact. But now the night comes on and there is danger all around you. So you begin to cry for your Father and you would gladly be back in fellowship with Him— and that is a blessed trouble which brings us near to our God. Christ’s sheep ought to be thankful for the ugly black dog that keeps them from going astray, or fetches them back when they have wandered from the Shepherd! Perhaps Christ will call that black dog off when he has answered the Master’s purpose and brought you near His side.

Dear child of God, anything that promotes your sanctification, or increases your spirituality, is a good thing for you. I have had my share of physical pain and, perhaps, more of it than most who are here—and I bless God for it. If it comes again, I ask Him for Grace to bless Him for it then—and now that it has gone for a while, I freely bless Him for it, for I cannot tell you all the good that it has worked in me! Oh, how often a proud spirit has been cut back by affliction and trial, like a vine that is made to bleed, that the clusters that followed the pruning might be all the better and richer! The mown grass is very sweet and fine and so, often, are Believers who have been deeply tried. This tribulation, as Paul says, “works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.” Therefore, bow humbly before the Lord, my tried and afflicted Friend, and see at least some of the reasons why He thus puts you in he dark chamber of tribulation.

Perhaps, dear Brother, you are being very greatly tried, more than most people, to fit you to be an example to others. The Lord means to make a veteran of you, so you must be the first in the breach, or you must lead the forlorn hope. He puts you on the hardest service because He wants others of His children to be able to learn from you. I do not know that we should ever have heard anything of Job if it had not been for his troubles—he was a most respectable Eastern farmer with a considerable estate—very much like a great many country gentlemen we have in England who may be heard of at the Quarter Sessions, or the corn and cattle market. But nothing more will be known of them unless you go to the parish church and see some memorial of them stuck up there. Job would have been much the same sort of man as that—an Oriental magnate who would have lived, died and been forgotten—but now his fame will last as long as the world endures! “You have heard of the patience of Job.” You have all heard of it, and Job is one of the undying names. So it may be with you, Beloved. You are, perhaps, to sail through seas of trouble to reach your crown. God means to use you in His service and make you a blessing to others, and a teacher of others, by passing you, again and again, through the fire. One of the ancient warriors said, “I cannot use in battle a sword that has not been often times hardened. But give me a Damascus blade that has been so prepared, and I will cut through a coat of mail, or split a man from head to foot at a single stroke. It gets its temper and keenness of edge from having slept with the flames again and again.” So must it be with Believers! Full often they are unfit for God to use till they have been sorely tried.

Perhaps, dear Friend, the Lord is putting you through all this trouble—(only I hardly like to say it aloud, I must whisper it in your ears somehow) because He loves you more than anybody else. Dear Samuel Rutherford, when he wrote to a lady who had lost, I think, seven children, congratulated her and said, “I am sure that the Well-Beloved has a strong affection for Your Ladyship, for He will have all your heart. He has taken away all these children that there may not be a nook or a corner for anybody else but for Him.” So the Lord loves you much and He is testing you to see whether you can bear His will—whether you love Him so much that you will take up your cross and deny yourself, just as, sometimes, architects will ask for their work to be put to the severest possible tests. “Yes,” they say, “see what it will really bear.”

No doubt Stephenson felt great joy when the heaviest train went safely across his tubular bridge. And other engineers have said, “Yes, put on as much pressure as you like; it will stand it.” Fathers often take delight in the athletic feats of their sons, and princes revel in the brave deeds of their warriors. And so does the Lord delight to see what His people can do and He often puts upon them more and more, to prove whether they love Him so much that they can bear it all for His sake. Did not the Lord do this to let Satan see that Job did love his God, and would still say, “Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?...The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” We cannot tell what blessing might come from such a state of heart as that!

It is very possible, dear Friend, also, that God is putting you through all this trouble that He may enable you to bear great prosperity. Job was to have twice as much as he had ever had before, and that was a very great deal, for he said that he washed his steps with butter, and the rock poured him out rivers of oil. But how much richer he was when everything was doubled! Job was hardly fit to manage such a large estate as that until he had been made to see the vanity of it all, and to get nearer to his God. So, dear Friends, you are going to be pressed, and squeezed, and tried in order that you may be fitted to come right out into the front rank and to be magnified and made much of by the Lord your God! I have noticed this kind of thing happen more than once. I have seen a man suddenly taken from the very dregs of the people and put up to preach—and he has been popular all at once. Nobody has abused him, nobody has said a word against him. But, before long, he has passed completely out of sight. He could not bear the weight that was put upon him, and gave way.

You have seen others who have been called of God to preach the Word, and they have been abused year after year. They could not say anything that was not perverted. They were called mountebanks, impostors, and I know not what. And then, when happier days came, and almost all men spoke well of them, they could bear it, for they had learned to despise alike the flatteries and the abuse of men! Now, something like that must happen to all God’s servants who are to be greatly honored. If they are to bear prosperity, they must first go through the fire. Perhaps that is what the Lord is doing with you, my dear Friend. If so, be content with your lot.

And, once again, do you not think that the Lord means thus to make you more like His dear Son than other people are? Some other Christians have not as much trouble to endure as you have. No, why is it? You know how an artist can, if he likes, dash off a picture. There! A little red, a little blue and so on, and it is done. And away it goes! Yes, but when he wants to paint something that will be observed and admired, then he takes more pains. Look how he works at every part of it. Note what care and what trouble he takes with it. It is the same with the lapidary or the sculptor when he has choice work in hand. And you are, I hope, the kind of material that will pay for cutting and carving—and the Lord is using His chisel upon you more than He does upon most folk. He wants to make you just like His dear Son—so now He is chipping out a crown of thorns and you must wear it round your head. He is fashioning the image of His Son out of the block of your renewed nature and you must patiently bear the blows from His hammer and chisel till the work is done.

Finally, if I cannot tell you why all this trouble falls to your lot, I know it is right, for the Lord has done it, and blessed be His name! Aaron held his peace when his two sons died. He got as far as that in submission to the will of the Lord. But it will be better still if, instead of simply holding your peace, you can bless and praise and magnify the Lord even in your sharpest trouble! Oh, may you be Divinely helped to do so! Let every troubled soul march out of this place feeling, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.” Rise, dear Friend, out of all despondency and despair! Shake yourself from the dust and put on your beautiful garments of praise and joy, remembering that—

*“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,*

*Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”*You can see the tracks of the martyrs along the road you are journeying! Better still, you can see the footprints of the Son of God, your Lord and Savior! Therefore, you may rest assured that you are on the right road, so press bravely forward on it and, in due time, you will come to that place of which Job said, “There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest.” And you shall be forever without fault before the Throne of God!

May He grant this happy portion to you all, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.  
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÷Job 5.26

THE DEATH OF THE CHRISTIAN  
NO. 43

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 9, 1855, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“You shall come to your grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn comes in, in his season.”  
Job 5:26**

WE do not believe all that Job’s friends said. They spoke very often as uninspired men, for we find them saying many things that are not true. And if we read the book of Job through, we might say with regard to them, “miserable comforters are you all,” for they did not speak concerning God’s servant, Job, the thing that was right. But nevertheless, they gave utterance to many holy and pious sentences which are well worthy of regard as having come from the lips of three men distinguished in their age for their learning, talent and ability. Three gray-headed sires, who, from experience, were able to speak what they knew. Their mistakes are not to be wondered at because they had not then that clear, bright, shining Light of God which we enjoy in these modern times. They had few opportunities to meet together. There were but few Prophets in those days who taught them the things of the Kingdom of God. We only marvel that without the Light of the Gospel Revelation they were able to discover so much of the Truth of God as they did. However, I must make a remark concerning this Chapter, that I cannot but regard it as being, in the main, not so much the utterance of the man—who here speaks—Eliphaz the Temanite—but the very Word of God. Not so much the simple saying of the unwise comforter who upbraided Job as the speech of the Great Comforter who consoles His people and who only utters the thing that is right! The opinion is justified by the fact that this chapter is quoted by the Apostle Paul. Eliphaz says in the 13th verse, “He takes the wise in their own craftiness.” And we find the Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3:19 saying, “As it is written, He takes the wise in their own craftiness”—thus giving sanction to this passage as having been Inspired of God—at all events as being most certainly truthful. Most certainly the experience of such a man as Eliphaz is worthy of much regard. And when he, speaking of the general condition of God’s people—that they are hid from the scourge of the tongue, “that they are not afraid of destruction when it comes”—that they laugh at destruction and famine and so on, we may accept his words as being proven by experience and authenticated by Inspiration!

“You shall come to your grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn comes in in his season.” Here is a very beautiful comparison, the comparison of the aged Christian—for that I take it lies on the surface of the text—to a shock of corn. Go into the harvest field and you shall see how much the wheat reminds you of the aged Believer. How much anxiety has been expended on that field! When the seed first sprung up, the farmer dreads lest the worm should bite the tender shoots and the blade should be devoured. Or lest some sharp frost should consume the infant plant and cause it to wither and die. And, then, month after month, as the seasons came, how did he anxiously look towards Heaven and long that the rains might come, or that the genial sunshine might pour out its vivifying floods of light upon the field? When it has come to somewhat of maturity, how greatly has he feared lest the mildew and blast should shrivel up the precious ears? It now stands in the fields and, in some respects, he is freed from his anxiety. The months of his travail are over. He has waited patiently for the precious fruits of the soil and now they are there.

And so with the gray-headed man. How many years of anxiety have been expended upon him? In his youth how likely did it seem that he might be smitten down by death and yet he has passed safely through youth, manhood and age. What varied accidents have been warded from him? How has the shield of the Providential Keeper been over his head to keep him from the shafts of the pestilence, or from the heavy hand of accident that might have taken his life!? How many anxieties has he had, himself? How many troubles has he passed through? Look upon the hoary-headed veteran! Mark the scars that troubles have inflicted upon his forehead! And see, written deep in his breast, the dark mementos of the sharp struggles and trials he has endured! And now his anxieties are somewhat over—he is come very nearly to the haven of rest. A few short years of trial and trouble shall land him on fair Canaan’s coast! We look upon him with the same pleasure that the farmer regards the wheat because the anxiety is over and the time of rest is now approaching. Mark how weak the stem has become! How every wind shakes it to and for—it is withered and dried! See how the head hangs down to earth, as if it were about to kiss the dust and show from where it had its origin! So, mark the aged man—tottering are his steps—the eyes that look out of the windows are darkened, the grinders cease because they are few—and the grasshopper has become a burden. Yet even in that weakness there is glory! It is not the weakness of the tender blade—it is the weakness of the full ripe corn! It is a weakness that shows its maturity. It is a weakness that gilds it with glory. Even as the color of the wheat is golden, so that it looks more beauteous than when the greenness of its verdure is on it, so the gray-headed man has a crown of glory on his head! He is glorious in his weakness—more than the young man in his strength, or the maiden in her beauty! Is not a shock of corn a beautiful picture of the state of man, moreover, because very soon it must be taken home? The reaper is coming! Even now I hear the sickle sharpening. The reaper has well edged it and he shall soon cut the corn down. Look! He is coming across the field to reap his harvest. And then, by-and-by, it shall be carried into the barn and safely housed, no more subject to blight, or mildew, or insect, or disease. There it shall be secured where no snow can fall upon it, no winds can molest it. It shall be safe and secure. And joyful shall be the time when harvest home shall be proclaimed and the shock of corn, fully ripe, shall be carried into the farmer’s garner! Such is the aged man. He, too, shall soon be taken Home. Death is even now sharpening his sickle and the angels are getting ready their chariot of gold to bear him up to the skies! The barn is built. The house is provided. Soon the great Master shall say, “Bind up the tares in bundles to burn and gather the wheat into My barn.”

This morning, we shall consider the death of Christians in general. Not merely of the aged Christian, for we shall show you that while this text does seem to bear upon the aged Christian, in reality it speaks with a loud voice to every man who is a Believer. “You shall come to your grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn comes in in his season.”

There are four things we shall mark in the text. First, we shall consider that death is inevitable, because it says, “you shall come.” Secondly, that death is acceptable, because it does not read, “I will make you go to your grave,” but, “you shall come there.” Thirdly that death is always timely—“you shall come to your grave in full age.” Fourthly, that death to the Christian is always honorable, for the promise declares to him, “You shall go to your grave in full age, like as a shock of corn comes in in his season.”

1. The first remark, namely, that death, even to the Christian, is INEVITABLE, is very trite, simple and common. We scarcely need have made it. But we found it necessary, in order to introduce one or two remarks upon it. How familiar is the thought that all men must die and, therefore, what can we say upon it? And yet we blush not to repeat it, for while it is a Truth so well known—there is none so much forgotten! While we all believe it in theory and receive it in the brain, how seldom is it impressed on the heart? The sight of death makes us remember it. The tolling of the solemn bell speaks to us of it. We hear the deep-tongued voice of time as the bell tolls the hours and preaches our mortality. But very usually we forget it. Death is inevitable to all. But I wish to make an observation concerning death and that is, that while it is written, “It is appointed unto all men, once to die,” yet a time shall come when some Christians shall not die at all! We know that had Adam never sinned, he would not have died, for death is the punishment of sin. And we know that Enoch and Elijah were translated to Heaven without dying. Therefore it does seem to follow that death is not absolutely necessary for a Christian. And, moreover, we are told in Scripture that there are some who shall be “alive and remain,” when Jesus Christ shall come. And the Apostle says, “I tell you a mystery—we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” There shall be some who shall be found living, of whom the Apostle says, “Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we always be with the Lord.” We know that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, but it is possible that they may be refined by some spiritual process which shall preclude the necessity of dissolution. Oh, I have thought of that idea very much and I have wondered whether it would not be possible that some of us might be in that happy number who shall not see death! Even if we are not, there is something very cheering in the thought—Christ did so conquer death that He not only delivers the lawful captive out of the prison, but He saves a band from the jaws of the monster and leads them by his den unharmed!

He not only resuscitates the dead and puts new life into those that are slain by the fell scythe, but some He actually takes to Heaven by a byroad. He says to death—“Avaunt, you monster! On these you shall never put your hand! These are chosen men and women. And your cold fingers shall never freeze the current of their soul. I am taking them straight to Heaven without death. I will transport them in their bodies up to Heaven without passing through your gloomy portals, or having been captives in your dreary land of shades.” How glorious is the thought that Christ has vanquished death—that some men shall not die! But you will say to me, “How can that be? For the body has mortality mingled with its very essence!” We are told, it is true, by eminent men that there is a necessity in nature that there should be death, since one animal must prey upon another. And even could all animals be taught to give up their prey, they must feed upon plants and so devour certain minute insects which had hidden thereon. Death, therefore, seems to be the law of Nature. Be it remembered that men have already lived far beyond the present allotted term and it does seem most easy to conceive that the creature which can subsist a thousand years could exceed that period. But this objection is not valid, since the saints will not live forever in this world, but will be removed to a habitation where Laws of Glory shall supersede laws of Nature.

II. And now comes a sweet thought—that death to the Christian is always ACCEPTABLE—“you shall come to your grave.” Old Caryl makes this remark on this verse—“A willingness and a cheerfulness to die. You shall come, you shall not be dragged or hurried to your grave, as it is said of the foolish rich man in Luke 12, ‘This night shall your soul be taken from you.’ But you shall come to your grave quietly and smilingly, as it were. You shall go to your grave, as it were, upon your own feet and rather walk than be carried to your sepulcher.” The wicked man, when he dies, is driven to his grave, but the Christian comes to his grave! Let me tell you a parable. Behold, two men sat together in the same house when Death came to each of them. He said to one, “You shall die.” The man looked at him—tears suffused his eyes and tremblingly he said, “O Death, I cannot! I will not die.” He sought out a physician and said to him, “I am sick, for Death has looked upon me. His eyes have paled my cheeks and I fear I must depart. Physician, here is my wealth, give me health and let me live.” The physician took his wealth but gave him not his health with all his skill. The man changed his physician and tried another and thought that perhaps he might spin out the thread of life a little longer. But, alas, Death came and said, “I have given you time to try your varied excuses. Come with me. You shall die.” And he bound him hand and foot and made him go to that dark land of Hades. As the man went, he clutched at every side post by the way, but Death, with iron hands, still pulled him on! There was not a tree that grew along the way but he tried to grasp it, but Death said, “Come on! You are my captive and you shall die.” And unwillingly as the laggard schoolboy who goes slowly to school, so did he trace the road with Death. He did not come to his grave, but Death fetched him to it—the grave came to him.

But Death said to the other man, “I am come for you.” He smilingly replied, “Ah, Death! I know you, I have seen you many a time. I have held communion with you. You are my Master’s servant. You have come to fetch me Home. Go, tell my Master I am ready, whenever He pleases. Death, I am ready to go with you.” And together they went along the road and held sweet company. Death said to him, “I have worn these skeleton bones to frighten wicked men. But I am not frightful. I will let you see myself. The hand that wrote upon Belshazzar’s wall was terrible because no man saw anything but the hand. But,” said Death. “I will show you my whole body. Men have only seen my bony hand and have been terrified.” And as they went along, Death ungirded himself to let the Christian see his body and he smiled, for it was the body of an angel. He had wings of cherubs and a body as glorious as Gabriel. The Christian said to him, “you are not what I thought you were—I will cheerfully go with you.” At last Death touched the Believer with his hand—it was even as when the mother does in sport smite her child a moment. The child loves that loving pinch upon the arm, for it is a proof of affection. So did Death put his finger on the man’s pulse and stopped it for a moment and the Christian found himself, by Death’s kind finger, changed into a spirit. Yes, found himself brother to the Angels! His body had been etherealized, his soul purified and he himself was in Heaven! You tell me this is only a parable. But let me give you some facts that shall back it up. I will tell you some of the deathbed savings of dying saints and show you that, to them, Death has been an agreeable visitant of whom they were not afraid. You will not disbelieve dying men! It were ill to act the hypocrite’s part at such a time. When the play is over, men will take off the mask—and so with these men when they came to die—they stood out in solemn unclothed reality.

First, let me tell you what Dr. Owen said—that celebrated prince of Calvinists. While his works are to be found, I am not afraid that men shall lack arguments to defend the Gospel of Free Grace. A friend called to tell Dr. Owen that he had put to press his, “Meditations on the Glory of Christ.” There was a momentary gleam in his languid eye as he answered, “I am glad to hear it. Oh,” he said, “the long wished-for time has come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever done, or was capable of doing in this world.”

“But,” you may say, “this man was a mere theologian, let us hear a poet speak.”  
George Herbert, after some severe struggles and having requested his wife and nieces, who were weeping in extreme anguish, to leave the room, committed his will to Mr. Woodnott’s care. Crying out, he said, “I am ready to die—Lord, forsake me not now, my strength fails. But grant me mercy for the merits of my Lord Jesus. And now, Lord receive my soul.” Then he laid himself back and breathed out his life to God. Thus the poet dies. That glorious fancy of his that might have pictured gloomy things if it had pleased, was only shed with rapturous sight of angels. As he used to say himself, “I think I hear the church bells of Heaven ringing.” And I think he did hear them when he came near the river Jordan!  
“But,” you will say, “one was a theologian and the other a poet—it might have been all fancy.” Now learn what an active man, a missionary, said—Brainard.  
He said, “I am almost in eternity. I long to be there. My work is done. I have done with all my friends. All the world is now nothing to me. Oh, to be in Heaven to praise and glorify God with His holy angels.” That is what Brainard said. He who counted all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ and went among wild untutored Indians to preach the Gospel!  
But it is possible you may say, “These were men of ages gone by.” Now, you shall have men of modern times!  
And first, hear what the great and eminent Scotch preacher, Haldane, said. He raised himself a little and distinctly repeated these words, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then we shall appear with Him in Glory.” He was then asked if he thought he was going Home. He answered, “Perhaps not quite yet.” Mrs. Haldane affectionately said, “Then you will not leave us very soon.” He replied with a smile, “To depart and to be with Christ is far better.” On being asked if he felt much peace and happiness, he twice repeated, “Exceedingly great and precious promises.” He then said, “But I must rise.” Mrs. Haldane said, “you are not able to get up.” He smiled and answered, “I shall be satisfied when I awake with His likeness.” She said, “Is that what rising up you meant?” He replied, “Yes, that is the rising I meant. I must rise!”  
And now, what said Howard—the great philanthropist, the man who, while possessing true religion and being the most eminent and distinguished of Christians, would, from his plain commonsense mode of acting, never be suspected of being a fanatic and an enthusiast? A few days before his death, when the symptoms of his disease began to assume a most alarming appearance, he said to Admiral Priestman, “You endeavor to divert my mind from dwelling on death. But I entertain very different sentiments. Death has no terror for me. I always look forward to it with cheerfulness, if not with pleasure.”  
But perhaps you may say, “We never knew any of these people. We would like to hear of somebody whom we did know.” Well, you shall hear of one whom you have heard me affectionately mention. He was not of our denomination, but he was a very prince in Israel—I refer to Joseph Irons. Many of you heard the sweet and blessed things that proceeded out of his lips and will, perhaps, be able to verify what is said of him. At intervals he repeated short portions of Scripture and select sentences, such as, “How long, Lord?” “Come, Lord Jesus!’’ “I long to go Home to be at rest.” Seeing his dear wife shedding tears, he said, “Do not weep for me. I am waiting for that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” After a pause, to recover his breath, he added, “He that has preserved me thus far, will never leave, or forsake me. Fear not—all is well! Christ is precious. I am going Home, for I am a shock of corn fully ripe.” Now that is a man you did know, many of you. And it proves the fact that I have asserted—that to a Christian, death is acceptable, come when it may! I am sure I can say, with many of my Brothers and Sisters, here, that could I now have the greatest favor conferred on me that mortals could desire, I would ask that I might die! I never wish to have the choice given to me. But to die is the happiest thing man can have because it is to lose anxiety, it is to slay care, it is to have the peculiar sleep of the Beloved. To the Christian, then, death must be acceptable!  
A Christian has nothing to lose by death. You say he has to lose his friends. I am not so sure of that. Many of you have many more friends in Heaven than on earth. Some Christians have more dearly beloved ones above than below. You often count your family circle, but do you do as that little girl of whom Wordsworth speaks, when she said, “Master, we are seven.” Some of them were dead and gone to Heaven, but she would have it that they were still all brothers and sisters. Oh, how many brothers and sisters we have upstairs in the upper room in our Father’s house! How many dear ones linked with us in the ties of relationship, for they are as much our relations, now, as they were then! Though in the Resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, yet in that great world, who has said that the ties of affection shall be severed, so that we shall not even, there, claim kindred with one another, as well as kindred with Jesus Christ? What have we to lose by death? Come when he may, should we not open the door for him? I would love to feel like that woman who said, when she was dying, “I feel like a door on the latch, ready to be opened to let my Lord in.” Is not that a sweet state, to have the house ready, so that it will require no setting in order? When death comes to a wicked man, he finds him moored fast, he snaps his cable and drives his ship to sea. But when he comes to the Christian, he finds him winding up the anchor and he says, “When you have done your work and shipped the anchor, I will take you Home.” With sweet breath he blows on him and the ship is wafted gently to Heaven, with no regrets for life, but with angels at the prow, spirits guiding the rudder, sweet songs coming through the cordage and canvas silvered over with light!  
III. Then thirdly, the Christian’s death is always TIMELY—“You shall come to your grave in a full age.” “Ah,” says one, “that is not true! Good people do not live longer than others. The most pious man may die in the prime of his youth.” But look at my text. It does not say you shall come to your grave in old age—but in a “full age.” Well, who knows what a “full age” is? A “full age” is whenever God likes to take His children Home! There are some fruits you know that are late in coming to perfection and we do not think their flavor is good till Christmas. Or till they have gone through the frost—while some are fit for table right now. All fruits do not get ripe and mellow at the same season. So with Christians. They are at a “full age” when God chooses to take them Home. They are at “full age” if they die at twenty-one. They are not more if they live to be ninety. Some wines can be drunk very soon after the vintage. Others need to be kept. But what does this matter, if when the liquor is broached it is found to have its full flavor? God never broaches His cask till the wine has perfected itself. There are two mercies to a Christian. The first is that he will never die too soon. And the second, that he will never die too late!  
First, he will never die too soon. Spencer, who blazed out so brilliantly some years ago, preached so wonderfully that many expected that a great light would shine steadily and that many would be guided to Heaven. But then suddenly the light was quenched in darkness and he drowned while yet in his youth. Men wept and said, “Ah, Spencer died too soon.” So it has been sung of Kirk White, the poet, who worked so laboriously at his studies. Like the eagle who finds that the arrow that smote him was winged by a feather from his own body, so was his own study the means of his death. And the poets said he died too soon. It was untrue. He did not die too soon—no Christian ever does! “But,” some say, “How useful might they have been had they lived.” Ah, but how damaging they might have been! And were it not better to die than to do something, afterwards, that would disgrace themselves and bring disgrace to the Christian character? Were it not better for them to sleep while their work was going on than to break it down afterwards? We have seen some sad instances of Christians who have been very useful in God’s cause, but have afterwards had sad falls and have dishonored Christ. Though they were saved and brought back, at last, we could almost wish that they had died rather than lived. You don’t know what might have been the career of these men who were taken away so soon! Are you quite sure they would have done so much good? Might they not have done much evil? Could we have a dream of the future and see what they might have been, we would say, “Ah Lord! Let it stop while it is well.” Let him sleep while the music plays, there may be hideous sounds afterwards. We long not to keep awake to hear the dreary notes. The Christian dies well—he does not die too soon.  
Again, the Christian never dies too late. That old lady, there, is 80 years old. She sits in a miserable room, shivering before a small fire. She is kept by charity. She is poor and miserable. “What’s the good of her?” everybody says —“She has lived too long. A few years ago she might have been of some use. But now look at her! She can scarcely eat unless her food is put into her mouth. She cannot move. And what good can she be?” How dare you find fault with your Master’s work! He is too good a husbandman to leave His wheat in the field too long and let it shale out. Go and see her and you will be reproved. Let her speak—she can tell you things you never knew in all your life. Or, if she does not speak at all, her silent unmurmuring serenity—her constant submission—teaches you how to bear suffering. So that there is something you can yet learn from her—say not the old leaf hangs too long on the tree! An insect may yet twist itself therein and fashion it into its habitation. O say not the old sear leaf ought to have been

blown off long ago! The time is coming when it shall fall gently on the soil. But it remains to preach to unthinking men the frailty of their lives. Hear what God says to each of us—“You shall come to your grave in full age.” Cholera! You may fly across the land and taint the air—I shall die in a “full age.” I may preach today and as many days as I please in the week, but I shall die at a full age. However ardently I may labor, I shall die at a full age! Affliction may come to drain my very life’s blood and dry up the very sap and marrow of my being. Ah, but Affliction, you shall not come too soon—I shall die at a full age! And you waiting man! And you tarrying woman! You are saying, “O Lord, how long? How long? Let me go Home.” You shall not be kept from your Beloved Jesus one hour more than is necessary! You shall have Heaven as soon as you are ready for it. Heaven is ready enough for you and your Lord will say, “Come up higher!” when you have arrived at a full age—but never before nor after!  
IV. Now the last thing is that a Christian will die with HONOR. “You shall come to your grave like a shock of corn comes in, in his season.” You hear men speak against funeral honors and I certainly do enter my protest against the awful extravagance with which many funerals are conducted and the absurdly stupid fashions that are often introduced. It would be a happy thing if some persons could break through them and if widows were not obliged to spend the money which they need so much, themselves, upon a needless ceremony which makes death not honorable, but rather despicable! But I think that while death should not be flaunted out with gaudy plumes, there is such a thing as an honorable funeral which everyone of us may desire to have. We do not wish to just be carried away as a bundle of tares—we would prefer that devout men would carry us to the grave and make much lamentation over us. Some of us have seen funerals that were very like a “harvest home.” I can remember the funeral of a sainted minister under whom I once sat. The pulpit was hung in black and crowds of people came together. And when an aged veteran in the army of Christ rose up to deliver the funeral oration over his remains, there stood a weeping people lamenting that a prince had fallen that day in Israel! Then, verily, I felt what Mr. Jay must have experienced when he preached the funeral sermon for Rowland Hill, “Howl fir tree, the cedar is fallen!” There was such a melancholy grandeur there. And yet my soul seemed lit up with joy to think it possible that some of us might share in the same affection and that the same tears might be wept over us when we come to die! Ah, my Brothers here, my Brothers in office, my Brothers and Sisters in this Church—it may somewhat cheer your hearts to know that when you depart, your death will be to us a source of the deepest grief and most piercing sorrow. Your burial shall not be that prophesied for Jehoiakim—the burial of an ass, with none to weep over him. But devout men will assemble and say, “Here lies the deacon who for years served his Master so faithfully.” “Here lies the Sunday school teacher,” will the child say, “who early taught me the Savior’s name.” And if the minister should fall, I think a crowd of people following him to the tomb would well give him such a funeral as a shock of corn has when “it comes in in his season.” I believe we ought to pay great respect to the departed saints’ bodies. “The memory of the just is blessed.” And even you little saints in the Church, don’t think you will be forgotten when you die. You may have no gravestone. But the angels will know where you are as well without a gravestone, as with it! There will be some who will weep over you. You will not be hurried away, but will be carried with tears to your grave.  
But I think there are two funerals for every Christian—one, the funeral of the body. And the other, the soul. Funeral, did I say, of the soul? No, I meant not so! I meant not so! It is a marriage of the soul. For as soon as it leaves the body, the angel reapers stand ready to carry it away! They may not bring a fiery chariot as they had for Elijah, but they have their broad spreading wings. I rejoice to believe that angels will come as convoys to the soul across the ethereal plains. Lo! Angels at the head support the ascending saint and lovingly they look upon his face as they bear him upwards. And angels at the feet assist in wafting him up yonder through the skies. And as the husbandmen come out from their houses and cry, “A joyous harvest home,” so will the angels come forth from the gates of Heaven and say, “Harvest home! Harvest home! Here is another shock of corn fully ripe gathered into the garner!” I think the most honorable and glorious thing we shall ever behold, next to Christ’s entrance into Heaven and His Glory, there, is the entrance of one of God’s people into Heaven. I can suppose it is made a holiday whenever a saint enters and that is continually—so that they keep perpetual holiday! Oh, I think there is a shout that comes from Heaven, whenever a Christian enters it, louder than the noise of many waters! The thundering acclamations of a universe are drowned as if they were but a whisper in that great shout which all the ransomed raise when they cry, “Another and yet another comes!” And the song is still swelled by increasing voices, as they chant, “Blessed Husbandman, blessed Husbandman, Your wheat is coming home. Shocks of corn fully ripe are gathering into Your garner!”  
Well, wait a little, Beloved. In a few more years you and I shall be carried through the ether on the wings of angels. I think I die and the angels approach. I am on the wings of cherubs. Oh, how they bear me up—how swiftly and yet how deftly. I have left mortality with all its pains. Oh, how rapid is my flight! Just now I passed the morning star. Far behind me, now, the planets shine! Oh, how swiftly do I fly and how sweetly! Cherubs! What sweet flight is yours and what kind arms are these I lean upon! And on my way you kiss me with the kisses of love and affection. You call me Brother. Cherubs—am I your Brother? I, who just now was captive in a tenement of clay—am I your Brother? “Yes!” they say. Oh, hark! I hear music strangely harmonious! What sweet sounds come to my ears! I am nearing Paradise. ‘Tis even so. Do not spirits approach with songs of joy? “Yes!” they say. And before they can answer, behold they come—a glorious convoy! I catch a sight of them as they are holding a great review at the gates of Paradise. And ah, there is the golden gate. I enter in. And I see my blessed Lord! I can tell you no more. All else were things unlawful for flesh to utter. My Lord! I am with You—plunged into You—lost in You just as a drop is swallowed in the ocean—as one single tint is lost in the glorious rainbow! Am I lost in You, glorious Jesus? And is my bliss consummated? Is the wedding day come at last? Have I really put on the marriage garments? And am I Yours? Yes! I am! There is nothing else now for me. In vain your harps, you angels! In vain all else. Leave me for a little while. I will know your Heaven, by-and-by. Give me some years, yes give me some ages to lean here on this sweet bosom of my Lord! Give me half an eternity and let me bask myself in the sunshine of that one smile. Yes—give me this! Did You speak, Jesus? “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love and now you are Mine! You are with Me.” Is not this Heaven? I want nothing else! I tell you once again, you blessed spirits, I will see you, by-and-by. But with my Lord I will now take my feast of loves. Oh, Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! YOU are Heaven! I need nothing else! I am lost in YOU!  
Beloved, is not this to go to “the grave in full age, like as a shock of corn,” fully ripe? The sooner the day shall come, the more we shall rejoice. Oh, tardy wheels of time! Speed on your flight. Oh, angels, from where do you come with haggard wings? Oh, fly through the ether and outstrip the lightning’s flash! Why may I not die? Why do I tarry here? Impatient heart, be quiet a little while. You are not yet fit for Heaven, otherwise you would not be here. You have not done your work, otherwise you would have your rest. Toil on a little longer. There is rest enough in the grave, you shall have it there. On! On!  
*“With my scrip on my back and my staff in my hand, I’ll march on in haste thro’ an enemy’s land. Though the way may be rough, it cannot be long. So I’ll smooth it with hope and I’ll cheer it with song.”*My dear Friends, you who are not converted, I have no time to say anything to you this morning. I wish I had. But I pray that all I have said may be yours. Poor Hearts, I am sorry I cannot tell you this is yours right now. I would if I could, preach to everyone of you and say that you all shall be in Heaven. But God knows there are some of you that are on the road to Hell—and do not suppose you will enter Heaven if you go Hell’s road! Nobody would expect, if he proceeded to the north, to arrive at the south! No, God must change your heart. By simple trust in Jesus, if you give yourself up to His mercy, even though the vilest of the vile, you shall sing before His face! And I think, poor Sinner, you will say to me as a poor woman did last Wednesday, after I had been preaching—when I believe everybody had been crying—from the least to the greatest and even the preacher in the pulpit. As I went down, I said to one, “Are you chaff or wheat?” And she said, “Ah, I trembled tonight, Sir.” I said to another, “Well, Sister, I hope we shall be in Paradise soon.” And she replied, “You may, Sir.” And I came to another and said, “Well, do you think you will be gathered with the wheat?” And she answered, “One thing I can say—if God ever lets me get into Heaven I will praise Him with all my might. I will sing myself away and shall never think I can sing loud enough.” It reminded me of what an old disciple once said—“If the Lord Jesus does but save me, He shall never hear the last of it.” Let us praise God, then, eternally—  
*While life, or thought, or being, lasts, Or immortality endures!”*  
Now may the Three-in-One God dismiss you with His blessing.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2175 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 5.27

“SO IT IS”  
NO. 2175

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1890.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCT. 12, 1890.

**“Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know you it for your good.” Job 5:27.**

THUS closed a forcible speech by Eliphaz the Temanite—it may be called his “summing up.” He virtually says, “What I have testified in the name of my friends is no dream of theirs. Upon this matter we are specialists and bear witness to truth which we have made the subject of research and experience. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know you it for your good.” By this declaration he sets forth his teaching with authority and presses it home. He persuades Job to consider what he had said, for it was no hasty opinion, but the ripe fruit of experience. When we speak what we know we expect to be heard.

I shall not follow Eliphaz—I am only going to borrow his closing words and use them in reference to Gospel testimony which is to us a thing known and searched out. I shall use it in the following way. First, our text sets forth the qualification of the teacher. He must be a man who can say, “Lo this, we have searched it, so it is.” Secondly, we have the argument with the hearers—“We have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know you it for your good.” And lastly, we have here the exhortation for every enquirer who wants to know the truth concerning spiritual and eternal things: “Hear it, and know you it for your good.”

I. To begin with, I judge that these words may well describe THE QUALIFICATION OF THE TEACHER. He will be poorly furnished if he cannot run in the line which Eliphaz draws in the words of our text. He should have, first, an intimate knowledge of his subject. How can he teach what he does not know? When we come to talk about God and the soul, and sin and the precious blood of Jesus, and the new birth, and holiness and eternal life, the speaker who knows nothing about these things personally must be a poor driveller. Let him be quiet till he knows what he is to speak upon! Let him sweep chimneys, or cobble shoes, or break stones, or follow any other honorable calling—it will not be honest for him to profess to be a preacher of the Gospel unless he is acquainted with these sacred subjects.

I know well the place of the ministry of one who was ordained to be a preacher and drew the hire of which every true laborer is worthy. He delivered a discourse which greatly troubled the mind of a friend named

Jonathan whom I knew and esteemed. The awakened young man went to him on the Monday and said, “Oh, Sir, your sermon last Lord’s Day has robbed me of my sleep and made me very anxious.” The preacher answered, “I am very sorry for it, Jonathan. I will never preach that sermon any more. If it troubles people, I will have no more of it, for I have something better to do than to make people miserable.” “But, Sir,” said the young man, “you preached about the new birth and you said we must be born again. In fact your text said so. What does it mean?” He answered, “Jonathan, I do not know anything about it and you are such a good fellow that I am quite sure you need not be afraid. If there is anything in being born again you had it when you were christened. In your Baptism you were made a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven. That is all I know about it.”

It is necessary that we say to some preachers, first of all—You must be born again, for, if not, you cannot interpret the new birth to the people. Without personal experience you will speak riddles of which you do not know the answers! The blind will lead the blind and both will fall into the ditch. There is a German story of a minister who had delivered himself very earnestly upon a vital theme and after the service he was waited upon by one in great distress of heart who was peculiar in his use of language. He generally said, “we,” when he should have said, “I.” And so he said to the minister, “Sir, if what you have been saying is true, what shall we do?” He did not mean to bring the minister into it, but the use of the word, “we,” implicated the pastor so much that he began to search—and searching he found that he had no part nor lot in the matter—and that he had been preaching what he himself had never felt!

Have I anybody here who is doing this every Sabbath? A blind man who is teaching others about color and vision? A preacher of an unknown God? A dead man sent with messages of life? You are in a strange position, dear Friend. The Lord save you! I wish that it might happen to you as it did to my dear friend, Mr. Haslam, whom God has blessed to the conversion of so many. He was preaching a sermon which he did not understand and while he preached it he converted himself! By God’s Grace he began to feel the power of the Holy Spirit and the force of Divine Truth. He so spoke that a Methodist in the congregation presently cried out, “The parson is converted!” And so the parson was. He admitted it and praised God for it—and all the people sang—

*“Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow.”*

His own utterances concerning Christ Crucified had been to him the power of God unto salvation! O Beloved, no man has any right to teach in the Sunday school, or preach, or pretend in any other way to be sent of God unless he has been so taught of the Holy Spirit that he has an intimate acquaintance with the Gospel! I must add that he should have a personal experience of it, so that he can say, “Lo this, we have searched it, so it is.” It is unseemly that an ignorant man should keep a school. It is not meet that a dumb man should teach singing. Shall an impenitent man preach repentance? Shall an unbelieving man preach faith? Shall an unholy man preach obedience to the Divine will? Shall one that is living in sin preach of freedom from sin? Surely any person will be an unsuitable herald of the glad tidings of Divine Grace who speaks what he has never tried and verified. Before you preach again, Brother, pray God to enable you to know in your own soul the Truth of that which you declare. Oh, that we may be born again and so preach regeneration! Oh, that we may exercise faith and then preach it! Surely it must be so! He who would learn to plow must not be apprenticed to one who never turned a furrow. We must know the Lord or we cannot teach His way.

It strikes me, next, that what is needed in a successful teacher is a firm conviction of the truth of these things growing out of his having tested them for himself. He must say, with emphasis, “So it is.” When I had found Christ and joined the Church, I began to teach in the Sunday school, but my little class of boys taught me more than I taught them! I was speaking to them, one day, about “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” and one of the boys said to me, “Teacher, have you believed?” I answered, “Yes.” “And have you been baptized?” “Yes.” “Then,” said he, “Teacher, you are saved.” I said, “I hope so.” Years ago it was a kind of fashion to say, “I hope so,” and I followed my seniors in this modest talk. The boy looked me straight in the face and said, “And don’t you know, Teacher?”

Well, I felt that I did know and that I ought not to have said, “I hope so.” So I replied, “Yes, I do know it.” “Of course,” said the boy, “the text says so. If it ain’t true, well, of course, it ain’t true. But if it is true, well, it is true and nobody need hope about it.” So it was. The boy used good logic. The Scripture says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Therefore, he that believes and is baptized is saved. That is clear enough and let not the Believer say that “he hopes so,” but let him boldly assert that, “it is so!”

You promise a man to pay him five pounds some day this week. Suppose you asked him, “Do you expect that I shall pay you that five pounds?” If he should answer, “I hope so,” you would know what he thought of you. And it is very much the same when we thus speak of the Lord—we dishonor Him when we say, “I hope so,” after He has said “it is so.” The Lord’s Word is true. Why do you “hope” about it? Believe it and enjoy it! But people will go hoping and hoping, and hopping and limping— as if to be lame were the proper thing. They had better put both feet to the ground and cry, “God has said it! I believe it! Glory be to His name, He shall have all the praise!” “Then shall the lame man leap as an hart.” When we teach others, we ought to have a firm conviction that what we teach is true beyond all question. You cannot use a lever if you have no fixed fulcrum. You must have a point to work upon or you cannot lift an ounce. So, in trying to teach another man, you must know that something or other is true.

Infallibility used to be claimed for the pope, but Luther upset that nonsense. The Protestants then asserted that infallibility lay in the Bible and this became their fulcrum. It seems to me that now it is commonly thought that infallibility lies nowhere—or, if there is any such thing, it is to be found among young green horns, fresh from college, who do not

know A from B in theology and yet criticize the Bible and cut it about as they choose. They are infallibles and we must all bow down before their idol of advanced thought! I prefer my Infallible Bible and I shall stick to it—God helping me—knowing that it has never led me astray and believing that it never will! O dear Teachers, know for a certainty what you teach and, if you do not know it to be true, hold your tongues about it! If you are not sure that your doctrine is true, be quiet till you are sure! A ministry of hesitation must be ruinous to souls. When Divine Truth is held fast, then let it be held forth and not till then.

Once more— a necessary qualification for a teacher of the Lord is earnestness and good will to the hearer. We must implore each one of our hearers to give earnest heed. We must cry to him with our whole heart, “Hear it, and know you it for your good.” Without love there can be no real eloquence. We must have a burning love for the souls of men if we would win them for Jesus. Unless our hearts desire their good, we may preach our tongues out, but we shall never bring our hearers to salvation by Christ. The best birdlime for these wild fowl is a longing desire for their present and eternal good! The great Savior’s heart is love and those who are to be saviors for Him must be of a loving spirit. True love will do the work when everything else has failed. A pastor has held the hearer by his heart long after his head has struggled away.

A preacher had managed, somehow, to offend one of his hearers and the angry man kept away from the place of worship for many a day. The preacher was not in the least aware that he had given offense, but when the matter came out, he went at once to set it right. The offended person had become settled in unbelief. The preacher went to him and said that he had been sorry to miss him and that he had been made ill by learning that he had become an unbeliever. Tears were in his eyes and his voice was half choked as he said, “Do you know, friend David, I cannot sleep at nights for thinking about you? I am so concerned about your soul that I cannot rest unless you are converted.”

The man had grown into the habit of blasphemy and if he had been addressed in any other way he would have cursed the minister and told him to go about his business—but that touch of real affection did it. “You, concerned about my soul? Then it is time that I became concerned about it, too”—that was the reasoning which passed through David’s mind. Oh, do let us love our hearers! Let us love them to Jesus! These are the bands that draw men to Jesus—the bands of love! And these are the cords that hold them to the Savior—the cords of a man! We must wish our people to hear the Truth of God, not because we have prepared discourses which we cannot afford to waste upon an empty chapel, but because we feel sure that if they will hear the Gospel it will do them good and save their souls! We must sigh and cry for the souls of our hearers! We must preach with an intent—and that intent must not fall short of their eternal salvation! We must go as with a sword in our bones till we see our hearers yield their hearts to Jesus! Knowledge of our subject avails not without love to our hearers!

There are three ways of knowing, but only one sort is truly worth having. Many labor to know merely that they may know. These are like misers who gather gold that they may count it and hide it away in holes and corners. This is the avarice of knowledge—in some respects less mean than greed of gold and yet of the same order of vices. Selfishness makes men anxious to know. Mental selfishness urges them to toils most wearisome. Yet there may be much of this hoarded knowledge where there is no wisdom. Poor is the ambition to know—to know more than others, to know more today than we knew yesterday—to know what no one else knows. What of all this? To know, to know—this is the one thing with those who, like the horseleech live only to suck and to be swollen. To what purpose is knowledge buried in the brain like a crock of gold buried in a ditch? Such knowledge turns stagnant, like water shut up in a close pond—above mantled with rank weeds and below putrid, or full of loathsome life.

A second class aspire to know that others may know that they know. To be reputed wise is the Heaven of most mortals. To win a degree and wear half-a-dozen letters of the alphabet at the end of your name is the glory and immortality of many. To me the fashion seems cumbersome and vexatious—but the grand use of these appended letters is to let the world know that this is a man who knows more than the average of his fellows. After all, it is no very great thing to make your neighbors aware that you are somebody in scientific circles. It is more magnanimous to do without the certificates and let folks find out for themselves that you possess unusual information. One does not eat merely that others may know that you have had your dinner and one should not know merely to have it known that you know. Why not wear letters after your name to signify that you own half a million of money, or farm a thousand acres of land, or fatten a hundred hogs? This is the grand end of wearisome days and nights—that the knowing ones may know that you know!

The third kind of knowledge is the one worth having. Learn to know that you may make other people know. This is not the avarice but the commerce of knowledge. Acquire knowledge that you may distribute it! Light the candle, but put it not under a bushel. Some are much buried under that bushel. My friend was half inclined to say a word or two for his Lord but he did not, for he remembered the big bushel marked, “TIMIDITY & Co.,” and so he kept his light out of the way. Destroy that bushel, since it destroys your usefulness! If God has given you a candle, let it burn and shine, for light is given that eyes may see it. If God has lighted you from on high, do not deny your light to any far or near. Know that others may know! Be taught that you may teach! This trading is gainful to all who engage in it.

Thus much upon the first point—the qualification of a teacher is intimate knowledge, personal experience, confidence, earnestness and good will.

II. Secondly, THE ARGUMENT FOR THE HEARER—“Lo this, we have searched it, so it is.” The argument directed to the hearer is the experience of many, confirming the statement of one—“We have searched it, so it is.” Bacon has taught us from a mass of agreeing testimonies to infer a general truth. We are not, now, so foolish as to set up a theory and then hunt for facts to support it. No, but we gather the facts, first, and then deduce the theory from them. So here the three friends have made ample research and have arrived at certain conclusions—and they urge this reasoning upon Job.

Unrenewed men cannot know much about Christ and His salvation unless it is through the testimonies of their friends who have felt the power of Divine Grace. It is ours, therefore, to be witnesses for Christ to them, that they also may believe the Truth of God which can save their souls. Without further preface I should like to bear my own personal witness to a few things about which I am fully persuaded. I am not afraid of dogmatism, but I shall speak very positively, since I can say, “Lo this, we have searched it, so it is.” And my first witness is that sin is an evil and a bitter thing. I think, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I may speak for you and say, “We have searched this out, and we know that it is so.” We have seen sin prove injurious to our fellow men.

“Who has woe, who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. Men of strength to mingle strong drink.” From where comes much of beggary but from dissipation? From where comes much of deadly disease but from uncleanness of life? Is not half the misery in the world the direct and distinct result of vice? I will not harrow up your feelings by telling you of young men and young women who set out for better things, but who turned aside to vice and thus brought evil diseases into their bones. We could wish to forget their cries and moans with which they appalled us when they found that wild oats had to be reaped and that each ear of those sheaves was as a flake of fire. By-and-by the guilty soul has to meet its God—and what will be its terror!

We know of ourselves and in ourselves, that sin is a serpent whose tooth infuses poison into the wound it makes. Sin brought some of us very low and nothing but Almighty Grace restored us. It made some of us sit between the jaws of despair and question whether it would not be better to put an end to our lives than continue to exist in such horrible gloom. Sin is that inquisition which deals in racks and fires and all manner of infernal tortures. No misery can for a moment be compared with the torment which follows upon sin! We get neither pleasure nor profit by sin, though it may dupe us with the name of both. Sin is “evil, only evil and that continually.” This we have searched, and so it is.

We wish that others who are beginning life would accept our testimony and withhold their feet from the paths of the Destroyer. It cannot be necessary that everybody should taste the poison cup—may not our mournful experience of sin’s evil effects suffice for you? Sirs, you may search the neighborhood of sin from end to end, but you will never find a living joy therein. Therefore, flee from it, by God’s Grace.

I wish, next, to testify to the fact that repentance of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ bring a wonderful rest to the heart and work a marvelous change in the whole life and character. There is such a thing as the new birth, for we have been born again—and this not a mere fancy or sentiment—but is a plain matter of fact. We know what it is to have passed from death unto life as surely as we know the difference between night and morning. Young man, have you any doubt about this? Will my testimony be of any use to you? Do you think I would stand here, knowingly, and tell you what is false? I hope you do me justice and admit that I aim at speaking the truth! There is such a thing as having the tastes all altered, the desires all changed, the fears removed, the hopes elevated, the passions subdued, the will conquered, the affections purified and the mind sanctified.

There is such a thing as having perfect rest about all the past because sin is forgiven—perfect rest about the future, because we have committed our all to the hands of Christ who is able to keep us—and peace as to the present, because we belong to Jesus. I speak for thousands in this place tonight when I say that repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ bestow on men a wonderful delight and transform their characters by the Holy Spirit! That is worth knowing, is it not? Believe for yourselves and realize personally the power of faith. “We have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know you it for your good.”

Next, we beg to bear our witness to the fact that prayer is heard of God. If it were possible for me to tell you the many instances in which God has heard my prayers, you would, in your kindness, follow me a considerable way. But I should have to draw so largely upon your faith that before I came to the end, you would feel compelled to doubt. Nor should I blame you. Truth is stranger than fiction and if you are not familiar with prayer, you will think me a mad fanatic! In matters in reference to the Stockwell Orphanage I have seen the Lord’s hand very conspicuously in times of need. When money has run short and there have been hundreds of children to be fed, faith and prayer have filled our coffers! Well, Sirs, men of the world may say it is all fancy and laugh at it as a spiritual dream—but fancies do not load tables and feed children and supply thousands of pounds!

Will one of you make the attempt? Will you provide for our five hundred orphans for a month by dreams and fancies? We have known times of close pinching and have waited upon God—and in a short time He has sent us abundant relief and there are Brethren on this platform who would willingly bear witness. If there is no prayer-hearing God, we have played the fool! And yet no other sort of foolery has ever produced such surprising results! We know that God hears prayer! We are personally sure of it because we have tried it for ourselves. I wish that anybody here who is in doubt about it would try the power of prayer. Go to God in prayer—yes, even you that are unconverted—and see whether the Lord will not hear you!  
Somebody says, “Surely that is unsound advice! How can the unconverted pray?” Let me tell you a story. I was preaching, years ago, to the Sunday school children of a certain country town where the people were Calvinistic and a point or two more. They received 16 ounces to the pound of the Gospel and they liked an ounce or two above full weight. I made the observation to the children that before I had been renewed by Divine Grace, I, as a child, was in trouble and I went to God in supplication and He helped me. I need not repeat the circumstances but it seemed to me that the Lord heard my childish pleading and helped me. This experience led me to feel that there was a reality in prayer, for God had heard me.

When I came out from the Chapel where I had mentioned this circumstance, a number of grave persons who were both sound and sour in the faith, beset me round about like bees. They began asking, “How can a natural man pray a spiritual prayer? How can God accept a prayer which is merely natural, since He is a Spirit? If prayer is not worked by the Holy Spirit it is an idle form,” and so on, and so on. It is difficult to conceive how many quibbles can be made upon one point. I was about 20 years of age but I did my best to defend myself, for I had stated a fact and a fact is a stubborn thing. At any rate, I held my own, but I do not know that I should have won the victory if I had been left alone. A grand old woman in a red cloak pressed forward into the middle of the ring and addressed the doubly-sound Brethren whom she knew better than I did.

With an almost prophetic air she looked on them and said, “O fools and slow of heart to come here and quibble with this young servant of the Lord! Listen to me and be convinced, and go home in silence. Does not the Lord hear the young ravens when they cry? Do they pray spiritual prayers? Does the Holy Spirit work prayer in them? If God hears the natural prayers of crying ravens, will He not hear the cries of children?” This was fine. The adversaries vanished out of my sight. There was no overcoming a statement so Scriptural. God does hear prayer! We bear our witness to that fact with all our strength and therefore we say about it—“Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know you it for your good.”

Another testimony we would like to bear, namely, that obedience to the Lord, though it may involve present loss, is sure to be the most profitable course for the believing man to take. If you will serve the Lord Jesus Christ, you will not find your road all smooth, but you will find it more pleasant than serving the devil. Satan said of Job, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have not You made an hedge about him and about all that he has?” It was most true, but the Lord God might have answered the devil, “Would you have My servants unrewarded? It is from you that service meets no reward but death. Do you think I would have you able to say, ‘God’s servants serve Him for nothing. Even Job gets no return for his faithful obedience’?”

Beloved, we may not expect immediate success in business because we walk in the path of integrity. We may, for a time, be losers by being honest and may miss many a chance by abhorring deception. But we do not measure things by the inch and by the ounce when we come to deal with eternal matters. Brothers and Sisters, here we leave the clock and its ticking and speak of the Glory and Immortality which belong to the infinite and the eternal! Coming into those larger regions, we declare that nothing can be obtained worth getting by a lie, or by a trick, or by falling into sin. The most profitable course in life that any man can take is to do the right in every case. If it should involve loss, do right and suffer the consequences—for there are other compensating consequences which will make a man a gainer by uprightness—even if he should lose the clothes from his back. To have done right is to have a well-spring of joy within the heart.

Some of us have tried this and are sure about it. There are aged persons here who can tell you that they owe everything in life to having been enabled, by the Grace of God, to act uprightly in their youth. I know one who is at this moment in a fine position, whose rise in life dates from the moment when his employer bade him say that he was not at home and he answered, “Sir, I could not say that. I cannot tell a lie.” From that day his promotion in the office was constant and rapid.

Another felt himself unable to cast up the firm’s accounts on Sunday but before long was so prized that nobody would have suggested such a thing to him. A straightforward course is the nearest way to success. We bear our testimony that righteousness is the best course. We cannot say, “Honesty is the best policy—we have tried both that and thieving—and honesty pays best.” But, for all that, if you consider the Law of the Lord you will be considering your own interests. Take notice of this testimony— righteousness is wisdom. A straight line is the shortest way between any two places. “Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know you it for your good.”

I have many things to say, but our hours fly like the cherubim—each one has six wings. We beg to say that the old-fashioned Gospel is able to save men and to awaken enthusiasm in their souls. Here—here is the best proof! Look around upon this vast assembly! Have we any music, any candles, any millinery? Have we anything here to attract people but simply the preaching of the old, old Gospel? Our service is so severely simple as to be called bare. Have I varied from the old way and the old faith—yes, by even an eighth part of a hair’s breadth? Have I not kept to the Gospel and set it forth in simple language? Lo, here I come to the end of 37 years and before me are the same multitudes of people as at the first!

Young preacher, you will not need anything but Christ Jesus should you be spared to preach as long as I have done. When everybody seems to say that orthodoxy is spun out, God will send us a revival and the despised Doctrines of Grace will be to the front again and Christ shall make them His chariot in which He will ride forth conquering and to conquer! Behold, even at this day a company of the poorest of the people proclaim the Gospel in its roughest form and preach it in our streets and lanes— and the crowd is stirred as it never is by any other theme! Notwithstanding all the infidelity of the times, faith is still lifting the standard! Hold to the faith and to the Cross! Preach sin down—preach Christ up! Preach the atoning Sacrifice! Preach in the power of the Holy Spirit! Such preaching

is sufficient for the purposes of salvation! “Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know you it for your good.”

III. I close, now, with our third point—we have HERE THE EXHORTATION TO THE ENQUIRER. What do we say to him? This—“We have searched it, so it is; hear it.” I need hardly address that exhortation to most of the present assembly. Hear it you do—with a delight which is remarkable. But you know how matters tend in London in these sad days. The masses of the people will not come to hear of Jesus and His love. They often pass by a street preacher and have no curiosity to know what it is which has brought him out into the open air.

But oh, if you wish to be saved, hear the Gospel! Let nothing keep you away from God’s sanctuary where the real Gospel is proclaimed. Hear it! If it is not preached exactly in the style which you would prefer, nevertheless, hear it! “Faith comes by hearing.” Come out on Sunday morning, you working men that are sitting at home in your shirt-sleeves. Come out and hear! I cannot make out what some of you do—you work hard all the week round—and when the day of rest arrives, you have no hope of Heaven and no hunger after salvation! Life is a poor thing if it ends here. Do you believe that all you can possess is to be had on this side the grave? It is a poor situation.

Do you fancy that your life can be nothing better than an endless turning of the grindstone? Were you born merely to toil for daily bread? Is there nothing higher and better? If you say that you will die like dogs, I dare not think so meanly of you as you think of yourselves. You have only begun to exist! You have to live forever! You will exist in eternity as surely as God shall live, world without end! Shall it be an immortality of happiness, or an eternal existence of woe? Do, I pray you, think about this— and if there is a Gospel, (and you know there is), then hear it, hear it, hear it, till by the hearing of it God sends you faith and faith grasps salvation!

The next thing that we say is, “ know it.” Hear it and know it—go on hearing it until you know it! If you cannot quite attain to knowing it by hearing it, read your Bibles and seek the Lord till you are made to know the sublime secret. Ask Christian men and women to explain difficulties to you so you may know it. By getting a clear view of the plan of salvation, know what you must do to be saved. If you do not know anything else, know this essential matter! Christ Crucified is the most precious piece of knowledge which you can ever come at. To know Christ is life eternal! Look to Him till you see in Him your life, your love, your God, your Heaven, your all. Blessed is the man that finds this wisdom, for he has found an endless blessedness.

Our text means— know it in a particular way. “Know you it for your good.” The devil knows a great deal. He knows more than the most intelligent of us—but he knows nothing for his good. All that he knows sours into evil within his rebellious nature. There is a way of knowing a great deal and yet of getting no good out of it. Like Samson’s lion which had a mass of honey within it and yet had never tasted the sweetness of it, for it was a dead lion. You may have all the knowledge of Solomon and yet you may know nothing for your good, but end your days with the terrible wailing, “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!”

How is a man to know anything for his good? This knowledge must first be a practical knowledge. Does the Word say, “Repent”? If you want to know what repentance means, repent at once. You need not go to the Catechism or to the Creed for a definition—repent, and you know what repentance means! Be changed in mind, confess your sin and forsake it. Be sorry for sin. See the wrong of it. Quit it. You will know what repentance is when you have repented. If you want to know what faith is, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and when you have believed, you will know what believing is. The best way to know a virtue is to practice it! Somebody said, “What is the best way to tell a sinner the way of salvation?” The answer given was, “The best way to tell him is to tell him.” So it is.

The very best way to eat your dinner is to eat it. We get confounding and confusing ourselves with trivial distinctions, whereas we had better throw distinctions to the dogs and get to soul-winning! You will never catch hares with drums, nor souls with controversies. Come to Jesus, Sinner! Come to Jesus! Believe in Jesus, Sinner! Believe in Jesus at once! “He that does His will shall know of His doctrine.” You will know the Truth of God when, from the heart, you have obeyed it. God help you to exercise this practical faith at once. “Know you it for your good.” To know a thing for our good is to know it for ourselves. “Know you it for your good.”

I find that one rendering is, “Know it for yourself.” Another man’s God is no God to me—He must be, “My Lord and my God.” Another man’s Christ is no Christ for you—He must reveal Himself to you personally. Another man’s faith is no faith for you. God must be your God. Christ must be your Christ and the faith that saves you must be your own faith. God grant that it may be so—then you will know the Lord personally for your good. I must add that we only know things for our good when we know them believingly. To a sinner a promise is as dark as a threat if he does not believe it. Christ, to an unbelieving sinner, is simply a judge. Christ’s very death becomes “a savor of death unto death” to the unbeliever and it cannot be “a savor of life unto life” to him unless it is mixed with faith.

When you believe in Jesus, there is a vein of Divine Grace for you in every doctrine of the Bible. You know the promise of the Lord and you know it for your good when you humbly believe that it is so, and humbly take it to yourself because you are resting in Christ. I would to God that many here would know these things for their good! If they did, I should be happy, indeed, and so would they!

Now I have done, but I should like to say this—If there is nothing in religion, why do you come here? If there is salvation in believing in Christ, why are you not saved? You say there is a Hell. Why are you going there? You know that there is a Heaven. Why are you not preparing for it? You know that there is a Christ whose wounds bleed salvation—why are you not looking to Him? Is it all to be play, this religion of yours—going to meetings, sitting in your seats and listening to the preacher? I would rather be silent than be fiddling to your dancing, or go through the service merely to spend a Sabbath in a decorous manner.

Sirs, if you are not saved what shall I do? What shall I do? If you are saved, we will meet in Heaven and we will praise God forever, each one of us—and our Lord shall have all the glory. But if you are lost! If you are lost—I cannot come to you, nor can you come to me—no matter what I do for you before the great gulf divides us. What? What shall I say when I render in my account? Shall I tell the Lord that you were not saved because I was afraid to tell you that there was a Hell and I kept back every threatening doctrine and tried to make things pleasant for you, whether you were saved or not? I could not make that profession even if it could save your souls, for it would not, in any measure, be true!

“I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God” as far as I know it. God is my witness and so are your consciences that I have longed for your conversion! You that have heard me these years, if you are lost, it will not be for lack of pleading with, nor for lack of instruction, nor from lack of entreaties! O Souls, why will you die? Why will you keep on procrastinating and crying, “Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow”? Why should it always be tomorrow? There will be no tomorrow of hope for you when once you are lost!

Flee, now, to Christ! I pray you, by the living God and by the Heaven which He gives to those who believe in Christ, hasten to Jesus! Trust yourselves to Jesus now! By that dreadful doom which will surely fall on every man who dies rejecting Christ, I beseech you, flee from the wrath to come! Lord, grant that it may be so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Job 5.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—245, 23 (VERS. III), 757.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:  
[The following note from Mr. Spurgeon was read at the Tabernacle last Lord’s-Day. The publishers feel sure that sermon readers everywhere will pray for the speedy recovery of the suffering preacher.]

DEAR FRIENDS—I have been in great pain day and night all this week. I earnestly entreat your prayers, for I am brought very low.  
Yours ever heartily,

*C. H. SPURGEON.*  
Mentone, November 20, 1890. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #1471 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 6.10

CONCEALING THE WORDS OF GOD  
NO. 1471

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 27, 1879, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**(On behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society). “I have not concealed the Words of the Holy One.” Job 6:10.**

JOB’S dire distress was aggravated by the remarks of his friends. Eliphaz the Temanite opened fire against him in such words as these— “Behold, you have instructed many and you have strengthened the weak hands. Your words have upheld him that was falling and you have strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon you and you faint; it touches you, and you are troubled.” As much as to say, you can preach but you cannot practice. Where are your sermons and advice to others now? It was a shameful thing to throw in the good man’s teeth his testimonies in former days, but Job, who under all his sorrow always retained his clearness of intellect and singular shrewdness, took the words of Eliphaz and used them for his own comfort.

They were bread and meat to him, though brought in a raven’s mouth. “Yes,” he said, “I have comforted many and my words have instructed the ignorant and strengthened the feeble, and this is so much my comfort in the hour of my affliction that I dare even ask God to let loose His hand upon me and end my life. Let Him not spare me, for I have the testimony of my conscience that I have not been disloyal to my God. The taunt of my accuser proves that I have not concealed the Words of the Holy One.”

It is always well to be able to turn the enemy’s guns upon him and to extract comfort from that which was meant to grieve us. Job made no idle boast when he said that he had not concealed the Words of the Holy One, for we know from his history that he had been a bold confessor of the Truth of God. We are informed that he was carefully watchful as to his own family that the Words of the Holy One should be there esteemed and known, especially that grandest of all holy Words concerning sacrifice and atonement, for we read that when his children had kept birthdays at each other’s houses and had fulfilled their days of feasting, “Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.”

He was earnest for the purity of his family and the keeping up of the sacrifices which were typical of the cleansing of sin—and thus he made known to his descendants the central Word of all the Words of the Holy One. Even in the time of his affliction the Patriarch had not spoken other than according to the mind of God. What said he when he had lost all his possessions and was left without a child? “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there: the Lord gave, and the

Lord has taken away; and blessed be the name of the Lord.” And when his wife, seeing him covered with a loathsome disease, bade him curse God and die, he did not withhold his testimony from her, but said, “What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”

These were words given him of the Lord in the moment of his need and he shunned not to utter them with all his heart! The Inspired Testimony about this holy man is that, “in all this did not Job sin with his lips.” It is clear that in his prosperity Job was a most faithful witness for God. We will not speculate about the time or the place in which he lived, but wherever he lived, he was a man of great influence and was held in high esteem. He says, “When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street, the young men saw me and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking and laid their hand on their mouth.”

This influence was always exerted for the cause of truth and righteousness, which is always the cause of God. In the 29th chapter he says of himself, “When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem.” He was thus, by his conduct, a perpetual protest against sin; a continued proclamation of justice, righteousness, mercy and love in the age in which he lived. And he could, therefore, say without any word of egotism, “I have not concealed the Words of the Holy One.”

This was now a comfort to him when all other comforts failed—he knew that his affliction was not the fruit of a treacherous departure from God, or a cowardly concealment of his faith. He felt that he could face death and even long for it because he had been loyal to his God and faithful to the light which had been given him from on high. It was not selfrighteousness which led Job to speak thus, but only such a use of the sure evidences of Grace as would be natural and proper in any godly man in the hour of his extremity. It is the nature of obedience to yield peace to the heart and no one can be blamed for enjoying that peace. It cannot be wrong for our consciences to bear testimony to the sincerity and purity of our lives, nor wrong that when our hearts condemn us not, we have confidence towards God.

He who is most undivided in his faith in Jesus may, nevertheless, derive comfort from having been enabled to be loyal to his God. Did not Paul bless God for much the same faithfulness as Job claimed when he said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”? Happy shall he be who has a clear testimony within his soul that he has declared the Truth of God in all honesty and earnestness, even to the end. Job had not refrained from an open confession of his own faith in God—he had been known in the gates of the city as a worshipper of the Lord, a perfect and an upright man—one that feared God and eschewed evil. He had never hidden his faith, but had acknowledged one God whom he here calls the Holy One.

While many gods and lords divided the fealty of nations, Job was true to the one only God and believed His Words as they were revealed to him. Nor was he content with an open confession of his own faith. Job had made a continued communication of what he knew to others. He had taught his family—there all teaching should begin. He had taught his fellow citizens by his example—the most powerful of all teaching. Never had he wandered into idolatry, or worshipped the sun when it shined, or kissed his hand to the queen of heaven, but, on the contrary, he had avowed the one and only Lord without fear. He asks, “Did I fear a great multitude, or did the contempt of families terrify me that I kept silence?” So faithful had he been that he cries, “Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know my integrity.” This was high ground to take, but it evidently strengthened the good man’s heart to bear his troubles and it will do the same for us if we can win the same witness from our consciences.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, this is a comfort we ought to seek. It should be our care that when we come to die, we may not have to cry, “I was ashamed of Jesus and now I shall find Him ashamed of me! I hid His Truth in unrighteousness, wrapping my talent in a napkin! What shall I do, or where shall I turn? A servant unfaithful to His trust, I have to give an account of my stewardship and I cannot do it! Woe is me!” God grant that we may be able to say with Job, “I have not concealed the Words of the Holy One.”

Many professors will greatly need to alter their ways, or they will be covered with confusion in the Day of the Lord. Blessed and holy is he who can declare with David, or rather with David’s son, “I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your Truth from the great congregation” (Psa. 40:10). We have more of the Words of the Holy One than Job had and should, therefore, be the more anxious to make them known. I suppose he had no Inspired Book to read—he could not have had any more than the Books of Moses and probably he had not those—but the Lord spoke to him as He often spoke to the Prophets in the olden time and he had also learned those Truths of God which had been handed down from the earliest days from father to son.

Now we have a vast mass of sacred literature and we have, besides that, the Word Himself, who is the hope of our souls and the Lord of our hearts! O Brethren, if we wickedly hide what God has revealed to us, we shall be veiling a great light and we shall heap up guilt like the hills! When we come to die, we shall feel a misery proportionate to the enormity of our crime—we shall be tortured with agonizing thoughts for having, as far as we were able, quenched the Spirit and blotted out the testimony of the Most High! God forbid that we should be guilty of such an enormity!

Job, according to the language of our text, evidently had a great reverence for every Word of the Lord. He would not have used that term, “the Holy One,” if he had not felt the holiness of the Words, themselves, and if he had not stood in solemn awe of Him who spoke them. He felt that they must not be concealed, because the Words of the Holy One should have free course and be published abroad. Should not the word of a king be circulated through the length and breadth of his dominions? Have you

and I such a reverence for every revealed Truth of God? Do we stand in awe of every Word of God? If we do, it will be well for us if we practically express our homage after the fashion of David, who said, “With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Your mouth.”

The words which God speaks are uttered that we may speak them! It is the best homage to a word to hear it and to repeat it. Let us proclaim God’s Words abroad—they are light and are not meant to be hidden! Such candles ought never to be put under a bushel. To hide the Divine Words would be a great sin against the Most High—and to warn you against it will be the aim of this morning’s discourse. I shall speak with the earnest prayer that both to myself and to each one of you there may be a personal voice from God stirring every conscience as to this matter and making each one of us enquire whether or not we, also, can say, “I have not concealed the Words of the Holy One.”

We shall divide our subject thus. First, we shall have a little to say about the sin to be avoided. Then we will give some strong arguments for avoiding it. And, thirdly, suggest some methods by which we may be enabled to avoid it.

I. Here is A SIN TO BE AVOIDED, concealing the Words of the Holy One. Now, we can conceal those words from ourselves as well as from others. “How can we conceal them from ourselves?” you ask. I think that very great stress must be laid upon this form of the evil which lies at the root of the second shape of it. We can conceal the Word of God from ourselves in many ways. The Law of God speaks with a searching and threatening voice—it tells us of our sin, it forewarns us of the punishment—and it sets our danger, both present and future, before our mind’s eyes.

But there are thousands of persons who never give the Law an opportunity of being heard in their hearts—they turn a deaf ear to anything which is unpleasant to them—they do not like to face the honest Truth of God. You know why this is. Why doesn’t a man who is bankrupt in business take any pleasure in his books? Why is it that he postpones all settlements and endeavors to forget his affairs? Is it not because his ruin is near at hand? If there is any Truth of God, my Friend, that you are afraid of, you have cause to be afraid of it! But let me forewarn you that there is no escaping from a fact by endeavoring to forget it!

Every honest man, every brave man, every man who is truly a man, would like to face his true condition and see what and where he is. One of the prayers which I commend to your frequent use is this, “Lord, let me know the very worst of my case that I may not be living upon vain pretensions and may not be pluming myself with being in a happy condition while all the while I am in awful danger.” Let it never be said of any one of you that you concealed the Words of the Holy One about yourselves by refusing to feel their force lest they should end the flattering visions of your fond conceit! Love the Truth of God even though it cuts you to the quick. Ask God to search you and try you and to make you sensible of sin and of judgment to come—this is the part of honesty and common sense. You will be foolish, indeed, if you conceal the Words of the Holy One from your conscience and so flatter your soul into destruction.

Others conceal the Gospel Word, that Word which speaks of the free gift of pardoning mercy, which is of many offenses unto justification. They go about to find out some way of their own for self-salvation and do not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. Beloved, pray the Lord to help you to know the Gospel thoroughly and to understand its glorious simplicity, its sweet freeness and boundless fullness! Do not put out the light which, alone, can lead you to eternal life! Do not shut your eyes to the Divine Lamp—do not conceal from yourselves those humbling but yet soul-saving doctrines which make for your souls eternal peace! Shut not against yourselves the one gate of Paradise. Hide the Gospel in your heart, by all means, but hide it not from your heart, lest you sin against your own soul.

I ought, also, to warn every Christian here of concealing any of the Words of God from himself, by accepting half the Truth of God and rejecting the rest. Receive the whole of Revelation. Some professors have favorite texts and choice portions of Scripture—and they regard other parts of the Word with aversion—avoiding them as much as possible because they do not agree with their system of divinity and need much squaring before they will fit in with their foregone conclusions! They do not read such passages, or they read them carelessly, or a commentator is sought out who, by the exercise of much ingenuity, will impute another meaning than the true one to the Words of God.

Brothers and Sisters, open your souls to Divine Light! Give the Word of God free admittance into your spirits! Lay no embargo upon any form of the Truth of God! Demand no toll for the commodities of Heaven. Let your mind be an open port, carrying on a free trade in the treasures of the Gospel. Believe whatever God says, because God says it, though you may not always see its why and wherefore or perceive its internal consistency. Be prepared and even anxious to know the whole Truth of God as far as you can know it and let it pervade your entire being with its holy influence. It will be a terrible thing if one of these days you shall have to say, “I rejected a great Truth of God. I had a suspicion that it was so, but I did not wish to believe it and so I shut my ears to its evidence. I had a leaning towards the opposite view and I felt committed to it and so refused to change.” Open both your eyes, my Brothers and Sisters. If you cannot see everything, yet see all you can see and pray the Lord to take each scale away that you may know all the Truth and so the Truth may make you wholly free.

There is, again, a concealing of the Truth from ourselves in one other respect, namely, when we try to avoid the Word of command. There are some professed Christians of peculiar doctrinal opinions to whom the word, “duty,” is something dreadful and if the preacher dwells upon Gospel precepts they call him, “legal.” I am not much in awe of that word, myself, for being interpreted it means, lawful, and none of us would like to be unlawful preachers. These folks insinuate that the preaching of the practical precepts of the Gospel is in conflict with the Grace of God and is little better than preaching up human merit! Whereas the doctrine of God our Savior is always a doctrine according to holiness and good works are the sure results of true faith.

True Gospel preaching does not decry holy living! No, it sets up the highest possible standard and declares the way to reach it! Beware of picking and choosing in reference to the commands of Christ! Some professors object to much of the teaching of Him whom they call Master and Lord. The forgiving of injuries as we hope to be forgiven; the nonresistance principle of turning the other cheek when one is struck—these are very objectionable to ordinary religionists. Such precepts are denounced as impracticable and it is asserted that they cannot be carried out. Doing unto others as you would that they should do to you is regarded as a golden precept for other people to practice towards our dear selves, but not at all a practical maxim from us to the general public!

When persons speak of our Lord’s precepts as good but impracticable, they make Him out to be an amiable simpleton! Is this their reverence for the Incarnate Wisdom? I need not stop to quote examples, but there are many such things in the Word of God as precepts which good men decline to see, which, indeed, they declare that they cannot see! If you put a gold piece over the boldest printed verse in the Bible you will not be able to see the passage—and there are some whose profits in business, whose position in life, above all, whose “respectability” will not allow them to see certain precepts and so they do not see them and they pass through life without obeying the most plain commands of the Lord! I pray you do not do so, for willful ignorance is no excuse for disobedience.

It is written, “He that knew his master’s will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.” And, mark you, he that did not know his master’s will, but might have known it and deliberately declined to know it, shall take his place with those who bear the heavier punishment! The plea of ignorance will be of no use to such persons except it is to make them also take their place with the man who receives the few stripes and so they shall partake in both the greater and the lesser scourging, inasmuch as they are worthy to range with both kinds of offenders! Try to know what God would have you do and pray that by His Holy Spirit, when you know it, you may put it into speedy and cheerful practice and this shall be a comfort to you.

Still, the point I want to bring out is that the holy man in our text had not concealed God’s Truth from others. We can do this in many ways. We can conceal the Words of the Holy One by not confessing the Truth of God at all. A Christian, but he never said so! He hid himself along with Joseph of Arimathea, although he never offered his new tomb to his Lord. He justified himself by the example of Nicodemus, though he never brought spices for his Lord’s burial! There was a time when there might be secret disciples of Christ, but that was before the Cross was lifted up! It is written, concerning our Lord’s death, that the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed by it and now Christ’s followers follow Him openly. I should not like to be among those who expect to slink into Heaven by a back door some dark night and intend never to disclose themselves till they throw off the mask and stand before the wondering eyes of angels!

Christians who passed through the world disguised as unregenerate men? No, no! Our Lord has said, “He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess. But he that denies Me, him will I deny.” Do not run risks upon that score! If you love the Lord, say so! If you expect Him to acknowledge you, acknowledge Him. We may conceal the Words of the Holy One, although we have made an open confession, by a sinful silence about the Gospel towards others. I am afraid I would not be too censorious if I said that there are many professors of religion who never talk of Christ to others and never seek the salvation of anybody.

Are there any such people here in this gallery, or down below in this area? You have found a medicine which has healed your soul, but you never mention it to the thousands who are sick around you? You have not even named it to your own children? Can such cruelty be possible? Where do you sit? Are you there? No, good people, do not move away from him! I hope he still has something human about him, though certainly not much that is humane. You were hungry and you have found bread and you have eaten it—and yet though thousands are around you perishing with hunger, you have no pity on them? Many loaves are in your stores at home, but you spare none for these starving ones! You eat your morsel alone and all the while thousands are dying outside your window, yes, they are perishing by the millions. Do you care nothing for their woes? Are you a man or a demon? The Lord have mercy upon you! I will say no more than this, for I think I need not prove that it must be an atrocious sin for a man to know the Words of the Holy One and not to make them known to others. This sin is easily committed by a silence which pleads modesty, but which ought to confess to cowardice—therefore be aware of the cheat!

Some who speak often, nevertheless conceal the Words of the Lord by their own words. The Roman Catholic Church stands convicted of concealing the Words of the Holy One by the use of the Latin tongue in the daily service. Whatever there is of good in the “mass,” ought to be spoken in such language that everybody can understand and receive it. But instead, the people stand and look on and know not what is being done! And if there is anything that might edify and instruct, they are not cognizant of it because it is hidden from them by words unknown to them.

Protestant! You condemn this practice, but are not many of you as guilty yourselves? Did you listen to that splendid sermon? What rhetoric! What oratory! But those poor people in the aisles did not understand a word, or if they did, they only comprehended disconnected sentences and lost the soul of the discourse. Is this right? Is this according to the Scriptural idea of preaching? “Oh, but,” you say, “the great man does not preach to that class of people.” But His Master did and He bade men take note that in the Gospel dispensation the poor have the Gospel preached unto them! He would have His ministers preach so that they can be understood of all men! It is a pity when you hang the Cross with your artificial flowers until you hide the wounds of Christ. Down, down, down with all your tawdry rhetoric! Your so-called eloquence deserves a curse since it robs the simple of a blessing! Few things have so much damaged the Church of God as “the wisdom of words.” A sweet and solemn simplicity which a child can comprehend is after the fashion of our Master, therefore let us aim at it. When you talk about Jesus Christ, make your speech very plain, lest under the ornaments of your language you should conceal the Words of the Holy One.  
The thing can be done, again, by clouding the Truth of God with error.

There is such a thing as laying a substratum of the Truth of God and then overlaying it with human opinions, after the manner of the boastful school of modern thought whose novelties are set before us as the matured fruit of the culture of the 19th Century—this also is concealing the Words of the Holy One! You may, perhaps, have seen ancient parchments containing words of holy Writ which have been covered over and then re-written with popish legends—these palimpsests (that is their technical name) are the types and symbols of the discourses of the philosophical divines of the school of culture. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is hidden by their so-called “thought”—their own thoughts are set before the thoughts of God! What shall we say to such thinking but that it is a presumptuous setting up of human intellect above the Revelation of the Lord? What shall we say of such culture but that it cultivates a pride which had better have been cut up by the roots? It conceals the Words of the Holy One that fallible man may sit upon the throne of wisdom and make his own religion and be his own god!

We may yet further conceal the Words of God by an inconsistent life. You have often heard it said that the worldling does not read his Bible, but he reads professing Christians—he never troubles to read a chapter, but he reads his godly relatives. Many a man has found Christ through reading some dear and venerated mother whose living and dying experience has been God’s testimony to his soul. See, then, if our lives are crooked, perverse, unkind, ungenerous, unholy, selfish, un-Christly—we conceal the Words of God—for men will not read a true Gospel in us, nor have a true idea of our religion. They will not care to hear a Gospel which produces such characters as ourselves, if those characters are unlovely.

Men lay all our faults at the door of our Master and thus we crucify Him afresh. They say, “That is your religion,” though they must know better. They will always say so, for after this manner the enemies of God have always gloried over Israel. He who lives not after a godly and holy sort is guilty of concealing the Words of the Holy One in the most injurious manner. Let us all try to avoid this sin because it is contrary to the practical genius of Christianity which commands godly men to shine as lights in the world. Sinful silence, as to the blessed Word of Grace, is rebellion against our Lord’s last command—“Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Therefore, be not chargeable with so grave a crime.

II. In the second place we will give a mere outline of the ARGUMENTS FOR AVOIDING THIS SIN. The subject is weighty and deserves a longer consideration, but time compels me to condense. And first, the man who conceals the Word of God is out of order with God. God speaks that He may be heard and that His mind may be known. The evident design of words is to make known the speaker’s mind. To run parallel with God’s wish, therefore, is to give His Words free course to the ends of the earth.

O you who profess to be a child of God, will you run counter to the design of the Most High? And when He speaks, will you, by concealing His Words, make Him to be as though He spoke not? Such a silence is out of gear with the whole course of Nature. “The heavens are telling the Glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork: day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge.” The whole Creation, after its own inarticulate manner, proclaims its Maker and Preserver! Rocks find a voice and waters have a tongue. Stars sing by shining and darkness preaches by its solemnity. Should man, alone, be dumb? God forbid that he should be Creation’s silent chord when every other string is vibrating with praise! No, let us pray the Holy Spirit to put us into order with God and with His universe—and let us no more conceal His Words!

If you wish to see the sin of concealing the Gospel, think of the consequences which would have followed if others had done so. If the Apostles had never risked their lives to preach, what had the nations been? If martyrs had never yielded their blood in testimony, would not thick darkness have brooded over the nations? Imagine the consequences, if you can, if Luther had taken the advice of his godly but timid friend, when he said, “Get to your cell and pray: meddle not with things too high for you.” Imagine what history would have been if Wycliffe, Tyndal, Calvin, Zwingli and all those lights of the world had hidden themselves through cowardice! They would have been guilty, but we would have been miserable!

Now, what would have been criminal in them must be evil in us, also, in proportion to our degree. We owe it to coming generations that we pass on the torch of the Truth of God as it has been handed down to us. Let us not be unfaithful to our trust. If we conceal the Words of the Holy One, we shall evidently err because the motive for so doing can hardly be supposed to be other than sinful. If we conceal God’s Truth, it will probably be out of cowardice—and to be a coward under the command of such a Captain as ours is treason! Probably self-love will be the ruling motive, but we are told expressly that he who loves his life shall lose it and that Christ is to be better loved than life itself.

Those who do not love the Word of God are often moved by pride which cannot stoop to be despised. Or fear which dreads ridicule, or love of the world which seeks the applause of men. Is it not atrocious ingratitude to Him who was derided and spit upon for our sakes if we hide His glory to escape from shame? I feel it difficult to conceive an argument for concealing God’s Word which would hold water for a single moment! Certainly I can invent none which will bear the test of the great trial to which we all must come. If, then, the motive of such concealment is evil, it must, itself, be evil.

I have already hinted that common humanity requires that if we have received the precious Truth of God, we should not conceal it. I feel as if your natures responded to the remark and that I needed not again enforce it, having done so already. If you love men; if you would make them happy here; if you would save them from perishing hereafter, I beseech you make known to them with holy earnestness the way of salvation contained in the Words of the Holy One! For if not, let it be known that all the results of concealment will be chargeable against you! If the next generation should become more wicked than the present and still more ignorant of the Gospel, the fact will be chargeable upon those who conceal the Words of God today!

If the masses, through not knowing the Gospel, reject it and continue in their sin, the calamity and crime will be charged upon those dumb lips which never speak of Jesus! If sinners sink to Hell, passing out of this world unsaved and they have come into contact with Christian men who gave them no warning, on whose hands will their blood be found? Yes, more—remember that even if sinners are saved by some other agency it does not exonerate those who neglected to warn them—for since the silence naturally tended to destruction, those who were guilty of it shall be judged as if the uninstructed were destroyed even though, by God’s interposition, it is not so! If the natural result of any line of conduct is prevented by Divine interference, its criminality is by no means lessened. The conduct itself may be judged by what it would naturally result in if it were left to itself.

Many a man has been guilty of murder who, nevertheless, did not actually spill his fellow’s blood because he did that which he knew would kill. And it is no praise of his that death did not come of it. So, if a corrupt, unholy silence would slay a soul, even though that soul is saved, the wickedly silent one is guilty of soul murder all the same. You are shifting uneasily in your seats, some of you—this is a good sign—for many might do so without being too sensitive. How again, dear Friends, can any man prove his loyalty to his God or his likeness to the Savior if he continues to conceal the Words of the Holy One? What can you do for God but obey Him? And when He speaks to you, you must gladly make known to others the Truth which has sounded in your ears!

How can you be like Jesus, your professed Master, if you have no witness to bear for the good of men? He went about doing good. His life was transparent. He wore the Gospel on His sleeve, spoke it with His eyes and revealed it in His daily life! How can you be like He if you smuggle away the Gospel as if it were contraband to be hidden away from all eyes? How can you bury the priceless Truth of God like a miser who hoards up his cankered gold? Tell all the heavenly message! Tell it all around! Tell it so long as you have a voice! If you are a true servant of God, you can not stifle the voice of Jesus, who, out of Heaven cries to the sons of men!

Now, think once more and we shall see the sinfulness of the conduct we denounce. What will it be to meditate upon your dying bed of having known the Truth of God, but having never, in any way, assisted to spread it? What will it be to die with eternity just before you and to reflect, “I have been a member of a Church many years, but I have never brought in a single convert. I sat in my pew and I knew the Divine Secret, but I never even told a child of it. Neither by pen nor tongue did I make Jesus known. I left that to the minister. I knew there were good people about who cared for men’s souls, but I had no such feeling—I kept myself to myself and felt no anxiety about my neighbors. I had very little care as to whether souls were saved or not. I was glad when I heard of an increase in the Church, but not very particularly so. I was rather sorry when things were down— not so sorry that I lost my appetite, or lay awake 10 minutes. I did not trouble myself more than I could help, for I was foolish enough to dream that the best thing I could do was to consult my own interests and I fancied that my chief end was to enjoy myself forever.”

Now, I can imagine such a person sorely beset with horrors when he comes to die and struggling hard to get anything like a glimpse of hope. His whole life has been that of selfishness—how can he be a Christian? Conscience will ask him, “Is this Christ-like, this keeping back of the Divine Bread from the perishing millions; this concealing of the Light of God? Surely you are no follower of the Crucified!” How will such conduct look at the Last Great Day? The Lord Jesus will say to some, “I was hungry and you gave Me no meat: I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink.” Now mark, these sentences refer to temporal bread and water, but they must be more emphatic, still, when they relate to spiritual things! If the Lord Jesus shall say, “There were hungering souls and you professed to know the Gospel, but you gave them no meat. There were thirsty souls and you professed to have drunk of the Water of Life and you gave them no drink,” can there be any answer? Will not such persons stand speechless—dumbly confessing the justice of the sentence, “Depart, you cursed”?

III. I shall close by mentioning one or two METHODS BY WHICH WE MAY AVOID THIS SIN. I am speaking, now, to you who have believed in Jesus and are truly His own disciples. First, take care that you make an open profession of your faith. Come out from the world and unite with the people of God. If you do not make a profession, I do not see how you can be found innocent of the charge of concealing the Lord’s Words. When you have done that, keep yourself clear of sinful silence by very often speaking to others of the things of God.

I was greatly pleased this week when a Brother minister said to me, “A man has just joined our Church; a rough man who mixed in company that was not likely much to improve him and yet he has been really made a new man. He was accustomed to go round to houses with small casks of beer for a large brewery and among the rest he called at a certain house where the servant is a member at the Tabernacle. She had not seen him more than once or twice before she began to ask him whether he knew the Savior and to question him about his soul. And when he called each month she spoke to him, again, till at last he who had never thought of religion, nor entered a place of worship at all, was brought to the feet of Jesus and has become an honor to the Church of which he is a member.”

This minister said, “I hope all your members do as that servant does.” I told him I knew a great many of you did, but no doubt some of you did not. You who do not, may well fidget upon your seats as you take home the hint! From now on, at every opportunity speak of Jesus to those around you, lest you be found guilty of concealing the Words of the Holy One! Some of you cannot speak very much because you are naturally diffident and slow of speech. Try and overcome the infirmity, but if you cannot do so, do not conceal the Words of the Most High on that account, but write letters of personal entreaty. You can do this, can’t you? Some of you can write very well, indeed, and you write so much that it is much easier for you to write than for friends to read! As you can write so well, write for Jesus Christ—write earnestly and lovingly for Jesus!

You can also circulate what has been written by other people, though I do not think it so good a thing to do as writing, yourself. You may send tracts and sermons, but let them be such as you may hope that people will read. Sometimes you may write out part of a tract and it will attract

them all the more for being your own handwriting. Another thing may be done. If you feel that when you have spoken and written you have still not done much, help other people who have greater gifts. A great deal may be done by imitating Aquila and Priscilla who helped Apollos. It is not given to everybody to preach to large numbers, or to preach at all—but you can often pick out a young man and say, “I will help him in his education and encourage him in his first efforts.” You can always help young men by filling the offering box, which supports the College. [Seminary.]

I married a gentleman on this platform, some time ago, who said to me, “I wish I could preach, but I will tell you what I will do. I will support a man to preach—I will find the money and you will find the man.” I told him I must have him speak, too, as best he could. He said he would, but he wished to have somebody to speak better. Men of wealth should copy this example. Help the tract distributors, help the city missionaries, help all those who publish the Word of the Lord! [If the Holy Spirit is thus burdening you, a great print/audio ministry is Mt. Zion Publications, a ministry of Mt. Zion Bible Church, in Pensacola, Florida. Write them at 2603 W. Wright St., Pensacola, FL 32505, USA.]

And lastly, and this morning most to the point, there are the heathen perishing for lack of knowledge. Millions of voices call out of the darkness to you, “Come over and help us! You have the Light of God, bring it to us! You have the Living Bread, come and feed us! We perish, we perish, we perish.” Brothers and Sisters, the heathen are perishing! Will you let them perish? I wish that some young men here would go for missionaries. One of the leaders of a missionary society cheered my heart last week when he took out of his pocket an old sermon of mine, marked and crossed and scored. He said, “You will like to see that, Mr. Spurgeon.” “What about it?” I asked. “That was given to me by a young man who has joined our mission. He read that sermon and marked the passages which touched his heart and now he is at work in China.

I looked upon that sermon with great delight! I think I felt more pleased with that old sermon than if I had received a wreath of gold. I felt gratified that I had brought a young and fervent heart to devote itself to the Lord Jesus Christ. Give me the same joy, each of you! And if you cannot go among the heathen, personally, help others to do so! Give, this morning, a liberal collection and may God accept it at your hands for Christ’s sake. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1730 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 6.6

A CURE FOR UNSAVORY MEATS— OR, SALT FOR THE WHITE OF ANEGG  
NO. 1730

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 5, 1883, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?”  
Job 6:6.**

THIS is a question which Job asked of his friends who turned out to be so unfriendly. Thus he battles with those “miserable comforters” who inflamed his wounds by pouring in salt and vinegar instead of oil and wine. The first of them had just opened fire upon him and Job, by this question, was firing a return shot. He wanted the three stern watchers to understand that he did not complain without cause. If he had spoken bitterly, it was because he suffered grievously. He was in great bodily pain; he was enduring great mental depression and, at the same time, he had been smitten with poverty and bereavement. He had, therefore, reason for his sorrow. He had no comforts left and every arrow of grief was sticking in his flesh. If he groaned, he had reason to groan.

His were not sorrows which he had imagined. They were real and true and, therefore, he asks this question first, “Does the wild ass bray when he has grass? Or bellows the ox over his fodder?” If these creatures lift up their notes of complaint, it is when they are starving. When the wild ass cannot find a mouthful of grass, anywhere, then his complaint is heard far and near. When the ox at the stall has no fodder—when he is fastened there and no farmer brings him provision—then he lows and there is good reason for his bellowing. Job seems to say, “I do not complain without cause. If I still enjoyed my former comforts, or even a tithe of them, you should hear no voice of murmuring from me. But I am tried to the utmost. I am grievously afflicted and there is overflowing cause for my moaning.”

He had lost all care to breathe. The zest of life was gone. No joy remained to make existence worth the having. He was like one who finds no flavor in his food and loathes the morsel which he swallows. That which was left to him was tasteless as the white of an egg—it yielded him no kind of comfort. In fact, it was disgusting to him. He was fed, he says, upon meat which yielded him no solace. “The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat.” Therefore, he virtually asks his friends, “How can you expect me to eat such meat as this without sighs and tears? Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt? Is there any taste in the white of an egg?”

He means that everything about him had lost its flavor and life had become dull and dreary to him and, therefore, they must not wonder that he uttered words of complaint. The speech, also, to which Job had listened from Eliphaz the Temanite, did not put much sweetness into his mouth, for it was devoid of sympathy and consolation. If you read it at home you will see that it was worthy to be the first of a singular selection of galling utterances. Job, we must admit, was sufficiently acid, himself, and abundantly sarcastic, but his friends produced the irritation and took care to always repay him double for all his wormwood. For every hard speech of his, they returned compound interest. They grieved and vexed his upright soul till he said no more than the truth when he cried, “Miserable comforters are you all.”

Here he tells them that Eliphaz had administered unto him unsavory meat without salt—mere whites of eggs without taste. Not a word of love, pity, or fellow feeling had the Temanite uttered. He had spoken as harshly and severely as if he were a judge addressing a criminal who was suffering no more than he deserved. Looking at the speech—and looking at all his surroundings—poor Job feels that he has very unsavory meat to eat and he asks them whether they expect him to eat it without salt. They have given him something that is no more gratifying to him than the white of an egg and he enquires if they really think that he can accept this at their hands and thank them for their treatment.

We may now forget the much-tortured Patriarch, Job, and apply this text to ourselves. “Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?” Three thoughts arise out of it.

I. The first point will be this—A LACK OF SAVOR IS A VERY GREAT NEED in anything that is meant for food. I am not going to deliver a cookery lecture and so I shall not enlarge upon the passage so far as it refers to the bread upon our table, or the food which we eat and drink. Everybody knows that all kinds of animal life delight in food that has a flavor in it—and even “dumb driven cattle” will turn away from dry, flavorless food and will go a long way to find something that has a juice and a taste in it which suits the palate which God has created in them.

It is exactly the same with regard to the food of our souls. It is a very great fault with a sermon when there is no savor in it. It is a killing fault to the people of God when a book contains a good deal of what may be true, but yet lacks holy savor—or what, in other words, we call, “unction.” Somebody says, “Tell us what unction is.” I can much more easily tell you what it is not! You know a discourse when there is savor in it—and you also know when a sermon is dry, sapless, marrowless. And yet you could not state the difference in words. Some sermons could not even be suspected of anything like unction—their authors would sneer at you if you accused them of it!

But salt is still to be had. The fat things, full of marrow, are not quite out of the market yet. But what kind of savor is that which we expect in a sermon? I answer, first, it is a savor of the Lord Jesus Christ. Years ago, before ministers grew so wise as to question the Divine Inspiration of Scripture and renounce the Doctrine of Atonement, there used to be men in the country whose ministry was full of savor to the people of God. There were numbers of Christians in London who would go to the north, or go to the south, or go to the east, or go to the west to hear such preachers—and count it a great feast to listen to them! What was there about them? Were they great critics? I do not suppose that the good men ever read a work on criticism.

Were they profoundly learned? Assuredly they were not! Profoundly learned brothers were preaching in churches and chapels where there were more spiders than people! Those who displayed their learning and rhetoric had empty places—but these men were followed by multitudes! Wherever they spoke, the places were too small for them. Those who did not know the reason said, one to another, “What is there about these men? We do not see any peculiar talent.” And there was not much. “We do not see any profound learning.” And there was none to see. “We do not hear anything of advanced thought and liberal ideas.” No, these good men were innocent of these modern diseases!

Yet there are people of God tonight, now gray-headed, who remember the happy hours they spent, and the joyful seasons they knew while hearing these men, and how they journeyed home, perhaps, seven or eight or 10 miles from such a sermon and only wished they could go again the next night, when their labor was done, to be fed again! What was it that made this preaching so attractive, so edifying? What drew the Lord’s people so far? What evoked such enthusiasm? Why, it was that the preacher spoke of his Lord and never wandered from the Cross! When we were children we learned Dr. Watts’ Catechism of the Bible and I remember one question—“Who was Isaiah?” and the answer was, “He was that Prophet who spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest.”

Who were these men, then, that were followed by God’s people so earnestly? They were men that spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest! You have read Dr. Hawker’s Morning and Evening Portions, perhaps? I do not suppose that you have learned much of fresh exposition from them, or that you have been struck with any great originality of idea in them. But if you have read them profitably you have said to yourself, “Well, there is this one point in Hawker, his subject is Christ on the first of January, Christ on the last of December and Christ all the other days of the year.” He speaks of nothing else but Christ! He seems to bring forth the Lord Jesus in his portions every day as a matter of course, just as your maid always puts the bread on the table, whatever else she does not place there.

So it was with Hawker and men like he—Christ Crucified was their All in All. Their dear Lord and Master was never long absent from their discourses. If they preached doctrine, it was “the Truth of God as it is in Jesus.” If they preached experience, it was “to know Him and the fellowship of His suffering.” And if they went into practice, as they did, their idea of holiness was to be made like Jesus and to follow Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. Now, I do not believe a sermon can have savor in it unless it has Christ in it, for He has the savor of all good ointments and there is no sweetness without Him!

What shall we say of Him? “Your name is as ointment poured forth; therefore the virgins love You.” His name is so fragrant that it perfumes Heaven itself! Jehovah smells a savor of rest in the name, Person and work of His well-beloved Son. Therefore an essential to savory meat is that it shall have Christ in it! He has said, “My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed.” And there is no meat and no drink that has such savor in it as this! Oh, that we might hear more of a crucified Christ in all our places of assembly!

The next necessity to secure savor is a devout spirit in the preacher—a savor of devotion. I am trying to explain savor by not attempting a definition, but by noticing its accompaniments. Why, those men who have now gone to Heaven, whom you used to hear, seemed to be praying while they preached! Their sermons were devotions as well as discourses! Their rhetoric was rapture, their oratory was emotion. Their preaching came from the heart, but it came also from “the deep that lies under,” that secret reservoir of the everlasting Truth of God which is opened up by the Spirit to those who know the Lord, and to none else! They could say, “All my fresh springs are in You.” They drew up the Truth of God, which they preached out of this deep—out of the very heart of God!

They preached the Gospel of Grace as men that knew it, loved it, lived on it! It was no irksome task to them to speak of Christ and Grace, and pardon and Covenant faithfulness. You could not always see traces of elaboration or even of preparation about their utterances—you could see something better—the sparkling salt of Divine Grace! If the midnight oil had not smeared their sermons, the unction of the Spirit had anointed them! Their heart was inditing a good matter, for they spoke the things which they had learned touching the King! They spoke with such cheerfulness and reverence that it was good to hear them! They spoke with profound belief that what they said was Infallibly true, for had they not received it fresh from the Spirit of God?

Coming from their heart, it went to your heart—and by their realizing faith you were helped to believe it joyfully! It is an evil sign when a teacher of the Truth of God does not, himself, believe it, for thus he becomes a virtual spreader of error. David said, “I believed: therefore have I spoken.” Do you not believe, Brother? Then go home and be quiet till you do! At least, do not come into the pulpit until you know what your Lord would have you say. Woe to the man who lets the smoke of undried wood come from off his hearth and blow into poor seekers’ eyes! We need live coals from off the altar—and the less doubt-smoke the better!

Where a man has evidently been with God to learn His Truth and has been baptized into the everlasting spirit of that truth and, therefore, speaks what he knows and testifies what he has seen in the fear of the living God, there is a savor about his witness and the saints discern it gladly. This holy savor cannot be imitated or borrowed! It must come of personal assurance. It is a holy thing and the composition thereof is known only to the great Giver of all spiritual gifts, the Lord, Himself. It is a holy anointing oil which comes not of man’s flesh and is far removed from all carnality. It never comes on any man except as it descends from Him who is “the Head,” and so drops even to the skirts of His garments. From Christ, alone, the true anointing comes, and blessed is he who is made partaker with Him.

Very well, then, as food without savor is an evil and undesirable sort of food, so is all Christian teaching unacceptable if it lack the savor of Christ and of devotion. Another matter goes to make up sweet savor in a discourse, and that is a savor of experience. You used to delight in those men because they had tasted and tested the doctrines which they preached. The younger Brothers were somewhat at a discount because, you said, “That good Brother speaks fluently, but he cannot have experienced so much as the man of God under whom I have now sat for many years.” You prefer to have the Truth of God spoken to you by one who has felt for himself the renewing, upholding and comforting power of Divine Grace.

And I cannot blame you for your liking. If the preacher has done business on great waters, in deep soul trouble, or personal affliction, so much the better for you. If he is one who loves much because much has been forgiven him, so much the better for you. If he is a man conscious of his own infirmity and weakness, who speaks humbly of himself as out of the very dust, though he speaks confidently the word from Heaven, so much the better for you! Such experience puts a kind of spice into the food which he presents to you. It is so in all our communications one to another. We do not speak with certainty of edification unless we speak of what we have, ourselves, enjoyed.

I have been greatly benefited by hearing an aged blind man stand up and tell of the faithfulness of God to himself. I have been much encouraged, at times, by hearing a poor but gracious woman near to the gates of death telling with tears in her eyes of the goodness of the Lord to her. Testimonies from such people have weight in them. These people do not play at religion! Poor and tried people; people with aches and pains; people who have none of this world’s comforts; people on the borders of the grave tell us of the great Father’s love—and when they do so, there is great force of conviction in their testimony. We attach weight to every word they say because their experience is taken into consideration.

I never heard a man who spoke more to my soul than dear Mr. George Mueller. The sermon that I heard from him was like an address to a Sunday school, it was so simple and unadorned. But then there was the man behind it—that simple-hearted child of God who has believed the promises and has gone on doing wonders such as astonish all beholders! That man has no more doubt about God’s answering his prayers than he has about two times two making four—why should he have? He acts out the Truth of God which he has received—why shouldn’t he? Entertaining no modern questions and no ancient questions, either, he triumphs by knowing the Truth of God and living the Truth of God, and rejoicing in the Truth of God! Such a man is a pattern and example to us all. And there is a precious savor in what he utters because he speaks experimentally of Truths which he has carried out in his own life.

Thus three things help to make up savor in sermons— Christ as the doctrine, devotion as the spirit and experience as adding weight to testimony. But these three things are not the whole of it. There is a sacred something—it is not nameless, for I will name it, by-and-by—it is a heavenly influence which comes into man, but which has no name among the things that belong to men. This sacred influence pervades the speaker, flavoring his matter and governing his spirit—while, at the same time, it rests upon the hearer so that he finds his mind awake, his faculties attentive, his heart stirred. Under this mysterious influence the hearer’s spirit is in a receptive condition and, as he hears the Truth of God, it sinks into his soul as snowflakes drop into the sea. He finds himself warmed, cheered, comforted and stirred up as fainting men are apt to be when refreshed after a long fast.

Now, what is this? From where comes this savor? In a word, it comes of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit bears witness with the Word of God upon the quickened heart and conscience of the people of God—and that Word of God becomes life, light and power to them. All this we greatly need! And if we have it not, what shall we do? I have often trembled as I have come to preach here lest I should have to speak among you without the help of the Divine Spirit. It would be much better to be silent. I could almost wish that we had the liberty of our Quaker friends just to sit still until we feel that we are moved to speak, for sometimes we might do better to wait without a spoken word for the hour and a half rather than for one of us to talk without the guidance of the Spirit of God!

Pray much, Beloved, that there may be a great deal of dew about—that heavenly showers may fall on us and on all the Churches of God! Let our belief in the Holy Spirit never become a mere compliment which we feel bound to pay Him, but in deep and reverent sincerity may we acknowledge that He is the great Worker in the Church—the real actor and doer of the wondrous works of quickening, saving and comforting! Let us wait upon Him with lowly spirits, feeling that we can do nothing without Him, but that if He is with us then all is well. Take away from any preaching or any teaching Christ as the subject, devotion as the spirit, experience as the strength of testimony—and the Holy Spirit as being All in All—and you have removed all the savor!

And what is left? What can we do with a savorless Gospel? “Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt? Is there any taste in the white of an egg?” They said of a Brother, the other day, that he liked savory doctrine. “He had a sweet tooth,” they said. It was said in scorn, but if there is anything to be scoffed at in that matter, I desire to be a partaker in the reproach, for I have a sweet tooth, myself! I like such books as have savor in them and I declare to you that whatever scorn it brings upon me, I think that the majority of modern books seem to me to be fit for nothing but to be burned! The old theology has the sweetness and the savor in it which the people of God delight in and I, for one, mean to stick to it, for I cannot eat the white of your eggs—I cannot endure your unsavory meat!

I must hear of the electing love and Covenant purpose of the Father— this is savory meat such as my soul loves! I must have teaching that is full of Christ, the Doctrines of Grace and the Holy Spirit, or my soul will die of famine! This is my first head.

II. Our second remark is this. I find a rendering given to the text, which, if it is not absolutely accurate, nevertheless states an important truth, namely, that THAT WHICH IS UNSAVORY FROM NEED OF SALT MUST NOT BE EATEN. I shall only mention this second head as a note of caution. A word to the wise suffices. There is a great deal in this world which is unsavory for lack of salt. I mean in common conversation. Alas, it is easy to meet with people—even people wearing the Christian name— whose conversation has not a particle of salt in it. Nothing that tends to edification is spoken by them. Their talk has an abundance of gaiety, but no Grace in it. They exhibit any amount of frivolity, but no godliness.

In other conversation there is weighty information and solid upon common matters, but there is a lack of that spirit which God’s people desire to live in, for the Lord Jesus is forgotten. Someone said to me, the other day, “When we were young people, we knew many good old folk who used to meet together and talk about the Lord Jesus Christ by the hour together. And we used to sit and wonder whether we should ever join in such talk as that. But where do you hear it now?” So I said to him, “I hope that we can hear it in a great many places.” He said, “I do not meet with it. I find that the ordinary talk among professors has not much in it for the helping of souls onward towards Heaven.” I do not profess to form a judgment on this matter, but I will say this—it is a great pity if holy conversation is a scarce commodity—and it is well for you and for me to get away from that conversation which does not benefit us. If there is no salt in conversation, it will be unsavory to a true Christian spirit, and the less he has of it, the better.

Again, there is some talk in the world—I hope not among professors— which has no salt in it even of common morality and, consequently, it corrupts and becomes impure and obnoxious. Old Trapp says, somewhat roughly, that it is full of maggots and that is, perhaps, what Job meant. That is to say, many persons use coarse allusions and evil suggestions—to such things shut your ears! Things are often said which sparkle, but the flash is born of decay. The wit which owes its pungency to sin is of the devil. The brilliance which comes of corruption is not for holy eyes. Oh, child of God, never tolerate it in your company! If it is not in your power to stop evil communications, remove yourself out of their reach. It is not for us to associate with those whose lips are cankered with lascivious words.

We have enough within these gunpowder hearts to make us afraid to go near the forge when the sparks are flying about. Let us keep ourselves from ever permitting corrupt communication to proceed out of our own lips—that would be horrible, indeed. Let us avoid all company in which the purity of a renewed heart would be in danger of taint. Yet I fear that in our daily avocations we shall have grave cause to watch against the things which are unsavory and corrupt, for the preserving salt is not so abundantly used in these days as it ought to be.

Now, the same thing is true, not only of common conversation, but of a great deal of modern teaching. Have nothing to do with teaching that is tainted with heresy, Brothers and Sisters! If a man’s discourse has not salt enough in it to keep false doctrine out of it, it is not the kind of food for you. Clean provender is not so scarce that you need to eat carrion. Some like their meat rather high and there are hearers who are inclined to a preacher who has a sniff of heresy about him. But, as for us, our taste conducts us where salt is found. Where Grace is lacking we are not eager to be feeding! The banquets of the Truth of God need not be supplemented by the tables of error. But I shall not dwell upon this because I require all my time for the third head.

III. The third point is that THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS IN THE WORLD WHICH NEED SOMETHING ELSE WITH THEM. “Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?” There are many things in this world which we cannot tolerate by themselves—they need seasoning. One of the first of these may read us a lesson of prudence, that is, reproof. It is a Christian duty to reprove a Brother who is in a sin—we should speak to him with all gentleness and quietness—that we may prevent his going farther into evil and lead him back to the right way.

But will you please remember, Brothers and Sisters, that the giving of reproofs is delicate work and needs a delicate hand. It was said of good Andrew Fuller that frequently he gave a rebuke so severely that it reminded you of one who saw a fly upon his Brother’s forehead and seized a sledge hammer to knock it off. It is the habit of some Brethren to do everything forcibly. But in this case one needs more love than vigor, more prudence than warmth, more Grace than energy. Some persons have a very quick eye for the faults of others and they have a ready tongue to descant upon them when they perceive them—to all which they add a tendency to exaggerate the importance of the fault.

Now, these Brethren always reprove in a wrong way. Listen. One of them cries—“Come here, Brother! Come here. Let me take that beam out of your eye.” The aforesaid “beam” is really only a gnat and the Brother who is addressed becomes indignant at such injustice and will not have his eye touched at all. Why destroy your own influence by such unwisdom? If the gnat can be removed, well and good. But if you will ruin the eye in the process, would it not be better to leave it alone? We have known persons who, to spread the Truth of God, have killed love, which is the Truth of God’s life. They wish to set a Brother right in doctrine and, in order that his sight may be clearer, they knock his eyes out and call it “controversy.”

It is one thing to be “valiant for the truth,” and quite another thing to be bitter for your own opinion. Rebuke, however kindly you put it, and however prudently you administer it, will always be an unsavory thing! Therefore, salt it well. Think over it. Pray over it. Mix kindness with it. Rub the salt of brotherly love into it. Speak with much deference to your erring friend and use much tenderness, because you are not faultless yourself. Speak acknowledging all the excellences and virtues of your Brother which may, after all, be greater than your own. And try, if you can, to wrap up what you have to say in gentle words of praise for something else in which the friend excels. Express the rebuke in one of your Master’s sentences, if you can find one that will exactly fit. Give your patient the pill silver-coated with gentleness—it will be received the more willingly and have none the less efficacy.

If you speak unkindly, the reproved one may turn round upon you in anger. And if you ask him why he is angry, he may answer, “Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?” Do not expect your neighbor to eat your eggs without salt! Do not expect him to receive your words of rebuke without the true kindness of voice and spirit which will act as salt. Be not silent about sin, but be not harsh in your rebuke of it. Savor your admonitions with affection and may the Lord make them acceptable to those who need them.

Now, for other matters which many people do not like by themselves. I mean the Doctrines of the Gospel. The true Doctrines of the Gospel never were popular and never will be, but there is no need for any of us to make them more distasteful than they naturally are. The human heart especially revolts at the Sovereignty of Divine Grace. Man is a king, so he thinks, and when he hears of another King, he straightway grows rebellious. Man would have God bound hand and foot to give His mercy as man likes—and when the Lord defies the bond and declares, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” man burns with wrath!

When the Lord says, “It is not of him that wills or of him that runs, but of God who shows mercy,” man is up in arms! He will not tolerate the Divine prerogative. It becomes us who preach this doctrine to take care that we do not add needless offensiveness to it. Not one of the Doctrines of Grace is palatable to natural man. He does not like the truth of Total Depravity. Over that he grows exceedingly angry. He calls it a libel upon the nobility of human nature. I have often read of human nature as a noble thing, but I am sorry to say that I have never seen it in that aspect. I am told that our fallen nature is sublime and that we defame mankind when we speak of them as altogether fallen and say, “There is none that does good, no, not one.” It is little wonder that this is unsavory to carnal pride!

As to the doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone, Mrs. Toogood stamps her foot at such teaching—is she to be none the better for all her good works? Mr. Good-Enough gnashes his teeth at the idea that human merits cannot save! He cannot endure to hear that we must be saved by faith in Jesus Christ and that the most moral and excellent need Christ just as much as the most depraved and abandoned! Carnal minds have no taste for the Gospel—they rave against the system of theology that glorifies God! Man wants to be the great MAN and he would have God to be the little god and then he will be satisfied. But if God is set on high as being All in All, then straightway many are offended.

Brothers and Sisters, since we need people to receive these doctrines, what must we do? We must mix an abundance of salt with them! If the Gospel is distasteful, we must add flavoring to it. What shall it be? We cannot do better than flavor it with holiness! Where there is a holy life, men cannot easily doubt the principles out of which it springs. If it is so that men and women are kindly, generous, tender, affectionate, upright, truthful, Christ-like because of the doctrines they hold, then the world begins to think that there must be truth in those doctrines! The evangelical school must always draw its strongest arguments, first, from the Gospel and, next, from the lives of its believers—and if we cannot point to those who profess this faith as being famous for holiness—what will the world say?

In former ages, holy living has been our battle-ax and weapons of war. Look at the Puritan age. To this day it is the stumbling-block of infidelity! In these times it is very common to laugh at the Puritans and to say that their faith is worn out and that we have got beyond their teaching. And yet the very same men who say this cannot read Carlyle’s writings without marveling at Oliver Cromwell and the great men who trooped around him. Do they never say to themselves, “Upon what meat did these men feed that they have grown so great?” They cannot turn to the lives of the Puritans without reading how they saturated all England with godliness, till, as you passed down Cheapside in the morning, you would have noticed that there was scarcely a single house in which the blinds were not drawn down because the inhabitants were at family prayer!

The whole land felt the force of the Truth of God and righteousness through these men—these poor, benighted, foolish Puritans whom our boys fresh from college call by names. In their contests for the Truth of God, the Puritans were as mighty as Cromwell’s Ironsides in the days of battle when they drove the foe before them like chaff before the wind! Then there followed an age of driveling in which our Non-conformity existed—but gradually dwindled down, first into Arminianism and then into Unitarianism—until it almost ceased to be. Men know that it was so and yet they would act it all over again! They read history and yet demand that the old Doctrines of Grace should again be given up—and the experiment be tried again of starving our churches with human philosophies. Oh, fools and slow of heart! Will not history teach them?

No, it will not if the Bible does not. If they hear not Christ and His Apostles, neither will they believe even though another Unitarian ghost should pass before their eyes. Surely evil days are near unless the Church shall again clasp the Truths of God to her heart! But I diverge. The point I had in hand was this—that in the case of the Puritans, their doctrines were rendered respectable and forceful by their glorious lives—and it must be so now. Holy living must salt our doctrines! We must be like Christ that men may believe what we have to say about Christ!

Now, a third egg which cannot be eaten without salt is affliction. Afflictions are very unsavory things. I think I hear one say, “I should not mind any affliction except the one which now oppresses me.” Brother, you speak as other foolish Brethren have done before you! This has been my language in my turn! Somebody sitting next to you would not mind your affliction at all—at least that is what he thinks! He thinks it is his own cross which is so galling. The loads borne by people in yonder street have no great weight for you. But if you had to carry a sack of flour, yourself, the sack would prove very heavy. We all know the weight of our own burden and we underestimate that of others. People in trouble know where their own shoe pinches—yet other people’s shoes pinch, too—and other people’s crosses are weighty. “No affliction for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous.”

Afflictions are unsavory meat. What is to be done with them, then? Why, let us salt them, if we can. Salt your affliction with patience and it will make a royal dish! By Grace, like the Apostle, we shall, “glory in tribulations also.” Look at those who endure constant infirmities. Do you know any? I do. A dear Sister has been blind many years and yet I do not know a happier woman than she. She has more visions of joy than the most of us, though her eyes are closed to the light of the sun. I know a Brother in the ministry who has lost his sight almost entirely, but he preaches more sweetly than he ever did! He has become a seer in our Israel, enjoying a depth of insight into the Truths of God which few possess. Truly the lame take the prey!

Some that are deaf hear the voice of their Master better than others. And so infirmities become things to glory in, since more of Christ’s power rests upon us. It is so when the Lord gives Grace to the poor man and he becomes content with his lot. Has he not far greater joy than the rich man who still craves for more? Many of God’s poor prisoners in the martyr days were happier in prison than they ever were out of it. In the days of the Covenanters, when they worshipped God on the bleak hill or by the moss side, the Lord was specially near to them. When those times had passed away and they went to plenty and sat with the congregation undisturbed, they said, “Ah, man, the Lord was not here today as He was out on the brae and on the hillside.” The Master was transfigured before His disciples among the mists of the glens. Then He wore no veil over His face, but He revealed Himself so clearly that the sanctuary among the hills was none other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven!

The Lord salted their afflictions with His Presence and with the abundant power of the Holy Spirit—and so they enjoyed a sweet savor in them. It is even thus with you and me—

*“I can do all things, or can bear  
All sufferings if my Lord is there.  
Sweet pleasures mingle with the pains,  
While His left hand my head sustains.”*

There now, Brother, do not go on eating that egg without salt! No longer say to yourself, “Here is nothing but the white, with no taste in it. I cannot bear to eat such loathsome food.” Put the salt in, Brother! Put the salt in, Sister! Have you been forgetting that salt? Have you failed to ask the Lord for Grace equal to your day? Grace to see that “all things work together for good to them that love God”? Be forgetful no longer, but throw in a pinch of salt! Then the tasteless thing will go down comfortably enough and you will bless the name of the Lord for it.

I will not detain you longer to speak about persecution, though that is another unsavory article with which salt of consolation is much to be desired. But, lastly, there is the thought of death. Is not death an unsavory thing in itself? The body dreads dissolution and corruption and the mind starts back from the prospect of quitting the warm precincts of this house of clay and going into what seems a cold, rarefied region where the shivering spirit flits naked into untried mystery. Who likes to sit down and think of his last hour—the corpse, the coffin and the shroud? The spade, the mattock and the falling clods make poor music for happy minds! Who cares for morgues?

Oh, but dear Friends, thoughts of death, when they are salted, are among the richest, daintiest things that ever come to the Believer’s table! What is it to die? Is it not to end our pilgrimage and come to the place where the many mansions are? Is it not to quit the storm-tossed seas for the Fair Havens where all is forever bliss? Death strips the soul of its garments and, by itself, this seems a trying process—but season it well and you will long for evening in order to undress that you may rest with God! Salt it well and you will almost grow impatient of your length of days and look for your last hours as children do for their holidays when they may go home!. Salt it well and your heart will grow like hers whose husband tarries away and she reckons how long it will be before he will come home, again, to her house and to her heart!

You will cry, “Why are His chariots so long in coming?” I have known saints to salt their thoughts of death until they were transfigured into visions of Heaven and they began to drink of that wine of the Kingdom which the Beloved will drink new with us in the day of His appearing! Oh, happy spirits who can do this! “What salt,” you ask, “shall I mingle with my thoughts of death?” Why the thought that you cannot die! Because He lives, you shall live, also! Add to it the persuasion that though you are dead, you shall yet live. Thoughts of the Resurrection and the swinging open of the pearly gates and of your entrance there! Thoughts of the vision of the Well-Beloved’s face! Thoughts of the glory that shall be yours forever and ever at His own right hand! These are the things with which to savor your meditations among the tombs.

As for you that are not in Christ, you must eat this unsavory meat and there will be no salt with it. I see you put it away from you. You say, “No, I do not mean to think of death.” Oh, Man, but you will have to die, and it may be soon. Oh, Woman, you will have to die—the seeds of death are now in your bosom. As surely as you live, you will have to die! And after death, the judgment. This is the meat which will be laid in your dish and there will be no leaving it. This is the white of the egg and you must even down with it, whether you will or not! It has no taste which your palate can enjoy. It has no savor about it but that of fear. Ah, when your conscience awakes, what will you do with the burning thought that, dying, you must go where hope can never come?

O Soul, if you pass out of this world as you are, you can never see the face of God with joy! You will be driven from His Presence and from the glory of His power to experience what it means—“Where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched.” They say that everlasting does not mean everlasting. What then? Are the righteous to perish after a while? In these two sentences the same word must mean the same thing—“These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” If eternal life lasts forever, so must eternal punishment!

When the righteous cease to be, the wicked will cease to be. When the godly cease their joy, the ungodly will cease their misery—but not till then! That is unsavory meat for you. The Lord help you to salt it, even now, by believing in Jesus and so finding eternal salvation. Amen.

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÷Job 7.1

THE HAND OF GOD IN THE HISTORY OF A MAN  
NO. 1258

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 10 1875, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?”  
Job 7:1.**

I WAS settling myself down yesterday to meditate upon the Word of God and to prepare my mind to preach the Gospel to you today, when, all of a sudden I had my subject marked out for me by a mournful messenger, for the Angel of Death pointed to it with his finger. There came into my chamber an honored elder of this Church, who in broken accents told me, “Our beloved Brother, Henry Olney, is dead.” He is my near neighbor and I was in his house so lately that I could not believe the news. It seems that when he left the City at noon he felt a severe rheumatic pain in his shoulder, and on reaching home he sent for a doctor, who prescribed a slight remedy and advised him to lie down. He did so, and with a gasp or two, he expired.

A man in the prime of life and apparently in full vigor of health, he went to his business for the last time that morning and returned to die. The blow has fallen so suddenly that I am stunned and staggered by it, nor do I think that either of his three brothers, whose familiar faces we miss this morning, have yet recovered from the amazement caused by the stroke. Many around me were with him so short a time since that it is hard to believe one’s own eyes and feel sure that there he lies, a cold corpse, motionless upon the bed. But, oh, my Brothers and Sisters, how true it is that in the midst of life we are in death! And those who often die first are they who least expected to go. If I had said to you this morning that our Brother, William Olney, was gone, you would have said, “We are grieved at our loss, but we do not wonder, for he has been long sick.”

But here, the strong and stalwart brother, who ailed nothing, has been taken away, while, thank God, the languishing invalid is still spared to us. Thus do they remain who expected to depart, and they depart who expected to remain. Who among us can reckon upon a single hour? We talk of being living men—let us correct ourselves and feel, from this moment on, that we are dying men, whose every breath brings us nearer to the grave! We are and are not. We walk in a vain show and are disquieted in vain. We are unsubstantial as the shadows of the flying clouds which on a summer’s day flit over the face of the field and are gone!

When I look at that seat where our departed friend sat for years, the Lord seems to have come very near to us. I could almost take my shoes off in awful consciousness of His terrible Presence. We can no longer think of the Lord as far away in Heaven. He has been among us—He who touches

the hills and they smoke has set His eyes upon our Brother, and lo, he is not! Let me put it in a gentler manner—our Lord came into His garden to gather lilies and His hand has been filled to our sorrow. When our heavenly Father comes so near to us and in so solemn a manner, let us ask Him why He contends with us. Let us, in solemn reverence, approach Him that we may hear His answer and may be obedient to His Word.

The flower of the field stands amid the grass, unconscious that the mower’s scythe is busy, and though swath after swath has fallen beneath the pitiless stroke, the flower smiles gaily! It cares not for its associates in the same field and reckons not of its own speedy fall. Its leaves are wet with dew and its colors are bright in the sun. It mourns not for its fellows, but rejoices in unconsciousness of all that happens around it. In this respect you are not as the grass of the field, but are endowed with understanding, so that you are able to be instructed, or at least, warned, by the fall of those around you.

The sheep in their folds remark not that their fellows are taken away to the slaughter. The cattle graze in the meadows in happy ignorance that death is all around. You, however, are not “dumb, driven cattle.” To you it is given to know your own mortality—and you cannot suffer your comrades to be taken away, one after another so rapidly, without feeling emotion and gathering wisdom. You will hear the rod and Him that has appointed it, and this morning you will ask Divine Grace that the dead may be your schoolmasters and yourselves the scholars who cry, “So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

As best I shall be able, this morning, I shall try and teach you, by the help of God’s Spirit, one lesson. It is this—Divine appointment rules human life. And when we have learned that lesson, we shall, in the second place, draw inferences from this Truth of God.

I. First, then, let us consider a Truth of God which, I trust, none of us have ever denied, but have heartily accepted ever since we have been Believers. THERE IS A DIVINE APPOINTMENT RULING ALL HUMAN LIFE. Not that I single out man’s existence as the sole object of Divine forethought, for I believe it to be but one little corner of illimitable Providence. A Divine appointment arranges every event, minute or magnificent!. As we look out on the world from our quiet room, it appears to be a mass of confusion. He who studies history and forgets God might think that he was looking out on chaos, for events seem flung together in terrible disarray, and the whole scene is as darkness itself, without any order.

Events happen which we deeply deplore—incidents which appear to bring evil, and only evil—and we wonder why they are permitted. The picture before us, to the glance of reason, looks like a medley of color with dark shades where lights seemed necessary, and glowing color where we might have looked for masses of black. Human affairs are a maze of which we cannot discover the clue. The world appears to be a tangled mess and we weary ourselves with vain endeavors to disentangle it. But, Brethren, the affairs of this world are neither tangled, nor confused, nor perplexing to Him who sees the end from the beginning. To Him all things are in due course and order, and before Him all forces keep rank and file. God is in all and rules all!

In the least as well as in the greatest, Jehovah’s power is manifested. He guides the grain of dust in the March wind and the comet in its immeasurable pathway. He steers each drop of spray which is beaten back from the face of the rock and He leads forth Arcturus with his sons. God is the dictator of destinies and appoints both means and ends. He is the King of kings, ruling rulers and guiding counselors. Alike in the crash of battle and in the hush of peace, in the desolation of pestilence and famine, and in the joy of abounding harvests, He is Lord! He does according to His will, not only in the army of Heaven, but among the inhabitants of this lower world. Yon fiery steeds, which dash so terribly along the highway of time, are not careering madly—there is a Charioteer whose almighty hands have held the reins for ages—and will never let them go!

Things are not in the hurry-burly which we imagine, but driven onward by a power which is irresistible. They are under law to God, and speed onward without deviation towards the goal which He designs. All is well, Brothers and Sisters! It is night, but the Watchman never sleeps, and Israel may rest in peace. The tempest rages, but it is well, for our Captain is governor of storms! He who trod the waves of the Galilean lake is at the helm and, at His bidding, winds and waves are quiet. Our main point is that God rules mortal life and He does so, first, as to its term—“Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?” He rules it, secondly, as to its warfare, for so the text might most properly be read—“Is there not an appointed warfare for man upon earth?” And, thirdly, He rules it as to its service, for the second clause of the text is, “Are not his days as the days of an hireling?”

First, then, God’s determination governs the time of human life. We shall all acknowledge this as to its commencement. Not without infinite wisdom did any infant’s life commence then and there, for no man is the offspring of chance. Not without a world of kindness did your life commence, dear Friend, just where and when it did. Our child’s little hymn, in which he thanks God that he was not “born a little slave to labor in the sun,” contains a good deal of truth in it. A man’s whole life is mainly guided by its commencement—had we been born as thousands are where God was never known, we might have been idolaters at this hour!

Who would wish to have first seen the light at the era when our naked forefathers sacrificed to idols? Who would wish to have stepped upon the stage of life amid the dense darkness of popery, when our childish hands would have been lifted up by superstitious parents in adoration of the Virgin Mary, and we should have been taught to worship some bone fragment or rotten rug, superstitiously believed to be a relic of a saint? ‘Tis no small thing to have been born in the nineteenth century, when works of Grace are to be seen on every side! Many of us should bless the Lord every day because in infancy we lay upon a Christian woman’s bosom and were lulled to sleep with the sound of holy hymns of which the name of Jesus was the theme!

Our tiny feet were taught to run in the ways of righteousness, as far as parental instruction could effect the same, and this was no insignificant advantage. Blessed are the eyes which see the things which we see and hear the things which we hear! All this is by the appointment of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Our presence on earth in this day of Grace was a matter altogether beyond our control, and yet it involves infinite issues—therefore let us, with deepest gratitude, bless the Lord, who has cast our lot in such an auspicious season.

The continuance of life is equally determined by God. He who fixed our birth has measured the interval between the cradle and the grave, and it shall not be a day longer or a day shorter than the Divine decree. How many times your lungs shall heave and your pulses beat have been fixed by the eternal calculator from of old. What reflections ought to arise out of this! How willing we should be to labor on, even if we are weary, since God appoints our day and will not over-weary us, for He is no hard taskmaster!

How glad we ought to be, even, to suffer if the Lord so ordains it. It is sweet music, that God draws forth from patient sufferers, and though the strings have to be painfully tightened every now and then with many a grief and pang to us, yet if those dear hands of the Chief Musician can fetch out richer melody from those tightened strings, who among us would wish to have it otherwise, or ask to have the harp withdrawn from that beloved Harper’s hand before the wondrous strain is over?

No, let us wait, for He appoints. If our griefs were the offspring of chance, we might pine to have them ended, but if the loving Lord appoints, we would not hurry Him in His processes of love. Let the Lord do what seems good to Him. Here is good cheer for those who have lain so long upon the bed of pain and who are apt to ask—“Will it never end? O Lord, will the chariots of salvation never come? Have the angels quite forgotten Your servant in his sickness? Must he forever remain a prisoner under his infirmity, loneliness and decay? Have You placed me as a sentinel to stand upon my watchtower through a night which will never end? And shall I never be relieved from my weary guard? Shall I never know rest? Must I forever peer into the dark with these eyes so red with weeping?”

Courage, Brother! Courage, Sister, the Lord, the Ever Merciful, has appointed every moment of your sorrow and every pang of your suffering. If He ordains the number 10, it can never rise to 11, neither should you desire it to shrink to nine. The Lord’s time is best—to a hair’s breadth your span of life is rightly measured. God ordains all—therefore peace, restless spirit, and let the Lord have His way. So, too, has He fixed life’s termination. “Is there not an appointed time for man upon earth?” A time in which the pulse must cease, the blood stagnate and the eyes are closed? Yes, my Brethren, it is of no use for us to indulge any idle dream of living forever here! A time of departure must come to every one of us, unless the Lord, Himself, should appear all of a sudden and then we shall not die, but be changed.

There is no man among us that lives and shall not see death. In this war there is no discharge. Not only do the Scriptures teach us so, but our common sense and reason put the matter beyond all question. What do the gray hairs mean which fall like snow flakes upon our heads? What do that stooping gait and failing strength mean? What do the dimness of the eyes and the tottering of the limbs mean? Do they not all show that the house is about to come down, for the frame and plaster of it are beginning to give way? Yet our earthly house will not fail us till the time ordained of Heaven! There is an appointed time for death and God has fixed how we shall die, when we shall die and where we shall die—

*“Though plagues and deaths around me fly, Till He pleases I cannot die  
Not a single shaft can hit  
Till the God of love sees fit.”*

Diseases eager to slay are in ambush all around us, but none of their swords can come at us till Jehovah gives them leave. Behold, the Lord shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust, nor shall nightly pestilence nor midday destruction make you afraid—

*“What, though a thousand at your side  
At your right hand ten thousand died,  
Our God, His chosen people saves  
Amongst the dead, amidst the graves.”*

We are immortal till our work is done, but that work will not last forever, and when it is concluded we shall have fulfilled our day and shall receive our summons Home. All this is true. None will venture to dispute it, but let us remember that it is true for ourselves at this moment. For you, my Brothers and Sisters, it is true while you sit here. Realize it, and do not look on others as dying men while you, yourselves, are secure of a long life. Be you, also, prepared to meet your God suddenly, for so you may be called to do. This fact is most solemn. We shall not live, but die, and that death may come in an instant. As I saluted my Brothers, this morning, in the vestry, I could not help expressing my pleasure and surprise that any of us were alive, for certainly it was quite as much a wonder that certain of us were alive, as that our friend should be dead.

We might as readily have been taken away as he, and even more readily. God had ordained his death, but He might have ordained ours. “Be you, also, ready; for in such an hour as you think not the Son of Man comes.” Yet this fact, to my mind, is most strengthening. The doctrine of Predestination, when really believed, is like steel medicine. It infuses a deal of iron into the mental system and builds up strong men! I am not such a Predestinarian as Mohammed, who bade his soldiers rush to the fight, “for,” he said, “when your time comes to die you will die at home as well as in the battle, and Paradise is to be found beneath the shadow of swords.” But still I see that while the doctrine makes some men slumber, it is, to nobler souls, a mighty source of energy and a fountain of courage.

If duty calls you into danger—if you have to nurse the sick who are laid low with foul diseases—never shrink, but run all risks if love to God or man demand them of you. You will not die by a stray arrow from Death’s quiver! The Lord, alone, can recall your breath. Your death is not left to chance—it is determined by a heavenly Father’s gracious will—therefore

be not afraid. Be not so fearful of pain, or so anxious to preserve life as to be held back where Jesus calls you, for in such a case he that saves his life shall lose it. You may not be reckless and rush on danger without reason—that were madness—but you will, I trust, be brave and never fear to face death when the voice of God calls you into peril.

Moreover, how consoling is this Truth of God for, if the Father of our Lord Jesus arranges all, then our friends do not die untimely deaths! The beloved of the Lord are not cut off before their time. They go into Jesus’ bosom when they are ready to be received there. God has appointed the times for the gathering in of His fruit. Some of them are sweet, even, in early spring, and He gathers them. Others are as a basket of summer fruit and He takes these, also, while the year is young, while yet another company needs to remain among us till autumn mellows them. Each class shall be gathered in its season. Now of all this we are, by no means, competent judges. We know nothing, for we are infants of a day. God knows best. It were better that our friend should die, as die he did, than that he should live, otherwise he had lived. Be sure of that. Yes, God has appointed the commencement, the continuance and the conclusion of this mortal life.

But we must now consider the other translation of our text. It is generally given in the margin of the Bibles. “Is there not an appointed warfare to man upon earth?” Which teaches us that God has appointed life to be a warfare. To all men it will be so, whether bad or good. Every man will find himself a soldier under some captain or another. Alas, for those men who are battling against God and His Truths—they will, in the end, be clothed with dishonor and defeat. I shall, however, speak mainly of the righteous and, truly, their experience shows that life is one long struggle from which we never cease till we hear the words, “Your warfare is accomplished.”

Brothers and Sisters, life is a warfare and, therefore, we are all men under authority. No Christian is free to follow his own devices. We are all under law to Christ. A soldier surrenders his own will to that of his commander. His captain says to him, “Go,” and he goes, or, “Do this,” and he does it. Such is the Christian’s life—a life of willing subjection to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. In consequence of this we have our place fixed and our order arranged for us—and our life’s relative positions are all prescribed. A soldier has to keep rank and step with the rest of the line. He has a relation to the man on his right, to his comrade on his left. He bears a relation which he must not violate to each officer and, especially, to his commander-in-chief.

God has appointed for you, then, dear Brother, to be a father or to be a son, to be a master or to be a servant, to be a teacher or to be taught. See that you keep your place. As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place. In our appointed warfare happy is the man who, from first to last, keeps in order with the forces of the Lord of Hosts and cheerfully fulfils the Divine purposes. As we have a warfare to accomplish, we must expect hardships. A soldier must not reckon upon ease. During a campaign he has neither house nor home. Perhaps last night he pitched his tent in a happy valley, but he must be up and away, and his tent must, tomorrow, be exposed on the bleak mountain side.

He has renounced the luxuries of life and the joys of repose. Forced marches, light slumbers, scant fare and hard blows are his portion—he would be foolish to look for ease and enjoyment during a campaign. O you sons of men, the Lord has appointed life to be a warfare! Why, then, do you wrap yourselves about with silken garments and sew pillows for your armholes, and say to yourselves, “Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years! Eat, drink and be merry”? You must not do so! And if the Lord, by trial, prevents your doing so, you must not quarrel with Him, but must feel that such treatment must be expected in this war.

If life is a warfare, we must look for contests and struggles. The Christian man must not expect to go to Heaven without opposition. A soldier who never meets an enemy at all is not renowned. We count his valor light and reckon him to be as some vain carpet knight, “whose best delight is but to wear a braid of his fair lady’s hair.” The man who is scarred and gashed, maimed and wounded—he is the hero to whom men pay homage! You must fight if you would reign! Your predecessors swam through seas of blood to win the crown and, though the form of battle may be changed, yet the spirit of the enemy is unaltered! You must still contend against sin and bear up under trouble, for only through much tribulation will you inherit the kingdom of God!

It is a warfare, Brothers and Sisters, for all these reasons and yet more so because we must always be upon the watch against danger. In a battle no man is safe. Where bullets fly, who can reckon upon life for a moment? Brethren, the age is peculiarly dangerous! Perhaps every preacher before me has said as much and every preacher after me will say the same for his times—yet still, I say—in this peculiar age there are a thousand perils for the soul, from superstition on the one hand and skepticism on the other! From rude self-reliance and indolent trust in others, from a wicked world and an apostate church! You must not marvel that it is so, for war is raging! The enemy has not laid down his weapons. The war drum is still beaten, therefore do not lay down your arms, but fight manfully for your King and country—for Christ and for His Church.

Blessed be God that the text says “Is there not an appointed warfare?” Then, Brothers and Sisters, it is not our warfare, but one that God has appointed for us, in which He does not expect us to wear out our armor, or bear our own charges, or find our own rations, or supply our own ammunition! The armor that we wear we have not to construct. The sword we wield we have not to fabricate. All things are ready for us! Our great Captain manages the commissariat with unquestioned skill and unbounded liberality. Yes, the warfare is so much His warfare that He is with us in it! The Greek soldiers, when they marched against the Persians, traversed many a weary league, but that which comforted them and made every man a hero was that Alexander marched when they marched!

If he had been carried luxuriously, like the Persian monarch, while they were toiling over the hills and dales, they might have murmured. If he had been seen to drink of costly wines while they were parched with thirst, they might have complained. But Alexander, like the great commander he

was, marched in the ranks with his soldiers, so that they saw him faint and weary as they were! They saw him wiping the sweat from his brow as they did. And when, as was his due, they brought him the first crystal draught they could obtain, he put it to the side and said, “Give it to the sick soldiers, I will not drink till every man can take a draught.”

O glorious Jesus! Surely You have done the same and more! You have borne resistance even unto blood! You have known toil and agony even to a sweat of gore! Suffering, weakness and self-denial You have drank of, for You saved others, but You could not save Yourself! Courage, Brothers and Sisters, then! Our warfare is of the Lord. Let us go forth to it, conquering and to conquer!

Thirdly. The Lord has also determined the service of our life. All men are servants to some master or another, neither can any of us avoid the servitude. The greatest men are only so much the more the servants of others. The Prime Minister is only the first and most laborious of servants. The yoke upon the neck of the Emperor is heavier than that which galls the shoulders of the serf. Despots are the most in bondage of all men. Happy will it be for us if, through Divine Grace, we have chosen Jesus for our Master and have become His servants for life—then, indeed, we are free, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light—and in learning of Him we shall find rest unto our souls.

If we are now the servants of the Lord Jesus, this life is a set time of a labor and apprenticeship to be worked out. I am bound by solemn indentures to my Lord and Master till my term of life shall run out, and I am right glad to have it so. Jacob, when he had served seven years, was glad to serve seven more for the love of Rachel and we, for love of Jesus, would serve 70 times seven if He desired it! But even then, the longest term of life would have an end, even as ours, also, will. Here below our term is fixed, even as the days of an hireling.

Now, a servant who has let himself out for a term of years has not a moment that he can call his own, nor have any of us, if we are God’s people. We have not a moment, no, not a breath, nor a faculty, nor a farthing that we may honestly reserve. We have transferred ourselves to Jesus Christ forever and we belong wholly to Him. A servant does nothing of his own mind, he does what his master tells him—this also is our condition. We have an appointed service and we receive orders from our Lord, which orders are our Law. A servant has his occupations prescribed. He may have to work indoors or outdoors. He may have to be near the house or far off in the field. He may be sent on errands, or bid to stay at home, but he does not choose his labor or the place of it—he accepts what is chosen for him by his superior. Are we not glad to have it so? Does not our heart say, “anything, everything for Jesus?” That should be our spirit!

The servant, moreover, expects to be sometimes weary and spent, is it not natural? To a servant who applies for your situation and says, “I do not expect to work hard. I want large wages and little work,” you would say, “Yes, there are many of your mind, but I shall not employ one of the sort if I know it.” Your Lord and Master thinks the same. You must expect to toil in His service till you are ready to faint. And then His Grace will renew your strength. A servant knows that his time is limited. If it is weekly service, he knows that his engagement may be closed on Saturday. If he is hired by the month, he knows how many days there are in a month and he expects it to end. If he is engaged the year, he knows the day of the year when his service shall run out.

As for us, we do not know when our term will be complete, but we do know that it will conclude, therefore we would live in view of that conclusion. It is as well that the Lord has not told us when the appointed end will be, or we might have loitered till near the close. But He has left that period unrevealed that we may be always laboring and waiting for His coming. None the less, it is sure that there is an appointed time and our work will come to an end. The hireling expects his wages—that is one reason for his industry. We, too, expect ours—not of debt, truly, but of Grace—still a gracious reward. God does not employ servants without paying them wages, as many of our merchants now do. They are His own children and, therefore, they would be glad enough to serve without a hope of wage, but that is not God’s way. He prefers that they, also, should have “respect unto the recompense of reward.”

While the child’s relationship shall be carried out with blessed liberality, so shall the servant’s relation, too, and wages shall be liberally given. Let us look forward, Brothers and Sisters, let us look forward to the Great Day when the Master shall call His servants together and give them their wages! The reward, if it were of debt, would be a very scanty one, and, in fact, it would be none at all, for we are unprofitable servants. But, the wages being of Grace, there is room for giving every man his penny—room for giving to us exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think!

There I leave the subject of service—it is all appointed for us, let us fulfill it.  
II. Secondly, and briefly, THE INFERENCES TO BE DRAWN FROM THIS FACT. First, there is Job’s inference. Job’s inference was that as there was only an appointed time and he was like a servant employed by the year, he might be allowed to wish for life’s speedy close and therefore he says—“As a servant earnestly desires the shadow, and as an hireling looks for the reward of his work.” Job was right, in a measure, but not altogether so. There is a sense in which every Christian may look forward to the end of life with joy and expectancy and may pray for it. I wish that some Believers were in a state of mind which would fairly admit of their doing so. Many of us can heartily sympathize with the songster who penned the verses beginning—  
*“I would not live always, I ask not to stay Where storm after storm rises dark o’er the way. The few fleeting mornings that dawn on us here Are enough for life’s sorrows, enough for its cheer. Who, who would live always away from his God— Away from yon Heaven, that blissful abode, Where rivers of pleasure flow o’er the bright plains, And the noontide of glory eternally reigns?”*

At the same time, there are necessary modifications to this desire to depart and a great many of them, for, first, it would be a very lazy thing for a servant to be always looking for Saturday night, and to be always sighing and groaning because the days are so long. The man who wants to be off to Heaven before his life’s work is done does not seem, to me, to be quite the man that is likely to go there at all! He that is fit to go there and serve God is one who is willing to stop here and do the same! Besides, while our days are like those of a hireling, we serve a better Master than other servants do. There are employers of such a kind that servants might be very glad never to see their faces any more. They are so sharp, so acid, so domineering.

But our Master is Love itself. Blessed be His name, His service is perfect freedom! We are never so happy and never so truly helping ourselves as when we are altogether serving Him. For my part, I can say of Him that I love my Master, I love His service, I love His house, I love His children and I love everything about Him! And if He were going to discharge me at the end of this life, I would beg Him to let me live here forever, for I could not bear to be dismissed. It is one of my dearest hopes, in going to Heaven, that He will employ me still. Moreover, we are not like other servants, for this reason—we are one with our Master—His brethren, His spouse, His body—and we are under such deep obligation to Him that it is unspeakable joy to work for Him. If He gave us no wages it would be wage enough to be allowed to wait upon Him—

“ **For why, O blessed Jesus Christ,  
Should I not love You well?  
Not for the sake of winning Heaven,  
Or of escaping Hell.”**

But because of Your own sweetness, goodness and dear love to me, ought I not to be Yours forever?

Yes, yes! Under some aspects you might feel that it was better to depart and be with Christ, but from other points of view you see differently and check the wish, so that, like Paul, you are in a strait betwixt the two and you don’t know which to choose. It is a great mercy that the choice does not lie with you! All things are settled for us. Thus you see there are facts which modify Job’s inference and forbid our excessive longing to close life’s weary day. I will tell you the devil’s inference. The devil’s inference is that if our time, warfare and service are appointed, there is no need to care and we may cast ourselves down from the pinnacle of the temple, or do any other rash thing, for we shall only work out our destiny. So argues the arch-enemy, though he knows better.

How many men have drawn most damnable conclusions from most blessed Truths of God! And these men know, when they are doing it, that their conclusions are absurd. “Oh,” they say, “we need not turn to Christ, for if we are ordained to eternal life we shall be saved.” Yes, Sirs, but why will you eat at mealtime today? Why do you eat at all? For if you are to live you will live. Why go to bed tonight? If you are ordained to sleep you will sleep. Why will you take down your shop shutters tomorrow and exhibit your goods and try to sell them? If you are predestinated to be rich you will be rich.

Ah, I see, you will not act the thing out. You are not such fools as you look! You are more knaves than fools, and your excuse is a piece of deceit. If it is not so, why not act upon it in daily life? He has a false heart who dares to suck out of the blessed Truth of Predestination the detestable inference that he may sit still and do nothing! Why, Sirs, nothing in the world more nerves me for work than the belief that God’s purposes have appointed me to this service! Being convinced that the eternal forces of Immutable Wisdom and unfailing power are at my back, I put forth all my strength as becomes a “worker together with God.”

The bravest men that ever lived, like Cromwell and his Ironsides, believed in God’s decrees, but they also kept their powder dry. They relied upon everlasting purposes, but also believed in human responsibility, and so must you and I. Your years are appointed, but do not commit lewdness or drink with the drunk, or you will shorten your days. Your warfare is appointed, O Man, but do not go and play the fool, or your troubles will be multiplied! Your service is allotted you, O Believer, but do not loiter, or you will grieve the Spirit of God and mar your work.

I will now give you the sick man’s inference—“Is there not an appointed time to men upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?” The sick man, therefore, concludes that his pains will not last forever and that every suffering is measured out by Divine Love. Truly, disease is a bitter draught, but Jehovah Rophi often prescribes it as a medicine for spiritual disease. When the Lord knows that the appointed affliction has worked out all His purpose He will either raise up the patient to walk among the sons of men, again, or else He will take him to His bosom in Glory. Let him be patient, therefore, and in confidence and quietness shall be his strength.

Next comes the mourner’s inference—one which we do not always draw quite so readily as we should. It is this—“My child has died, but not too soon. My husband is gone, ah, God, what shall I do? Where shall my widowed heart find sympathy? Still he has been taken away at the right time. The Lord has done as it pleased Him and He has done wisely.” If you have not yet come to mourning over the dead, but have everyday to sympathize with a living sufferer who is gradually melting away amidst wearisome pain and constant anguish, ask Grace to enable you to feel, “It is well.” It is a grand triumph of Grace when the heart is neither stoic, unsympathetic, nor rebellious—when you can grieve but not rebel in the grieving, mourn without murmuring—and sorrow without sinning. Pray for some who have this trial. Pray for them that Grace may be perfect in their weakness.

Furthermore, let us draw the healthy man’s inference. Do you know what inference I have drawn from the sudden death of my friend? I thought—in a moment it struck me—“Ah, if I had died last Saturday afternoon instead of Mr. Henry Olney, should I have left all the concerns that I have in hand quite in order?” I have no end of business— a great deal too much—and I resolved, “I will get all square and in order as if I were going off, for perhaps I am.” Dear Brothers and Sisters, I want you to feel the same. You are healthy, but be prepared to die. Have your will

made and your accounts squared and fit for your successor to take up.

What you do, do quickly! Have your will made and if you are wealthy, do not forget the Lord’s work. Mr. Whitfield used to say, “I could not sleep at night if I had left my gloves out of their place, for,” he said, “I would leave everything in order.” Trim the ship, Brothers and Sisters, for you know not what weather is coming. Clear the decks for action, for no one knows when the last enemy will be in sight. Your best Friend is coming, make ready for His entertainment. Be as a bride adorned for her husband, and not as a slovenly woman, ashamed to be seen. Lastly, there is the sinner’s inference. “My time, my warfare and my service are appointed, but what have I done in them? I have waged a warfare against God and have served in the pay of the devil, what will the end be?”

Sinner, you will run your length. You will fulfill your day to your black master. You will fight his battle and earn your pay, but what will the wages be? The end comes and the wage-paying—are you ready to reap what you have sowed? Having taken sides with the devil against yourself and against your God, are you prepared for the result? Look to it, I pray you, and beseech the Lord, through Jesus Christ, to give you Grace to escape from your present position and enlist on the side of Christ. I ask you, Sirs, who are sitting in this gallery and who have not believed in Jesus— and you men and women all over this building who are unregenerate—if, instead of the decease of the Brother who has fallen I had to speak of your death, where must you have been?

If you had died in sin, we are not among those who would have read a hypocritical service over you and thanked God that you were taken! We would not have insulted the Most High by saying that we, ourselves, hoped to die in that fashion! We dare not so have blasphemed the Majesty of Heaven! You know we should have laid you into the grave very silently with many a tear more salty than usual, because deep down in our spirit there would have been that dreary thought, “He died impenitent. He died unregenerate. He is lost! He is lost!” Weep not for our Brother, dead in his prime, whose children mourn him! Weep not for him, though his sorrowing wife bends over his corpse and cannot persuade herself that his spirit is gone!

Weep not for him, but weep for those who have died and are lost forever, driven from the Presence of God! In their eternal warfare there will be no discharge! And in their dreadful slavery there will be no end, for there is no appointed time for man when once he leaves this earth! Time is over and the angel who puts one foot upon the sea, and another upon the land, swears by the Eternal that time shall be no more and the condition of the lost spirit is finally settled, settled forever! Beware, therefore, and be wise, for Christ’s sake and your own. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Job 7.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—90, 851, 839. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #2206 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 7.12

“AM I A SEA, OR A WHALE?”  
NO. 2206

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, MAY 31, 1891, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN SAILORS’ SOCIETY, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 7, 1891.

**“Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?” Job 7:12.**

JOB was in great pain when he thus bitterly complained. These moans came from him when his skin was broken and had become loathsome and he sat upon a dunghill and scraped himself with a potsherd. We are amazed at his patience, but we are not amazed at his impatience! He had fits of complaining and failed in that very patience for which he was noted. Where God’s saints are most glorious, there you will find their spots. The weaknesses of the saints lie near their strength. Elijah is the bravest of the brave and flees from Jezebel. Moses is the meekest of the meek and speaks in passion. Job is the most patient of men and cries, “I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.” As part of his bitter complaint, he asks, “Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?”

He seemed to be watched and whipped—and then watched again. It seemed to him that God concentrated all His strength upon him in afflicting him. He was beaten black and blue and, whereas, other culprits had 40 stripes save one, he had 50 stripes save none! He was spared no suffering and, he cries at last, “I am watched, and checked, as if I were a great sea needing always to be held in bounds or a terrible sea monster needing always a hook in its jaws. Lord, why do You harass me thus? I am such a poor, insignificant thing, that it seems out of Your usual way to be so rough upon one so feeble. The raging ocean, or the mighty leviathan may need such watching, but why do You spend it on me? Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?”

I shall not moor myself to Job’s sense of the words, but I shall spread my sail for a voyage further out to sea. This sort of talk may have been used by many a man who is now within hail of my voice—may have been used by sailors now before me.

Let me point out the channel along which I shall steer in my discourse. We shall begin by saying that some men seem to be narrowly watched by God. They think that the Lord’s eyes are as much fixed on them as though they were great as a sea, or huge as a whale. My second point will be that they do not like this watching. They complain about it and wish they could get rid of it. Therefore they argue with God against it. Our third head is that their argument is a bad one. They think they are very harshly treated, but the fact is that all they complain of is in love. See, my messmates, the way I shall try to steer, but if the heavenly wind blows me out of my course, don’t be surprised if I tack about and go, nobody knows where!

I. I have, first, to say that SOME MEN SEEM TO BE ESPECIALLY TRACKED AND WATCHED BY GOD. We hear of persons being “shadowed” by the police—and certain people feel as if they were shadowed by God—they are mysteriously tracked by the great Spirit and they know and feel it. Wherever they go, an eye is upon them and they cannot hide from it. They are like prisoners under arrest—they can never go out of reach of the law. They cannot get away from God, do what they may! There are men who have been in this condition for years and they know what I mean.

All men are really surrounded by God. He is not far from everyone of us. “In Him we live, move and have our being.” “Where shall we flee from Your Presence?” To the heights above, or to the depths beneath? To oceans frozen into ice, or seas where the sun shines with burning heat? In vain we rise or dive to escape from God. “You, God, see me,” is as true in the watches of the night as in the blaze of day. God is with us and we are always beneath His eyes. Yet there are certain people to whom this is more clear than it is to others.

Some are singularly aware of the Presence of God . Certain of us never were without a sense of God. As children, we could not go to sleep till we said, “Our Father which are in Heaven.” As youths, we trembled if we heard God’s holy name blasphemed. As men, engaged in the cares of life, we have seen the Lord’s goodness, all along. We delight to see Him in every flower that blooms and to hear His voice in every wind that blows. It has made us happy to see God in His works. “The fool has said in his heart, No God,” but this folly we never cared for. We knew that God was good even when we felt we had offended Him. He has taught us from our youth and manifested Himself to us. Softly has the whisper fallen on our ear, “God is near you. God is with you. God has an ear to hear you. God has a heart to love you. God has a hand to help you.” I have known those who, even when they have sinned and gone against their consciences, have never at any time quite lost a sense of the nearness of God even though its only fruit was fear—a fear which has torment!

With others, God’s watch is seen in a different way. They feel that they are watched by God because their conscience never ceases to rebuke them. The voice of conscience is not pitched to the same key in all men, neither is it equally loud in all people. Conscience can be made like a muzzled dog and then it cannot bite the thief of sin. Conscience can grow like a man with a cold who has lost his voice. But it is not so with all men, even after years of sin. Some have a naturally tender conscience and, while living in sin, they are never easy. They make merry all the day, for, “they count it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away”—but dull care, like the chickens, comes home to roost at night! The sailor in company is jolly, but if he has to keep a lone watch beneath the silent stars, his heart begins to beat and his conscience begins to call him to account for the follies of the day. He starts in his sleep—he dreams over his past sin and the judgment to come—for conscience will wake even when the rest of the man sleeps. “You were wrong,” says conscience, and his voice is very solemn.

Even great sin in certain men has not prevented Conscience speaking out honestly to them. Again and again the inward monitor cries, “You were wrong and you will suffer for it.” We read that, “David’s heart smote him”—the heart deals us an ugly knock. When the blow is within us, it tells. I am addressing some who, though they do not feel pleased about it, yet must know that there is a something within that will not let them sin cheaply. God has a bit in their mouths and a bridle upon their jaws—and every now and then He gives a tug at it and pulls them right up. They are not at home in sin! They have not yet got their sea legs upon the ocean of vice. They sing the songs of the devil with a quake and a shake which shows that the music does not suit them! Thus God has set a watch upon them—they carry a detective in their bosoms.

In some this watching has gone farther, for they are under solemn conviction of sin. They are convinced of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come. God’s custom-house officer has boarded them and their smuggling is found out. I remember when I was in that state, myself—a criminal who dared not deny his guilt, but dreaded punishment. I would not go back to that condition for a hundred worlds! There was no rest for me then. I was only a youth, but boyish sports lost their relish for me because I knew that I was a sinner and that God must punish sin. I awoke in the morning and my first act for many a day was to read a chapter of the Bible, or a page of some awakening book which kept my conscience still awake. The Holy Spirit put me in irons and there I lay both day and night! My bed was, at times, a very weary place for me, because the eyes of God’s anger seemed to be always watching me. I knew I had offended God and I had not yet found out the way of reconciliation by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Now, it may be that I speak to some here who have been to the ends of the earth and they have said, “Well, when we get away where the Sabbath bell is never heard, we shall get rid of these fears and take our swing in sin.” They sailed off and as soon as they reached port, they hurried to a place of vicious amusement—where no one knew them. But the dog of fear howled at their heels and merriment seemed mockery to them. On the lone ocean the very stars pierced their hearts with their rays. At length their messmates began to notice it and call them Old Sobersides. “Jack, what ails you?” was the frequent question, and well it might be, for Jack was very heavy and it is hard to be merry with a broken heart! In some such fashion as this the man feels that God has set a watch upon him and that he has become like a sea which never rests, or a whale which roams the waste of water and knows no home. God watched him and though he would gladly have run the blockade, he could not find an hour in which his vessel was left alone.

Certain men are not only plagued by conscience and dogged by fear, but the Providence of God seems to have gone out against them. Just when the man had resolved to have a bout of drinking, he fell sick of a fever and had to go to the hospital. He was going to a dance, but he became so weak that he had not a leg to stand upon. He was forced to toss to and fro on bed—to quite another tune from that which pleases the ballroom! He had yellow fever and was long in pulling round. God watched him and put the skid on him just as he meant to have a breakneck run downhill! The man gets better and he says to himself, “I will have a good time, now.” But then he is out of berth and perhaps he cannot get a ship for months—and he is brought down to poverty. “Dear me!” he says, “everything goes against me. I am a marked man!” And so he is. Just when he thinks that he is going to have a fair wind, a tempest comes on and drives him out of his course, and he sees rocks ahead. After a while he thinks, “Now I am all right. Jack is himself, again, and piping times have come.” A storm hurries up; the ship goes down and he loses all but the clothes he has on his back. He is in a wretched plight—a shipwrecked mariner far from home. God seems to pursue him even as He did Jonah!

He carries with him misfortune for others and he might well cry, “Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?” Nothing prospers. His tacklings are loosed. He cannot well strengthen his mast; his ship leaks; his sails are torn; his yards are snapped and he cannot understand it. Other people seem to get on, though they are worse than he is. Time was when he used to be lucky, too—but now he has parted company with success and carries the black flag of distress. He is driven to and fro by contrary winds. He makes no headway. He is a miserable man and would wish that the whole thing would go to the bottom, only he dreads a place which has no bottom, from which there is no escape, if once you sink into it. The Providence of God runs hard against him and thus he sees himself to be a watched man.

Yes, and God also watches over many in the way of admonition. Wherever they go, holy warnings follow them. They cannot escape from those who would be friends to their souls. They seem to be surrounded with a ring of prayers and sermons and holy talks. The boy said, “If I could get away from my mother, I should be free! I have been tied long enough to her apron strings. I am old enough to do as I like. If I can get away from my father’s chidings and prayers, I shall have a fine time of it.” So the boy ran away and went to sea—and when he got on board, a good old sailor tackled him—and talked to him about his soul! And then another pleaded with him. The boy said to himself, “Why, I have got out of the frying pan into the fire! I came here to be out of the way of religion and here it is!”

I have known a sailor to go from port to port, and wherever he has landed there has been some gracious man or woman waiting to lead him to Christ. May it be often so! May the Bethel flag be found flying in all waters, till every runaway says, “Why, I am watched wherever I go!” May it be as it was with our dear friends, Fullerton and Smith, on board the steamboat! Mr. Fullerton spoke to a rough man and asked him if he was saved. And the man was angry, cross, vexed and went to the other side of the vessel. There he complained to Mr. Smith, “That man over there asked me if I was saved; he is a fool!” “Very likely,” said Smith, “but then, you see, he is a fool for Christ. I think it is better to be a fool for Jesus than to be wise for the devil.” He began to plead with the sailor, when the man cried out, “There is a regular gang of them! I cannot go anywhere but they are on to me.”

It has been made hot for some of you by the British and Foreign Sailors’ Society which has placed missionaries in so many ports. “There’s a gang of them,” and wherever you go, you stumble on an earnest Christian man who will not let you alone. If I could stir up Christian people here, I would make it hard for sinners, so that wherever they went they would find a hand outstretched to stop them from going to destruction! Oh, that each one might be met with tears and entreaties, that thus each one might be snatched from the waves of fire and landed on the rock of salvation! Some here present have had to dodge a great deal to keep out of the way of Gospel shots. Their track has been followed by mercy and they have been pursued by swift cruisers of Grace. They have been like fish taken in a net—surrounded on all sides—and neither able to pass through the meshes, nor to break the net, nor to leap out of it! Oh, that the net of Christ’s love may so entangle you all, that you may be His forever!

That is our first point—there are some men who seem especially watched of God.  
II. Secondly, we notice that THEY ARE VERY APT TO DISLIKE THIS WATCHING. Job is not pleased with it. He asks, “Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?” These people, to whom God pays such attention, are foolish enough to murmur that they are so hedged in and they are vexed to be made to feel that God has His eyes upon them.  
Do you know what they would like? They want liberty to sin! They would like to be let loose and to be allowed to do just as their wild wills would suggest to them. They would cast off every restraint and have their fling of what the world calls “pleasure.” They would climb from sin to sin, hand over hand. They would like to empty all the cups on the devil’s sideboard and be as merry as the worst of men when they are taking it free and easy. That is why they would send their consciences to sleep, drown their fears and escape from chastening Providences and warning admonitions. They would like to live where no Christian would ever worry them again with wearisome exhortation! They demand liberty—liberty to put their hands into the fire! Liberty to ruin themselves! Liberty to leap into Hell before their time! Liberty! What destruction has been worked in your name! Free thinking! Free living! Free loving and all that! What misuse of terms! What a libel upon the name of freedom, to use the word, “free,” in connection with the slavery of sin! Yet, I am speaking to some who say, “That is just what I want! I want to cut myself clear of all this hamper which blocks me up from having my own way.” Ah me! This is the cry of a man who is bent on soul-suicide!

They also wish that they could be as hard of heart as many others are . Some men can drink any quantity and yet do not seem as if they were greatly affected by it. And many a young sailor has wished that he could pour down his grog without a wink, after the style of the old toper. He meets with a foul-mouthed being who can swear till all is blue, while he himself has only dropped an oath or two, and then felt wretched. The young man begins to wish that he was as tough as old Jack, and as much a daredevil as he. The hardened profligate is foolishly envied and looked upon as a man of “pluck.” But is it true bravery to ruin one’s soul? Is it manly to be wicked? Is it a great gain to have a seared conscience? We don’t envy the blind because they cannot see danger, nor the deaf because they cannot hear an alarm—why envy the hardened old sinner because he has become spiritually blind and deaf?

There are monsters, both on land and on sea, whose very breath is pestilent and whose talk is enough to choke up a town with vice. And yet certain young men, whom God will not allow to descend into such rottenness, are almost angry that they are restrained! A tender conscience is a great possession, but these simple ones know not its value. They wish that they could have a heart as hard as the nether millstone. Ah, poor souls! You know not what you wish, for you have no idea how deep is the curse that lies in a callous conscience! When God gave Pharaoh up to hardness of heart, it was a tremendous punishment for his pride and cruelty and, short of Hell, there is no judgment that God can inflict like letting a man have his own way! “Let him alone,” says God, “he is joined to idols.” And if the Lord says that, there is only one other word more dreadful—and that is the final sentence—“Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” O you beginners in vice who cannot yet stifle the cries of your suffering consciences, I pray that you may see your folly and no longer do violence to your own mercy!

Men do not like this being surrounded by God—this wearing the bit and kicking strap—because they would drop God from their thoughts. If tomorrow we could hear, by telegram from Heaven, that God was dead, what crowds would buy the newspaper! It would be the greatest relief in the world to many a godless wretch if he could feel sure that there was no God! To some of us this news would be death—we would have lost our Father, our Comforter, our Savior, our All! Alas, many wish that there were no God, and if they cannot persuade themselves that there is none—and it is very hard for a sailor to do that—yet they try to forget Him. If God is out of mind, He is as good as out of the world to the careless sinner.

When God comes with inward fears and awakens conscience—and sends cross Providences, so that the man feels pulled up and made to pause—then he knows that there is a God, for he feels a Power which works against his sin from which he cannot get away. He longs to be clear of this secret force, but it wraps him about on every side. He does not read his Bible and yet Scripture rises in his memory! It is long since he bent his knee in prayer—he has almost forgotten what his mother said to him when she lay dying—but still he feels that there is a God and, somehow, that belief sounds a trumpet blast through his soul, summoning him to his last account. Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to judgment! The call rings in his ears and he cannot get away from the terrible sound! Then it is that he cries “Why am I thus? Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?”

Once more, there are some who do not like to be shadowed in this way because they want to have their will with others. Shall I speak a sharp word, like a two-edged sword? There are men—and seamen to be found among them—who are not satisfied with being ruined, themselves, but they thirst to ruin others! They lay traps for precious souls and they are vexed that their victims should escape them. They are angry because certain poor women are not altogether in their power. Woe unto the men who lead women astray! I have heard of sailors who, in every port they enter, try to ruin others. I charge you to remember that you will have to face these ruined ones at the Day of Judgement! You sailed away and they never knew where you went, but the Lord knew. It may be, when you lie in Hell, eyes will find you out and a voice will cry aloud, “Are you here? You are the man that led me to Perdition!”

You will have to keep everlasting company with those whom you dragged down to Hell—and these will, forever, curse you to your face. I say there are men who would like to have full license to commit wantonness and they are grieved that they are hindered in their carnival of sin! May God grant that you may be stopped altogether and, instead of lusting to pollute others, may you have a desire to save them! May God grant that the channel of evil may be blocked for you and may you be piloted into the waters of repentance and faith!

This is why some kick against God. I fear these people will be much vexed with me for speaking so plainly, but you must not think that it will alarm me should you be angry. I am rather glad when fellows get angry with my preaching. “Oh,” I say to myself, “those fish feel the hook in their jaws and so they struggle to escape.” Of course a fish does not like the hook which lays hold of him! But these angry hearers will come again. You people with whom the sermon goes in at one ear and out at the other, you get no good, whatever—but a man who fires up with wrath and says, “How dare that fellow speak thus to me?” is sure to listen again—and it is very likely that God will bless him. But whether it offends you or pleases you—I repeat my warning—I charge you, do not drag others down to Hell with you! If you must go there yourselves, seek not to destroy those around you! Do not teach boys to drink and to swear. Neither tempt frail women to commit uncleanness with you. God help you to shake off all vice, for I know that vile habits are often the reason why men kick against the restraint of God’s loving hand.

III. And now I have got to the very heart of my text. The third part is this—that THIS ARGUMENT AGAINST THE LORD’S DEALINGS IS A VERY BAD ONE. Job says, “Am I a sea, or whale, that You set a watch over me?” Listen! To argue from our insignificance is poor pleading, for the little things are just those against which there is most need to watch! If you were a sea, or a whale, God might leave you alone, but as you are a feeble and sinful creature who can do more hurt than a sea, or a whale, you need constant watching! In life, men fall by very little things. One does not need to watch against his dog one half as much as against a horsefly, or a mosquito, for these will sting you when you least expect it. The little things need most watching, therefore it is poor reasoning when we complain that God watches us as if we were a sea, or a whale.

After all, there is not a man here who is not much like a sea, or a sea monster in this respect, that he needs a watch to be set over him. A man’s heart is as changeable and as deceitful as the sea. Today it is calm as a sea of glass, unruffled by a breath of air. Oh, trust not yourself upon it, for before tomorrow’s sun is up, your nature may be rolling in tremendous billows of passion! You cannot trust the sea, but it is more worthy of confidence than your heart! Here you are, tonight, and oh, how good you look as you sit and listen and then stand up and sing! Ah, my men! I should not like to hear you if you take to blaspheming your Maker, as many do! When you are down in the forecastle with a little band of praying men, how very good you feel! Let us see you when you are on shore and there is plenty of grog about. It is easy to have a calm sea when there is no wind, but how different is the ocean when a gale is blowing! We are all very well when far away from temptation, but how are we when the devil’s servants are around us? Then, I fear, that too often good resolutions prove to be—

*“False as the smooth, deceitful sea,  
And empty as the whistling wind.”*

It may be that I speak to one who has undergone a dreadful change. Once you led others in the way of righteousness, but now you draw them into evil. Once you sailed under the Bethel flag, but now the old Pirate of the infernal lake is your captain. You have gone back to your old ways and have again become the slave of the world, the flesh and the devil. Your religious profession had no foundation. Ah me, you need not say, “Am I a sea, or a whale?” for seas and sea monsters are more to be trusted than you are! The sea is immeasurable and, as for you, your sinfulness is unsearchable. Your capacity is almost without measure—your mind reaches far and touches all things. Man’s mind can rise in rebellion against the God of the whole earth, till, like the raging waves of the sea, it threatens to put out the lights of Heaven! When man is in a rebellious state he will rage in his thoughts as though he would wash away the shores of Heaven and beat like the surf upon the iron rocks of Hell. A man is an awful mystery of iniquity when left to himself. You cannot fathom his pride, nor measure his daring. Deep down in his mind there are innumerable creeping things, both small and great beasts—for all manner of evils and sins multiply in the heart like fishes in the sea! Do not ask, “Am I a sea, or a sea-monster, that You set a watch over me?” for the Lord may answer, “You are more capacious for evil than a sea and more wild than a sea monster.”

I shall now go further and show that, by reason of our evil nature, we have become like the sea. This is true in several ways, for, first, the sea is restless and so is our nature. “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” You need not go far to find hearts always agitated, always seeking rest and finding none. They know not Christ and, until they do know Him, they cannot rest. They are always seeking a something—they know not what. They run first in one direction and then in another, but they never follow the right thing. When they are thoughtful, no good comes of their thoughts. Their waters cast up—what? Pearls and corals? No—“mire and dirt.” I do not need to explain those words. If any of you have to keep company with these restless beings, you know how foul-mouthed they can be. They cast up worse things than mire and dirt when they are stirred up. Oh, say not, “Am I a sea, or a whale?” Think of yourself as being as restless as a whale when the harpoon is in him—as restless as the sea when a storm is moving its lowest depths.

Let us say, next, that the sea can be furious and terrible—and so can ungodly men. When a man is in a fury, what a wild beast he can be! A landsman looks on the sea when it has put on its best behavior and he says, “I should not mind going on a voyage. It must be splendid to steam over such a sea! I feel I shall make a splendid sailor.” Let him look at that same ocean, by-and-by. Where is the sea of glass, now? Where are the gentle waves which seemed afraid to ripple too far upon the sand? The sea roars and rages and raves. The Atlantic in a storm is terrible, but have you ever seen a tempest in a man’s nature? It is an awful sight and one which causes gracious eyes to weep! What a miserable object is a man with the drink in him! He was as decent a fellow as one could talk with, but now that the drink has mastered him, the devil has come on board and you will do well to give him a wide berth. The same is true of passion. Concerning angry men our advice would be, “Put not to sea in a storm, neither argue with a man in a passion.” You do not know what he will do, and he does not know, himself! Such a man will be grieved enough when he sobers down, but meanwhile, while the storm is on, he cares for nothing. His eyes flash lightning, his face is black as tempest, his mouth foams and his tongue rages. In his case, “The sea roars and the fullness thereof.” When you feel the Lord’s restraint, you need not ask, “Am I a sea, or a whale?” for your own heart may answer, “You can be more furious than the sea itself.”

Think, again, how unsatisfied is the sea. It draws down and swallows up stretches of land and thousands of tons of cliff, but it is not filled up. “All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full.” Huge Spanish galleons went to the bottom, with thousands of gold and silver pieces on board—but the sea was never the richer. When, on some dreadful night, our coasts are strewn with wrecks and hundreds of lives are lost, the devouring deep is never the more satisfied. The sea is a hungry monster which could swallow a navy and then open its mouth for more! Are not many men made of the same craving sort? If you gave them half a world, they would cry for the other half, and if they had the whole round globe, they would weep for the stars! Man’s mind never rests in sweet content till God, Himself, satisfies it with Himself. O man, without true religion it is your fate to go hungry and thirsty forever, or, like the sea, yeasting and foaming after you know not what!

Human nature is like the sea for mischief . How destructive is the ocean and how unfeeling! It makes widows and orphans by the thousands—and then smiles as if it had done nothing! Terrible havoc it can work when once its power is let loose! Do not talk of the destructiveness of the sea— let the reckless sinner think of the destructiveness of his own life! You that are living in sin and vice, what wrecks you have caused! How many who set out on the voyage of life and bade fair to make a splendid passage, have gone upon the rocks through you! A foul word, a loose song, a filthy act and a frivolous craft has become a wreck! Conscience can fill in the details. Ah me, one cannot say to God, “Am I a sea, or a sea monster?” or He might well reply, “No shark has devoured so many as the drunkard in his cups, the swearer in his presumption and the unclean in his lust!” Ah me, I could weep to think how much of mischief any one of you who are unconverted may yet do! The Lord deliver you from being left derelict, to cause wreck to others!

We must not forget that we are less obedient to God than the sea is. Nothing keeps back the sea from many a shore but a belt of sand—and though it rages in storm and tempest, the sea goes back in due time and leaves the sand for children to play upon. It knows its bounds and keeps them. When the time comes for the tide to rise, the obedient waters march upon the shore in unbroken ranks and fill up every creek. They do not linger behind their time. When the moment comes to stay where they are, they rest at flood. Then comes the instant to begin the ebb and, no matter how boisterous the waves may be, they fall back at God’s bidding. What, after all, is more orderly than the great sea? Would to God we were like it in this! How readily this great creature yields! A little wind springs up and its waves answer at once to the breath of Heaven. When the sun crosses the line, the equinoctial gales know their season, while at all times the great currents cease not the flow which God has appointed them.

The sea is obedient to the Lord and so was that great fish of which we read just now—“The Lord spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.” As for us, we refuse to obey! And when left to ourselves, what law can restrain us? Is there anything in Heaven or earth which a proud sinner will not venture to attempt? God blocks up the road to Hell with hedge, ditch and chain—but we break them all! He digs a trench across our way and we leap over it. He piles a mountain in the road and as if our feet were like hinds’ feet, we leap upon the high places of presumption! A man will go against wind and tide in his determination to be lost! O Sea! O Sea! You are but a child with your father compared to the wicked and rebellious heart of man! It is a bad argument, then. We need to be looked after. We need to be watched. We need to be kept in check even more than a sea or a whale! We need the restraining Providence and constraining Grace of God to keep us from deadly sin.

IV. Last of all, I would remark that ALL THEY COMPLAINED OF WAS SENT IN LOVE. They said, “Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?” but if they had known the truth, they would have blessed God with all their hearts for having watched over them as He has done.

First, God’s restraint of some of us has kept us from self-ruin. If the Lord had not held us in, we might have been in prison! We might have been in the grave! We might have been in Hell! Who knows what would have become of us? An old Scotchman said to Mr. Rowland Hill what, I am quite sure, would have been as true of me. He looked into Mr. Hill’s face so keenly and so often that at last good Rowland asked him, “Why are you looking at my face so much?” “I was thinking,” said the Scotchman, “that if you had not been converted by the Grace of God, you would have been a terrible sinner.” And, surely, this would have been my case. Nothing halfand-half would have contented me. I would have gone to the end of my tether.

Is not the same true of some of you? How many times has the Lord laid His own hand on us to stay us from a fatal step! If we were checked in our youth and brought, then and there, to Jesus, it was a gracious deed on God’s part. If we have been hindered during a sinful manhood and have, at length, been made to bow before the will of the Lord, this, also, is great Grace. Left to ourselves, we would have chosen our own destruction! Do you not think that God’s taking you apart and giving you a tender conscience—and admonishing you so often—proves His great love to you! Surely someone has prayed for you! There is a mother here tonight. I hope she will not mind my telling you what she did last Tuesday when I was sitting in my vestry. She brought me a little brown paper parcel with £50 in it and she gave it for the British and Foreign Sailors’ Society. She has a son whom she has not heard of for years. He went to sea and she cannot find him, or get any tidings of his whereabouts. But she hopes that a missionary of this Society may meet him in some strange place and bring him to the Savior.

She prays that it may be so and, therefore, she brings her selfsacrificing offering—a great sum, I am sure, for her—that she may help to support the good Society which, she hopes, may be a blessing to her boy. There are other sailors to whom God’s love is seen in their being followed up by a mother’s pleading. Ah, Friend, the Lord would not have checked you so if He had not intended to bless you! That broken leg of yours is to keep you from running too far into sin. That yellow fever was sent to cool the fever of your sin. Your missing that ship caused you to miss shipwreck and death. These mishaps were all tokens of love to you. The Lord would not let you perish! He resolves to save you. You are one of His chosen. Christ bought you with His blood and He means to have you for His own. If you will not come to Him with a gentle breeze, He will fetch you by a storm! Yield to the pressure of His love. If you will be as the horse and the mule which have no understanding, He will break you in and manage you with bit and bridle—but it would be far better if you would be ruled by love.

I think I see tokens of electing love upon you in those very things which you have kicked against. The Lord is working to bring you to Himself, and to Himself you must come. The prodigal son was driven home by stress of weather. If his father had had the doing of it, he could not have worked the matter better! His hungry belly and his pig-feeding fetched him home. The unkindness of the citizens of the far country helped to hurry him back to his father. Hardship, need and pain are meant to bring you back—and God has used them to that end! And the day will come when you will say, “I bless God for the rough wave which washed me on shore. I bless God for the stormy Providence which drowned my comfort, but saved my soul.”

Once more and I have done. God will not always deal roughly with you. Perhaps tonight He will say His last sharp word. Will you yield to softer means? They say that oil poured on troubled waters will make them smooth—God the Holy Spirit can send to your troubled soul a lifelong calm! The winds and waves on the Galilean sea all went to sleep in an instant. How? Why, when Jesus came walking on the water, He said to the warring elements, “Be still.” The waves crouched like whipped dogs at His feet, though they had, just before, roared like lions! He said to the winds, “Hush!” and they breathed as softly as the lips of a babe! Jesus is here at this hour. He that died on Calvary looks down on us—believe on Him! He lifts His pierced hands and cries, “Look unto Me, and be you saved!” Will you not look to Him? Oh, that His Grace may lead you at once to say, “He is All in All to me!”

Here is a soul-saving text for you—“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Accept the Savior and though you are as a sea, or as a whale, you shall no longer complain of the Lord’s watching you, but you shall rejoice in perfect liberty! He is free who loves to serve his God! He makes it his delight that he is watched of the Lord. The Lord bless sailors! May we all meet in the Fair Havens! May the flag of your Society bless every sea because God blesses its missionaries! I wish for it the utmost prosperity and I judge it to be worthy of the most generous aid of all Christians. In all respects it is exactly to my mind. The Lord send prosperity to it! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jonah 2.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—42 (VER I) 590, 551. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2705 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 7.21

WHY SOME SINNERS ARE NOT PARDONED  
NO. 2705

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 16, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 30, 1881.

**“And why do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?” Job 7:21.**

NO man should rest until he is sure that his sin is forgiven. It may be forgiven and he may be sure that it is forgiven—and he ought not to give rest to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids till he has been assured, with absolute certainty that his transgression is pardoned and that his iniquity is taken away. You, dear Friends, may be patient under suffering, but not patient under sin. You may ask for healing with complete resignation to the will of God as to whether He will grant it to you, but you should ask for pardon with importunity, feeling that you must have it. You may not be sure that it is God’s will to deliver you from disease, but you may be quite certain that it is His will to hear you when you cry to Him to save you from sin. And if at your first crying unto Him, you are not saved, seek to know the reason why He is refusing to grant you the blessing you so much desire. It is quite legitimate to put this question to God again and again, “Why do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?” We also ought to press this matter home upon our own heart and conscience, to see whether we cannot discover the reason why pardon is, for a while, withheld from us, for God never acts arbitrarily and without reason. And, depend upon it, if we diligently search by the light of the candle of the Lord, we shall be able to find an answer to this question of Job, “Why do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?” Job’s question may sometimes be asked by a child of God, but it may be more frequently asked by others who, as yet, are not brought consciously into the Lord’s family.

I. I shall first take our text as A QUESTION THAT MAY BE ASKED, AS IN JOB’S CASE, BY A TRUE CHILD OF God—“Why do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?”

Sometimes, beloved Friends, this question is asked under a misapprehension. Job was a great sufferer and although he knew that he was not as guilty as his troublesome friends tried to make out, yet he feared that possibly his great afflictions were the results of some sin and, therefore, he came before the Lord with this sorrowful enquiry, “Why do You continue to me all this pain and agony? If it is caused by sin, why do You not, first, pardon the sin, and then remove its effects?”

Now I take it that it would have been a misapprehension on Job’s part to suppose that his afflictions were the result of his sin. Mark you, Brothers and Sisters, we are, by nature, so full of sin that we may always believe that there is enough evil within us to cause us to suffer severe affliction if God dealt with us according to justice. But also remember that in Job’s case, the Lord’s objective in his afflictions and trials, was not to punish Job for his sin, but to display in the Patriarch, to His own honor and Glory, the wonders of His Grace by enabling Job, with great patience, to still hold on to God under the direst suffering and to triumph in it all. Job was not being punished—he was being honored. God was giving to him a name like that of the great ones of the earth. The Lord was lifting him up, promoting him, putting him into the front rank, making a great saint of him, causing him to become one of the fathers and patterns in the ancient Church of God! He was really doing for Job such extraordinarily good things that you or I, in looking back upon his whole history, might well say, “I would be quite content to take Job’s afflictions if I might also have Job’s Grace and Job’s place in the Church of God.” It may happen to you, Beloved, that you think that your present affliction is the result of some sin in you, yet it may be nothing of the kind.

It may be that the Lord loves you in a very special manner because you are a fruit-bearing branch, and He is pruning you that you may bring forth more fruit. As Rutherford said to a dear lady, in his day, who had lost several of her children, “Your ladyship is so sweet to the WellBeloved that He is jealous on your account, and is taking away from you all the objects of your earthly love that He may absorb the affection of your whole heart into Himself.” It was the very sweetness of the godly woman’s character that led her Lord to act as He did towards her, and I believe that there are some of the children of God who are now suffering simply because they are gracious. There are certain kinds of affliction that come only upon the more eminent members of the family of God— and if you are one of those who are thus honored, instead of saying to your Heavenly Father, “When will You pardon my sin?”—you might more properly say, “My Father, since You have pardoned my iniquity and adopted me into Your family, I cheerfully accept my portion of suffering, since in all this, You are not bringing to my mind the remembrance of any unforgiven sin, for I know that all my transgressions were numbered on the Scapegoat’s head of old. Since You are not bringing before me any cause of quarrel between myself and You, for I am walking in the light as You are in the light, and I have sweet and blessed fellowship with You, therefore will I bow before You and lovingly kiss Your rod, accepting at Your hands whatever Your unerring decree appoints for me.” It is a blessed thing, dear Friends, if you can get into this state of mind and heart. And it may happen that your offering of the prayer of the text may be founded upon a complete misapprehension of what the Lord is doing with you.

Sometimes, also, a child of God uses this prayer under a very unusual sense of sin. You know that in looking at a landscape, you may so fix your gaze upon some one object that you do not observe the rest of the landscape. Its great beauties may not be seen by you because you have observed only one small part of it. Now, in like manner, before the observation of the Believer, there is a wide range of thought and feeling. If you fix your eyes upon your own sinfulness, as you may well do, it may be that you will not quite forget the greatness of Almighty Love, and the grandeur of the Atoning Sacrifice, but, yet, if you do not forget them, you do not think so much of them as you should, for you seem to make your own sin, in all its heinousness and aggravation, the central objective of your consideration! There are certain times in which you cannot help doing this—they come upon me, so I can speak from my own experience. I find that, sometimes, do what I will, the master thought in my mind concerns my own sinnership—my sinnership even since my conversion, my shortcomings and my wanderings from my gracious God—and even the sins of my holy things.

Well, now, it is well to think of our sin in this way, but it is not well to think of it out of proportion to other things. When I have gone to a physician because I have been ill, I have, of course, thought of my disease. But have I not also thought of the remedy which he will prescribe for me, and of the many cases in which a disease similar to mine has yielded to such a remedy? So, will it not be wrong to fix my thoughts entirely upon one fact to the exclusion of other compensating facts? Yet, that is how many of us sometimes act, and then we cry to God, as did Job, “Why do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?” when, indeed, it is already pardoned and taken away! If we try to look at it, there flows before us that sacred stream of our Savior’s atoning blood which covers all our guilt, so that, great though it is, in the sight of God it does not exist, for the precious blood of Jesus has blotted it all out forever!

There is another time when the Believer may, perhaps, utter the question of our text. That is, whenever he gets into trouble with his God. You know that after we are completely pardoned—as we are the moment we believe in Jesus—we are no longer regarded as criminals before God—we become His children. You know that it is possible for a man who has been brought before the court as a prisoner, to be pardoned. But suppose that after being forgiven, he should be adopted by him who was his judge, and taken into his family so as to become his child? Now, after doing that, you do not suppose that he will bring him up again before the judgment seat and try him, and put him in prison. No, but if he becomes the judge’s son, I know what the judge will do with him—he will put him under the rules of his house, to which all the members of his family are expected to conform. Then, if he misbehaves as a son, there will not be that freeness of conversation and communion between himself and his father that there ought to be. At night the father may refuse to kiss the wayward and disobedient child. When his brethren are enjoying the father’s smile, he may have a frown for his portion—not that the father has turned him out of his family, or made him to be any the less a child than he was—but there is a cloud between them because of his wrongdoing.

I fear, my dear Friends, that some of you must have known, at times, what this experience means, for between you and your Heavenly Father—although you are safe enough and He will never cast you away from Him—there is a cloud. You are not walking in the Light of God, your heart is not right in the sight of God. I would earnestly urge you never to let this sad thing happen, or if it does ever happen, I beg you not to let such a sorrowful state of affairs last for even a day! Settle the quarrel with your God before you go to sleep. Get it put right, as I have seen a child do after he has done wrong. Perhaps he has been pouting and scowling and his father has had to speak very roughly to him. For a long while he has been too high-spirited to yield, but, at last, the little one has come and said, “Father, I was wrong, and I am sorry.” And in that moment there was perfect peace between the two! The father said, “That is all I wanted you to say, my dear child. I loved you even while you were naughty, but I wanted you to feel and admit that you were doing wrong. And now that you have felt it, and acknowledged it, the trouble is all over. Come to my bosom, for you are as much loved as all the rest of the family.” I can quite imagine that when any of you have been at cross purposes with God, He has refused, for a time, to give you the sense of His fatherly love in your heart. Then, I beseech you, go to Him, and I suggest that you cannot pray to Him more appropriately than in the words of the text, “Why do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?” Or pray, as Job did, a little later, “Show me why You contend with me, for I wish to be at peace with You, and there can be no rest to my new-born spirit while there is any cause of quarrel between us.

Thus far have I spoken to the children of God. Now I ask for your earnest prayers that I may be guided to speak wisely and powerfully to others.

II. THE QUESTION IN OUR TEXT MAY BE ASKED BY SOME WHO ARE NOT CONSCIOUSLY GOD’S CHILDREN. “Why do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?”

And, first, I think that I hear somebody making this kind of enquiry, “Why does not God pardon my sin and have done with it? When I come to this place, I hear a great deal about atonement by blood, and reconciliation through the death of Christ. But why does not God just say to me, ‘It is true that you have done wrong, but I forgive you, and there is the end of the matter’?” With the utmost reverence for the name and Character of God, I must say that such a course of action is impossible! God is infinitely just and holy. He is the Judge of all the earth and He must punish sin. You know, dear Friends, that there are times, even in the history of earthly kingdoms, when the rulers say, by their actions, if not in words, “There is sedition abroad, but we will let it go on. We do not want to seem severe, so we will not strike the rebels down.” What is sure to be the consequence of such conduct? Why, the evil grows worse and worse—the rebellious men presume upon the liberty allowed them, and take still more liberty—and, unless the law-giver intends that his law shall be kicked about the street like a football, unless he means that the peace and safety of his law-abiding subjects should be absolutely destroyed, he is at last obliged to act! And so he says, “No, this state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue. I shall be cruel to others unless I draw the sword and make justice to be respected throughout my realm.”

I tell you, dear Friends, that the most awful thing in the universe would be a world full of sin and yet without a Hell for its punishment! The most dreadful condition for any people to be in is that of absolute anarchy, when every man does what he pleases, and law has become utterly contemptible. Now, if, after men had lived lives of ungodliness and sin, of which they had never repented, and from the guilt of which they had never been purged, God were just quietly to take them to Heaven, that would be the end of all moral government, and Heaven itself would not be a place that anybody would wish to go! If ungodly people went there in the same state as they are in here, Heaven would become a sort of antechamber of Hell, a respectable place of damnation! But that can never be the case. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” He has devised a wondrous plan by which He can pardon the guilty without to the slightest degree shaking the foundations of His Throne, or endangering His government. Will you be saved in that way, or not? If you reject God’s way of salvation, you must be lost and the blame must lie at your own door! God will not permit anarchy in order that He may indulge your whims, or vacate the Throne of Heaven that He may save you according to your fancy. At the infinite expense of His heart’s love—by the death of His own dear Son—He has provided a way of salvation! And if you reject that, you need not ask Job’s question, for you know why He does not pardon your transgression and take away your iniquity—and upon your own head shall lie the blood of your immortal soul!

Perhaps somebody else says “Well, then, if that is God’s way of salvation, let us believe in Jesus Christ and let us have pardon at once. But you talk about the need of a new birth and about forsaking sin, and following after holiness, and you say that without holiness no man can see the Lord.” Yes, I do say it, for God’s Word says it! And I repeat that for God to give pardon, and then allow men to go on in sin just as they did before, would be a curse to them instead of a blessing! Why, if the dishonest man prospers in the world, is that a blessing to him? No, certainly not, for he only becomes the more dishonest. If a man commits licentiousness and he escapes the consequences of it in this life, is that a blessing to him? No, for he becomes the more licentious—and if God did not punish men for their sin, but permitted them to be happy in the sin, it would be a greater curse to them than for Him to come and say to them, “For every transgression of My righteous Law, there shall be due punishment. And for all moral evil there shall also be physical evils upon those who commit it.” I thank God that He does not permit sin to produce happiness! I bless Him that He puts punishment at the back of evil, for so it ought to be. The curse of sin is in the evil, itself, rather than in its punishment. And if it could become a happy thing for a man to be a sinner, then men would sin, and sin again, and sin yet more deeply—and this, God will not have.

“Well,” says another friend, “that is not my trouble. I am willing to be saved by the Atonement of Christ, and I am perfectly willing to be made to cease from sin, and to receive from God a new heart and a right spirit. Why, then, does He not pardon me and blot out my transgressions?” Well, it may be, first, because you have not confessed your wrongdoing. You remember that the Apostle John says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Do you ask, “To whom shall I confess my sins?” Shall you come to me with your confession? Oh no, no, no! I could not stand that! There is an old proverb about a thing being “as filthy as a priest’s ear.” I cannot imagine anything dirtier than that and I have no wish to be a partaker in the filthiness. Go to God and confess your sin to Him—pour out your heart’s sad story in the ear of Him against whom you have offended! Say with David, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.”

Dear anxious Friend, if you say to me, “For months I have sought the Lord, but I cannot find Him, or get peace of conscience.” I advise you to try the effect of this plan—shut yourself up in your room and make a detailed confession of your transgression. Perhaps confessing it in the bulk may have helped you to be hypocritical, so try and confess it in detail, especially dwelling upon those grosser sins which most provoke God and most defile the conscience, even as David prayed, “Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God.” That was his great crime—he had been the cause of the death of Uriah, so he confessed that he was guilty of blood and prayed to be delivered from it. In like manner, confess your sin, whatever it has been. I am persuaded that, often, confession to God would relieve the soul of its load of guilt. Just as when a man has a gathering tumor, and a wise physician lets in the lancet, and that which had gathered is removed, and the inflammation subsides, so often would it be with what the conscience has gathered if, by confession, the heart were lanced, and the accumulated evil dispersed. How can we expect God to give rest to our conscience if we will not confess our sins to Him?

May it not be possible, also, dear Friends who cannot obtain pardon and peace, that you are still practicing some known sin? Now, your Heavenly Father means to give you mercy in a way that shall be for your permanent benefit. What are you doing that is wrong? I do not know you so intimately as to be able to tell what is amiss with you, but I have known a man who never could get peace with God because he had a quarrel with his brother and, as he would not forgive his brother, it was not reasonable that he should expect to receive forgiveness from God. There was another man who sought the Lord for a long while, but he never could get peace for this reason—he was a traveling draper and he had what was supposed to be a yard measure, but it was not full length—and, one day, during a sermon, he took up his short measure in the place of worship and just snapped it across his knee—and then he found peace with God! He gave up that which had been the means of his wrongdoing. He had sought for pardon in vain all the while that he had persevered in evil. But as soon as that was given up, the Lord whispered peace to his soul.

Do any of you take “a drop too much” at home? Is that your besetting sin? I mean women as well as men when I ask that question! You smile at the suggestion, but it is no laughing matter, for it is only too true that many who are never suspected of such a thing, are guilty of drinking to excess. Now it may be that there will never be peace between God and your soul until that glass goes. It will have to go if God is to forgive your sin—so the sooner it goes, the better will it be for you. Perhaps, in your case, the sin is that you do not manage your families right. Are your children never corrected when they do wrong? Are they, in fact, allowed to grow up to be children of the devil? Do you expect God and you to be agreed while it, if so? Think what a quarrel God had with His servant, Eli, over that matter, and remember how that quarrel ended because Eli mildly said to his sons, “Why do you do such things?” but restrained them not when they made themselves vile.

Look, dear Friends, God will not save us because of our works! Salvation is entirely by Grace, but then that Grace shows itself by leading the sinner upon whom it is bestowed to give up the sin in which he had formerly indulged. Which, then, will you have—your sin or your Savior? Do not try to hold sin with one hand and the Savior with the other, for they cannot both of them be yours. So choose which you will have. I pray that God may show you what is the sin which is keeping you from peace, and then grant you the Grace to give it up.

“Well,” you say, “I do not know that this is my case at all, for I really do, from my heart, endeavor to give up all sin, and I am sincerely seeking peace with God.” Well, Friend, perhaps you have not found it because you have not been thoroughly earnest in seeking it. You seem to be in earnest while you are here on a Sunday night, but how earnest are you on Monday night? Perhaps you are fairly so, then, because you come to the Prayer Meeting, but how about Tuesday, and Wednesday, and the rest of the week? When a man really wants to have his soul saved, he should let everything else go until he gets that all-important matter settled. Yes, I will venture to say as much as that. Remember what the woman of Samaria did when she had received Christ’s word at the well at Sychar? She had gone to the well for water, but look at her as she goes back to the city! Is there any water pot on her head? No! The woman left her water pot—she forgot what had been to her a necessary occupation when once she had been brought seriously to think about her soul and her Savior! I do not want you to forget that when you have found Christ, you can carry your water pot, and yet cleave to Christ, but, until you have really received Him by faith, I should like to see you so fully absorbed in the pursuit of the one thing necessary that everything else should be put into the second place, or even lower than that! And if you were to say, “Until I am saved, I will do absolutely nothing. I will get to my chamber and I will cry to God for mercy, and from that room I will never come until He blesses me,” I would not charge you with fanaticism, nor would anybody else who knew the relative value of eternal things and things of time and sense! Why, Man, in order to save your coat, would you throw away your life? “No,” you would say, “the coat is but a trifle compared with my life.” Well, then, as your life is of more value than your coat, and as your soul is of more value than your body, and as the first thing you need is to get your sin forgiven that your soul may be saved— until that is done, everything else may well be let go! God give you such desperate earnestness that you must and will have the blessing! When you reach that resolve, you shall have it. When you cannot take a denial from God, you shall not have a denial.

There is still one more thing that I will mention as a reason why some men do not find the Savior, and get their sins forgiven, and that is, because they do not get off the wrong ground on to the right ground. If you are ever to be pardoned, dear Friend, it must be entirely by an act of Divine, unmerited favor. Now perhaps you are trying to do something to recommend yourself to God. You would scorn with derision the doctrine of being saved by your own merits, but, still, you have a notion that there is something or other in you that is to recommend you to God in some measure or degree, and you still think that the ground of your forgiveness must lie, to some extent, with yourself. Well, now, you never can have forgiveness in that way! Salvation must be all of works, or else all of Grace. Are you willing to be saved as a guilty, Hell-deserving sinner—as one who does not deserve salvation, but, on the contrary, deserves to endure the wrath of God? Are you willing that, henceforth, it shall be said, “That man was freely forgiven all his trespasses, not for his own sake, but for Christ’s sake alone?”

That is good ground for you to stand upon! That is solid rock. But some men seem to get one foot upon the rock and they say, “Yes, salvation comes by Christ.” Where is that other foot of yours, my Friend? Oh, he says that he has been baptized, or that he has been confirmed, or that he has, in some way or other, done something in which he can trust. Now, all such reliance as that is simply resting on sand—and however firmly your other foot may be planted on the rock, you will go down if this foot is on sand. You need good standing for both your feet, dear Friends—and see that you get it. Let this be your language—

*“You, O Christ, are all I need;*

*More than all in You I find.”*  
Do not look anywhere else for anyone or anything that can save you, but look to Christ, and to Christ alone! Are you too proud to do that? You will have to humble yourself beneath the mighty hand of God—and the sooner you do so, the better will it be for you. “Oh, but I, I—I must surely do something!” Listen—

*“Till to Jesus’ work you cling  
By a simple faith,  
‘Doing’ is a deadly thing,  
‘Doing’ ends in death!  
Cast your deadly ‘doing’ down,  
Down at Jesus’ feet,  
Stand in Him, in Him alone,  
Gloriously complete!”*

This is the Gospel—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” You will never see up in Heaven a sign bearing the names ,“Christ, and Co.” No, it is Christ, and Christ alone, who is the sinner’s Savior! He claims this for Himself—“I am Alpha and Omega.” That is, “I am A, and I am Z. I am the first letter of the alphabet, and I am the last letter, and I am every other letter from the first down to the last.” Will you make Him to be so to you, dear Friend? Will you take Him to be your Savior now? “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” A friend told us, at one of our Prayer Meetings, that “H-A-S spells, “got it.” “He that believes on the Son is a saved sinner, he has got that everlasting life that can never die and can never be taken away from him. Therefore, Beloved Friends, believe in Jesus and you, too, shall have this eternal life! You shall have pardon, you shall have peace, you shall have God, and you shall have Heaven, itself, to enjoy before long! God do so unto you, for His great mercy’s sake in Christ Jesus! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOB 7; JOHN 3:14-17.**

Job was sorely troubled by the cruel speeches of his friends and he answered them out of the bitterness of his soul. What we are first about to read is a part of his language under those circumstances.

Job 7:1. Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling? Is there not a certain time for each one of us to live? Is there not an end to all the trouble and sorrow of this mortal state? “Woe is me,” says Job, “will this sad condition of things never come to a close? Must it always be thus with me?”

2. As a servant earnestly desires the shadow. When the day shall close, and he can go to his home.  
2, 3. And as an hireling looks for the reward of his work: so am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. If that is the case with any of you, dear Friends, you ought to be comforted by the thought that a better man than you are underwent just what you are enduring—and underwent it so as to glorify God by it. Remember what the Apostle James wrote, “Behold, we count them happy which endure. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” But if our case is not so bad as Job’s was—if we are in good health and surrounded by God’s mercy—let us be very grateful. Every morning that you wake after a refreshing night’s rest, praise God for it, for it might have been far otherwise—you might have had wearisome nights through pain and suffering.

4, 5. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone and I am full of tossing to and fro unto the dawning of the day. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome. Such was the dreadful disease under which this man of God labored, for the worst of pain may happen to the best of men. Sometimes God plows His best fields most, and why should He not do so? Do not men try to do most with that which will yield most? And so God may most chasten those who will best repay the strokes of His hand. It is no token of displeasure when God smites us with disease—it may be an evidence that we are branches of the vine that bring forth fruit, or else He would not have taken the trouble to prune us.

6. My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and are spent without hope. His spirits are sunk so low that he had not any hope left at all—at least, there was none apparent just then. O you poor tried children of God, I beseech you once again to see that you are only walking where others have gone before you! Mark their footprints and take heart!

7, 8. O remember that my life is wind: my eyes shall no more see good. The eyes of Him that have seen me shall see me no more: Your eyes are upon me, and I am not. As if God only looked at him and the very look withered him. Or as if there was only time for God to look at him, and then he disappeared as though he had been but a dream, an unsubstantial thing. It is good, my Brothers and Sisters, sometimes, to know what vanities we are. And if we complain that things around us are vanity, what are we ourselves but the shadows of a shade?

9-12. As the cloud is consumed and vanishes away: so he that goes down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him anymore. Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me? Am I such a big thing, such a dangerous thing, that I ought to be watched like this, and perpetually hampered, and tethered, and kept within bounds? Ah, no! Job, you are neither a sea nor a whale, but something worse than either of them! So are we all—more false than the treacherous sea, harder to be tamed than the wildest of God’s creatures. God does set a watch over us and well He may. But hear Job’s complaint—

13-15. When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then You scare me with dreams, and terrify me through visions: so that my soul chooses strangling, and death rather than my life. Were you ever in this terrible place, dear Friend? Some of us have been there and we have used the very language of Job! And yet, for all that, we have been brought up out of the utmost depths of despondency into the topmost heights of joy. Therefore, be comforted, you poor prisoners. Through the bars and grating of your soul dungeon, we would sing unto you this song—the Lord who has brought us forth can bring you forth, also, for “the Lord looses the prisoners.” The God of Job is yet alive, strong as ever for the deliverance of such as put their trust in Him.

16, 17. I loathe it; I would not live always: let me alone; for my days are vanity. What is man, that You should magnify him? And that You should set Your heart upon him? Job seems to say, “I am too little for God to notice me; why does He make so much of me as to chasten me so sorely?”

18, 19. And that You should visit him every ,morning, and try him every moment? How long will You not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle? Blow followed blow in quick succession. Pain came fast upon the heels of pain till Job seems to have had no rest from his anguish. This is the mournful moaning of a man on a sickbed, worn out with long-continued grief. Do not judge it harshly. You may have to use such words yourself, one day, and if you ever do, then judge not yourself harshly, but say, “I am only now where that eminent servant of God, the Patriarch Job, once was, and the Lord who delivered him will also deliver me.”

20. Have I sinned? What have I done unto You, O You Preserver of men? We did not expect him to call God by that name, yet sorrow has a quick memory to recall anything by which it may be cheered. “You Preserver of men,” says Job, “Have I sinned? What have I done to You?”

20. Why have You set me as Your target? “Drawing Your bow, and directing all Your arrows against my poor heart. Have You no targets, that you must make me Your target and test Your holy archery upon me?”

20. So that I am a burden to myself? Oh, what heavy words, “a burden to myself!”  
21. And why do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity? For now shall I sleep in the dust and You shall seek me in the morning, but I shall not be. Speaking after the manner of man, he seems to think that if God does not pardon him soon, the pardon will come too late, for if God comes in mercy, by-and-by, he will be dead and gone— and God may seek him, but he shall not be found! This is how men talk when they get a little off their head through the very extremity of grief. We, too, may perhaps talk in the same fashion, one day, so let us not condemn poor Job. Now let us read a few Verses in the 3rd Chapter of the Gospel according to John, that we may be comforted. If any of you are laboring under a sense of sin, I would take you straight away to sin’s only cure.  
John 3:14, 15. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. “Whoever.” Note that word, for it means you, and it means me. No matter though you are near to death’s door, crushed and broken, bruised and mangled, look to the Crucified One and, looking, you shall find that there is eternal life for you! Though your soul has been ready to choose strangling rather than your life, yet there is a better life for you by trusting in Christ. Choose that and rest in Him. Say, from your heart, the last lines of the hymn we sang just now— *“Jesus, to Your arms I fly;  
Save me, Lord, or else I die.”*

16, 17. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. Now this, which is good teaching for those who have but lately come to Christ, or for those who are seeking to come to Him, is the very same teaching which will bring comfort to the most advanced and best instructed of the saints. How I love to continually begin with Christ over again as I began at the first! They say when a man is sick, it is a good thing to take him to his native place. And when a true Believer’s soul gets faint and unbelieving, let him breathe the air of Calvary again! The learned Grotius, who had spent the most of his life in theological disputations—not always or even often on the right side—when he was dying said, “Read me something.” And they read him the story of the publican and the Pharisee. He said, “And that poor publican I am. Thank God, that I am publican.’ God be merciful to me, a sinner.’” That was the word with which the great scholar entered into Heaven—and that is the way in which you and I must come to God! May the Holy Spirit help us to come to Him thus! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—296, 606, 607.  
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÷Job 8.11

A SERMON FROM A RUSH

NO. 651

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 24, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Can the rush grow up without a marsh? Can the reeds grow without water? While it is yet green and not cut down, it withers before any other plant. So are the  
paths of all that forget God. And the hypocrite’s hope shall perish.” Job 8:11-13.**

ISAAC walked in the fields at eventide to meditate. I commend him for his occupation. Meditation is exceedingly profitable to the mind. If we talked less, read less, and meditated more we should be wiser men. I commend him for the season which he chose for that occupation—at eventide—when the business of the day was over and the general stillness of nature was in harmony with the quiet of his soul. I also commend him for the place which he selected—the wide expanse of nature—the field.

Wise men can readily find a thousand subjects for contemplation abroad in the open country. Our four-square room is not very suggestive. But when a man walks in the fields, having the Lord in his heart and his whole mental faculties directed towards heavenly things, all things aid him in his pleasing occupation. If we look above to the sun, moon and stars, all these remind us of the grandeur of God and make us ask ourselves, “What is man, that the Lord should be mindful of him, or the son of man, that Jehovah should visit him?”

If we look below, the green meadows, or golden cornfields all proclaim Divine care and bounty. There is not a bird that sings, nor a grasshopper that chirps in the grass which does not urge us to praise and magnify the name of the Most High—while the plants, from the hyssop on the wall to the cedar which spreads its boughs so gloriously on Lebanon— exhibit to observant eyes the wisdom of the great Creator of all things. The murmuring brook talks to the listening ear in hallowed whispers of Him whose cloudy Throne supplies its stream. And the air, as it sighs amid the trees, tells in mysterious accents of the great unseen but ever-active Spirit of the living God.

The great book of Nature only needs to be turned over by a reverent hand and to be read by an attentive eye to be found to be only second in teaching to the Book of Revelation. He who would have us forget to study the fair creation of God is foolish. He would have us neglect one book by a great Author in order that we may the better comprehend another from the same hand. The pages of Inspiration reveal God far more clearly than the fields of creation—but having once obtained the light of God, the Holy Spirit, we can then enter the world of nature which has become consecrated to our best devotions and find that “in His temple does everyone speak of His Glory.”

Down by the river’s bank let us go, like Pharaoh’s daughter, and perhaps among the rushes we shall find a subject for thought of which we may say, as she did of Moses, “I drew it out of the water.” The reed, as it waves in yonder marsh, has a word of warning and whoever has ears to hear, let him hear. I claim your attention for a preacher who is not often heard—lend him your ears and when any shall ask you, “What did you go out to see?” you need not blush to answer, “A reed shaken by the wind.”

The rush shall, this morning, by God’s Grace, teach us a lesson of self-examination. Bildad, the Shuhite, points it out to us as the picture of a hypocrite—so, going to our work at once we shall have three things to talk about this morning. The hypocrite’s religion—first, what is it like? Secondly, what it lives on. And thirdly, what will become of it?

I. First, then, THE HYPOCRITE’S PROFESSION—WHAT IS IT LIKE? It is here compared to a rush growing in the mire and a reed flourishing in the water. This comparison has several points in it.   
1. In the first place, hypocritical religion may be compared to the rush for the rapidity with which it grows. True conversions are often very sudden—as, for example, the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus and the conversion of the Philippian jailer when suddenly startled out of his sleep and made to cry, “What must I do to be saved?” But the after-growth of Christians is not quite so rapid and uninterrupted—seasons of deep depression chill their joy. Hours of furious temptation make a dreadful onslaught upon their quiet.   
They cannot always rejoice. Their life is checkered. They are emptied from vessel to vessel and are acquainted with grief. True Christians are very much like oaks which take years to reach their maturity—many March winds blow through them before they are well rooted. And oftentimes tempest and flood and drought and hurricane exercise their tremendous powers upon them.   
Not so the hypocrite—once having made a profession of being converted, things generally go very smoothly with him. “Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.” They are strangers to lamentations over inbred corruption. When Believers talk of a warfare within, they are astonished! If we groan out, “O wretched man that I am— who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” these gentlemen say, “What bad people these Christians must be, to talk in that way! What black hearts they must have! And how inconsistent for them to claim to be children of God!”   
The hypocrite can always pray well and sing well. He meets no hindrances in coming to the Mercy Seat, has no groans to mingle with his formal songs. The backs of living men ache under their loads, but a steam-engine having no living sensibilities knows no pains. A horse may stumble from weariness, but a locomotive, never! Even so, the mechanical professor goes on and on and on at an even rate—when *living* souls enjoy no such perfect equanimity.   
Strong temptations do not grieve the mere *professor*. The devil does not care to molest him—he knows he is sure of him and so he lets him very much alone. The Pharisee’s house stood very firmly though it was built on sand—and it neither shook nor stirred till the flood came. It was as firm to all human appearance as if it had been founded on the Rock of Ages. When the trial-hour came—*then* the destruction was terribly complete—but meanwhile its foundations were dug without labor and its timbers were set up without trouble.  
It is an ill sign, dear Friend, if you never have to search your heart with deep anxiety lest you should be deceived. To have such strong faith that you never waver is one thing—but to be filled with such strong presumption that you never *examine* yourself is quite another. “Tush!” says this man, “I can do all things. I can run and not be weary! I can walk and not faint! I do not understand these sighings of Little-Faith, and limping of Ready-to-Halt. I cannot understand all this noise about conflict within—I am peaceable and quiet always.” Yes, so it may be. Alas, many have heard the voice, “Peace, peace, where there is no peace.”   
So, like the rush by the river, the hypocrite grows up suddenly and flourishingly in Divine things, to all appearances, and finds it easy work to be green and fair in the ways of the Lord.   
2. The rush is of all plants one of the most hollow and unsubstantial. It looks stout enough to be wielded as a staff, but he that leans upon it shall most certainly fall. It is a water-loving thing and it partakes of the nature of that on which it feeds—it is unstable as water and it does not excel. It has a fine appearance, but it is of no service whatever where stability is needed.   
So is it with the hypocrite! He is fair enough on the outside, but there is no solid faith in Christ Jesus in him—no real repentance on account of sin—no vital union to Christ Jesus. He can pray, but not in secret, and the essence and soul of prayer he never knew. He has never wrestled with the angel, never sighed and cried unto God and been “heard in that he feared.” He has a pretended confidence, but that confidence never was founded and bottomed on the finished work of Jesus Christ.   
He was never emptied of self, never brought down to feel that all his own doing, and willing, and power are less than nothing and vanity. If there had been a deep repentance, and a real confidence, and a true life in Jesus, then he had not been the hypocrite that he now is. Oh, dear Friends, while I speak upon these things, I have over my spirit the overshadowing of a great gloom. What if some of us should be found to have been as unsubstantial as the rush by the river when God comes to judge the world?   
What? When you need a hope to bear you up in the hour of death—what if it should snap beneath you? You high professors! You ancient members and revered Church officers! You eloquent preachers of the Word—what if all your profession should, like the baseless fabric of a vision, pass away? You have been drinking of the cup of the Lord. You have been feasting at His sacramental table. You have talked a great deal of rich experiences. You have boasted of the Divine Graces which you think the Spirit of God has given you—but what if it should all be a delusion? What if you should have fostered in your soul self-deception and should now be traversing the way of darkness while you dream that you are in the way of light?   
May the Lord search us and give us that true, solid, substantial, real, strong-hearted faith in Christ which will stand the test! The reed is hollow and has no heart—and the hypocrite has none either—and lack of heart is fatal, indeed. When the Roman seer killed the victim to take an omen from the innards, he always considered it to be the worst sign of all if no heart was found, or if the heart was shriveled. “Their heart is divided,” said Hosea, “now shall they be found wanting.”   
God abhors the sacrifice where the heart is not found. Sirs, if you cannot give God your *hearts*, do not mock Him with solemn sounds upon thoughtless tongues! If you do not mean your godliness, do not profess it! Above all things, abhor mere profession. Jonathan Edwards tells us that in the great revival in America there were conversions of all sorts of people—from harlots upwards, but not one single conversion, he said—of ungodly professors. Those seemed to have been the only persons upon whom the Spirit of God did not descend. Beware, then, of having the outward form of religion and being hollow and heartless like the rush, for then your case is desperate, indeed.   
3. A third comparison very naturally suggests itself, namely, that the hypocrite is very like the rush for its bending properties. When the rough wind comes howling over the marsh, the rush has made up its mind that it will hold its place at all hazards. So if the wind blows from the north, he bends to the south and the blast sweeps over him. And if the wind blows from the south, he bends to the north and the gale has no effect upon him. Only grant the rush one thing—that he may keep his place—and he will cheerfully bow to all the rest.   
The hypocrite will yield to good influences if he is in good society. “Oh yes, certainly, certainly, sing, pray, anything you like.” With equal readiness he will yield to evil influences if he happens to be in connection with them. “Oh, yes, sing a song, talk wantonness, run into gay society, attend the theater, take a turn with the dice! Certainly, if you wish it! ‘When we are at Rome we do as Rome does.’ ”   
Anything to oblige anybody is his motto. He is an omnivorous feeder and like the swine can eat the vegetable of propriety, or the flesh of iniquity. One form of doctrine is preached to him—very well, he would not wish to contend against it for a moment! It is contradicted by the next preacher he hears—and really, there is a great deal to be said on the other side—so he holds with hare and hounds, too. He is all for heat when the weather is hot and quite as much for cold when it is the season. He can freeze and melt and boil, all in an hour—just as he finds it pays best to be solid or liquid. If it is most respectable to call a thing black, well, then, it is black! If it will pay better to call it white, well, then, it is not so very black—in fact it is rather white, or white altogether if you like to call it so!   
The gross example of the Vicar of Bray comes at once to one’s mind. He had been a papist under Henry VIII, then a Protestant under a Protestant reign—then a papist under Mary—then again a Protestant under Elizabeth. And he declared he had always been consistent with his principle, for his principle was to continue the Vicar of Bray! Some there are who are evidently consistent in this particular and in the idea that they will make things as easy for themselves as they can—and will get as much profit as they can—either by truth or lies.   
Do you not know some? They have not an atom of that stern stuff of which martyrs are made in the whole of their composition. They love that modern goddess, Charity. When Diana went down Charity went up. And she is as detestable a goddess as ever Diana was. Give me a man who will be all things to all men to win souls, if it is not a matter of principle—but give me the man who, when it comes to be a matter of right and wrong, would rather die than deny his faith— who could burn, but could not for a moment conceal his sentiments, much less lay them aside until a more convenient season.   
True godliness, such as will save the soul, must not be the mere bark, but the heart, the sap, the *essence* of a man’s being—it must run right through and through, so that he cannot live without it. That religion which you do not carry with you every day and which is not the dearest object for which you live is not worth picking up from a dunghill! Beloved, we must be ready to *die* for Christ or we shall have no joy in the fact that Christ died for us.   
4. Yet again the bulrush has been used in Scripture as a picture of a hypocrite from its habit of hanging down its head. “Is it to hang your head like a bulrush?” asks the Prophet, speaking to some who kept a hypocritical fast. Pretended Christians seem to think that to hang down the head is the very index of deep piety. To look piously miserable. To speak in a wretched tone of voice. To be constantly lamenting the wickedness of the times and bewailing the badness of the harvests and the wickedness of our legislature.   
To see nothing anywhere but what is vile, deceptive and abominable is thought to be the trademark of superfine godliness. It is the mark of a hypocrite to wear always a sad countenance—Job says of the hypocrite, “Will he delight himself in the Almighty?” And the answer that he expected was, “No, it is altogether impossible!” A real hypocrite finds no satisfaction in his religion. He goes through with it because he thinks he must. He walks to his place of worship with his books under his arm just as a culprit might be supposed to walk up the gallows stairs. And when he gets to a place of worship he is very proper in all his demeanor—very proper, indeed, but he is never joyous.   
Smile on Sundays? Shocking! What? Enjoy anything like mirth at any time! Awful! Now you understand all about this. There are some things which you must handle very tenderly because they will break if you don’t. A man, dressed in shoddy garments, walks very demurely for fear the rubbish should tear. But good broadcloth allows us liberty of action without fear of such an accident. Gingerbread religionists may only be looked at in their somber aspects—genuine Believers are not ashamed to be viewed even when their cheerfulness is at its full.   
A person who has bought a pair of shoes made of brown paper must mincingly tread with delicate steps. But he who, according to Scripture, is shod with iron and brass may, with manly gait, march on and even leap for joy without fear! I love Christian preciseness of action, but I abhor hypocritical decorum and formalistic exactness of worship. I would advocate holy cheerfulness—a Christian freedom which lets the whole man show itself—a freedom of sorrowing when it is the time for sorrow and a freedom of rejoicing when it is the time for rejoicing!   
That constrained, stiffly starched religion which some people think such a great deal of is nothing but the bulrush religion of the hypocrite and the Pharisee—and the sooner we throw it out the better. The man whose heart is right with God does not stop to say, “How will this look?” His heart tells him, as he reads the Word, that such a course is right and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit he follows it. Right with him is delight. He knows that evil is not denied to him as though he were debarred from pleasure, but that it is only *kept from him* as a tender parent would keep poison from a child. Our life is the life of liberty. And we find, of true religion, that “Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.”   
5. Once more—the rush is well taken as an emblem of the mere professor from its bearing no fruit. Nobody would expect to find figs on a bulrush, or grapes of Eshcol on a reed. So it is with the hypocrite—he brings forth no fruit. The hypocrite gets as far as this—“I do not drink. I do not swear. I do not cheat. I do not lie. I do not break the Sabbath.” His religion is all negative. And when it comes to anything positive he fails. What have you ever done for Christ? You may look at the whole of the hypocrite’s life and it yields nothing.   
Perhaps he has given a guinea or two to a charity. Yes—but did he give it to God? He has been kind to the poor. Did he look at the poor as being *God’s* poor and care for them because *God* cares for them? Did he do it for God? Throughout the whole life of the hypocrite there is nothing in which he really serves God. What? Not when he has made that long prayer? He did it either to satisfy his conscience or to please those who were listening to him. Did he really pray to God and do it for God’s Glory and in order that he might have fellowship with God?   
If so, he is no hypocrite—but the hypocrite proper—though he has left off many wrong things, yet he has not advanced so far as to bring forth fruit meet for repentance. He has not run in the way of holiness. He has not sought after the image of Christ. He does not delight in communion with Christ. He has no faith, no joy, no hope, no conformity to the Spirit of the Master. He lacks fruit and therefore he is as the rush and not as a plant of the Lord’s right hand planting.   
I will not stay further to work out this parallel—only if any words have seemed to strike you—let them strike you. If there has been a sentence in what I have said that suited my own case, I do desire to feel its power. The worst is that some of you who are most sincere will be troubled when you search yourselves, when we do not want you to be. And others who are *really* hypocrites are the very last persons to think they are. When our young members come to me in such trouble, crying, “Sir, I am afraid I am a hypocrite,” I always think, “*I* believe you are *not*, or else you would not be afraid of it.”   
But those who are never afraid—who have just written it down as a matter of fact that all is well with them—should listen to the word of the Prophet, “Strangers have devoured his strength and he knows it not: yes, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows not.” The worm may be in the center of the apple when the cheek of the fruit is still beautiful to look upon. God save us from hypocrisy and grant us Grace to see ourselves in a true light!   
II. Secondly, we have to consider WHAT IT IS THAT THE HYPOCRITE’S RELIGION LIVES ON. “Can the rush grow up without a marsh? Can the reeds grow without water?” The rush is entirely dependent upon the ooze in which it is planted. If there should come a season of drought and the water should fail from the marsh, the rush would more speedily die than any other plant. “While it is yet green and not cut down, it withers before any other plant.” The Hebrew name for the rush signifies a plant that is always drinking. And so the rush lives perpetually by sucking and drinking in moisture.   
This is the case of the hypocrite. The hypocrite cannot live without something that shall foster his apparent piety. Let me show you some of this mire and water upon which the hypocrite lives. Some people’s religion cannot live without excitement—revival services, earnest preachers and zealous Prayer Meetings keep them green. But the earnest minister dies, or goes to another part of the country. The Church is not quite so earnest as it was and what then? Where are your converts?   
Oh, how many there are who are hot-house plants—while the temperature is kept up to a certain point they flourish and bring forth flowers, if not fruits! But take them out into the open air. Give them one or two nights’ frost of persecution and where are they? My dear Hearers, beware of that godliness which depends upon *excitement* for its life! I do not speak against religious excitement—men get excited over politics, and science, and trade—why should they not be excited about the far weightier things of religion?   
But still, though you may indulge yourself with it, sometimes, do not let it be your *element*. I am afraid that many Churches have been revived and revived till they have become like big bubbles full of wind and now they have almost vanished into thin air! The grace which *man* gives, man can take away. If your piety has sprung up like a mushroom, it will be about as frail. Doubtless many are converted at revivals who run well and hold out. And then their conversion is the work of the Spirit of God.   
But there are as many, I fear, of another kind! They get delirious with excitement—they fancy that they have repented, dream that they have believed—and then imagine themselves to be the children of God! They may go on in such a delusion perhaps year after year. Beware! Beware! Some hypocrites can no more live without excitement than the rush can live without water! Dear Hearers, pray that you may be like the palm tree, which even in the desert still continues green and brings forth its fruit in the year of drought.   
Many mere professors live upon encouragement. You are the child of godly parents—those parents naturally look with great delight upon the first signs of Divine Grace in you and they encourage and foster, as they should do, everything that is good. Or you belong to a class such as some of those most blessed classes which meet here, presided over by tender, loving spirits—and whenever you have a little difficulty you can run to these kind helpers. Whenever any fresh temptation arises you find strength in their warning and counsel.   
This is a very great privilege. I wish that in all Churches we would practice the text, “Encourage him,” more and more. We ought to comfort the feeble-minded and support the weak. But, dear Friends, beware of the piety which *depends* upon encouragement. You will have to go, perhaps, where you will be frowned at and scowled at, where the head of the household, instead of encouraging prayer, will refuse you either the room or the time for engaging in it. You may meet with hard words, bitter sneers, and cruel mockery because you profess to be a Christian. Oh, get Grace which will stand that fiery trial! God give you a Grace that will be independent of human helpers because it hangs upon the bare arm of God Himself!   
Some, too, we know, whose religion is sustained by example. It may be the custom in the circle in which you move to attend a place of worship—no, more—it has come to be the *fashion* to join the Church and make a profession of religion. Well, example is a good thing. When I was crossing the Humber from Hull to New Holland the other day, a steamer came in with sheep on board and there was some difficulty in getting them from the boat to the pier. The butcher first dragged one sheep over the drawbridge and then the others came along readily enough. Example is a good thing—one true sheep of Christ may lead the rest in the way of Truth and obedience.   
But a religion which depends entirely on other people must obviously go to ruin when subjected to the temptation of an *evil* example. Why, if you simply join the Church because other young people do it, or profess such-and-such a faith because it happens to be the prevailing doctrine in the district where you reside—why, then, your religion will depend on the locality! And when you move somewhere else, your religion will move off, too, or you from it. Young man, avoid this feeble sort of piety. Be a man who can be singular when to be singular is to be right.   
If the whole world shall run headlong down the broad road, be it yours to thread your way through the crowd against the current along the uphill way of life. The dead fish floats down the stream, the live fish goes against it. Show your life by shunning unholy example. Furthermore, a hypocrite’s religion is often very much supported by the profit that he makes by it. Mr. By-Ends joined the Church because, he said, he should get a good wife by making a profession of religion.   
Besides, Mr. By-Ends kept a shop and went to a place of worship because, he said, the people would have to buy goods *somewhere*—and if they saw him at their place—very likely they would come to his shop and so his religion would help his trade. Thus he argued that there were three good things—a profession of religion, a good wife and a good trade as well. Suppose, Mr. By-Ends, that your religion involved your missing the supposed good wife, and losing the good customers, what about it then? “Why, then,” says he, “I’m very sorry, but really we must look to the main chance. We must not commit ourselves too far.”   
That is Mr. By-Ends’ way of judging. He does not look upon the things of God as the main choice. They are means to an end—that is all. I fear there is much of this everywhere. You will know best, any of you, how far you are affected by it. I am sure there are few, if any of you, who can be suspected of coming here to gain trade, for the thing does not answer in such a city as London. But in country towns this operates marvelously. You can have the Dissenting trade if you go to meeting, or you can have the Church trade if you go to the steeple-house.  
Well, worshippers of the golden calf, do you know what Christ will do with you if you are found in His temple when He comes? That scourge of small cords will be on your backs! “Take these things from here,” He will say, as He sees your tables and your doves and your shekels. “My Father’s house shall be called a House of Prayer—you have made it a den of thieves.” The rush will grow where there is plenty of mire, plenty of profit for religion—but dry up the gains and where would some people’s religion be? Pray with all your might against this loathsome disgusting sin of making a pretension to godliness merely for the sake of getting something by it.   
Yet, doubtless, there are crowds who do this. With certain persons their godliness rests very much upon their prosperity. “Does Job serve God for nothing?” was the wicked question of Satan concerning that upright man. And of many it might be asked with justice, for they love God after a fashion because He prospers them. But if things went ill with them they would give up all faith in God. I remember two who joined this Church. I remember them with sorrow. I faintly hope good things of them, but I frequently fear the worst.   
They joined this Church when things were going very well. But almost from that very time they had a succession of losses and they imputed this to their having made a profession of religion. And so they gave up outward religious duties. Whether they did that out of a scrupulous honesty, I scarcely can tell. Or whether it really was this—that they could not receive evil at the hand of God as well as good—I do not know. I am inclined to fear it was the latter. There are some who quarrel with the most High. If they can clearly see that since the time of their supposed conversion, the world has gone prosperously with them, then they will love God in their poor carnal way. But if it has been nothing but adversity then they are astonished and think God is not kind with them.   
Do you know that the promise of the old Covenant was prosperity, but the promise of the new Covenant is adversity? Listen to this text—“Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away and every branch that bears fruit”—what? “He *purges* it, that it may bring forth more fruit”! If you bring forth fruit you will have to endure affliction! “Alas,” says one, “that is a terrible prospect!” Ah, but, Beloved, this affliction works out such comfortable fruit that the Christian, who is the subject of it, has learned to rejoice in tribulations—because as his tribulations abound so his consolation abounds by Christ Jesus!   
Rest assured if you are a godly man, you will be no stranger to the rod. Trials must and will befall. But do not let me mislead anybody into the idea of *praying* for trouble! I have heard of one who did so—he only did it but once—many trials made him wiser! The true-born child knows how to bear the rod, but he will not *ask* for it—if he asked for it he would be very silly—and it would be of no service to him. You will have it sooner or later! And though it may be months and years will roll very quietly with you, yet there will be days of darkness and you ought to rejoice that there are such, for in *these* you will be weaned from earth and made ready for Heaven! You will be delivered from your clinging to the present and made to long, and pine and sigh for the things which are not seen but eternal, so soon to be revealed to you.   
To conclude this point. The hypocrite is very much affected by the respectability of the religion which he avows. John Bunyan’s pithy way of putting it is, “Many walk with religion when she wears her silver slippers.” But they forsake her if she goes barefoot. May I ask you this question? What would you do if to follow Christ were penal according to the laws of the land? If you had to live under perpetual jeopardy of life for reading the Word—would you hide it as the saints of God did, behind the wainscot or under the floor—and read it down in the cellar or up in the attic at spare moments?   
Could you come forward in the day of trial as those did in Pliny’s time and say, “I am a Christian”? Do you think that like poor Tomkins, when Bonner held his finger over the candle to let him see what it was like, you could still say you could burn but you could not turn? Could you stand as some of the martyrs did at the stake, telling those who looked on that if they did not clap their hands at the last they might know their religion was not true, and so at the very last, when their poor fingers were all on fire, they would still lift them up and wave their hands to and fro, and cry out, “None but Christ! None but Christ!”?   
Do you think you would have the Grace to suffer for Christ Jesus? You may say, “I fear I should not.” My dear Friends, that fear is a very natural one. But mark you, if you can bear the ordinary trials of the day, the constant trials of the world, and take them before God and exhibit Christian patience under them, you may hope that as a Believer in Christ you would have more Grace given you when the trials became more severe. And so you *would* be able to pass through them as the saints of old did!   
But mark you, if the present trials and troubles of the day are too much for you and you cannot exhibit Christian patience under them, I am compelled to ask you in the language of Jeremiah, “If you have run with the footmen and they have wearied you, how will you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace wherein you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” This may help us to try ourselves.   
III. We have a third point to close with and that is, WHAT BECOMES OF THE HYPOCRYTE’S HOPE? “While it is yet green and not cut down, it withers before any other plant. So are the paths of all that forget God. And the hypocrite’s hope shall perish. Long before the Lord comes to cut the hypocrite down it often happens that he dries up for want of the mire on which he lives. The excitement, the encouragement, the example, the profit, the respectability, the prosperity upon which he lived fail him and he fails, too.   
Alas, how dolefully is this the case in all Christian Churches! Little have we had to mourn over defections during the years of our ministry. But we have had some sorrowful, very sorrowful cases, and I doubt not we shall have more. “Lord, is it I?” “Lord, is it I?” is a question that may be passed round among professing Christians. I fear that there are those here this morning who one day will deny the Lord that bought them and crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame.   
“Oh,” says one, “it cannot be me.” Do not be too sure, Friend, do not be too sure! If I could come in Prophetic spirit to some of you who will do this and look you in the face and tell you what you will do, you would say like Hazael, “Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?” And I should have to settle my countenance until I became ashamed and look at you yet again and say, “You are no dog and yet you will play the dog and return to your vomit and become yet again what once you were, only with this aggravation, that you will have sinned against light and against knowledge, against sacred influences and professed enjoyments of Divine love.”   
You have cleansed the house. You have swept it. You have garnished it and the evil spirit is gone. But if the *Holy Spirit* has not driven him out—if this has not been a work of power on the part of *God*—that evil spirit will come back and he will take unto himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself and they shall enter in and dwell there and your last end will be worse than the first! Better not to have known the way of righteousness than, having known it, to be turned back again.   
The worst of men are those traitors who leave the army of Truth to side with the foe. I believe in the doctrine of the final perseverance of every true child of God—but there are in all our Churches certain spurious pretenders who will not hold on their way—who will blaze and sparkle for a season and then they will go out in darkness. They are “wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” Better far make no pretension of having come to Christ and of having been born again, unless through Divine Grace you shall hold fast to the end! Remember the back door to Hell! Remember the back door to Hell!   
There is a public entrance for the open sinner—but there is a back door for the professed saint. There is a back door for the hoary-headed professor who has lived many years in apparent sincerity but who has been a liar before God. There is a back door for the preacher who can talk fast and loudly, but who does not, in his own heart, know the Truth of God he is preaching. There is a back door to Hell for Church members who are amiable and excellent in many respects, but who have not really looked unto the Lord Jesus Christ and found true salvation in Him. God grant that this may wake some who otherwise would sleep themselves into perdition!   
Yet again, where the rush still continues green because it has mire and water enough on which to feed, another result happens, namely, that before long the sickle is used to cut it down. So must it be with you, Professor, if you shall keep up a green profession all your days. Yet if you are heartless, spongy, soft, yielding, unfruitful like the rush—you will be cut down and sorrowful will be the day when, with a blaze, you shall be consumed! Oh, to be cut down at the last! Death, I hope, Beloved, will be to many of you the season of your greatest joy!   
You will climb to Pisgah’s top with weary footsteps, but when once there, the vision of the landscape will make amends for all the toil. The brooks, and hills, and valleys will flow with milk and honey! And your delighted eyes shall gaze upon your portion—your eternal heritage! But oh, how different will be our lot, if instead of this, “Tekel” shall be written upon us at the last because we are found wanting!   
“O my God! My God! Have You forsaken me? Am I, after all, mistaken? Have I played the hypocrite and must I take the mask off now? Have I covered over the cancer? Have I worn a golden cloth over my leprous forehead and must it be torn away? And must I stand the mockery of devils and the laughter of all worlds? What? Have I drunk of Your cup? Have I eaten with You in the streets and must I hear You say, ‘I never knew you, depart from Me you worker of iniquity’? Oh, must it be?”   
Then how hard will be the bed on which I die! How stuffed with thorns that pillow! How tortured and anguished my poor broken heart, when every prop is knocked away and the house comes tumbling down about my ears! When every drop of comfort is dried up and even here the thirsty spirit lacks a drop of cordial to afford it comfort! O my dear Hearers, by the eternal God I do beseech you—seek a genuine religion! Do not put off self-examination! I dare not put it off on my own account and I pray you do not postpone it on yours. If I have not said a word to comfort and to cheer you this morning, forgive that lack of service, for my aim is to drive at this one thing—it will in the end be the best and most comforting to you all if you will set to work *now* and with *diligence* to try yourselves—whether you are in the faith.   
Cry to God to aid you in this! You cannot do it well yourself, for, “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?” O Cry to Him—“Search me, O God and know my heart, try me and know my ways.” Time is flying—set about the business before it is gone! Death is coming on—search yourselves before the darkness thickens into midnight gloom. The Judgment Day will soon arrive! The King will sit upon the Great White Throne. Oh, before He judges you, judge yourselves, that you be not judged!   
The division will soon take place between the goats and the sheep. O, seek to be under Christ, the heavenly Shepherd now, that you are not banished from His Presence at the last. What more can I say? It is not your *body* that is at stake—it is not your *estates* that are in jeopardy—your *soul*, your undying SOUL—destined to Heaven’s glories or to Hell’s miseries are now in question! Search yourselves, search yourselves and God Almighty search you, too!   
Ah, there are some of you who have no need to search. Without any trial you know yourselves to be on the wrong side. And there are others of you who, when you have searched, will still be afraid that you are wrong. Ah, well, whatever we are, or may have been, remember Jesus came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Looking to that thorncrowned head, those dear hands and feet nailed to the tree, that blessed heart all exposed by the soldier’s spear—looking there, looking there only, looking there NOW—we find salvation!   
Believers, you have looked before. But if that is a matter of question, look now. “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” Repeat that glance which gave you comfort. There is life still in a look at that Crucified One. There is life at this moment for you. Jesus! Your people look to You again! Lover of our souls! Accept us! Oh, you who never looked before, He reigns in Glory, mighty to save! He gives repentance and remission of sins!   
Only trust Him with your soul. Have done with all your works, your willings, your prayers, your tears, your *everything* as a ground of confidence, and trust in HIM who died for sinners and you “shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hands.” The Lord grant we may be found right at last for Jesus’ sake! Amen.   
*PORTION OFSCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—[Psalm 139](tw://bible.*?id=19.139.0|_AUTODETECT_|).*

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Job 8.7

THE BEGINNING, INCREASE AND END OF THE DIVINE LIFE  
NO. 311

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, APRIL 29, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

**“Though your beginning was small, yet your latter end should greatly increase.”  
Job 8:7.**

THIS was the reasoning of Bildad the Shuhite. He wished to prove that Job could not possibly be an upright man, for if he were so, he here affirms that his prosperity would increase continually. Or that if he fell into any trouble, God would awake for him and make the habitation of his righteousness prosperous. And though his family were now all destroyed and his wealth scattered to the winds—if he were an upright man, God would surely appear for him and his latter end would greatly increase.

Now the utterances of Bildad and of the other two men who came to comfort Job, but who made his wounds tingle, are not to be accepted as being inspired. They spoke as men—as mere men. They reasoned no doubt in their own esteem logically enough. But the Spirit of God was not with them in their speech, therefore with regard to any sentiment which we find uttered by these men, we must use our own judgment. And if it is not in consonance with the rest of Holy Scripture, it will be our bounden duty to reject it as being but the word of man—of a wise and ancient man it is true—but still of a man only.

With regard to the passage which I have selected as a text, it is true— altogether apart from its being said by Bildad, or being found in the Bible at all—it is true, as indeed the facts of the book of Job prove—for Job did greatly increase in his latter end. His beginning was small—he was brought down to poverty! To the potsherd and to the dunghill he had many graves, but no children. He had had many losses, he had now nothing left to lose. And yet God did awake for him. His righteousness came out from the darkness which had eclipsed it. He shone in sevenfold prosperity so that the words of Bildad were prophetic, though he knew it not. God put into his mouth language which did come true, after all. Indeed, we have here a great principle—a principle against which none can ever contend—the beginning of the godly and the upright man may be but very small, but his latter end shall greatly increase.

Evil things may seem to begin well, but they end badly. There is the dash and the glare, but afterwards the darkness and the black ash. They promise fairly—their sun rises in the zenith and then speedily sets, never to rise again. Evil things begin as mountains. They end as molehills. You sail upon their ocean at first and as you sail onward it grows into a river

and afterwards into a dry bed, if not into burning sands. Behold Satan in the garden of Eden. Sin begins with the promise, “You shall be as gods!” How grand is its beginning! Where ends it? Shivering beneath the trees of the garden, complaining of nakedness, sin comes to its end.

Or see it in Satan himself. He stretches out his right hand to snatch the diadem of Heaven—he would be Lord paramount. He cannot bear to serve, he longs to reign. Oh, glittering vision that enchants the eye of an archangelic splat! But where ends it? The vision is all gone and is succeeded by “the blackness of darkness forever.” And the chains reserved in fire for those that kept not their first estate—so will it be with you, too, my Friend—if you have chosen the path of evil today. Your mirth is as the crackling of thorns under a pot—it blazes, it crackle with excess of joy. Tomorrow you shall find nothing there but a handful of ashes and darkness and cold. Yes, the path of evil is downhill from its sunny summits to its dark ravines—from the pretended loftiness, which it assumes when it professes to be a cherub—to that lowliness in which it finds itself to be a devil.

Evil goes downward. It has its great things first and then its terrible things last. Not so, however, with good. With good the beginning is even small. But its latter end does greatly increase. “The path of the just is as the shining light,” which sheds a few flickering rays at first, which exercises a combat with the darkness, but it “shines more and more unto the perfect day.” As the coming forth of stars at even-tide, when first one, and then another, and yet another struggles through the darkness, then at last the whole starry host are marshaled on the heavenly plains. So is it with good—it begins with grains of sand, it goes on to hills and later it swells up to mountains.

It begins with the rippling rill—the little cascade that leaps from its secret birthplace and down the mountain it dashes. It swells to a joyous stream, wherein the fish do leap. Later it becomes a river which bears upon its surface the navigation of nations and then it rolls at last an ocean that belts the globe. Good things progress. They are like Jacob’s ladder—they ascend round by round. We begin as men, we end as angels. We climb until the promise of Satan is fulfilled in a sense in which he never understood it. We become as gods and are made partakers of the Divine, being reconciled unto God and then having God’s grace infused into us.

The principle, then, upon which I have to speak this morning, is this— that though the beginnings of good things are small, yet their latter end shall greatly increase. Instead, however, of dealing with this as a mere doctrine, I propose to use it practically—assume the fact and then make a practical use of it. Three ends shall I hope to serve—first—to quiet the fears of those who are but beginners in grace. Secondly, to confirm their faith. And, thirdly, to quicken their diligence.

May I ask the prayers of God’s people here that I may be strengthened in this preaching? I cannot tell how it is—the cold clammy sweat comes over me now. I am about to address you and I feel almost quivering with weakness. Nevertheless, this is a subject which may strengthen me as well as you and therefore let us go to it at once.

I. First, then, for THE QUIETING OF YOUR FEARS. You say, my Hearer, “I am but a beginner in grace and therefore I am vexed with anxiety and full of timorousness.” Yes and it shall be my business, if God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, shall enable me, to give you some few sweet words which, like wafers made with honey, you may roll under your tongue and find them satisfactory and pleasant, even as that manna which came down from Heaven and fed the Israelites in the wilderness. Perhaps your first fear, if I put it into words, is this—“My beginning is so small that I cannot tell when it did begin and therefore, methinks I cannot have been converted, but am still in the gall of bitterness.”

O Beloved, I know many thousands like yourself have been exercised with doubts upon this point! They were not converted in an instant. They were not stricken down as in the Revivals. They were not nerved with terrible alarms, such as John Bunyan describes in his “Grace Abounding.” But they were called of God, as was Lydia, by a still small voice. Their hearts were gradually and happily opened to receive the Truth of God, it was not as if a tornado or a hurricane rushed through their spirits. But a soft zephyr blew and they lived and came to God.

And you doubt, do you, because from this very reason you cannot tell when you were first converted? Be encouraged. It is not needful for you to know when you were regenerated. It is but necessary for you to know that you are. If you can set no date to the beginning of your faith, yet if you do believe now, you are saved. If in your diary there stands no red-letter day in which your sins were pardoned and your soul accepted—yet if your trust is in Jesus only—this very day you are pardoned. And you are accepted, despite your ignorance of the time when.

God’s promises bear no dates. Our notes are dated because there is a time when they run due and we are apt to forget them. God’s promises bear none and His gifts sometimes do not bear any. If you are saved— though the date be erased—yet you may rejoice and triumph evermore in the Lord your God. True, there are some of us who can remember the precise spot where we first found the Savior. The day will never be forgotten when these eyes looked to the Cross of Christ and found their tears all wiped away. But thousands in the fold of Jesus know not when they were brought in. Be it enough for them to know they are His.

Let them feed upon the pasture, let them lie down beside the still waters for whether they came by night or by day—they did not come at a forbidden hour. Whether they came in youth or in old age, it matters not. All times are acceptable with God, “and whoever comes,” come he when he may, “He will in nowise cast out.” Does it not strike you as being very foolish reasoning if you should say in your heart, “I am not converted because I do not know when?” No, with such reasoning as that, I could prove that old Rome was never built, because the precise date of her building is unknown. No, we might declare that the world was never made, for its exact

age even the geologist cannot tell us.

We might prove that Jesus Christ Himself never died, for the precise date on which He expired on the tree is lost beyond recovery. Nor does it signify much to us. We know the world was made, we know that Christ did die and so you—if you are now reconciled to God, if now your trembling arms are cast around that Cross, you too are saved—though the beginning was so small that you cannot tell when it was. Indeed, in living things, it is hard to put the finger upon the beginning. Here is a fruit—will you tell me when it began to be? Was it at the time when first the tree sent forth its fruit bud? Did this fruit begin when first the flower shed its exhalations of perfume upon the air?

Indeed, you could not have seen it if you had looked. When was it? Was it when the full-ripe flower was blown away and its leaves were scattered to the wind and a little embryo of fruit was left? It were hard to say it did not begin before that and equally hard to say at what precise instant that fruit began to be formed. Yes, and so is it with Divine Grace—the desires are so faint at the beginning, the convictions are but the etchings upon the plate—which afterwards must be engraved with a harder instrument. And they are such flimsy things—such transient impressions of Divine Truth, that it were difficult to say what is transient and what permanent— what is really of the Spirit of God and what is not. What has saved the soul, or what only brought it to the verge of salvation. What made it really live, or what was really the calling together of the dry bones before the breath came and the bones began to live. Quit your fears, my Hearers, upon this point—for if you are saved—no matter when, you never shall be unsaved.

Another doubt also arises from this point. “Ah, Sir,” says a timid Christian, “it is not merely the absence of all date to my conversion, but the extreme weakness of the grace I have.” “Ah,” says one, “I sometimes think I have a little faith, but it is so mingled with unbelief, distrust and incredulity, that I can hardly think it is God’s gift—the faith of God’s elect. I hope sometimes I have a little love, but it is such a beginning, such a mere spark, that I cannot think it is the love which God the Holy Spirit breathes into the soul. My beginning is so exceeding small, that I have to look and look and look again, at times, before I can discern it for myself. If I have faith, it is but as a grain of mustard seed and I fear it will never be that goodly tree, in the midst of whose branches the birds of the air might rest.”

Courage, my Brothers and Sisters, courage. However small the beginnings of grace, they are such beginnings that they shall have a glorious end. When God begins to build, if He lays but one single stone He will finish the structure. When Christ sits down to weave, though He casts the shuttle but once—and that time the thread was so filmy as scarcely to be discernible—He will, nevertheless, continue till the piece is finished and the whole is worked. If your faith is ever so little, yet it is immortal and that immortality may well compensate for its littleness.

A spark of Grace is a spark of Deity—as soon may Deity be quenched as to quench grace—that grace within your soul given you of the Spirit shall continue to burn. And He who gave it shall fan it with His own soft breath, for “He will not quench the smoking flax.” He will bring it to a fire and afterwards to a furnace, till your faith shall attain to the full assurance of understanding. Oh, let the littleness of God’s beginnings stagger you! Who would think, if he stood at the source of the Thames, that it would ever be such a river as it is—making this city rich? So little is it that a child might stop it with his hand and but a handful of miry clay might dam its course, but there it rolls—a mighty river that man cannot stop.

And so shall it be with you. Your faith is so little that it seems not to exist at all and your love so faint that it can scarcely be called love. But your latter end shall greatly increase, till you shall become strong and do exploits—the babe shall become a giant. And he that stumbled at every straw shall move mountains and make the very hills to shake.

Having thus spoken upon two fears, which are the result of these small beginnings, let me now try to quiet another. “Ah,” says the heir of Heaven, “I do hope that in me grace has commenced its work, but my fear is that such frail faith as mine will never stand the test of years. I am,” says he, “so weak, that one temptation would be too much for me. How then can I hope to pass through yonder forest of spectra held in the hands of valiant enemies? A drop makes me tremble. How shall I stem the roaring flood of life and death? Let but one arrow fly from Hell—it penetrates my tender flesh. What then if Satan shall empty his quiver? I shall surely fall by the hand of the enemy. My beginnings are so small that I am certain they will soon come to their end and that end must be black despair.”

Be of good courage, Brothers and Sisters. Have done with that fear once and for all. It is true, as you say, the temptation will be too much for you, but what have you to do with it? Heaven is not to be won by your might, but by the might of Him who has promised Heaven to you! Your crown of life is to be obtained, not by your arm, but by that arm which now holds it out and bids you run towards it. If your perseverance rested upon yourself you could not persevere an hour. If spiritual life depended on itself, it would be like the shooting-star, which makes a shining trail for a moment and then is gone.

But thanks be unto God, it is written—“Because I live, you shall live also.” “For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.”— *“The feeblest saint shall win the day,  
Though death and Hell obstruct the way,”*

because that feeble saint is girded with Jehovah’s strength. If I had to fight in another man’s strength and I knew that he had gigantic force, I should not estimate the power of my own limbs and muscles, but of his limbs and muscles. And so if I have to fight in the strength of God, I am not to reckon by what I can do, but what He can do—not what I am able, but what He is able to accomplish. I am not to go forth bound and limited and cramped and bandaged by my own infirmity, but made free and valorous and unconquerable through that Divine Omnipotence, which first

spoke all things into existence and now maintain all things by the word of His power.

Stand up, poor Brothers and Sisters, full of fears though you are, and for once glory in your infirmities and boast in your Master. I say it in your behalf and on my own—you principalities and powers of darkness, you leaguered hosts of Hell, you enemies in human form or in form of demons, I challenge you all. More than a match for every one of you am I, if God is with me, less than nothing were I, if left alone. But were I weaker than I am I would defy you. But God is my strength. Jehovah is become my strength and my song. He also has become my salvation, therefore will we tread down our enemies and Moab shall become as straw that is trod down for the dunghill. In God will we rejoice, yes in God will we greatly rejoice and in Him will we rejoice all the day.

Thus have I dealt with a third fear. Let me seek to quiet and pacify one other fear. “No, but,” say you, “I never can be saved. For when I look at other people, at God’s own true children—I am ashamed to say it—I am but a miserable copy of them. So far from attaining to the image of my Master, I fear I am not even like my Master’s servants. Look at such-anone, how he preaches the Truth of God with power. What fluency he has in prayer, what service he undertakes! But I—I am such a beginner in grace, that—

*‘Hosannas languish on my tongue,*

*And my devotion dies.’*  
I live at a poor dying rate. I sometimes run, but oftener creep and seldom or ever fly. Where others are shaking mountains, I am stumbling over molehills. The saints seem to bestride this narrow world like some great colossus. But I walk under their huge legs and peep about to find myself a poor dishonored slave. I have no power, no strength no might.”

Pause, Brothers and Sisters, pause. Stop your murmuring for a moment. If some little star in the sky should declare it was not a star, because it did not shine as brightly as Sirius or Aroturus, how foolish would be its argument! If the moon should insist upon it that she was never made by God because she could not shine as brightly as the sun, then she cannot be content to be what her Lord has made her! If the nettle would not bloom, because it was not a pine and if the hyssop on the wall refused to grow because it was not a cedar, oh, what dislocation would there be in the noble frame of this universe! If these murmurings that vex us vexed the whole of God’s creatures, then were this earth a howling wilderness, indeed.

Now, let me talk to you a moment, to calm your fears. Have you, my Brothers and Sisters, ever learned to distinguish between Grace and gifts? For know that they are marvelously dissimilar. A man may be saved who has not a grain of gifts—but no man can be saved who has no grace. Yonder brother who prayed, yonder friend who preaches, yonder sister who spoke—all these perhaps acted so well because God had given them excellent gifts. It might not be that it was because of Grace. When you are in the Prayer Meeting and hear a Brother extremely fluent, remember that there are men quite as fluent about their daily business and that fluency is not fervency and that even the appearance of fervency is not absolutely an evidence that there is fervency in the soul.

If you are so mean a thing that you can not spell a word in any book, or put six words together grammatically. If you can offer no prayer in public. If you are so poor a scholar that every fool is wiser than you are—yet if you have Christ in your heart, you are saved and that is the matter in point just now—whether you are saved or not. “Covet earnestly the best gifts.” But still, sit not down and murmur because you have them not—for one grain of Grace outweighs a pound of gifts. One particle of grace is far more precious than all the gifts that a Byron ever had, or that Shakespeare ever possessed within his soul—vast and almost infinite though the gifts of those men certainly were.

And yet another question would I put to you. My dear Brothers and Sisters, have you ever learned to distinguish between grace that saves and the grace which develops itself afterwards? Remember, there are some graces that are absolutely necessary to the saving of the soul. There are some others that are only necessary to its comfort. Faith, for instance, is absolutely necessary for salvation. But assurance is not. Love is indispensable, but that high decree of love which induces the martyr’s spirit does not reign in the breast of everyone—even of those who are saved.

The possession of grace in some degree is needful to salvation. But the possession of grace in the highest degree, though it is extremely desirable, is not absolutely necessary for an entrance into Heaven. Remember, then, thus to yourself, if I am the meanest lamb in Jesus’ fold, I would be happy to think that I am in the flock. If I am the smallest babe in Jesus’ family, I will bless His name to think that I have a portion among the sanctified. If I am the smallest jewel in the Savior’s crown, I will glisten and shine as best I can, to the praise of Him that bought me with His blood. If I cannot make such swelling music in the orchestra of Heaven as the pealing organ may, then will I be but as a bruised reed, which may emit some faint melody.

If I cannot be the beacon fire that scares a continent and throws its light across the deep, I will seek to be the glowworm that may at least let the weary traveler know something of its whereabouts. O Christians! You that have but little beginnings, quiet your fears. For these little beginnings, if they are of God, will save your soul and you may in this rejoice. Yes, rejoice exceedingly. I must ask your patience, now, while I turn to the second head and I shall dwell upon that very briefly, indeed.

II. Upon this head I wish to say a word or two for THE CONFIRMATION OF YOUR FAITH. I am sure you will give me your prayerful attention while I speak for the confirmation of my own faith as well as yours.

Well, Brothers and Sisters, the first confirmation I would offer you is this—our beginnings are very, very small, but we have a joyous prospect in our text. Our latter end shall greatly increase. We shall not always be so distrustful as we are now. Thank God we look for days when our faith shall be unshaken and firm as mountains. I shall not forever have to

mourn before my God that I cannot love Him as I would. I trust that He in my latter end will give me more of His Spirit, that I shall love Him with all my heart and soul and strength.

We have entered into the Gospel school. We are ignorant now, but we shall one day understand with all saints what are the heights and depths and lengths and breadths and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. We have hope that, as these hairs grow gray, we shall “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Time, that plows its furrow in the brow, we hope will sow the seeds of wisdom there. Experience, which shall furrow our back with many a sorrow and a wound, shall nevertheless, we trust, work patience and hope that makes us not ashamed and holy fellowship with Christ and His sufferings and nearer and sweeter fellowship than as yet we have come to know.

Think not, Mr. Ready-to-Halt, that you shall always need your crutches. There may come days of leaping and of dancing even for you. Oh, Mistress Despondency, the dungeons of Giant Despair’s castle are not to be your perpetual abode. You, too, shall stand upon the top of Mount Clear and you shall see the Celestial City and the land that is very far off. We are growing things. Methinks I hear the green blade say this morning, “I shall not forever be trod under foot as if I were but grass. I shall grow. I shall blossom. I shall grow ripe and mellow. And many a man shall sharpen his sickle for me.”

I hear the little sapling say, “I shall not forever be shaken to and fro by winds, I shall grow into an old stalwart oak—gnarled though the roots may be and twisted though my branches are—I shall one day stand and out laugh at the tempest, while all its waves of wind break harmlessly over me.” I shall be strong through Him that strengthens me, for I feel a growth within me that can never stop till I have grown to be next to a God—a son of God, a partaker of the Divine nature.

Courage then, courage, I say, Brothers and Sisters! These weak days are not always to last. We are not to be shorn lambs always—not always the weaklings of His cattle. We shall one day be as the firstlings of His bullocks and we shall push our enemies to the ends of the earth and tread upon them and destroy them.

But further, this cheering prospect upon earth is quite eclipsed by a more cheering prospect beyond the river Death. “Our latter end shall greatly increase.” Faith shall give place to fruition. Hope shall be occupied with enjoyment. Love itself shall be swallowed up in ecstasy. My eyes shall not forever weep. There are sights of transport for them. Tongue, you shall not forever have to mourn and be the instrument of confession. There are songs and hallelujahs for you. Feet, you shall not always be weary with this rough road. There are celestial leaping for you.

O my poor heart, often cowed and broken, often disappointed and trod down, there waits for you the palm-branch and the robe of victory and the immortal crown—

*“My spirit leaps across the flood,*

*And antedates the hour,”*  
when I shall come into possession of these joys which could not belong to my childhood here—but which await me in my manhood up there—when the spirit shall be perfected and made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Courage, Christian! “The way may be rough, but it cannot be long.” And the end will make amends for all the toil that you can endure when on the road. Oh, quicken your footsteps—sit not down in despair. Your latter end shall greatly increase, though your beginnings are but small.

Perhaps someone may say, “How is it that we are so sure that our latter end will increase?” I give you just these reasons—we are quite sure of it because there is a vitality in our piety. The sculptor may have oftentimes cut in marble some exquisite statue of a babe. That has come to its full size—it will never grow any greater. When I see a wise man in the world, I look at him as being just such an infant. He will never grow any greater. He has come to his full. He is but chiseled out by human power. There is no vitality in him.

The Christian here on earth is a babe, but not a babe in stone. A babe instead with life. It is a happy thought sometimes to have of one’s self down here compressed, small and insignificant. And one day Death shall come and say, “Rise to your proper altitude,” and we shall begin to grow and expand. And bursting all our cerements and every limit of humanity, we shall become greater than the angels are. I think it is Milton who pictures the spirits in Pandemonium as condensing themselves, so that multitudes of them could sit in a little space and then at their own volition mounting up till they attained a prodigious height.

So is it now. We are little spirits, but we shall grow and increase and we know this because there is life in us—eternal life. Now the life of twenty years develops itself into something vastly superior to what it was in childhood. And what will the eternal life be when that vitality within us shall make the littleness of our beginning seem as nothing at all, when our latter end shall have greatly increased?

Besides this, we feel that we must come to something better because God is with us. We are quite certain that what we are cannot be the end of God’s design. When I see a block of marble half chiseled, with just perhaps a hand peeping out from the rook, no man can make me believe that that is what the artist means it should be. And I know I am not what God would have me to be, because I feel yearnings and longings within myself to be infinitely better, infinitely holier and purer than I am now. And so is it with you. You are not what God means you to be. You have only just begun to be what He wants you to be. He will go on with His chisel of affliction, using wisdom and the engraving tool together, till by-and-by it shall appear what you shall be—you shall be like He and you shall see Him as He is.

Oh, what comfort this is for our faith—that from the fact of our vitality and the fact that God is at work with us—it is clear and true and certain, that our latter end shall be increased. I do not think that any man yet has ever got an idea of what a man is to be. We are only the chalk crayon,

rough drawings of men—yet when we come to be fired up in eternity, we shall be marvelous pictures—and our latter end, indeed, shall be greatly increased.

And now, one other thought and I will turn to the last point. Christian! Remember for the encouragement of your poor soul, that what you are now is not the measure of your safety. Your safety depends not upon what you are, but on what Christ is. If the Rock of our salvation were within us, indeed the house would soon be overturned. But we live by what Christ is—

*“What Adam had and forfeited for all,*

*That Jesus is, who cannot fail or fall.”*Till He can falter, my spirit need not tremble. Till Jesus sins, till Jesus dies, till Jesus is overcome, till He is powerless with His God, till He ceases to be Divine—the soul that trusts Him must be secure.

Look not within you for consolation, but look above, where Jesus pleads before the Throne the efficacy of His once-offered blood. If you will look at your own state and then judge your eternal standing by your own feelings, or willing, or doings, you will be an undone and miserable wretch. Measure yourself by Jesus’ doings, by Jesus’ standing, by Jesus’ acceptance, by the love of His heart, by the power of His arm, by the Divinity of His nature, by the constancy of His faithfulness, by the acceptance of His blood, by the prevalence of His plea. And so measuring, your faith need never, never fear—

*“For should the earth’s old pillar’s shake, And all the walls of nature break,  
Our steadfast souls need fear no more  
Than solid rocks when billows roar.”*

III. Now for our last point, namely, FOR THE QUICKENING OF OUR DILIGENCE.  
It was never intended that the promises of God should make men idle. And when we tell them that their small beginnings shall doubtless come to glorious endings, we tell them this for their encouragement—not that they may sit still and do nothing—but that they may gird up the loins of their mind, confident of their success, to do all that lies in them, God helping them. Brothers and Sisters, there are many of you here, who, like myself, have to mourn over little beginnings. Let me say to you, be very diligent in the use of those means which God has appointed for your spiritual growth.  
First, take heed to yourself that you obey the Commandments which relate to the ordinances of Christ. Neglect not Baptism. True, there is nothing saving in it, nothing meritorious. But Baptism is a means of grace. There have been many who have found, like the eunuch, that when they have been baptized they have gone on their way rejoicing—rejoicing as the effect of grace given when they have obeyed their Master.  
Be careful, too, not to neglect that most blessed Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, but let Him be known to you in the breaking of bread and in pouring forth of wine. Do this often in remembrance of Him. Ah, I am speaking to some here today who love Jesus, but who have neglected His last dying injunction, “This do in remembrance of Me.” And you have not grown in grace and are still little in Israel, as you used to be. Do you wonder at it? You have neglected God’s appointed means.  
“Oh,” says one, “but I am a spiritual man. I do not need these carnal ordinances.” There is no man so carnal as he who calls God’s ordinances carnal and no man more spiritual than he who finds spiritual things best brought home to him by what others have ventured to call “beggarly elements.” We do not know ourselves if we think we can dispense with these Divine signs.  
Christ knew what was best for us. He has said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized.” He would not have appended the last command if it were not important. He has bid us also, as often as we drink the cup, to do it in remembrance of Him. He would not have commanded us that, if it were not for our benefit and for His glory.  
But further, if you would get out of the littleness of your beginnings, wait much upon the means of grace. Read much the Word of God alone. Seek out one who understands it well—a man whom God has taught in it—and listen with reverence to the Word as it is preached. Frequent sermons, but prayers, most. Praying is the end of preaching. Make use of every means that lies before you. Be not like the fool, who calls the books of the old fathers “dead men’s brains.”  
What God spoke to Seers of old, what He spoke to mighty men who preached, is not to be despised. Read as you can and learn as you can. Take care, too, that you are not content with skimming over a page of Scripture. But seek to get the very marrow out of it. Be not as the butterfly, which flits from flower to flower, but rests nowhere. Be you as the bee, which enters the flower blossom and sucks the nectar and bears pollen off upon its heavily-laden thigh. Rest not till you have fed on the Word. And thus shall your little beginnings come to great endings.  
Be much also in prayer. God’s plants grow fastest in the warm atmosphere of the closet. The closet is a forcing-place for spiritual vegetation. He who would be well fed and grow strong must exercise himself upon his knees. Of all training practice for spiritual battles, knee practice is the most healthy and strengthening. Note that, if you forget anything besides. And, lastly, if your beginning be but small, make the best use of the beginning that you have. Have you but one talent? Put it out at interest and make two of it. Have you two? Seek to have them multiplied into four.  
Are you a babe? If you cannot walk, nor lift, nor carry, you can cry. Take care to cry right lustily. Are you a child? You cannot climb. You can not as yet teach. But you can run. Take care to run in the ways of heavenly obedience. Are you a young man? You can not as yet give the reverend advice of hoary age, but be strong and overcome the Wicked One. Are you an old man? You can not now fight the battles of your youth, nor lead the van in heroic deeds, but you can abide with the Truth of God and guard those old doctrines which, like the heavy baggage of the army, must not be lost, lest the battle itself should go from us. Every man to his place and to his post.  
And so—and so by using what we have, we shall gain more. Rivers increase by their onward flow, flames by burning, sunlight increases by the sun’s shining, lights by kindling other lights. And so do you. You will grow rich by enriching others—rich by spending. Lengthen out yourself by cutting off the ends that you can spare from all you have, for it is the way to grow—by giving up that which was unnecessary you shall get that which shall be a real growth. Oh, use yourself and God shall make use of you. Come out and God shall lead you forth. Be a man and God shall make you more than an angel. Be an angel, and God shall make you something more. He will make you better, holier, happier, greater. Oh, do this and so shall your latter end be joyous, your peace shall be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.  
Thus, I have spoken this for the comfort of God’s people—would that I could hope that all I have said belonged to all of you! But, ah, if it does not, may God convert you, may the new life be given to you! Oh, remember, if you are longing for it, the way of salvation is freely opened to you. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” God bless us now and forever, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #350 New Park Street Pulpit 1

÷Job 9.20

A BLOW AT SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS  
NO. 350

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 16, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

**“If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.”  
Job 9:20.**

EVER since man became a sinner he has been self-righteous. When he had a righteousness of his own he never gloried of it, but ever since he has lost it, he has pretended to be the possessor of it. Those proud words which our father Adam uttered when he sought to screen himself from the guilt of his treason against his Maker, laying the blame apparently on Eve, but really upon God who gave him the woman, were virtually a claim to blamelessness. It was but a fig leaf he could find to cover his nakedness but how proud was he of that fig-leaf excuse and how tenaciously did he hold to it.

As it was with our first parents so is it with us—self-righteousness is born with us and there is perhaps no sin which has so much vitality in it as the sin of righteous self. We can overcome lust itself and anger and the fierce passions of the will better than we can ever master the proud boastfulness which rises in our hearts and tempts us to think ourselves rich and increased in goods while God knows we are naked and poor and miserable. Tens of thousands of sermons have been preached against selfrighteousness and yet it is as necessary to turn the great guns of the Law against its walls today as ever it was. Martin Luther said he scarcely ever preached a sermon without inveighing against the righteousness of man and yet, he said, “I find that still I cannot preach it down. Still men will boast in what they can do and mistake the path to Heaven to be a road paved by their own merits and not a way besprinkled by the blood of the atonement of Jesus Christ.”

My dear Hearers, I cannot compliment you by imagining that all of you have been delivered from the great delusion of trusting in yourselves. The godly, those who are righteous through faith in Christ, still have to mourn that this infirmity clings to them. While as to the unconverted themselves, their besetting sin is to deny their guilt, to plead that they are as good as others and to indulge still the vain and foolish hope that they shall enter into Heaven from some doings, sufferings, or weeping of their own. I do not suppose there are any who are self-righteous in as bold a sense as the poor countryman I have heard of.

His minister had tried to explain to him the way of salvation, but either his head was very dull or else his soul was very hostile to the Truth the minister would impart. For he so little understood what he had heard that when the question was put, “Now then, what is the way by which you

hope you can be saved before God?” the poor honest simpleton said, “Do you not think, Sir, if I were to sleep one cold frosty night under a hawthorn bush, that would go a great way towards it?” Conceiving that his suffering might, in some degree at least, assist him in getting into Heaven. You would not state your opinion in so bold a manner. You would refine it, you would gild it, you would disguise it—but it would come to the same thing after all.

You would still believe that some sufferings, repentings, or believing of your own might possibly merit salvation. The Church of Rome often tells this so very plainly that we cannot think it less than profanity. I have been informed that there is in one of the Romish chapels in Cork, a monument bearing these words upon it, “I. H. S. Sacred to the memory of the benevolent Edward Molloy. A friend of humanity, the father of the poor. He employed the wealth of this world only to procure the riches of the next and leaving a balance of merit in the book of life, he made Heaven debtor to mercy. He died October 17th, 1818, aged 90.”

I do not suppose that any of you will have such an epitaph on your tombstones—or ever dream of putting it as a matter of account with God—striking a balance with Him—your sins being on one side and your righteousness on the other and hoping that a balance might remain. And yet the very same idea, only not so honestly expressed—a little more guarded and a little more refined—the same idea, only taught to speak after a Gospel dialect—is inherent in us all and only Divine grace can thoroughly cast it out of us.

The sermon of this morning is intended to be another blow against our self-righteousness. If it will not die, at least let us spare no arrows against it. Let us draw the bow and if the shaft cannot penetrate its heart, it may at least stick in its flesh and help to worry it to its grave.

I. Endeavoring to keep close to my text, I shall start with this first point—that THE PLEA OF SELF- RIGHTEOUSNESS CONTRADICTS ITSELF. “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me.”

Come, Friend, you who do justify yourself by your own works, let me hear you speak. “I say that I have no need of a salvation by the blood and righteousness of another for I believe that I have kept the Commands of God from my youth up and I do not think that I am guilty in His sight. I hope that I may be able in my own right to claim a seat in Paradise.”

Now, Sir, your plea and this declaration of yours is in itself a condemnation of you, because upon its very surface it is apparent that you are committing sin while you are pleading that you have no sin. For the very plea itself is a piece of high and arrogant presumption. God has said it, let Jew and Gentile stop his mouth and let all the world stand guilty before God. We have it on inspired authority, that “there is none righteous, no, not one.” “There is none good, save one, that is God.” We are told by the mouth of a Prophet sent from God, that, “all we like wandering sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way.” And you, in saying that you are righteous, do commit the sin of calling God a liar. You have dared to impugn His veracity, you have slandered His justice. This boast of your is in itself a sin so great, so heinous, that if you had only that one sin to account for it would be sufficient to sink you to the lowest Hell. The boast, I say, is in itself a sin. The moment that a man says, “I have no sin,” he commits a sin in the saying of it—the sin of contradicting his Maker and making God a false accuser of His creatures. Besides, do you not see, you vain and foolish creature, that you have been guilty of pride in the very language you have used?

Who but a proud man would stand up and commend himself? Who but one who was proud as Lucifer, would in the face of God’s declaration declare himself to be just and holy? Did the best of men ever speak thus? Did they not all of them acknowledge that they were guilty? Did Job of whom God said that he was a perfect and an upright man, claim perfection? Did he not say, “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me”? Oh, proud Wretch, how are you puffed up! How has Satan bewitched you! How has he made you lift up your horn on high and speak with a stiff neck. Take heed to yourself, for if you had never been guilty before, this pride of yours were quite sufficient to draw Jehovah’s thunderbolts out of the quiver and make Him smite you once and for all to your eternal destruction.

But further, the plea of self-righteousness is self-contradictory upon another ground for all that a self-righteous man pleads for is comparative righteousness. “Why,” says he, “I am no worse than my neighbors-in fact a great deal better. I do not drink, or swear. I do not commit fornication or adultery. I am no Sabbath breaker, I am no thief. The laws of my country do not accuse, much less condemn me. I am better than the most of men and if I am not saved, God help those who are worse than I am. If I cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven, then who can?”

Just so—but then all that you claim is that you are righteous as compared with others. Do you not see that this is a very vain and fatal plea, because you do in fact admit that you are not perfectly righteous—that there is some sin in you—only you claim there is not so much in you as in another. You admit that you are diseased, but then the plague-spot is not so apparent in you as in your fellow man. You admit that you have robbed God and have broken His Laws, only you have not done it with so desperate an intent, nor with so many aggravations as others. Now this is virtually a plea of guilty, disguise it as you may. You admit that you have been guilty and against you the sentence comes forth—“The soul that sins, it shall die.”

Take heed to yourself that you find no shelter in this refuge of lies for it shall certainly fail you when God shall come to judge the world with righteousness and the people with equity. Suppose now for a moment that a command is issued to the beasts of the forest that they should become sheep. It is quite in vain for the bear to come forward and plead that he was not so venomous a creature as the serpent. It would be equally absurd for the wolf to say that though stealthy and cunning and gaunt and grim, yet he was not so great a grumbler nor so ugly a creature as the bear. The lion might plead that he had not the craftiness of the fox. “It is

true,” says he, “I wet my tongue in blood, but then I have some virtues which may commend me and which, in fact, have made me king of beasts.”

What would this argument avail? The indictment is that these animals are not sheep—their plea against the indictment is that they are no less like sheep than other creatures and that some of them have more gentleness and more docility than others of their kind. The plea would never stand. Or use another picture. If in the courts of justice, a thief, when called up, should argue, “Well, I am not so great a thief as some. There are to be found some living in Whitechapel or St. Giles’s who have been thieves longer than I have and if there is one conviction in the book against me, there are some that have a dozen convictions against them.”

No magistrate would acquit a man on such an excuse as that. It would be tantamount to his admission of a degree of guilt, though he might try to excuse himself because he had not reached a higher degree. It is so with you, Sinner. You have sinned. Another man’s sins cannot excuse you. You must stand upon your own feet. At the Day of Judgment you must yourself make a personal appearance and it will not be what another man has done that will condemn, or acquit you, but your own personal guilt. Take heed, take heed, Sinner, for it will not avail you that there are others blacker with sin than yourself. If there is but a spot upon you, you are lost! If there is but one sin unwashed by Jesus’ blood—your portion must be with the tormentors. A holy God cannot look even upon the least degree of iniquity.

But further, the plea of the self-conceited man is that he has done his best and can claim a partial righteousness. It is true if you touch him in a tender place he acknowledges that his boyhood and his youth were stained with sin. He tells you that in his early days he was a “fast lad,” that he did many things which he is sorry for now. “But then,” says he, “these are only like spots in the sun. These are only like a small headland of waste ground in acres of fruitful soil. I am still good, I am still righteous, because my virtues exceed my vices and my good deeds quite cover up all the mistakes that I have committed.”

Well, Sir, do you not see that the only righteousness you claim is a partial righteousness? And in that very claim you do in fact make an admission that you are not perfect? You admit you have committed some sins. Now I am not responsible for what I am about to state, nor am I to be blamed for harshness in it, because I state neither more nor less than the very Truth of God. It is of no saving grace to you that you have not committed ten thousand sins—for if you have committed one you are a lost soul. The Law is to be kept intact and entire and the least crack or flaw, or breakage, spoils it. The robe of righteousness in which you must stand at last must be without spot or blemish. If there s but one microscopic stain upon it, which is supposing what is never true, yet even then the gates of Heaven never can admit you.

A perfect righteousness you must have or else you shall never be mitted to that wedding feast. You may say, “I have kept such a Commandment and have never broken it,” but if you have broken another you are guilty of the whole, because the whole Law is like one rich and costly vase—it is one in design and fashion. Though you break not the foot and stain not the margin, yet if there is any flaw or damage, the whole vessel is marred. And so if you have sinned in any point, at any time and in any degree, you have broken the whole Law. You stand guilty of it before God—nor can you be saved by the works of the Law or by a Church, do what you may.

“It is a hard sentence,” says one, “and who can bear it!” Indeed, who can bear it? Who can bear to stand at the foot of Sinai and hear its thunders roar? “If so much as a beast touch the mountain it must be stoned or thrust through with a dart.” Who can stand when the lightnings flash and God descends upon Mount Paran and the hills melt like wax beneath His feet? “By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified.” “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the Law to do them.” Cursed is the man who sins but once, yes, hopelessly cursed so far as the Law is concerned.

Oh, Sinner, I cannot help turning aside from the subject for a moment to remind you that there is a way of salvation and a way by which the Law’s demands can be fully satisfied. Christ bore all the punishment of all Believers, so that they cannot be punished. Christ kept the Law of God for Believers and He is willing to cast about any and every penitent sinner that perfect robe of righteousness which He Himself has worked out. But you cannot keep the Law and if you bring up your self-righteousness the law condemns both it and you. Out of your own mouth it condemns you, inasmuch as you have not done all things and have not kept all the Law. A great rock lies in your path to Heaven, a mountain insurmountable. A gulf impassable. And by that road no man shall ever enter into eternal life.

The plea of self-righteousness, then, is in itself self-contradicting and has only to be fairly stated to an honest man for him to see that it will not hold water for a single moment. What need of labored argument to disprove a self-evident lie? Why should we tarry longer? Who but a very fool would maintain a notion which dies in its own face and witnesses against itself?

II. But now I pass to the second point, THE MAN WHO USES THIS PLEA CONDEMNS THE PLEA HIMSELF.  
Not only does the plea cut its own throat, but the man himself is aware when he uses it that it is an evil and false and vain refuge. Now this is a matter of conscience and therefore I must deal plainly with you and if I speak not what you have felt, then you can say I am mistaken. But if I speak what you must confess to be true, let it be as the very voice of God to you. Men know that they are guilty. The conscience of the proudest man, when it is allowed to speak, tells him that he deserves the wrath of God. He may brag in public, but the very loudness of his bragging proves that he has an uneasy conscience and therefore he makes a mighty din in order to drown its voice.  
Whenever I hear an infidel saying hard things of Christ, it reminds me of the men of Moloch who beat the drums that they might not hear the screams of their own children. These loud blasphemies, these braggart boastings are only a noisy way of drowning the shrieks of conscience. Do not believe that these men are honest. I think all controversy with them is time thrown away. I would never controvert with a thief about the principles of honesty, or with a known adulterer concerning the duty of chastity. Devils are not to be reasoned with—but to be cast out. Parleying with Hell serves no ones turn except the devil’s.  
Did Paul argue with Elymas? Or Peter with Simon Magus? I would not cross swords with a man who says there is no God—he knows there is a God. When a man laughs at Holy Scripture you need not argue with him— he is either a fool or a knave—perhaps both. However villainous he may be, his conscience has some light. He knows that what he speaks is untrue. I cannot believe that conscience is so dead in any man as to let him believe that he is speaking the truth when he denies the Godhead. And much more I am certain that conscience never did give assent to the utterance of the braggart who says he deserves eternal life, or has no sin of which to repent, or which by repentance may be washed away without the blood of Christ. He knows within himself that he speaks that which is false.  
When Professor Webster was shut up in prison for murder he complained to the prison authorities that he had been insulted by his fellow prisoners, for he said that through the walls of the prison he could hear them always crying out to him, “You bloody man! You bloody man!” As it was not consistent with law that one prisoner should insult another, the strictest enquiry was made and it was found that no prisoner had ever said such a word, or that if he had said it, Webster could not have heard it. It was his own conscience. It was not a word coming through the walls of the prison, but an echo reverberating from the wall of his bad heart, as conscience shouted, “You bloody man! You bloody man!”  
There is in all your hearts a witness who will not cease his testimony. It cries “You sinful man! You sinful man!” You have only to listen to it and you will soon find that every pretense of being saved by your good works must crumble to the ground. Oh, hear it now and listen to it for a moment. I am sure my conscience says, “You sinful man! You sinful man!” and I think yours must say the same unless you are given up of God and left to a seared conscience to perish in your sins.  
When men get alone—if in their loneliness the thought of death forces itself upon them—they boast no more of goodness. It is not easy for a man to lie on his bed seeing the naked face of death, not at a distance, but feeling that his breath is breathing upon the skeleton and that he must soon pass through the iron gates of death. It is not easy for a man to plead his self-righteousness then. The bony fingers thrust themselves like daggers into his proud flesh. “Ah,” says grim Death, in tones which cannot be heard by mortal ear but which are listened to by the mortal heart— “Where now are all your glories?”  
He looks upon the man and the wreath of laurel that was upon his brow fades and falls to the earth like blasted flowers. He touches his breast and the star of honor which he wore molds and is quenched into darkness. He looks at him yet again—that breast-plate of selfrighteousness which glittered upon him like golden mail suddenly dissolves into dust, like the apples of Sodom before the touch of the gatherer. The man finds himself to his own surprise naked and poor and miserable when most he needed to be rich, when most he required to be happy and to be blessed. Yes, Sinner, even while this sermon is being uttered, you may seek to refute it to yourself and say, “Well, I believe I am as good as others and that this fuss about a new birth, imputed righteousness and being washed in blood is all unnecessary.”  
But in the loneliness of your silent chamber, especially when death shall be your dread and grim companion, you shall not need me to state this—you shall see it clearly enough yourselves, see it with eyes of horror. And feel it with a heart of dismay and despair and perish because you have despised the righteousness of Christ.  
How abundantly true, however, will this be at the Day of Judgment. I think I see that day of fire, that day of wrath. You are gathered as a great multitude before the eternal Throne. Those who are robed in Christ’s fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints, are caught up to the right hand. And now the trumpet sounds—if there are any that have kept the Law of God—if there are faultless ones, if there are any that have never sinned, let them stand forth and claim the promised reward. But, if not, let the pit engulf the sinner, let the fiery thunder-bolt be launched upon the impenitent offenders. Now, stand forth, Sir and clear yourself! Come forth, my Friend and claim the reward, because of the church you endowed, or the row of almshouses that you erected.  
What? What? Does your tongue lie dumb in your mouth? Come forward, come forward—you who said you had been a good citizen, had fed the hungry and clothed the naked—come forward now and claim the reward! What? What? Is your face turned to whiteness? Is there an ashy paleness on your cheek? Come forward, you multitudes who rejected Christ and despised His blood. Come now and say, “All the Commandments have I kept from my youth up.” What? Are you seized with horror? Has the better light of judgment driven out the darkness of your selfrighteousness? Oh, I see you, I see you, you are not boasting now!  
But you, the best of you, are crying, “You rocks, hide me. You mountains, open your stony bowels and let me hide myself from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne.” Why, why such a coward? Come, face it out before your Maker. Come up, infidel. Now, tell God there is no God. Come, while Hell is flaming in your nostrils. Come and say there is no Hell. Or tell the Almighty that you never could bear to hear a Hell-fire sermon preached. Come now and accuse the minister of cruelty, or say that we love to talk on these terrible themes.  
Let me not mock you in your misery. But let me picture to you how devils shall mock you. “Aha!” say they “where is your courage now? Are your ribs of iron and your bones of brass? Will you dare the Almighty now and dash yourselves upon the bosses of His buckler, or run upon His glittering spear?” See them, see them as they sink! The gulf has swallowed them up. The earth has closed again and they are gone, a solemn silence falls upon the ear. But hark below, if you could descend with them, you would hear their doleful groans and hollow moans, as they now feel that the God omnipotent was right and just and wise and tender when He bade them forsake their righteousness and flee to Christ and lay hold on Him that can save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.  
III. THE PLEA IS ITSELF EVIDENCE AGAINST THE PLEADER.  
There is an unregenerated man here, who says, “Am I blind also?” I answer in the words of Jesus, “But now you say we see, therefore your sin remains.” You have proved by your plea, in the first place, that you have never been enlightened of the Holy Spirit but that you remain in a state of ignorance. A deaf man may declare that there is no such thing as music. A man who has never seen the stars is very likely to say that there are no stars. But what does he prove? Does he prove that there are no stars? He only proves his own folly and his own ignorance.  
That man who can say half a word about his own righteousness has never been enlightened of God the Holy Spirit. For one of the first signs of a renewed heart is that it abhors itself in dust and ashes. If you do today feel yourself to be guilty and lost and ruined, there is the richest hope for you in the Gospel. But if you say, “I am good, I have merits,” the Law condemns you and the Gospel cannot comfort you—you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity and you are ignorant that all the while you are talking thus—the wrath of God abides on you. A man may be a true Christian and may fall into sin, but a man cannot be a true Christian and boast in his self-righteousness.  
A man may be saved though infirmity may bespatter him with much mire. But he cannot be saved who does not know that he has been in the filth and is not willing to confess that he is guilty before God. There are, in one sense, no conditions of salvation on our part, for whatever may be conditions God gives. But thus I know, there never was a man yet who was in a state of grace who did not know himself, in himself, to be in a state of ruin, a state of depravity and condemnation. If you do not know this, then I say your plea of self-righteousness condemns you for ignorance.  
But then again, inasmuch as you say that you are not guilty, this proves that you are impenitent. Now the impenitent can never come where God is. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” “But if we say that we have no sins, we make God a liar and the Truth is not in us.” God will pardon all men who confess their iniquity. If we weep and lament and take with us words and say, “We have grievously sinned, forgive us—we have greatly erred, have mercy upon us, through Jesus Christ,” God will not refuse the cry.  
But if we, out of our impenitent and hard hearts, put ourselves upon God’s justice, God will give us justice. But not mercy. And that justice shall be the meting out to us of the full vials of His indignation and of His wrath forever and ever. He that is self-righteous is impenitent and therefore he is not and cannot be saved. Further than this, the self-righteous man, the moment that he says he has done anything which can recommend him to God, proves that he is not a believer. Now, salvation is for believers and for believers only. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.”  
Sir, you will be damned with all your self-righteousness and your selfrighteousness shall be like Dejanira’s tunic which she gave to Hercules and which he put upon him and, as the old fable has it, it became a robe of fire to him. He tried to drag it away, but he pulled away pieces of his living, quivering flesh each moment and perished miserably. Such shall your self-righteousness be to you. It seems a pleasant draught and intoxicates for the moment. It is deadly and damnable as the venom of asps and as the wine of Gomorrah. O Soul! Would that you would flee, above all things, from self-righteousness. For a self-righteous man does not and cannot trust Christ and therefore he cannot see the face of God.  
None but the naked man will ever go to Christ for clothing. None but the hungry men will ever take Christ to be his food. None but thirsty souls will ever come to this well of Bethlehem to drink. The thirsty are welcome. But those who think they are good, are welcome neither to Sinai nor to Calvary. They have no hope of Heaven, no peace in this world, nor in that which is to come.  
Ah, Soul, I know not who you are. But if you have any righteousness of your own you are a graceless soul. If you have given all your goods to feed the poor. If you have built many and many a sanctuary. If you have gone about with self-denial among the houses of poverty to visit the sons and daughters of affliction. If you have fasted thrice in the week. If your prayers have been so long that your throat has become hoarse through your crying. If your tears have been so many that your eyes have become blinded through your weeping. If your readings of Scripture have been so long that the midnight oil has been consumed in abundance. If, I say, your heart has been so tender towards the poor and the sick and the needy that you would have been willing to suffer with them—to bear all their loathsome diseases—no, if adding all this you could give your body to be burned, yet if you trusted in any one of these things your damnation would be as sure as though you were thief or drunkard.  
Understand me, I mean what I say. I want you not to think I speak unguardedly now. Christ said of the Pharisees of old the very thing that I have said of you. They were good and excellent in their way. But, said He, the publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you, because they would go the wrong way, while the poor publicans and harlots were led to go the right way. The Pharisee who went about to make a righteousness of his own, did not submit to the righteousness of Christ. The publican and the harlot, knowing that they had nothing whereof to glory, came to Christ and took Him as He was and gave their souls up to be saved by His grace. Oh, that we may do the same. For until we get rid of self-righteousness we are in a state of condemnation and dying—the sentence must be executed upon us forever and ever.  
IV. I close now upon the last point, namely, that this plea, if we retain it, not only accuses the pleader now, but IT WILL RUIN THE PLEADER FOREVER.  
Let me show you two suicides. There is a man who has sharpened a dagger and seeking out his opportunity he stabs himself to the heart. There he falls. Who shall blame any man for his death? He slew himself. His blood is on his own head.  
Here is another: he is very sick and ill. He can scarcely crawl about the streets. A physician waits upon him. He tells him, “Sir, your disease is deadly. You must die. But I know a remedy which will certainly heal you. There it is. I freely give it to you. All I ask of you is that you will freely take it.” “Sir,” says the man, “you insult me. I am as well as ever I was in my life. I am not sick” “But,” says the other, “there are certain signs which I mark in your countenance which prove to me that you will have a deadly disease about you and I warn you.”  
The man thinks a moment—remembers that there have been certain signs in him of this very sickness. A monitor within tells him that it is so. He obstinately replies to the physician a second time—“Sir, if I want your medicine I will send for it and if I need it I will pay for it.” He knows all the while there is not a farthing in his pocket and that he cannot get credit anywhere. And there stands the life-giving cup before him which the physician at great expense has obtained, and which he would freely give to him and bid him freely take. “No,” says the man, “I will not take it. I may be somewhat sick, but I am not worse than my neighbors. I am not more ill than other people and I shall not take it.”  
One day you go to his bed and you find he has slept his last sleep and there he lies stone dead. Who slew this man? Who killed him? His blood is on his own head. He is as base a suicide as the other. Now I will show you two more suicides. There is a man here who says—“Well let what will happen in the next world, I will have my fill in this. Tell me where there are pleasures to be had and I will have them. Leave the things of God to old fools and such like. I shall have the things of the present and the joys and delights of time.” He drains the cup of drunkenness, frequents the haunt of folly and if he knows where there is any vice pursued he rushes after it.  
Like Byron, he is a very thunderbolt, launched from the hand of an arch-fiend. He flashes through the whole firmament of sin and blazes himself out, until decayed in body and soul, he dies. He is a suicide. He defied God, he went against the laws of nature and of grace, despised warnings, declared he would be damned and he has got what he richly deserved.  
Here is another. He says, “I despise these vices. I am the most upright, honest and commendable of men. I feel that I do not need salvation and if I did need it I could get it myself. I can do anything you tell me to do. I feel I have mental force and manly dignity enough remaining in me to accomplish it. I tell you, Sir, you insult me when you bid me trust in Christ.” “Well,” he says, “I consider there is such dignity in manhood and so much virtue in me, that I need not a new heart nor will I succumb and bend my spirit to the Gospel of Christ on free grace terms.”  
Very well Sir, when in Hell you lift up your eyes and you will do so as surely as the most profligate and profane, your blood will be upon your own head. And you will be as truly a suicide as he who wantonly and wickedly dashed himself against the Laws of God and man and brought himself to a sudden and hasty end by his iniquity and crimes.  
“Well,” says one, “this is a sermon well adapted to self-righteous persons, but I am not one.” Then what are you, Sir? Are you a believer in Christ? “I cannot say I am, Sir.” Why are you not, then? “Well, I would be, but I am afraid I may not believe in Christ.” You are self-righteous, Sir. God commands you to believe in Christ and you say you are not fit. Now what does this mean but that you are waiting to make yourself fit and this after all is the spirit of self-righteousness. You are so proud that you will not take Christ unless you think you can bring something to Him—that is it.  
“Ah, no,” says one poor broken-hearted soul, “I do not think that is fair with me, for I do feel as if I would give anything if I might hope to be saved. But oh, I am such a wretch! I am such a wretch! I cannot believe.” Now, that after all is self-righteousness. Christ bids you trust Him. You say, “No, I will not trust you, Christ, because I am such-an-one and suchan-one.” So, then, you are wanting to make yourself somebody and then Jesus Christ is to do the rest. It is the same spirit of self-righteousness only in another garb. “Ah,” says one, “but if I did but feel my need enough, as you just now said, Sir, then I think I would trust Christ.”  
Self-righteousness again. You want your sense of need to save you. “Oh, but, Sir, I cannot believe in Christ as I would.” Self-righteousness again. Let me just utter a solemn sentence which you may masticate at your leisure. If you trust to your faith and to your repentance, you will be as much lost as if you trusted to your good works or trusted to your sins. The ground of your salvation is not faith, but Christ. It is not repentance, but Christ. If I trust my trust of Christ, I am lost.  
My business is to trust Christ. To rest on Him. To depend, not on what the Spirit has done in me, but what Christ did for me, when He did hang upon the tree. Now be it known unto you that when Christ died, He took the sins of all His people upon His head and there and then they all ceased to be. At the moment when Christ died, the sins of all His redeemed were blotted out. He did then suffer all they ought to have suffered. He paid all their debts. And their sins were actually and positively lifted that day from their shoulders to His shoulders, for “the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” And now, if you believe in Jesus, there is not a sin remaining upon you, for your sin was laid on Christ. Christ was punished for your sins before they were committed and as Kent says—

*“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,  
It matters not how black their caste;  
And oh, my soul with wonder view,  
For sins to come here’s pardon too.”*

Blessed privilege of the believer! But if you live and die unbelievers, know this, that all your sins lie on your own shoulders. Christ did never make any atonement for you. You were never bought with blood. You never had an interest in His sacrifice. You live and die in yourselves, lost. In yourselves, ruined. In yourselves utterly destroyed. But believing—the moment you believe—you may know that you were chosen of God from before the foundation of the world.

Believing, you may know that the righteousness of Christ is all yours. That all He did, He did for you. That all He suffered, He suffered for you. You do in fact, in the moment you believe, stand where Christ stood as God’s accepted Son. And Christ stands where you stood as the sinner and suffers as if He had been the sinner and dies as if He had been guilty— dies in your place.

Oh, Spirit of God, give faith this morning. Win us all from self. Knit us all to Christ—may we be saved now by His free grace and be saved in eternity. Amen.

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FALSE JUSTIFICATION AND TRUE  
NO. 2932

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 1905.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 15, 1876.

**“If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me.” Job 9:20.  
“It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns?” Romans 8:33, 34.**

THE great question for the human race to answer has always been this, “How can man be just with God?” It is clear to every conscience that is at all awake that the thrice-holy God demands obedience to His Law and that disobedience to the Divine Law will certainly entail punishment. Hence the grand essential for each one of us is to be right towards God— to be accounted just even at His judgment bar. This is a most important matter at all times, but it appears to increase in importance as we advance in years and get nearer to that great testing time when the Lord shall put everyone into His unerring balances, to weigh him and so to prove what he really is. Woe unto the man who shall stand before the Bar of God unjustified! But happy shall he be who, in that last dread day, shall be approved and accepted by the Judge of all the earth!

I am going to speak about the way in which we are justified in the sight of God and I have taken two texts because so many people seem to have thought that there are two ways by which sinners can be justified before God. The first way that I shall describe is the false one. The second is the true way. The first is that which is mentioned by Job, the way of self-justification, of which it may be truly said that it is selfcondemning instead of self-justifying. The second mode of justification is the one that is ordained by God and of that it may rightly be said that it never can be condemned. It challenges Heaven and earth and Hell in those grand words which I have just read to you, “It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns?”

I. First, for a few minutes, let us consider THE SELF-JUSTIFICATION OF WHICH JOB SPEAKS—“If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me.”

I call to your remembrance the fact the it is Job who speaks thus, because, if there ever was a man in this world who might have been justified before God by his own works, it was Job. Did not the Lord Himself say of him to Satan, “There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil”? Yet, so far was Job from imagining that he had attained a sinless condition that he here declares concerning himself, “If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet I would not know my soul—I would despise my life.” In addition to Job’s excellence of character, he paid devout attention to religious observances. When his children met together for feasting, he ordered special sacrifices on their behalf, saying, “It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” Job was evidently as devout towards God as he was upright towards man, yet, you see, he tells us that if he were to justify himself, his own mouth would condemn him! Further, as if to show us how notable Job was in all respects, he had, in addition to his excellent character and his devotional spirit, most remarkable afflictions. But, putting together all his good works, all his religious observances and all his afflictions, he says, “If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me.” Job, at any rate, was not one of those who have imagined that they could work out a righteousness of their own which could be acceptable in the sight of God!

Let us try to find out what he meant when he said, “If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me.” I think he meant, first, that it would not be true. He could not and dare not say that he was just before God— it would be a lie for him to stand up before the Lord and say, “Great God, I deserve commendation at Your hands, for in me is found true righteousness.” Instead of talking like that, Job says, “If I were to say that, my own mouth would contradict me while I was trying to say it. I could not say it—I dare not say it.” I hope there are many here who feel that to talk about any righteousness of their own would be utterly absurd. If I were to attempt to justify myself before God, I should have to lie to my conscience, my self-knowledge and my whole being! Whatever anyone else may think or say, I know that I must be saved by the Grace of God or else I shall never be saved at all! I have not done a single good work in which I cannot see any fault—not one solitary thing which I cannot perceive to be marred and stained and, like a vessel spoiled even while it is on the potter’s wheel, not fit to be presented before God at all! That is what Job meant when he said, “If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me.”

But he meant, next, that his words, themselves, would be sufficient to condemn him. I know that I am addressing a large number of persons whose lives are apparently blameless. The most observant critic here would be unable to bring any very grave or serious charge against you and yet, my dear Friends, if you were to try to justify yourself before God, your words, themselves, would be enough to condemn you, for what sort of words do you use? I do not suppose that you use profane words—I will not imagine that you take the name of God in vain! Though, alas, that is a sin that is not at all uncommon. But do you not often utter proud, boastful words? Do you not often speak in a very lofty way concerning yourselves and your own doing? Do we not all use far too many light and trifling words—not merely such as cheerfulness may warrant, but such as are a mere waste of time, diverting the mind from serious purposes? And did not our Lord Jesus Christ say that, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment”?

And, Friends, let me whisper other questions in your ear. Do you never use words of a very doubtful kind? Is it not far too common in society for people to go to the very verge of propriety in what they say? Have you never done so? And have you never used false words? Have you always spoken the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Has your heart always gone with your tongue? Have there been no false compliments—no lying expressions of an affection that you never felt? I wish that certain people would more often go to the mirror and examine their tongues. Doctors judge their patients’ health by looking at their tongues—and we might judge of our moral and spiritual health in a similar way. Oh, what tongues some people would have if their words could blister their tongues as they ought to do! How common it is to hear scandalous words and slanderous words—and how many hearts are made to bleed, full often, by the cruel things that are said! “If I justify myself,” says Job, “my own mouth shall condemn me,” and I think he means, “because my very words have been sufficient to cause me to plead guilty before God.” I trust we also feel like that and if we do, we shall never dare to be self-righteous.

I think, further, that Job meant that if he were to plead that he was righteous before God, he would be sure to make such a muddled statement that, somehow or other, the statement, itself, would contain its own condemnation. If a man says, “I have kept God’s Law perfectly, so I can enter Heaven by the merit of my own good works,” every intelligent person thinks, “What a proud man that is!” And can a proud man be accepted before God? Is it not written, “Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knows afar off”? So you see that a statement of justification by betraying the pride of our heart, straightway condemns us! Men who believe themselves to be saved by their own good works generally have something harsh and evil to say against God’s Divine Grace, or against His Son, or against the Divine plan of salvation through the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ. And the very fact that they say anything against those things shows that their heart is in rebellion against God and, therefore, their own mouth condemns them!

Years ago there was as old man in Wiltshire who, according to his own statement, was 103 years of age. He had never neglected his parish church, he had brought up 11 children and had no help from the parish. And he expected that, by-and-by, he would go Home to God, for, “he had never done anything wrong in his life that he knew of.” “But,” said someone to him, “you are a sinner, you know.” “I know I ain’t,” he said. “Well, but God says that you are.” And what, do you think, that old man replied? He said, “God may say what He likes, but I know I ain’t.” So, you see, he even contradicted God, Himself, and is not that a great sin for anybody to commit? What worse sin can there be and what clearer proof of the alienation of the human heart than that a man should flatly contradict God? Well, none of you ever did that, did you? No, you have not honesty enough to do that, but you mean it all the same! Many of you mean it in your very souls. When a man does not accept salvation by Jesus Christ, if you probe his heart to its very depths, you will find that his rejection means that he does not really feel that he is guilty in the sight of God. He will not admit that he needs Divine Mercy, nor will he accept salvation by the blood and righteousness of Christ. Selfrighteousness often lies concealed far down in the heart of man—but whenever he ventures to speak it out, the very way in which he talks of it condemns him!

I have heard men talk in this fashion—“Well, I am quite as good as others are. And if I am not all right at last, it will be a very bad look-out for a great many.” Oh, yes, I see what you mean! Because others are not what they should be, you are content with your own condition because you are like they! There is no fear of God before your eyes and your only hope is that as you are like others, for it will be as well with you as it will be with them! But is not that a poor hope to lean upon? Do you not know that the broad road is thronged with travelers and yet that it leads to destruction? Even if you fare as others do, it will be no comfort to you to perish as they do! There is a very ancient declaration which ought to be a warning to you—“Though hand joins in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.”

“Well,” says another, “I have done my best and I cannot do more than that.” When you speak like that, you mean to imply that God asks of you more than He ought to ask, that He is really unjust in His dealings with you and that the great evil is not that you are a bad servant, but that He is a tyrant Master! What is that but flinging down the gauntlet to the Almighty and charging Him with injustice? Such language as that betrays the enmity of your heart against the Most High.

“Well,” says another, “I pay everybody all that is due.” I am glad that you do so and wish everybody else did the same, but have you paid to God all that is due to Him? There is the great flaw in your life—you pay every creditor except your God to whom you owe all that you have! Many a man who would not treat his dog badly, does not mind ill treating his God! The last one of whom many of you think is your Creator, Provider and Preserver—the God who keeps the breath of life in your nostrils! You give some sort of consideration to the meanest servant in your kitchen, but to Him who made the Heavens and the earth, to Him who sustains all things by the word of His Power, you pay no regard whatever! As this is the real meaning of your attempt at self-justification, it carries its condemnation upon its very surface!

“Still,” says one, “whatever I may seem to be, I am reasonably good at heart.” Ah, that is another of the sayings that I have often heard, but I have never yet been able to believe that a man could be bad in life yet good at heart. It is sometimes said of a man who dies drunk and cursing his Maker, “Ah, he was a good fellow at bottom.” That is not the way that men talk in the market. If you go to buy a barrel of apples and see a lot of rotten and spoiled ones at the top of the barrel, do you believe the salesman when he says, “Ah, but the apples underneath are very good ones”? Of course you do not believe anything of the kind! You always reckon that the fruit below is worse than that at the top, for the universal practice is to put the best at the top and the poorer quality underneath. In like manner, we do not believe the man who says that he is good at bottom and good at heart, although his life is evil! No, Sir, you are even worse in heart than you ever were in life because there are many things that restrain you from revealing your naked self to these who only see your outward life! But your sin is there, down at the bottom of your heart—and if you attempt to justify yourself in the sight of God—the very statement that you make will condemn you!

Besides, so conscious are men that their own good works will not justify them before God, that I do not remember ever meeting with a person who absolutely professed to be at peace with God as the result of his own endeavors. If I were to ask any man who says that he is righteous simply because of what he has done or been, himself, “Are you prepared to die?” he would shake his head, and say, “Oh, no! I am not prepared to die.” You say that you have done nothing wrong and that you are right. But suppose that tomorrow you were to be called to stand at God’s Judgment Bar—would you feel comfortable at the prospect? “Oh, no!” you say. I felt sure that must be your answer. Indeed, all the religions in the world that teach the doctrine of salvation by works are at least honest enough not to pretend to ensure for any man present salvation!

Take, for instance, that gigantic form of error, the Roman Catholic system of religion. It never tells anybody that he is saved. There is not a cardinal, though he is called a prince of the church, and there is not a pope, though he is called Christ’s vicar on earth, who dares to say that he is saved! They have some kind of faint hope that they may be saved at some future period, but there are none of them who dare to say that they are already saved. As to using the language of the Apostle Paul, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”—language which even boys and girls in our Sunday school can use as soon as they have believed in Jesus Christ—well, even the greatest and the wisest of them cannot say that, either while they are in full health and strength, or when they are about to die. What becomes even of their great cardinals when they die? I have seen a notice of this sort put up in their churches and probably many of you have also seen it—“Of your charity, pray for the repose of the soul of Cardinal So-andSo.” So that it is evident that he has gone somewhere or other where he is not at rest! It is quite clear that he has not gone to Heaven, so all that he has done, all the “masses” that he has said, all the confessions he has made and all the penances he has undergone have done nothing for him but land him somewhere where he has not repose for his soul! But it is the glory of the Gospel of Christ that it says to the sinner, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be justified immediately. Trust in what He has done and you shall be saved, and you shall know that you are saved, and that you shall be saved forever!” This is a Gospel that is worth preaching! And I pray you, therefore, to regard it as worth hearing while I try to expound it during the few remaining minutes available for my discourse. And in order that you may do so, I urge you to put away all self-righteousness in which you have up to now trusted! Bury it! Bury it forever! It will only ruin you if you rely upon it!

II. Our second text reveals THE DIVINE JUSTIFICATION OF WHICH THE APOSTLE PAUL SPEAKS—“It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns?”

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you know that God can justify the ungodly. We may put this Truth of God very broadly and say that God can take an unjust, unrighteous sinner and, by a wondrous process which made even the angels in Heaven to be astonished when it was revealed to them, He can take the guilt from the guilty one and cast it into the depths of the sea! And He can cover the unrighteous man with a spotless robe of righteousness so that he shall be accounted fair and lovely and whiter than the newly-fallen snow. God can do this, at once, for every soul that is willing to accept the Divine plan of salvation! Well might the Apostle say, “It is God that justifies.” Oh, what a blessing it is that God is able to pardon the guilty and both to impute and impart righteousness to those who have none of their own!

Notice how this great work is done. The whole wondrous plan of salvation can be summed up in a single word—Substitution. As the first Adam stood before God as the representative and federal head of the whole human race, and as it was by his sin that our whole race fell, it became possible for God to regard our race as a whole and to find for us another Adam who would come and stand in our place and represent us as the first Adam did. So that, as in the first Adam we fell, we might be raised up by a second Adam! That second Adam is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Mary, the Lord from Heaven! He has been here upon this earth and He has kept the Law of God in every jot and tittle and has woven a righteousness which covers the sinner from head to foot when he is enabled to put it on. And then, when the Law of God examines him, it cannot find a flaw, or a tear—or even a faulty thread in that matchless robe which is woven from the top throughout!

In addition to this, inasmuch as we had actually sinned against the Lord, this glorious God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, suffered the terrible consequences of our sin. Oh, wondrous Truth of God! He went up to the accursed tree and freely gave Himself up to die a felon’s death so that, in that death the Justice of God might be vindicated and that God might be just, and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus! It is thus that God can reckon the sinner to be just because Jesus has taken his place and borne the penalty that was due for his sin!

“But,” asks someone, “how is that great work accomplished? I see that Christ suffered instead of sinners and worked out a righteousness which sinners could never have worked for themselves, but how can that righteousness become theirs?” God’s plan, my Friend, is that you should hide yourself in Christ. You must come to Christ and take what He has done to be yours by an act of simple faith. I cannot use a better illustration than that of the sin-offering brought to the priest under the Mosaic dispensation. When the sacrificial animal was about to be slain, the sinner came and laid his hands upon the head of the beast and confessed his sin over the appointed sin-offering. Thus his sin was put on the animal—which was then killed and consumed—and so, in type, the man’s sin was put away. In a similar fashion, come, Beloved, to my Lord Jesus Christ at this very moment and, by an act of faith, put your sin where God long ago laid it and, in token of that act, say to your Lord

and Savior, Himself— *“My faith does lay her hand  
On that dear head of Yours,  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And thus confess my sin.”*

If you do thus trust Christ, even though you have never done so in all your life before, it does not matter, for, if you have done so now, then your sin is laid upon Christ and He has so completely borne the penalty for it that it has ceased to be—and His righteousness is accounted yours seeing that you are a Believer in Him. When God looks at you, He see no sin in you, nor does He mark any lack of righteousness in you—for the sake of Jesus Christ, His Son, He does accept and look upon you as though you had always kept His righteous Law!

“But for whom is this great work accomplished?” someone asks—“you surely do not mean that it is for me?” I do mean that it is for you if you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. But if you will not trust Him, on your own head be the guilt of your soul’s eternal ruin! If you will have Christ’s righteousness, it is for you. “What,” you say, “for such a guilty sinner as I am?” Listen, man—if you had not been guilty, God need not have provided a righteousness for you! Of course Christ’s righteousness is for the guilty—for whom should it be if not for them? “Do you mean,” asks one, “that in a moment I may be cleansed from all sin simply by believing in Jesus?” Yes, I do mean that! You, even you may be cleansed this very instant! “But I have not lived a good life.” If you had lived a good life, you would not have needed a Savior. Christ Jesus came into the world to save, not the good, but the bad! “In due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Publish that blessed Truth of God around the whole earth and let the ungodly especially hear it! Jesus Himself said, “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” Therefore, you sinsick souls, trust yourselves to the Christ who came on purpose to heal just such souls as you are! Only trust Him and there is immediate pardon and immediate salvation for you! “This is too good to be true,” says one. Not so, for high as the Heavens are above the earth, so are God’s thoughts above your thoughts and His ways above your ways. You feel that you could not forgive like this, any who had wronged you, but God’s ways are not to be measured by yours! You have often heard us praise and extol Him by singing—

*“Who is a pardoning God like Thee?  
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”*  
My first text said, “If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn

me.” But my second text as good as says, “If God justifies me, nobody can condemn me.” Paul, who wrote these words and who had been a blasphemer, a persecutor and a murderer, boldly declares, “It is God that justifies,” and then utters the confident challenge, “Who is he that condemns?” Are you not astonished to hear that little man from Tarsus talk in such a fashion as that? Why, there is the blood of the martyr Stephen crying out of the ground and saying, “Why, Paul, I condemn you!” Then there is the blood of all the poor men and women whom he dragged off to prison, or compelled to blaspheme the name of Christ. And those whom he put to death in every city—does not the blood of the martyrs cry out against Paul the Apostle, who was once Saul the persecutor? How does he dare to cry, “Who is he that condemns?” Yet there is no voice of blood raised against him! All is still and silent, for God has blotted out forever even that great sin which he had committed! But do not the fiends of Hell bring accusations against him? Does not the arch-fiend lift up his head and say, “Saul of Tarsus, you are a liar, for I can condemn you. You know what a self-righteous man you used to be and how you sinned against God in that way”? No, even Satan, himself, dares not accuse the Apostle, for, “it is God that justifies!” He has so effectually silenced the powers of darkness with the blood and righteousness of Christ that, like dogs which dread their master’s whip, they lie down in their kennel not daring even to howl against a bloodwashed child of God!

But do you not expect the angels in Heaven, who saw Stephen die and watched Saul of Tarsus in all his cruel persecutions, to bend down from their shining thrones and say, “O Paul, it ill becomes you to ask, ‘Who is he that condemns?’ when all of us can condemn you”? Oh, no! They all see the splendor of the righteousness of Christ and they are all glad to take their harps and sing a new song to the praise and glory of Jesus! Paul’s triumphant declaration, “It is God that justifies,” seems to start them singing again, as John heard them in his island prison, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing!” You may thus challenge Hell, earth and Heaven if you believe in Jesus—for if God has justified you, who is he that can condemn you?

“But,” says someone, “we must feel something.” Just so, but if you ever do feel aright, Christ must make you feel aright! You must not bring your feelings to Christ any more than your works—salvation by feelings is no more possible than salvation by good works! Salvation is all of Grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

“Well,” says one “I am spiritually brought to a bankrupt condition, for if I turned my pockets inside out, metaphorically, I could not find a solitary farthing in them.” Well, then, you are the very man to receive the Free Grace of Christ! When you have no merits, no good feelings, nothing whatever to recommend you—when at Hell’s dark door you lie, then it is that salvation’s joyful sound is pleasant to your ears and blessed are the ears that hear it and blessed is the heart that accepts it! Ask Christ for it and you shall have it! The Holy Spirit, Himself, will help you to ask for it aright. Ask Him to teach you how to ask for it. Ask Christ for everything—for all your salvation, from foundation to topstone—is in Him and He will freely bestow it upon you for His own Glory!

Now I must close my discourse by reminding you that this way of finding justification by faith in Jesus Christ has commended itself to the best of men—and I hope it will commend itself to you. Cowper, in one of his later letters, says—(I will give you his words as nearly as I can remember them)—“I cannot survey the future with any joy when I look upon it from the top of my own good works. Though I have labored ever since my conversion to have a conscience void of offense toward God and men, yet my only hope in death is in the blood and righteousness of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in whom death once sheathed his sting.” And when Dr. Watts, that sweet singer of Israel, was dying, he said to one who stood by his bedside, “I heard an old Divine once say that when the most learned Christian minister comes to die, he draws his greatest comfort from the most plain promises of God’s Word. And so,” said Dr. Watts, “do I and I bless God that they are so simple that they do not need any great understanding in order to grasp them! My hope is simply in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior.” And so the good man fell asleep. If we had time and opportunity, we might multiply such testimonies almost indefinitely, for all the children of God who have lived the best conceivable lives uniformly declare that they do not trust for salvation in anything they have done, or felt, or been, or suffered—but that they live by faith upon the Son of God who loved them and gave Himself for them!

I should like to finish by telling you the way in which one of the old Puritans, Mr. Thomas Doolittle, once finished a sermon. And I pray that God will set His blessing on it. The preacher turned to one of the members of the church, sitting in the left-hand gallery and, addressing him by name, he said, “Brother So-and-So, do you repent having trusted your soul to Christ?” And the Brother answered, “No, Sir, I do not repent it, for I never knew what true joy and peace meant until I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Mr. Doolittle then turned to the other side of the gallery and said to Brother So-and-So, “Do you repent having trusted your soul with Christ?” And he answered, “No, Sir, I do not. I have known the Lord since I was a child and my soul’s rest and confidence have been found in Him. And the more I know Him, the more I rejoice in Him.” Then, looking straight before him, to a young man who had been somewhat uneasy during the sermon, the preacher said, “Young man, I do not know your name, but will you have the blood and righteousness of Christ to save you?” The young man was so abashed by this public appeal that he hid his face and said nothing. The person sitting next to him nudged him and the minister, looking straight at him, said to him, “Young man, will you answer this question? There is salvation for you in Jesus Christ if you believe in Him. Are you ready to believe in Him?”

The young man looked up and said, “Yes, Sir.” “When?” asked the preacher. The young man replied, “Now, Sir.” “Then,” he said, “listen to the voice of God! ‘Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.’” That young man and his father became two earnest Christian men renowned in the church in years afterwards. It might not be wise for me to exactly imitate that good man’s actions. And if I especially addressed a young man, the old men might think that I did not mean them to trust in Christ—and the young women might imagine that I had passed them over. So, instead of speaking only to one person, I will put the question to everybody here. I have told you about God’s way of making you just in His sight—now, are you willing to be made just in God’s way? If you die unjust, you will be lost forever. If you live unjust, you will miss all true peace and rest of heart. Are you willing to have God’s righteousness? You say, “Yes.” Well, faith is the accepting of what God gives. Faith is the believing what God says. Faith is the trusting to what Jesus has done. Only do this and you are saved, as surely as you are alive!

You may have come into this place unsaved and have been sitting here a lost soul—yet you may go home saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation and you may know it, too! So I say to each individual here—If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are saved, saved now and saved forever! Therefore be of good courage, you who have trusted in the Lord, and go your way rejoicing in Him and may God bless you both now and forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **ROMANS 10.**

In commenting once more upon this familiar Chapter, I cannot help repeating a remark which I have made to you before—that it is very significant that this 10th Chapter should immediately follow the subject dealt with in the 9th Chapter. In the 9th Chapter we have the Doctrine of Absolute Predestination proclaimed in the sternest and boldest manner— the Doctrine that God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. Now, it is commonly thought by those who do not rightly understand Calvinism that that Doctrine has a tendency to burden the heart and dry up the springs of compassion. That it was not so in Paul’s case is very clear, for this Chapter is a most affectionate one and in it the Apostle manifests a most loving spirit towards his fellow countrymen, the Jews, and the chapter also contains the widest conceivable declaration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—the fact being that the grand Doctrine of Divine Predestination is by no means inconsistent with the fullest and freest preaching of the Gospel of Christ!

Verse 1. Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. Paul is writing concerning the Jews—the very people who had driven him from city to city and who had again and again sought to take his life! Yet he could not forget that these men were his own countrymen and, consequently, with a consecrated patriotism, he desired beyond everything else that they might be saved.

2. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. The Jews of Paul’s day were zealous, but they were zealous in ignorance. And that is just what we may say at the present time concerning a large number of our fellow countrymen—those who are ordinarily called Ritualists. “They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.” None can be more zealous than they are, but a grave error is at the root of their whole system—a fatal ignorance concerning the truth of the Gospel.

3. For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. Man must have a righteousness of one kind or another—and if he has not a God-given righteousness, he seeks to have one of his own making. As the spider spins her web out of her own bowels, so do sinful men try to manufacture a righteousness out of that which is within them—but this they can never do. The only righteousness which will stand the test of the Day of Judgment is that which God bestows upon Believers in His Son, Jesus Christ. Oh, that all men were willing to submit themselves to the righteousness of God!

4. For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes. “The end of the Law” is to make a man righteous and Christ makes righteous everyone who believes in Him. The act of faith in Christ accomplishes what all the good works in the world can never accomplish!

5. For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the Law, That the man which does these things shall live by them. That is the message of the Law of God—“Do, and live.” But the message of the Gospel is, “Live, and do”—a very different thing! The Law says, “Work to obtain life.” The Gospel says, “You have life freely given to you in Christ Jesus—now work for Him because you live by Him.”

6-9. But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above),or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what says it? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. How simple is the Divine Plan of salvation—confess Jesus Christ believing in Him—or, in the other order, believe in Jesus Christ and then acknowledge your faith for so it is written, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”—Baptism being the way of confessing the faith which you already possess!

10-13. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture says, Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. What precious promises these are, and how wide they are! “Whoever—whoever.” That must include you, dear Friend, if you believe in Jesus, and call upon the name of the Lord.

14, 15. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Here you have the whole plan of salvation! Christ is preached, sinners hear the message of the Gospel, they believe it and so they are saved. What a mass of rubbish men have interjected into this blessed simple Plan! What counterfeits of so-called sacraments and what a mass of human doings and external paraphernalia of all sorts have they interjected! God requires none of their fripperies, fineries and ornate performances, but simply says, “Believe, and live.” How different is this from the cumbrous, complicated plan by which men would destroy our souls! Cling to the old-fashioned Gospel, Beloved, and never turn away from it! There is nothing that can take the place of the simplicity of Divine Truth. God grant that throughout England and from one end of the world to the other, salvation by believing—the result of hearing the Gospel—may be proclaimed!

16. But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. That is the pity of it—that so many have heard the Gospel but have not obeyed it. This shows that the Gospel comes to us as a command because we cannot disobey where there is no order or rule. O Sinner, listen to this! When you hear the Gospel, it is not left to your own choice to have it or leave it, so that you are as free to do the one as the other! If you reject it, you are disobedient to it.

16-18. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Ah, that is the important question! If they had not heard it, they could not be condemned for disobeying it, for the sin lies in hearing and yet not believing. “Have they not heard?”

18, 19. Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and the words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? Did not the Jews hear the Gospel? Certainly they did, and they rejected it. Moses foretold it would be so—

19. First Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are not a nation and by a foolish nation I will anger you. So the poor outcast Gentiles have received Christ although Israel rejected Him!

20, 21. But Isaiah is very bold, and says, I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. But to Israel He says, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. God grant that we may not be disobedienta and gainsaying as Israel was but that we may all accept Christ at once as our only and all-sufficient Savior!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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÷Job 9.30

WASHED TO GREATER FOULNESS

NO. 1908

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

**“If I wash myself with snow water and make my hands never so clean; yet You will plunge me into the pit and my own clothes will abhor me.” Job 9:30, 31.**

I FEEL certain that I am sent on a special errand at this time. Before my mind’s eye I see a soul whose awful reflections are hurrying him to despair. He refuses counsel and will not listen to direction, for dread has made him desperate. I would have a word in the ear of that worried and wearied one. Do you see the man? He has battled long against a dark temptation, but at last he is beaten. He feels that he can hold out no longer. He can scarcely take a breath—the air grows hot and stifling around him as he faces the question—what next? Accustomed as I am to look down on these crowded aisles and up at these closely-packed galleries, I feel a strange curiosity as I gaze into the mass, for I know that there is one man among all of you to whom I have a private message. I carry dispatches from the King of Kings to one who is grievously troubled and is become as a woman forsaken and despised. My Lord and Master described Himself in parable as leaving the 99 to seek for one lost sheep—I must now copy His example. You will not grudge me for this service, I am sure. I quit the throng that I may find the bewildered one and bring him safe and sound to the fold.

Turning to my text, let me say, that as one is startled by a shriek, or saddened by a groan, so these sharp utterances of Job astonish us at first and then awake our pity. How much are we troubled with brotherly compassion as we read the words—“If I wash myself with snow water and make my hands never so clean; yet shall You plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes will abhor me!” The sense of misery couched in this passage baffles description. Yet this is but one of a series in which sentence after sentence reveals a fresh chamber of horrors! The similitudes of grief are piled up here in heaps with what an old author has spoken of as the “rhetoric of sorrow.” Physical sufferings had produced a strain on Job’s mind and he sought relief by expressing his anguish. Like some solitary prisoner in the gloomy keep of an old castle, he engraves pictures of the abject despondencies which haunt him on the walls. His afflictions are aggravated by vain efforts to alleviate them—he wounds his hands with the rough hammer and nail with which he is engraving his griefs. Of such tortures many of us have had a taste.  
From my experience, as a patient, myself, smitten down with soulsickness, and from my observation as a pastor into whose ears the woes of awakened sinners are constantly poured, I have somewhat learned to understand the imagery of Job. The sufferer is in double straits. While he is tossed about by Satan, his friends are discharging their arrows at him and the Almighty troubles him. To help such a sufferer we must be careful to distinguish between the causes of his sorrow and divide between his affliction, itself, and the further sorrows which he has brought upon himself by his unwise efforts to escape from them.

Such, then, is the line of thought we will pursue. I shall make four divisions. Three of them are to be found in the text and the fourth will follow on as an important consequence. First, we shall notice that a quickened soul becomes conscious of guilt. Secondly, the soul that is quickened makes ineffectual attempts to rid itself of the stain of guilt. Thirdly, to deter His people from self-righteousness, it pleases God to plunge deeper into the mire those who attempt to cleanse themselves. The fourth point is that only by severe training are men led to look to God, alone, for salvation—it needs Omnipotence to teach us that salvation is of the Lord.

I. At the outset, then, we observe that QUICKENED SOULS ARE CONSCIOUS OF GUILT. They see it; they know it; they feel it and they blush to find that they are without excuse for it. All men are sinners. To most men, however, sin appears to be a fashion of the times, a necessity of nature, a folly of youth, or an infirmity of age which a slight apology will suffice to remove. You will scarcely meet with an Englishman who will not acknowledge that he is a sinner. Is it not the General Confession stereotyped in the book of Common Prayer? But it is one thing to call yourself a sinner and quite another thing to feel it. I have heard of a lady who acknowledged to her minister that she was a great sinner. He questioned her kindly as to which of the Ten Commandments she had broken. Beginning with the first, he asked her, “Did you ever break this?” To which enquiry she indignantly answered, “No.” In like manner he dealt with the second and right through the whole ten. She professed in detail to have observed each one and yet pretended to confess that she had broken them all! By such equivocations, multitudes of men and women deceive themselves— and it is unhappily the custom of many a preacher to address his congregation as if they were all good people and every one of them knew the Lord, from the least even to the greatest! This is pleasing to the flesh and clattering to pride—but it is most pernicious. How many are being deceived by this lack of marking a difference where a vital difference exists!

Not till men are quickened by Divine Grace do they truly know that they are sinners. How is this? Some diseases are so insidious that the sufferers fancy that they are getting better, while in very truth they are hastening to the grave. After such manner does sin deceive the sons of men— they think they are saved when they are still unrenewed. How often have I seen a poor girl whose pale face, sunken eyes, shadowy hands and languid steps have clearly betokened that she was on the brink of death, yet she mistook the flush of consumption for the ruddiness of health. Slowly she waned, but within a day of her departure she planned cheerful projects which proved that she looked for life. Consumption is not, however, so deceitful as sin. Where it has full power over the soul, “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” If sin were not so deceitful it would not be half so destructive as it is.

How is this, you ask again? Few give themselves the trouble to think about these matters at all. Ours is an age in which men’s thoughts are keen upon politics and merchandize, practical science and economic inventions, financial schemes and Home Rule and I know not what beside— but sound doctrine and sincere piety are out of vogue! Few people trouble themselves to think about their souls’ everlasting welfare. Men die at the same rate as of yore, but the mortality is reckoned by a percentage and, as for the life hereafter, it is ignored! Friend, have you ever dedicated 10 minutes of your time to a consideration of your destiny? Days to your ledger; hours to your amusements; years to your commercial engagements—would it not be wise to reserve some moments for your soul’s outlook beyond the grave? You have made your last will and testament for the world that is fading away, but have you laid up no treasure for the world to come? Is this consistent with your usual prudence? I would have good hope for some of you if I could make you sit alone for one hour and think of nothing but your souls, your God and the Final Judgment. Alas! Alas! As the horse rushes to the battle, so men rush to the heated competition of the hour! They cannot be persuaded to consider. Poor mortals! They concern themselves about everything that does not concern them, but they persistently neglect everything that is necessary to their eternal well-being!

We enquire once more, How is this? To natural ignorance we may attribute much of the ordinary indifference of men to their own sinfulness. They live in a benighted age. In vain you boast the enlightenment of this 19th Century—the 19th Century is not one whit more enlightened as to the depravity of human nature than the First Century! Men are as ignorant of the plague of their own hearts, today, as they were when Paul addressed them. I know that almost every man you meet with talks as if he were qualified to set up for a doctor of divinity—but is not this the confidence of ignorance? “Vain man would be wise”—or read it, if you please, “vain man is void of understanding—though man is born like a wild ass’s colt.” Until God the Holy Spirit takes him in hand, no spiritual light enters the man’s soul. Preaching is an effective means of instructing the mind, awakening the conscience and impressing the hearts of the people—and faithful preachers are scattered up and down the country within measurable reach of most of your homes. Why, then, is the Doctrine of Human Sinfulness, or Total Depravity, so little understood and so seldom accepted as an undeniable fact?

Many persons seem startled and try to think that they misunderstand us when we say plainly that in the very best man in the world there is no virtue or Grace that can be pleasing to God unless he has been made a new creature in Christ Jesus! Let me put the Truth of God before you as plainly as I can by speaking of your body in order to describe your soul. You probably imagine that your physical constitution is sound and healthy. I grant you all that you ask on that score—yet you are but flesh and blood—like the rest of our mortal race and, therefore, you are exposed to every disease which waylays your fellow creatures! Even so, your deceitful heart is capable of as desperate crimes as the vilest of sinners ever committed. The evil propensity lurks within! It needs only the contagion of society, or the temptation of Satan to bring it out. Does not this alarm you? It ought to!

Hardly a glimmer of the humbling Truth of our natural depravity dawns on the dull apprehension of the worldly-wise, though souls taught from above know it and are appalled by it. In divers ways the discovery comes to those whom the Lord ordains to save. Sometimes a preacher sent of God lets in the dreadful light. Many men, like the false Prophet Mokanna, hide their deformity. You may remember the story. Mokanna wore a silver veil upon his forehead—should he ever remove it, the brightness of his countenance would blind the astonished world. In truth a foul disease had cankered his brow! God’s faithful servants are sent to tear off these veils and expose men to themselves. This duty demands courage. Men veil black villainy with self-flattery! Like Jezebel, they paint their eyebrows and tire their heads till they think themselves beautiful. It is ours, like Jehu, to cry, “Throw her down.” What have they to do with peace who are the servants of sin? How dare they pretend to comeliness whose hearts are not right with God?

How does it come to pass, then, that the best of saints on earth are prone to account themselves the chief of sinners? Their sincerity is unquestionable. This discovery is due to the Holy Spirit! He it is who convinces men of sin. By His mysterious but most blessed agency on the hearts of men, a sense of utter ruin is worked in the chosen and this prepares them to accept the full redemption provided by the Sacrifice of the Redeemer. We cannot explain to you the mystery of the Spirit’s operation. “The wind blows where it wills and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.”

But this we do know—the Holy Spirit withers all merely human hope and righteousness—and thus makes room for trust in the work of our Lord Jesus! Man, by nature, is blindly proud and proudly blind. The moment the Spirit of God comes into a man, the scales fall from his eyes and he sees himself in quite a different light! To each saved soul it seems a strange miracle. I have heard the story from simple lips full many a time. The new self talks of the old self with a kind of vacant wonderment. Yesterday our friend was on good terms with himself as a virtuous citizen, an honest trader, a sound churchman—in moral worth all that his neighbors could wish. Today he is vile in his own sight—his hands are filthy, his heart is foul, his thoughts are loathsome. He perceives that he has been walking in a vain show and, therefore, he writes himself down a hypocrite! No name is too base by which to surname himself!

Have I found you out, my Friend? Wandering among the motley throng, I am in quest of a soul that seeks the mercy of the Lord. Am I not upon your track?

Perhaps I am, at this moment, addressing a person who has been the subject of a mysterious gloom for which he sees no reason whatever. I am right happy to have found him, for I trust I have met with a recruit for the army of the Truth of God. But why, you may enquire, do I make such a remark? I will tell you in a moment. There is a vital connection between soul-distress and sound doctrine. Sovereign Grace is dear to those who have groaned deeply because they see what grievous sinners they are. Witness Joseph Hart and John Newton, whose hymns you have often sung, or David Brainerd and Jonathan Edwards, whose biographies many of you have read. You seldom hear much of God’s Everlasting Covenant in these modern times, for few men feel that thorough conviction of sin which comes directly from the teaching of the Holy Spirit. In the economy of redemption, the effectual operation of the Spirit in enlightening the heart concerning its own sinfulness is sure evidence of the Father’s personal love to His chosen people and of the special Atonement that the Son of God made for their transgressions—

*“Never had you felt the guilt of sin,  
Or sweets of pardoning love,  
Unless your worthless names had been  
Enrolled to life above.”*

You may walk through a dark cellar without discerning with your eyes that anything noisome is concealed there. Let the shutters be thrown open! Bid the light of day stream in! You soon perceive frogs upon the cold clammy pavement, filthy cobwebs hanging on the walls in long festoons, foul vermin creeping about everywhere! Startled, alarmed, horrified, who would not wish to flee away and find a healthier atmosphere? The rays of the sun are, however, but a faint image of that Divine Light shed by the Holy Spirit which penetrates the thickest shades of human folly and infatuation—and exposes the treachery of the inmost heart! Then the soul cries out in agony, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” When brought to feel this, we think our doom is sealed and everlasting destruction is close upon us.

But it is not so. This is the way of hope. Through death to life every saved soul must pass! Ask us not to paint the sensations, nor blame us if we usually describe that experience which is most distinct. Sharp conviction, fainting heart, struggling hope, fear that haunts, terror that appalls—an awful fight of fiercely strange emotions! This is the extreme measure of the life-change. In milder form, with one decisive pang, the true heart is born again! The Slough of Despond lies across every pilgrim’s pathway. The years or hours it takes to wade through it must be left an open question. Sudden death is an occasional fact, but more frequently the saints are peacefully welcomed to the realms above. So in the Church on earth, sudden conversions happen, but, as a rule, men pass gradually into the Kingdom of God. Between the sensual and the spiritual there is a great gulf and it must be passed. Of the wind or weather in which you make the passage it is not for me to speak—the voyage may be long or short—but in some way the gulf must be traversed. Conviction of sin is of the first importance—it cannot be dispensed with.

You will say, “Why?” Well, we might suggest many reasons. It will make mercy the more precious. It will excite horror of sin in the future—burnt children dread the fire. It will teach you patience, for no future trial will be so severe as this. And it will tend to keep you persevering in holiness. But be the reasons what they may, you can be sure of this, that no soul is saved without being made conscious of its own sinfulness!

II. We pass on to notice that it often happens that AWAKENED SOULS USE MANY INEFFECTUAL MEANS TO OBTAIN CLEANSING. Job describes himself as washing in snow water and making his hands never so clean. His expressions remind me of my own labor in vain. By how many experiments I tried to purify my own soul! Like all my fellows, I was always foiled in every attempt. Look at a squirrel in a cage—the poor thing is working away, trying to mount, yet he never rises one inch higher. In like case is the sinner who seeks to save himself by his own good works, or by any other means—he toils without result. It is astonishing what pains men will take in this useless drudgery! They prevent the dawn of day in their anxiety to attend matins or observe “mass!” They are austere in their fasting; they say prayers without stint and do penance to the fullest. We should be sorry to impugn their sincerity!

With what exemplary zeal many in the Anglican Church go about to establish their own righteousness! They practice ceremonies with a claim to catholicity which no Catholic will allow! Untiring is their diligence in one department or another of amateur office, they hope for a reward for doing what God never commanded! Without a Scriptural proof of being right in anything, they would gladly be righteous overmuch in everything! The labor of the foolish in spinning a righteousness of their own—that is neither accredited by the Divine Law nor by the holy Gospel—is almost incredible—they would rather give their bodies to be buried and their goods to feed the poor than submit to salvation by Grace, though it is the only possible salvation!

In seeking to obtain absolution of their sins, to establish a righteousness of their own and to secure peace of mind, men tax their ingenuity to the utmost. Job talks of washing himself with snow water. The imagery is, no doubt, meant to be instructive. Why is snow water selected? The reason probably was, first, because it was hard to get. Far easier, generally, to procure water from the running brooks than from melted snow. Men set a high value on that which is difficult to procure. Why is it that the great majority of the so-called Christian world prefer worship conducted with gorgeous rituals and stately ceremonies? Is it not the rarity of the thing which creates a sense of value? Enter a Popish cathedral and try, if you can, to understand the services! What are all these persons doing dressed in red and white, or those other persons in more somber color? Manipulations, genuflections, prostrations, waving of censers and elevating of “hosts”—an array of symbolism which it took ages to conglomerate! What is the value of it all unless it lies in its complications and expenses?

Our Protestant friends have their milder predilections. Organs and orchestras serve them for snow water! In measured accents let me speak of music. For Psalms and spiritual songs you all know I have an ardent passion. My spirit wings its way to the very portals of Heaven in the words and tunes of our hymns. But for your instrumental melodies I have no mind when you substitute mere sound for heartfelt prayer and praise. The obvious simplicity of the Gospel is the only outward voucher I know of for its inward sincerity. Praise is none the better because of the difficulty of the music—say rather that the more simple and congregational it is, the better by far. Forms of worship which are expensive and difficult, are greatly affected by many, as snow water was thought, in Job’s day, to be a bath for kings. But, after all, it is an idle fashion, likely to mislead.

Besides, snow water enjoyed a reputation for purity—if you would have a natural filtered water gather the newly-fallen snow and melt it. The figure represents the religiousness which is of the most rigid kind—the cream of the cream. Specimens yet remain among us of piety more than possible to men—religiousness above the range of mortals which piety is, however, not of God’s Grace and, consequently, is a vain show. Though we should use the purest ceremonies, multiply the best of good works and add thereto the costliest of gifts, yet we would be unable to make ourselves clean before God. You may wash yourself till you deny the existence of a spot and yet you may be unclean! You may make rigid rules and find much content in keeping them—and yet remain in Nature’s filthiness. With all your shrewdness you have but practiced a human device and in refusing to trust in the Lord Jesus you have failed to observe a Divine ordinance—and therefore you will fail.

Once again, this snow water is probably extolled because it descends from the clouds of Heaven instead of bubbling up from the clods of earth. Religiousness which can color itself with an appearance of the supernatural is very taking with many. Some folks are fond of Apostolic succession—it professes to come from Heaven. No doubt the notion originated in cloudland! Others are fascinated by Popery. His holiness the Pope is accounted to be a great cistern, full of Grace which is distilled in streams and runs through capacious pipes called cardinals—and then through smaller tubes styled bishops. At length by the still smaller pipes of the priests it comes to the people! No pretext was ever more paltry than this and yet many are deceived by it! There is no peace in it for thoughtful minds! For such your snow water has no solace, because they see no connection between outward acts and the purifying of the heart—

*“Not all the outward forms on earth,  
Nor rites that God has given,  
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,  
Can raise a soul to Heaven.”*

If I “ make my hands never so clean,” is an expression peculiarly racy in the original. The Hebrew word has an allusion to soap or niter. Such was the ordinary and obvious method anyone would take to whiten his hands when they were grimy. Tradition tells that certain stains of blood cleave to the floor. The idea is that human blood, shed in murder, can never be scrubbed or scraped off the boards. Thus is it most certainly with the dye of sin. The blood of souls is in your skirts, is the terrible language of Jeremiah (2:34). When you think that Baptism can begin, that Confirmation can further and that other “sacraments” can complete your purification, you are mere dupes of your own folly! “Though I wash myself in snow water and make myself never so clean; yet You will plunge me into the pit and my own clothes will abhor me.”

There it stands, it is the testimony of one man, but yet it is true! The Almighty attests it and all human experience affirms it. These worthless experiments to cleanse yourselves should be ended, once and for all, if you would have regard to the great Truth of the Gospel—“Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” God alone can remove sin and He does so by the blood of Jesus!

III. But AS SURE AS EVER QUICKENED SOULS TRY TO GET PURITY IN THE WRONG WAY, GOD WILL THRUST THEM DOWN INTO THE PIT. This is a terrible predicament. I find, on looking at the passage closely, that it means, “head over ears in the ditch.” It is not merely some filthy puddle in which a man treads till he is splashed all over, it is a slough of despond into which he sinks. His eyes, his ears and his mouth are filled with pollution—and his very clothes are so foul that he utterly abhors himself. Old Master Caryl, a rare expositor of the Book of Job, says that the original can only be equaled in English by the expression—“we would not touch such an one with a pair of tongs.”

Often it happens with those who try to get better by their own good works, that their conscience is awakened by the effort—and they are more conscious of sin than ever. If a chosen man strives to save himself from his sins by his own righteousness, the Lord permits him to see his own heart and he ceases from all glorying. The word here rendered, “pit,” is elsewhere translated, “corruption.” So in the 16th Psalm—“Neither will you suffer your Holy One to see corruption.” Language cannot paint abasement, reproach, or ignominy in stronger terms. “YOU shall plunge me in the pit.” Is it not as though God, Himself, would undertake the business of causing His people to know that by their vain ablutions they were making themselves yet more vile in His eyes? We read, in the second chapter of Jeremiah, of God’s remonstrance with Judah—“Though you wash with niter and use much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me, says the Lord God. How can you say, I am not polluted?”

May we not regard this as the discipline of our Heavenly Father’s love, albeit when passing through the trial we do not perceive it to be so? Thus, in the Apocalyptic Epistle to the Church at Laodicea, expostulation more severe or more tender it would be hard to imagine—“Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel you to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.” Mark the gentle words, “I counsel you,” addressed to a people whose lukewarmness excited nausea! Then follows a sentence of encouragement so sweet and enchanting that it almost sounds like an apology for the fierceness of the former censure. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent.” A revelation of wretched sinfulness ends in a declaration of love and a visit of Grace, for the Lord goes on to say, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.” Anyway, the Lord will end the conceit which is the source of the lukewarmness—He cannot permit His chosen to remain in self-righteous pride—His soul hates that.

Perhaps, my Friend, the experience I am trying to describe will come to you through the preaching of the Word of God. This sermon may dishearten and distract you. Your hope was thriving like a plant. This sermon shrivels every leaf and though, at the scent of water, the branch of self-righteousness will bud again, the next sermon you hear may wither even the stem of your confidence! If another sermon soon afterwards cuts it down to the very root, the ministry will be profitable to you, for the root of pride must be cut up. Believe me, this is mild treatment—I trust you may not be left to more severe methods.

Frequently our great Lord leaves a poor wayward soul to eat the fruits of its own ways and this is the severest form of plunging in the pit. While striving after righteousness in a wrong way, the man stumbles into the very sin against which he struggled. The young man, of whom I am now thinking, resolved, by the help of God, that he would be different from this day on from what he ever had been. His vows kept pace with his devotions. He started them at early morn—

*“And felt good, easy man, full surely  
His goodness was a-ripening.”*

To the shop he went, as was his custom—but his thoughts were no longer set on earthly things. He stood, as he supposed, on heavenly ground. Because he had taken snow water and had washed his hands, he began to think that he was amazingly clean. Towards evening a temptation suddenly crossed his path. At first he resisted, but it proved a feeble fight. The argument of another young man, that it was policy to yield, availed to break the covenant he had made with his own conscience. So he was led astray to a place of amusement where the Light of God’s countenance never shines. The wretchedness of his reflections on the morrow could not easily be told. He felt that his feet were fast in the miry clay and his garments foully soiled. His empty conceit might not have been dislodged from its secret lurking place in his depraved nature without some such perilous downfall!

Perhaps there sits out yonder a good Sister who has grown familiar with spiritual straits. Did you ever happen to hear of Mary Huntington, wife of William Huntington, S.S., the famous Calvinistic preacher? When he prayed for her, which he did with much affection, he confessed before God—“O Lord, I beseech You, hear me on her behalf. You know how warmly attached she has always been to Moses and what narrow and vain searches she has made in order to discover his grave, which You, in infinite wisdom and mercy, have thought fit to conceal.” That prayer, which was published about a century ago, is worth preserving in your memory. For that, “Mary,” like many worthy housewives of these days, was rather fond of collecting the rags and relics of self. If it had been possible, she would have worn at least an apron of the linsey-woolsey of selfrighteousness! The Lord will not have His handmaids thus arranged—they must be quit of self altogether!

Our lives through various scenes are drawn and vexed with petty provocations. Paltry annoyances are the bane of our peace. Some of you, dear Sisters, spend your years and your thoughts in a narrow circle and I deeply sympathize with you in it. Without a wish to be great, or to enlarge your coast, you intensely desire to be good. To do your duty to the best of your ability is your aim—and in it you are worthy of all honor. The lot of many of you is to pass much of your time in loneliness. Your temptations are, therefore, peculiar. For many a quiet hour you have been busy with domestic employments, distracted by no acute anxiety, but cheered by much quiet meditation. At such seasons you are apt to get on good terms with yourselves. Presently the shades of evening begin to fall. Evening, of which Cowper sweetly sings—

*“Come, evening, once again, season of peace, Return, sweet evening, and continue long!”*

You are prepared to welcome home the husband, brother, son who will look for his repast and seek his well-earned repose. Possibly, my Sisters, this is your season of temptation. His rough words, his needless complaints, his vacant look when you pine for sympathy puts you about. A sense of injustice stings you. It may be very natural, but all the same, it is very fatal to your sense of superior goodness. What more treacherous than one’s temper? In a sudden gust of passion, you utter words of anger. How gladly would you recall them! But they are registered. Down into the pit of despondency you sink. For days to come you feel that you cannot forgive yourself. Your rich mantle of righteousness, after this tumble in the pit, looks mean enough to provoke your own ridicule!

Thus do we, in our different spheres, fly from this to that and from that to the other. Some hope to cleanse away sin by a supreme effort of selfdenial, or of miraculous faith. Men dream of being clean without the blood of Jesus—they even boast of it—and yet their sin remains. The eyes of the judgment may be deceived till we half think we are clean—but no sooner does the scale grow thin, or the light grow strong, than the conscience perceives its error and learns the lesson that no human endeavor can wash out the accursed spot! Let us not play at purification, nor vainly hope to satisfy conscience with that which renders no satisfaction to God!

Persons of sensitive disposition and sedentary habits are prone to seek a righteousness of inward feeling. Let me describe these good folks to you. They aim at a righteousness that renounces every fault and they cultivate such graces as are naturally lovely, watching from moment to moment their own feelings of joy or grief. Yet these are they who get to know, with the keenest anguish, the plague of their own hearts! How it happens is sufficiently clear. They try to live by their feelings and frames of mind— and what can be more deceitful than these sensations? Treacherous as the sea on which you sail so smoothly on sunny days, but which, at other times, wrecks your boat without mercy, your frames and feelings are not in the least to be depended on! One day you are all aglow, the flush of fervor is on your face, the next day you feel so dead and cold that prayer would freeze upon your lips! Your evidences are dark. You think you have none and, seized with despondency, you lament that, “there is no hope.” Ah, me! The sin-sick soul, given to watch its own symptoms, is brought into perilous straits—trying one nostrum after another—sometimes feeling a little better and soon feeling much worse. Oh, that it could turn from feeling to faith and look steadily out of inward sensation to the work finished once and for all by the Lord Jesus!

Poor Job was smitten with sore boils from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. No doubt he sent for the doctor—though we are not actually told that he did so. It is likely enough that snow water was prescribed to him for a relief. His hands may not have seemed very pretty when he used it—there may, at least, have been some connection between his physician’s prescription and his poetry, when he said, “If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean.” Perfection in any one part of conduct would not secure cleanness for the rest. Washed hands would be a small matter if the boils remained over the rest of the body. This is another aspect of the same unsatisfactory expedient that I am wanting to point out to you. You are under bad treatment until you walk by faith in Jesus! Anything short of Grace will prove a mere mockery of your malady. Asa, King of Judah, was diseased in his feet. He sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians. Asa never recovered, but the Lord restored Job to perfect health. The gratuitous advice which the Patriarch received in the time of his sickness was not worth his gratitude. Of his three friends, he said, “You are all physicians of no value.” Then comes back the metaphor which I have repeated so often—“Yet shall You plunge me in the pit and my own clothes shall abhor me.” After all is said and done by the wisest of men, the poor sinner is worse off than when they undertook his case! All is vanity till God comes in!

Let us not forget that the man who thus described his own case “was perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil.” Such a case is a puzzle to those who are not enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Although Job was renowned for righteousness in his generation, a gleam from God’s Countenance exposed the faultiness of his soul. Does this prove him to have been a hypocrite? By no means! His friends supposed him to be so, though they had no ground whatever for the suspicion—it was their rough way of solving a hard problem. If the Patriarch’s integrity had not been so firm. If his refinement had not been so tender. If his piety towards God had not been so invariably accompanied by his pity for his brother men— if, in a word, his character had not been so complete—his trial and his deliverance could not have exhibited the extraordinary lesson which has interested and instructed every succeeding generation! He appears before us, at first, in the vigor of health, in the height of prosperity and in the charm of good repute. But oh, the vanity of man! At a touch of God’s finger, his flesh develops a festering mass of corruption! At a glance of God’s eyes, which searched him through and through, the total depravity of human nature at its best estate becomes apparent! “He abhors himself in dust and ashes.” What next? Utter ruin? No, Friend, it is full redemption!

IV. By such severe training THE AWAKENED ONE IS LED TO LOOK TO GOD, ALONE, FOR SALVATION and to find the salvation he looks for! This is my last point and I have no time left to enlarge upon it. What I want is that the Truth of God may flash across your mind in a moment. There sits the man who is menaced with despair because every effort to extricate himself from the tangled web of his own strange experience has left him worse than before. Did I attempt to comfort him, he would repel my kindest expressions. And why? He knows that it is God who condemns him! In a British court of justice, when the judge sums up against the prisoner, small cheer can he get from the honeyed words of his counsel. But listen—“It is God that justifies.” Whom does He justify? The ungodly! He first condemns them in their own consciences and then He justifies them according to His Grace. If I receive the sentence of death in myself, it is the earnest of deliverance in my Redeemer! My Brother, has the Light of God beamed on your soul? I hope I have found you and that the Lord has visited you with His salvation.

I want you to notice a simple fact which seems to me to have escaped your observation. When the Almighty justified Job, He commended him and pronounced a high encomium on his conduct. Whatever mistakes he made about himself or his circumstances, in one matter he was clear as a bell! “He has spoken right of Me, says the Lord” (Job 42:7). Eliphaz and his friends transgressed in this respect. Listen to me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek it in yourselves—you are all on the wrong track! You begin below with the whole duty of man and try to work upward—you are sure to fail! You should begin up yonder, with the righteousness of God—and then you could work downward to righteousness of daily life. God give you knowledge of salvation by Grace, to the Glory of His own name and to your sanctification, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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CLEANSING—WRONG OR RIGHT?  
NO. 3069

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MAY 31, 1874.

**“If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands ever so clean; yet shall You plunge me in the ditch,  
and my own clothes shall abhor me.”  
Job 9:30, 31.**

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on the same text is #1908, Volume 32—WASHED TO GREATER FOULNESS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

WE are all, by nature and by practice, unclean in the sight of God. However excellent or virtuous we may seem before man, we have all broken God’s Law, for that Law requires perfection and we have been far from it. The Law demands spotless holiness towards God and perfect rectitude towards man and, in some point or other, we have all transgressed that Law—and we have therefore become polluted before the thrice-holy Jehovah. The great question which ought to arise in the mind of every one of us is this—“How can I be cleansed before God?”

I. We are called upon to remember, first, that TO BE CLEAN IN THE SIGHT OF GOD IS WORTH EVERY POSSIBLE EFFORT.  
Job speaks of washing himself with snow water and trying to make himself clean. And this he speaks of right earnestly. However far from the hot plains in which he lived, Job might have to send for snowy water— whatever quantity of soap (for in the Hebrew there is an allusion to soap in the second clause)—however much nitre and soap he might have to take in order to wash himself perfectly clean, it was worth all the expense and trouble if only it could be accomplished.  
And, dear Friends, we must be clean in the sight of God. We must desire to be clean in the sight of God for, if not, we are the objects of His continual displeasure. “God is angry with the wicked every day.” This is a solemn Truth of God which is far too much forgotten in the present day. Many have tried to put the thought of it right on one side and held forth only the Doctrine of the Divine Benevolence. But while that Doctrine is blessedly true, these solemn declarations are equally true, “The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God.” And, “He that believes not, is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” Now, if we were right-hearted towards God, this would seem to us to be a very dreadful thing. We little know how exceedingly hateful sin is to God. [See Sermon #3068, Volume 53—

UNTOLD DEPTHS AND HEIGHTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You know that there are some things which you and I sometimes see which are very disgusting and loathsome to us. I went into a railway station in Italy once, where I saw a man who had lost his arm and who by way of begging, exposed to us the stump of it and also a horrible ulcer from which he was suffering. I turned away sick at the sight and dreaded to go to that station again, for fear that I should be met inside the door of the waiting room by that horrible spectacle! But, depend upon it, no mutilation and no disease of man’s body was ever so sickening to the most delicate taste as sin is sickening to God! He loves purity and, therefore, He must loathe impurity. He delights in those who are just and true and upright—and He cannot endure those who are unjust, false, or unrighteous. His holy soul abhors them as that strong expression of His in the prophecy of Zechariah proves—“My soul loathed them and their soul also abhorred Me.” The sinner does not dislike God more than God dislikes him as a sinner. The sinless God cannot look with complacency upon him who is sinful—he is loathsome to the holy mind of God. So, surely, if we are right-hearted, we shall feel that anything and everything that we can do in order to get right with God and to become clean in His sight, we ought to do at once!

Let us also remember that as long as we are unclean, we are in daily danger of the fires of Hell. Do any of you know what Hell is? It is the leper colony of the universe! Just as in the olden times when the “black pest,” or some other terrible epidemic ran through a town or village, they would build a house some miles away from the place and call it the pest house where they would put away all those who had the pest or plague—such is Hell, only a million times worse than any earthly pest house ever was! Hell is the pest house of the moral universe. You know that in countries where leprosy prevails, they shut up the lepers in a place by themselves, lest the terrible disease should pollute the whole district. And Hell is God’s leper colony where sinners must be confined forever when they are incurable and past hope! And what are the pains of Hell? They are the natural result of sin. Sin is the mother of Hell. The pains and groans of lost spirits in Hell are simply the fully-developed flowers of which their sins were the seed. Bitter is the fruit, sour is the vintage of that vine of Sodom and Gomorrah which some men set themselves so diligently to plant—and so industriously to water. Sin bears its own sting within itself. The torments that are to come are the stings of conscience and the inevitable effects of remorse upon the soul and body of the man who will continue to be unclean in the sight of God! Lest, therefore, any of you should ever be shut up in that place of “everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,” I do beseech you to awaken yourselves and diligently seek to find out how you may be made clean in God’s sight—

“You **sinners, seek His Grace,  
Whose wrath you cannot bear!  
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,  
And find salvation there.  
So shall that curse remove,  
By which the Savior bled  
And the last awful day shall pour  
His blessings on your head.”**

In addition to the eternal loss which all who are cast into Hell must sustain, also remember that none can enter Heaven until they are pure. Those holy gates are so closely guarded by angelic watchers that no contraband of sin shall ever cross the frontiers of Heaven. The angels look up and down and through and through. The man who presents himself there—if so much as a speck, or spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing is found upon him—cannot be allowed to enter! Just think for a minute how utterly impossible it must be for the impure to enter the courts of the thrice-holy God. You sometimes see, in the streets of London, wretched creatures in whom poverty, drunkenness and debauchery have so combined that even in their outward appearance, they present a truly horrible aspect. They are so foul, filthy and loathsome that I should not dare to describe them more fully. None of us would like to come near them—our flesh creeps at the very thought of them! Now, suppose that these shoeless, ragged, filthy, diseased creatures should present themselves at the gates of Buckingham Palace on some great occasion when all the princes of the blood and the peers of the realm were gathered there? Do even the most democratic of you think that the soldiers would be too squeamish if they were to tell them that they were unfit to enter such a place and to mingle with such company? “Why, no,” you say, “of course they must at least be clean, or they can never enter the royal palace.” Well then, it must assuredly be so in a still more emphatic sense with regard to the palace of the King of kings! Would it be possible for any to enter there defiled with sin, foul with fornications, adulteries, thefts, murders, infidelities, blasphemies, profanities and rebellions against God? It cannot be that the pure air of Heaven should ever be breathed by them, for it is expressly declared that “there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination or makes a lie.” All who are there are absolutely perfect! And you and I, if we would be with them, must be renewed in heart and converted unto God—and washed from every stain, and spot and speck of sin. It is clearly impossible that the thrice-holy God should have unrenewed, unclean sinners immediately under His own eyes, in His own courts. It is bad enough for Him to have them, for a time, in this little planet, floating in the vast sea of space. But He could not endure to have them up there amid the splendors of eternal Glory! That cannot, must not and will not be!

Once more, every man will feel that it is worth his while to endeavor to be clean before God if he wants a quiet conscience, for a truly quiet conscience is never possessed by any man until he has been washed in the precious blood of Jesus and so made “whiter than snow.” Does anyone ask, “Can that be done?” I answer in God’s own words. “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” This great miracle of mercy can be worked and nobody’s conscience will ever be perfectly at peace till it is accomplished. There is a way of silencing conscience without that miracle being worked, but it is like the way in which cruel tyrants sometimes silenced the martyrs. “Hold your tongue,” the tyrant has said, “I will not listen to your heresy.” But the brave man has still gone on speaking—he would not be silenced. And then the tyrant has cut his tongue out. I think I have known men cut out the tongue of their conscience, so that it could no longer speak. Perhaps some here have done it—torn it right out by the roots by going to the drink shop, by frequenting evil company, by taking up infidel ideas when they knew better. They knew that they could not, with a clear conscience, do what they wanted to do, so they resolved that they would tear out its tongue, so that it could no longer rebuke them!

O foolish Man, you could not have dome a worse thing for yourself than that, for he who quiets his conscience after that fashion is like one of whom I have heard who, one night, was unable to sleep because a faithful dog kept on howling under his window. He called out to it and bade it lie down, and went back to bed and tried to sleep, but still the howling continued. And at last, when the creature would not be quiet, he took his gun and shot it, in his anger. He ought to have known that the dog wanted to tell him that there were burglars who were trying to enter his house and that the faithful animal was doing its best to preserve its master’s life. After the dog was dead and the man had gone to sleep again, the burglars entered his bedroom, stole everything of value that they could find and ended by staining their hands with the blood of the foolish man who had killed the poor creature that warned him of his peril! The devil is trying to destroy your soul and your conscience, like that faithful dog, gives the alarm, but you cry to it, “Lie down!” It does not lie down, however, and perhaps this very sermon is helping to wake it up, but you are determined that it shall be quiet and you will even kill it if you can! Well, if you do, you will then have sealed your own destiny by that very deed. The only proper way of quieting conscience is the method that a wise owner would have taken of quieting his dog. Supposing that man had gone downstairs and patted his dog on the head and praised it for being a good dog? Suppose that he had loosed its chain and taken it round the yard with him? Suppose, too, that he had taken that gun, with which he so foolishly killed his dog, and when, at last, he had discovered the villains who had come to rob him, he had set his dog on them, or even leveled his gun at them? That would have been far wiser than killing his dog and losing his own life! In such a fashion as that, go and lose your conscience and let your sins be destroyed— otherwise they will assuredly destroy you! The quieting of an awakened conscience can only be rightly done by getting rid of sin—and there is but one way to get rid of sin—of which I will speak before I have finished my discourse.

Thus much on the first point—to be clean in the sight of God is worth any and every effort.  
II. Now secondly, ALL EFFORTS OF OUR OWN, MADE IN OUR OWN WAY, WILL CERTAINLY FAIL.  
It is very curious what efforts people will make to get rid of their sins. Some try to get clean by ceremonies. Ah, Mr. Priest, is that good soap that you are bringing with your bowl of water? “Yes,” he replies, “the best Roman soap, or you can have a cake from Canterbury or Oxford if you would prefer it. How beautifully white your hands will look if you only use enough of this patent soap.” So you say, but if you had your eyes opened, you would see that after all your washing, they are as black as night! The soapsuds get in your eyes, Sir, and therefore you do not see the dirt that is still on the sinner’s hands. That is all that ever comes of mere ceremonies—they blind, but they do not cleanse.  
Another thinks that he can obtain cleansing by religious observances. His form of washing with snow water is attendance at his usual place of worship. He goes there regularly. He would never be away if he could help it! When the proper time for service comes and having done that, he asks, “Will not that take away my sin?” No, Sir, not a spot, nor even half a spot! Some have given away large sums of money with the hope of thereby cleansing themselves from sin. But all the gold in the world can never form a golden ointment with which to cleanse iniquity. There are many who have tried to get cleansing by their moralities and their charities, but their efforts have all been in vain. Mr. Legality and Mr. Civility are said to be great hands at washing Blackamoors white, but I have very grave doubts as to whether the Blackamoors are not blacker after the washing than they were before!  
Men have had the strangest notions as to how they might be cleansed from sin. Read John Bunyan’s Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners— which is, as you know, a record of his own experience—and you will see some very curious ideas of his concerning the way in which he hoped to wash himself from sin. Yet, his ideas are not any more curious than those of people who are now living. The other day I read a letter from a young farm laborer, describing the way in which, at one time, he hoped to get saved. He said that in the village where he lived, there were some young men who went to the Patagonian Mission and there got what he called, “massacreated.” Of course, he meant to say that they were massacred. And he further wrote, “I thought that if the Patagonian Mission would have taken me and the natives would only have killed me, I would have gone joyfully and gladly, for I heard that they were all saints who died in that way and I would willingly have gone if I could have got to Heaven by that method.” Yes, and so would I, and so would most of us when we were under the burden of sin. We would not have minded being killed and eaten if we might in that way have entered into eternal life, for a man who really feels the burden of sin is willing to try all sorts of extraordinary methods of getting rid of it! Look at the methods adopted by the heathen in order, as they hope, to get rid of sin. Go to India and look at the great car of Juggernaut, and see by what cruel means the people there hope to get rid of sin! And there are many other equally useless methods which the spiritual quacks are vainly puffing as unfailing ways of getting rid of sin!  
But on the authority of the Word of God, we confidently declare that all human methods of seeking the cleansing of sin which men may practice must end in failure, even as Job’s did when he said, “If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands ever so clean; yet shall You plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me.” Yet, if God really means to save you, He will never let you be satisfied with any human plan of salvation, but He will, to use Job’s expression, plunge you in the ditch and make you feel even blacker than you did before! How will He do that?  
Sometimes the Lord does this by bringing to a man’s memory his old sins. “There,” says the self-satisfied man, “I am getting on now—how clean I am after that last wash!” And just then he recollects some sin he committed as a boy, or some foul deed which he can never wipe completely off the tablet of his memory. “Oh!” he cries, “that dreadful past sin of mine has not gone as I vainly hoped that it had—it is still there.” So he is again plunged in the ditch and all his beautiful washing counts for nothing!  
At another time, the Lord permits the man to be greatly tempted. He gets up in the morning and says to himself, “Now I really feel a great deal better than I have felt for a long time. I have firmly resolved to make a man of myself and I know that my resolutions are much stronger than they used to be.” So he starts out very confidently. But presently there comes to him something that is stronger than his resolutions—and over goes the boastful man, generally failing in the very thing in which he fancied himself to be strongest! He soon discovers that he was only powerful as long as he had not a powerful adversary to contend with him. That is the way in which many a man has been plunged by God in the ditch.  
Sometimes God will do it in another way—by opening a boastful man’s eyes to see the imperfection of his work. He thinks, “I did that piece of work well. I am sure I did and I do not see how any Christian could do it better.” When any man begins to talk like that, the Lord often makes him sit down and closely examine that work of which he is so proud. And as he looks at it, he sees that it is full of flaws. It is a beautiful vase, but just try to fill it with water. Ah, it leaks! The man looks at it and says, “Well, I never thought it was as faulty as this. It seemed to me to be perfect! Yet this beautiful vase that appeared to be so fair, leaks like a sieve.” The man says to himself, “That good action of mine was done with a bad motive, so it is like a leaky vessel. While I was doing it, I was as proud as Lucifer over it. So it leaks—and after I had done it, I went away and boasted about it, so the vase kept on leaking.” In that way the man gets plunged into the ditch and he sees himself to be blacker than he was before he had thus washed his hands with snow water!  
Very frequently men have been plunged into the ditch by being made to see the spirituality of the Law. A man says, “I have not broken the Law. I have kept all the Commandments from my youth up. I never killed anybody. No one can say that I ever did.” But where he finds it written, “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer,” he cries, “Ah then I have been a murderer!” A man says very boldly, “I have never committed adultery! Who dares to say that I have?” But when he reads the words of Jesus, “I say unto you, that whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart,” then the man says, “I must admit that I am guilty, for I see that I have broken these commandments by my thoughts and looks, although I knew that I had not broken them by my actions. I did not know that the Law concerned itself so closely with looks and thoughts as well as with acts and words.” But, indeed, that is the very thing with which the Law is concerned—and for which it condemns men! And when the self-satisfied man learns this solemn Truth of God, he says, “Then I am plunged in the ditch, and my own clothes abhor me, although I had washed myself quite clean.”  
Others are plunged in the ditch in this way—they are made to realize the supreme holiness of God. It had been the habit of a certain man to say, “I am as good as my neighbors, and better than most of them. Don’t talk to me about Christian men and women—there’s many a professing Christian not half as good as I am! Why, was I not kind to my neighbor when he was in distress? Did I not give a guinea to such-and-such a charity? Am I not ready at all times to stand up for the right?” So he talks. But when he gets a view of God, then, like Job, he abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes! And he says, “I thought I could compare myself with man, but I cannot compare myself with God! And as God and not man, is the standard of holiness, I am indeed plunged in the ditch. Yet I thought I had washed myself perfectly clean—that snow water and patent soap did seem to take the dirt off beautifully—but now I find that in the sight of God I am just as filthy as I can be.” And when the Lord, the Holy Spirit, convinces a man of sin, the words of Job are none too strong—“My own clothes shall abhor me.” You may sometimes have abhorred your clothes because they were so dirty that you were ashamed to be seen in them. But you must be dirty, indeed, when your very clothes seem ashamed to hang upon you! This is what the convicted sinner feels—that he is so foul that his very clothes seem to be ashamed of him, as if they would rather have been on anybody else’s back than on the back of such a filthy sinner as he is!  
“Ah,” says someone, “you are exaggerating now.” No, I am not exaggerating, at least as far as my own personal experience is concerned. I can well remember—though I did not then know that John Bunyan had used somewhat similar expressions—I can well remember when I was under deep conviction of sin, wishing that I had been a frog or a toad rather than have been a human being because I felt myself to be so foul in the sight of God. I felt that I was such a great sinner that the bread I ate might justly choke me and that the air I breathed might have righteously refused to give life to the lungs of such a sinner as I was. I felt, at that time, that if God spared me, it was only because He was boundless in compassion—and if He cast me into the hottest Hell, I could never murmur against the justice of His sentence, for I felt that I deserved any punishment that He might award me. When the Holy Spirit brings sinners to feel like this, it is a proof that He is leading them on the way by which He brings them to Christ. Oh, that the Lord would make every guilty sinner here long to be clean in His sight! And also make each one feel what is certainly the truth—that all the means in a man’s own power of making himself clean will turn out to be dead failures—for though he should take snow water and wash himself ever so clean, yet would he again be plunged in the ditch and his own clothes would abhor him!  
III. The last point on which I have to speak is the best. It is this— THERE IS A RIGHT WAY OF GETTING CLEAN IN GOD’S SIGHT.  
First, it is an effective way. He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be made clean. He shall be cleansed from all the foulness of the past—God will wipe it right out. He shall be cleansed as to his heart and his nature. To him God repeats that ancient promise, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” “How is this to be had?” By trusting to the Divine method of cleansing the filthy, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses from all sin everyone who believes in Him. There are millions upon the earth now whom the blood of Jesus Christ has completely cleansed—and there are millions more now hymning His praises in Glory who have had every spot of sin taken out of them by the application of His precious blood! O sinful Souls, if you could ever have made yourselves clean, Christ would not have needed to pour out His life’s blood that you might be washed in it! If the cleansing bath could have been filled with human tears, or could have been filled by means of the incantations of a so-called priest, there would have been no need for Your wounds, O Emmanuel, and no need of Your indwelling, O regenerating and sanctifying Spirit! But because we could not be cleansed by any other means, the water and the blood flowed freely from the pierced heart of Jesus, the Divine Son of God! And now the ever-blessed Spirit waits to be gracious and to change the heart and renew the nature and make us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!  
This effective way of getting cleansed is also an immediate way. We have often sung—  
*“There is life for a look at the Crucified One! There is life at this moment for you”—*  
and it is true, for there is instant cleansing for anyone who looks to Jesus Christ. A sinner may have committed more sins than he could count in a million years and yet, as soon as he gives one believing look at Jesus Christ, all those sins are gone forever! You know that when a bill is paid, the receipt is written at the bottom and that puts an end to the whole debt. So, Sinner, the name of Jesus at the bottom of the whole roll of your indebtedness to God puts an end to it all! The man who thinks he has only a few sins may bring his little bill—and you who know that you have many sins may bring your big bill—but Christ’s receipt avails for one as much as the other! Even if the roll of your guilt should be many miles long, it makes no difference to the efficacy of the blood of Jesus! If the list of your sins should be long enough to go right around the world— and just one drop of the blood of Jesus should be put upon it—all that is written there would at once disappear and be gone forever! And the sinner would be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!  
Further, this effective and immediate way of cleansing is also an attainable way of cleansing. To preach to sinners a salvation which they cannot obtain would be to tantalize them. We do not so, but to every person in this Tabernacle tonight and to everyone anywhere else whom this message may reach, we have to say this, “If you will confess your sin to God and then put your trust in Jesus Christ, His Son, you shall be saved—even you, whoever you are, and whatever sin you may have committed!” Your confession is to be made, not to your fellow creature, but to Him against whom your sins were committed. Go to your home, or seek some quiet spot where you can commune with your God. Tell Him that you have sinned, and ask Him to have mercy upon you. Tell Him that Jesus died in the place of sinners—plead the merit of His precious blood and say, “Lord, I believe that You can save me and I trust in You to save me, for Jesus’ sake.” If you will do this, you shall be forgiven! You shall be renewed in heart, you shall be made clean!  
In closing my discourse, I remind you, as I have often done before, that this cleansing is available now, at this very moment! I recollect hearing of a somewhat stingy man who once needed to hire a horse and chaise to go out for a drive. So he went to the man who let such things and asked the price. He said that the sum asked was too high—and went round to every other person in the little town who had such things to let, but found that their prices were higher still. So, at last, he went back to the first man and said to him, “I will take your horse and chaise at the price you mentioned.” “No,” he said, “you won’t, for you have been around to everybody else to try to get them at a lower price, and I shall not let you have mine now.” I was not very much surprised to hear that he was told that. Now, some of you have been to everybody else for salvation except to the Lord Jesus Christ! You have been to Rome and you have been to Oxford, and you have been to self and I hardly know where you have not been! Yet, notwithstanding that, you may come to Christ even now! He will not refuse you even now! Going to Canterbury has not saved you, but going to Calvary can. You have found no help in the city on the seven hills, but you may find immediate help on the little hill outside Jerusalem’s gate—the little mound called Calvary, where the Savior shed His precious blood for all who will put their trust in Him!  
I have been talking to you in a very simple, homely way, for I have been afraid lest anybody should by any possibility not know what the Gospel really is. I always think that if my net has small meshes, the big fish can get in and the little fish cannot get out, So I have put small meshes to my net and talked in a homely style with simple illustrations which all can understand. The Lord knows that I have done this out of love to your souls. I would bring you all to Jesus if I could—but I cannot do that. Oh, that the Spirit of God would do it! Why do you need so much urging to come to Christ? You are filthy with sin and here is a free bath in which you may be washed spotlessly white! Come and bathe in Jesus’ blood and that will make you fairer than the lilies, and lovelier than all the glories of Solomon! If you do but wash in this Fountain, you will scarcely know yourself when you come up out of it! And if you happen to meet your old self, the next day, you will say, “Ah, Self! I don’t want to be on speaking terms with you anymore. I never knew that you were so ugly! I never knew that you were so filthy! I never knew that you were so abominable till I had gotten rid of you by being made a new creature in Christ Jesus.”  
The Lord bless you and bring you to trust in Jesus Christ, His Son, and He shall have all the praise and glory forever and forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **MATTHEW 5:13-26.**

Verse 13. You are the salt of the earth. The earth would go putrid if there were no salt of Divine Grace to preserve it. So, dear Friends, if God’s Grace is in you, there is a pungent savor about you which tends to preserve others from going as far into sin as otherwise they would have done. “You are the salt of the earth.”

13. But if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? If the God-given Grace could be altogether taken from you. If you had no sanctifying power about you at all, what could be done with you? You would be like salt that has lost its savor.

13. It is therefore good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Mark this, then—either the saints must persevere to the end, or else the Grace of God has effectually done nothing for them. If they do not continue to be saints and to exercise a saintly influence, there is no hope for them! There cannot be two new births for the same person. If the Divine work has failed once, it will never be begun again. If they have really been saved, if they have been made the children of God and if it is possible for them to lose the Grace which they have received, they can never have it again. The Word of God is very emphatic upon that point—“If they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance” Falling may be retrieved, but falling away can never be.

[See Sermon #75, Volume 2—FINAL PERSEVERANCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

There are countries where there is found salt from which the pungency has completely gone. It is an altogether useless article and if there are men who ever did possess the Grace of God, and who were truly God’s people, if the Divine life could go out of them, they would be in an utterly hopeless case. Perhaps there are no powers of evil in the world greater than apostate churches—who can calculate the influence for evil that the Church of Rome exercises in the world today?

14. You the are light of the world. The Bible is not the light of the world, it is the light of the Church! But the world does not read the Bible, the world reads Christians! “You are the light of the world.”

14. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. You Christians are like a city built upon a hilltop—you must be seen. As you will be seen, mind that you are worth seeing.

15. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick and it gives light unto all that are in the house. God’s intent is, first, to light you. And, secondly, to put you in a conspicuous position where men can see you.

16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven. Let the light of your purity and your good works be as bright as possible, yet let not the light be to your own praise and glory, but let it be clearly seen that your good works are the result of Sovereign Grace for which all the glory must be given to “your Father which is in Heaven.”

17, 18. Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all are fulfilled. See how the great Lord of the New Testament confirms the Old Testament? He has not come to set up a destructive criticism that will tear in pieces the Book of Deuteronomy, or cut out the very heart of the Psalms, or grind Ezekiel to powder between His own wheels. But Christ has come to establish yet more firmly than before all that was written aforetime and to make it stand fast as the everlasting hills.

19. Whoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven: but whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. A true man may make mistakes and so he may teach men to violate someone or other of the Divine Commandments. If he does so, he shall not perish, for he was honest in his blunder. But he shall be among the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But he who earnestly, perseveringly and conscientiously teaches all that he knows of the Divine Will, “the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

20. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Christ does not teach a lower kind of morality than the Pharisees taught. They were very particular about little things— jots and tittles—but we must go further than they went! We must have more righteousness of life than they had, although they seemed to their fellow men to be excessively precise. Christ aims at perfect purity in His people and we must aim at it too. And we must really attain to more holiness than the best outward morals can produce.

21. You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. God had said, “You shall not kill.” But the remainder of the verse was the gloss of the Rabbis—a true one, yet one that very much diminishes the force of the Divine Command.

22. But I say unto you, That whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And a far higher judgment than that of men.

22. And whoever shall say to his brother, Raca. A word of very uncertain meaning, a kind of snubbing word, a word of contempt which men used to say to one another, meaning that there was nothing in them. “Whoever shall say to his brother, Raca.”

22. Shall be in danger of the council: but whoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of Hell fire. Christ will not have us treat men with anger, or with contempt, which is a very evil form of hate, akin to murder, because we as good as say, “That man is nobody.” That is, we make nothing of him, which is morally to kill him. We must not treat our fellow men with contempt and derision, nor indulge any angry temper against them, for anger is of the devil, but “love is of God.”

23, 24. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you; leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Note that this injunction is addressed to the man who has offended his brother. Why is this? Because he is the least likely to try to make up the quarrel. It is the man who has been offended who usually exhibits the nobler spirit—the offender is almost always the last to seek a reconciliation and therefore, the Savior says to him, “If your brother has anything against you, it is but right that you should be the first to seek reconciliation with him. Leave your gift, go away from the Prayer Meeting, turn back from the Lord’s Table and go and first be reconciled to your brother.”

25. Agree with your adversary quickly. Always be ready to make peace—not peace at any price—but, still, peace at any price except the sacrifice of righteousness.

25, 26. While you are on the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison. Verily I say unto you, You shall by no means come out from there till you have paid the uttermost farthing. And there are some debts of which we cannot pay the uttermost farthing! And there is a prison out of which no man shall come, for the uttermost farthing demanded there shall never be paid. God grant that we may, none of us, ever know what it is to be shut up in that dreadful dungeon!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #661 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 9.33

THE GREAT ARBITRATION CASE

NO. 661

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

**“Neither is there any mediator between us,  
that might lay his hand upon us both.”  
Job 9:33.**

THE Patriarch Job, when reasoning with the Lord concerning his great affliction, felt himself to be at a disadvantage and declined the controversy, saying, “He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him and we should come together in judgment.” Yet feeling that his friends were cruelly misstating his case, he still desired to spread it before the Lord, but wished for a mediator, a middleman, to act as umpire and decide the case. In his mournful plight he sighed for an arbitrator who, while dealing justly for God, would, at the same time, deal kindly with poor flesh and blood, being able to lay his hand upon both. And, dear Friends, what Job desired to have the Lord has provided for us in the Person of His own dear Son, Jesus Christ! We cannot say with Job that there is no mediator who can lay his hand upon both of us because there is now, “one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.” In Him let us rejoice, if indeed we have an interest in Him! And if we have not yet received Him, may almighty Grace bring us, even now, to accept Him as our Advocate and Friend.

There is an old quarrel between the thrice holy God and His sinful subjects, the sons of Adam. Man has sinned—he has broken God’s Law in every part of it and has wantonly cast off from him the allegiance which was due to his Maker and his King. There is a suit against man which was formally instituted at Sinai and must be pleaded in the Court of King’s Bench before the Judge of the quick and the dead. God is the great Plaintiff against His sinful creatures who are the defendants. If that suit is carried into court, it must go against the sinner. There is no hope whatever that at the last tremendous day any sinner will be able to stand in judgment if he shall leave the matter of his debts and obligations towards his God unsettled until that dreadful hour.

Sinner, it would be well for you to “agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way,” for if you are once delivered up to the great Judge of all the earth there is not the slightest hope that your suit can be decided otherwise than to your eternal ruin! “Weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth,” will be the doom adjudged you forever, if your case as before the living God shall ever come to be tried at the fiery Throne of absolute Justice. But the infinite Grace of God proposes an arbitration— and I trust there are many here who are not anxious to have their suit carried into court—but are willing that the appointed Mediator should stand between them and God and lay His hand upon both and propose and carry out a plan of reconciliation! There is hope for you, bankrupt Sinner, that you may yet be at peace with God! There is a way by which your debts may yet be paid! That way is a blessed arbitration in which Jesus Christ shall stand as the Mediator!

Let me begin by describing the essentials of an arbitrator, or mediator. Then let me take you into the Arbitrator’s court and show you His proceedings. And then for a little while, if there is enough time, let us dwell upon the happy success of our great Daysman.

I. First of all, let me describe what are THE ESSENTIALS OF AN UMPIRE, AN ARBITRATOR, OR A DAYSMAN. The first essential is that both parties should be agreed to accept him. Let me come to you, you Sinner against whom God has laid His suit, and put the matter to you. God has accepted Christ Jesus to be His Umpire in His dispute. He appointed Him to the office and chose Him for it before He laid the foundations of the world. He is God’s Fellow, equal with the Most High and can put His hand upon the Eternal Father without fear, because He is dearly beloved of the Father’s heart. He is “very God of very God,” and is in no respect inferior to “God over all, blessed forever.”

But He is also a man like yourself, Sinner. He once suffered, hungered, thirsted and knew the meaning of poverty and pain. No, He went farther— He was tempted as you have been—and farther still, He suffered the pangs of death as you, poor mortal man, will one day have to do! Now, what do you think? God has accepted Him—can you agree with God in this matter and agree to take Christ to be your Mediator, too? Does foolish enmity possess you, or does Grace reign and lead you to accept Emmanuel, “God With Us,” as Umpire in this great dispute?

Let me say to you that you will never find another so near akin to you, so tender, so sympathetic, and with such a heart of compassion towards you! Love streamed from His eyes in life and poured from His wounds in death. He is “the express Image” of Jehovah’s Person and you know that Jehovah’s name is “Love.” “God is Love,” and Christ is Love. Sinner, has Divine Grace brought you to your senses? Will you accept Christ? Are you willing that He should take this case into His hands and arbitrate between you and God? If God accepts Him, and you accept Him, too, then He has one of the first qualifications for being a mediator.

But, in the next place, both parties must be fully agreed to leave the case entirely in the arbitrator’s hands. If the arbitrator does not possess the power of settling the case, then pleading before him is only making an opportunity for wrangling—without any chance of coming to a peaceful settlement. Now God has committed “all power” into the hands of His Son. Jesus Christ is the Ambassador of God and has been invested with full ambassadorial powers. He comes commissioned by His Father and can say in all that He does towards sinners that His Father’s heart is with Him. If the case is settled by Him, the Father is agreed.

Now, Sinner, does Grace move your heart to do the same? Will you agree to put your case into the hands of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man? Will you abide by His decision? Will you have it settled according to His judgment, and shall the verdict which He gives stand absolute and fast with you? If so, then Christ has another essential of an arbitrator. But if not, remember, though He may make peace for others, He will never make peace for you! Understand this—that until the Grace of God has made you willing to trust the case in Jesus’ hands, there can be no peace for you and you are willfully remaining God’s enemy by refusing to accept His dear Son.

Further, let us say that to make a good arbitrator or umpire, it is essential that he be an apt person. If the case were between a king and a beggar, it would not seem exactly right that another king should be the arbitrator, nor another beggar. But if there could be found a person who combined the two—who was both prince and beggar—then such a man could be selected by both! Our Lord Jesus Christ precisely meets the case! There is a very great disparity between the Plaintiff and the defendant, for how great is the gulf which exists between the eternal God and poor fallen man? How is this to be bridged? Why by none except by One who is God and who at the same time can become man!

Now the only Being who can do this is Jesus Christ. He can put His hand on you, stooping down to all your infirmity and your sorrow—and He can put His other hand upon the Eternal Majesty—and claim to be coequal with God and co-eternal with the Father! Do you not see, then, His fitness? Surely it were the path of wisdom, Sinner, to accept Him at once as the Arbitrator in the case! See how well He understands it! I should not do to be an arbitrator in legal cases because, though I should be anxious to do justice, yet I should know nothing of the law of the case. But Christ knows your case and the law concerning it because He has lived among men and has passed through and suffered the penalties of Justice. There cannot surely be a better skilled or more judicious Mediator than our blessed Redeemer!

Yet there is one more essential of an umpire, and that is that he should be a person desirous to bring the case to a happy settlement. If you appoint a quarrelsome arbitrator he may delight to “set dogs by the ears.” But if you elect one who is anxious for the good of both and wishes to make both friends, then he is just the very man, though, to be sure, he would be one man in a thousand—very precious when found—but very hard to discover. Oh that all lawsuits could be decided by such men!

In the great case which is pending between God and the sinner, the Lord Jesus Christ has a sincere anxiety both for His Father’s Glory and for the sinner’s welfare—that there should be peace between the two contending parties. It is the life and aim of Jesus Christ to make peace. He delights not in the death of sinners and He knows no joy greater than that of receiving prodigals to His bosom and of bringing lost sheep back again to the fold. You cannot tell how high the Savior’s bosom swells with an intense desire to make to Himself a great name as a peacemaker. Never had warrior such ambition to make war and to win victories as Christ has to end war and to win the bloodless triumphs of peace! From the heights of Heaven He came leaping like a young roe down to the plains of earth. From earth He leaped into the depths of the grave. Then up again at a bound He sprang to earth and up again to Heaven.

And still He rests not, but presses on in His mighty work to ingather sinners and to reconcile them unto God—making Himself a propitiation for their sins. You see, then, Sinner, how the case is. God has evidently chosen the most fitting Arbitrator. That Arbitrator is willing to undertake the case and you may well repose all confidence in Him. But if you shall live and die without accepting Him as your Arbitrator, and the case goes against you—you will have none to blame but yourself. When the everlasting damages shall be assessed against you in your soul and body forever, you shall have to curse only your own folly for having been the cause of your ruin!

May I ask you to speak candidly? Has the Holy Spirit so turned the natural bent and current of your will that you have chosen Him because He has first chosen you? Do you feel that Christ, this day, is standing before God for you? He is God’s Anointed—is He your elected? God’s choice pitches upon Him—does your choice agree? Remember, where there is no will towards Christ, Christ as yet exercises no saving power. Christ saves no sinner who lives and dies unwilling. He makes unwilling sinners willing before He speaks a word of comfort to them. It is the mark of our election, as His people, that we are made willing in the day of God’s power. Lay your hope where God has laid your help, namely, on Christ, mighty to save! You cannot have an Arbitrator except both sides are agreed. Do you say, “Yes, yes, with all my soul I choose Him”? Then let us proceed.

II. And now I shall need, by your leave, to TAKE YOU INTO THE COURT WHERE THE TRIAL IS GOING ON AND SHOW YOU THE LEGAL PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE GREAT DAYSMAN. “The Man, Christ Jesus,” who is “God over all, blessed forever,” opens His court by laying down the principles upon which He intends to deliver judgment and those principles I will now try to explain and expound.

They are two-fold. First, strict justice. And secondly, fervent love. The Arbitrator has determined that, let the case go as it may, there shall be full justice done, justice to the very extreme—whether it is for or against the defendant. He intends to take the Law in its sternest and severest aspect and to judge according to its strictest letter. He will not be guilty of partiality on either side. If the Law says that the sinner shall die, the Arbitrator declares that He will judge that the sinner shall die. And if, on the other hand, the defendant can plead and prove that he is innocent, He intends to adjudge to him the award of innocence, namely ETERNAL LIFE. If the sinner can prove that he has fairly won it, he shall have his due. Either way, whether it is in favor of the Plaintiff or of the defendant, the condition of judgment is to be strict justice.

But the Arbitrator also says that He will judge according to the second rule, that of fervent love. He loves His Father and therefore He will decide on nothing that may taint His honor or disgrace His crown. He so loves God, the Eternal One, that He will suffer Heaven and earth to pass away sooner than there shall be one blot upon the Character of the Most High. On the other hand, He so loves the poor defendant, man, that He will be willing to do anything rather than inflict penalty upon him unless Justice shall absolutely require it. He loves man with so great a love that nothing will delight Him more than to decide in his favor and He will be but too glad if He can be the means happily establishing peace between the Plaintiff and the defendant.

How these principles are to meet will be seen by and by. At present He lays them down very positively. “He that rules among men must be just.” An Arbitrator must be just or else He is not fit to hold the scales in any suit. On the other hand, He must be tender, for His name, as God, is Love. And His nature as Man is gentleness and mercy. Both parties should distinctly consent to these principles. How can they do otherwise? Do they not commend themselves to all of you? Let Justice and Love unite if they can.

Having thus laid down the principles of judgment, the Arbitrator next calls upon the Plaintiff to state His case. Let us listen while the great Creator speaks—may God give me Grace to reverently state it in His name—as one poor sinner stating God’s case against us all. “Hear, O heavens and give ear, O earth—for the Lord has spoken—I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib—but Israel does not know, My people do not consider. Ah, sinful nation, a people filled with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters—they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.”

The Eternal God charges us, and let me confess at once, most justly and most truly charges us, with having broken all His Commandments— some of them in act, some of them in word—all of them in heart and thought and imagination! He says that we, against light and knowledge, have chosen the evil and forsaken the good! He charges that knowing what we were doing, we have turned aside from His most righteous Law and have gone astray like lost sheep, following the imaginations and devices of our own hearts. The great Plaintiff claims that inasmuch as we are His creatures we ought to have obeyed Him! That inasmuch as we owe our very lives to His daily care we ought to have rendered Him service instead of disobedience, and to have been His loyal subjects instead of turning traitors to His Throne.

All this, calmly and dispassionately, according to the great Book of the Law, is laid to our charge before the Daysman. No exaggeration of sin is brought against us. It is simply declared of us that the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint—that there is none that does good, no, not one—that we have all gone out of the way and altogether become unprofitable. This is God’s case. He says, “I made this man. Curiously was he worked in the lowest parts of the earth. And all his members bear traces of My singular handiwork. I made him for My honor and he has not honored Me. I created him for My service and he has not served Me.

“Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years I have kept the breath in his nostrils. The bread he has eaten has been the daily portion of My bounty. His garments are the livery of My charity. And all this while he has neither thought of Me, his Creator and Preserver, nor done anything in My service. He has served his family, his wife and children, but his Maker he has despised. He has served his country, his neighbors, the borough in which he dwells—but I, who made him—I have had nothing from him. He has been an unprofitable servant unto Me.”

I think I may put the Plaintiff’s case into your hands. Which of you would keep a horse if that horse should yield you no obedience? What excuse is it that though I might not use him he would carry another? No, the case is worse than this. Not only has man done nothing, but worse than nothing. Which of you would keep a dog, which, instead of fawning upon you, would bark at you—fly at you and tear you apart in his rage? Some of us have done this to God! We have perhaps cursed Him to His face. We have broken His Sabbaths, laughed at His Gospel and persecuted His saints. You would have said of such a dog, “Let it die! Why should I harbor in my house a dog that treats me thus?”

Yet, hear, O heavens! And give ear, O earth! God has borne with your ill manners and He still cries, “mercy!” He puts the lifted thunder back into the arsenal of His dread artillery. I wish I could state the case as I ought. My lips are but clay. And these words should be like fire in the sinner’s soul. When I meditated upon this subject alone I felt much sympathy with God, that He should have been so ill treated. And whereas some men speak of the flames of Hell as too great a punishment for sin, it seems ten thousand marvels that we should not have been thrust down there long ago!

The Plaintiff’s case having thus been stated, the defendant is called upon by the Daysman for his. And I think I hear him as he begins. First of all the trembling defendant sinner pleads—“I confess to the indictment, but I say I could not help it! I have sinned, it is true, but my nature was such that I could not well do otherwise! I must lay all the blame of it to my own heart—my heart was deceitful and my nature was evil.” The Daysman at once rules that this is no excuse whatever, but an aggravation, for inasmuch as it is conceded that the man’s heart, itself, is enmity against God, this is an admission of yet greater malice and blacker rebellion!

It was only alleged against the offender in the first place that he had outwardly offended—but he acknowledges that he does it inwardly and confesses that his very heart is traitorous against God—fully set upon working the King’s damage and dishonor! It is determined, therefore, by the Daysman that this excuse will not stand and He gives a case in point—a thief is brought up for stealing and he pleads that his heart was thievish, that he felt a constant inclination to steal and that therefore he could not help running off with any goods within his reach! The judge very properly answers, “Then I shall give you twice as much penalty as any other man who only fell into the fault by surprise—for according to your own confession, you are a thief through and through—what you have said is not an excuse, but an aggravation.”

Then the defendant pleads in the next place that albeit he acknowledges the facts alleged against him, yet he is no worse than other offenders and that there are many in the world who have sinned more grievously than he has done. He says he has been envious and angry and worldly and covetous, and has forgotten God—but then he never was an adulterer, or a thief, or a drunkard, or a blasphemer—and he pleads that his lesser crimes may well be winked at! But the great Daysman at once turns to the Statute Book and says that as He is about to give His decision by Law, that plea is not at all tenable, for the Law Book has it— “Cursed is every man that continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them.”

The offense of one sinner does not excuse the offense of another. And the Arbitrator declares that He cannot mix up other cases with the case now in hand—that the present offender has, on his own confession, broken the Law—and that as the Law Book stands, that is the only question to be decided, for “the soul that sins, it shall die,” and if the defendant has no better plea to offer, judgment must go against him. The sinner urges further that though he has offended and offended very greatly and grievously, yet he has done a great many good things. It is true he did not love God, but he always went to Chapel! It is true he did not pray, but he belonged to a singing class. It is quite correct that he did not love his neighbor as himself, but he always liked to relieve the poor.

But the Daysman, looking the sinner full in the face, tells him that this plea, also is bad, for the alleged commission of some acts of loyalty will not make compensation for avowed acts of treason. “Those things,” says He, “you ought to have done, but not to have left the others undone.” And He tells the sinner, with all kindness and gentleness, that straining at a gnat does not exonerate him for having swallowed a camel. And that having tithed mint and anise and cummin is no justification for having devoured a widow’s house. To have forgotten God is, in itself, a great enormity. To have lived without serving Him is a crime of omission so great that whatever the sinner may have done on the contrary, stands for nothing at all—since he has even, in that case, done only what he ought to have done.

You see at once the justice of this decision. If any of you were to say to your grocer, or tailor, when they send in their bills, “Well, now, you ought not to ask for payment of that account because I did pay you another bill—you ought not to ask me to pay for that suit of clothes because I did pay you for another suit.” I think the answer would be, “But in paying for what you had before, you only did what you ought to do—I still have a demand upon you for this.” So all the good deeds you have ever done are only debts discharged which were most fully due, (supposing them to be good deeds, which is very questionable), and they leave the great debt still untouched.

The defendant has no end of pleas, for the sinner has a thousand excuses. And finding that nothing else will do, he begins to appeal to the mercy of the Plaintiff and says that for the future he will do better. He confesses that he is in debt but he will run up no more bills at that shop. He acknowledges that he has offended but he vows he will not do so again. He is quite sure that the future shall be as free from fault as angels are from sin. Though it is true that he just now said his heart was bad, still, he feels inclined to think that it is not so very bad after all! He is conceited enough to think that he can, in the future, keep himself from committing sin—thereby, you see—admitting the worthlessness of his former plea on which he relied so much.

“Now,” he says, “if for life I become a teetotaler, then surely I may be excused for having been a drunkard! Suppose now that I am always honest and steady and never again say one ill word—will not that exonerate me from all my wrong-doings and for having blasphemed God?” But the Daysman rules, still with kindness and gentleness, that the greatest imaginable virtue in the future will be no recompense for the sin of the past—for He finds in the Law Book no promise whatever made to that effect—but the statute runs in these words, “He will by no means spare the guilty.” “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.”

You would think that the defendant would now be fairly beaten, but he is not—he asks leave to step across the way to bring in a friend of his. He is allowed to do so and comes back with a gentleman dressed in such a strange style, that, if you had not sometimes seen the like in certain Puseyite churches, you would suppose him to have arrayed himself for the mere purpose of amusing children at a show where a merry Andrew is the presiding genius. The defendant seems to imagine that if the case is left to this gentleman in the white shirt and ribbons, he will settle it with ease. He has with him a little bottle of water by which he can turn hearts of stone into flesh—making heirs of wrath into “members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven.”

He has a certain portion of mystical bread and magical wine, the reception with which he can work wonderful transformation, producing flesh and blood at his Reverence’s will and pleasure! In fact, this gentleman trades and gets his living by the prosecution of magic. He has occult influences streaming from his fingers, which influences he derived originally from a gentleman in lawn. And he now pretends to have ability derived from the Apostles, most probably from Judas, by marvelous manipulations—how, I cannot tell you—but by a kind of sleight of hand to settle the case! But the Daysman, with a frown, hurls a thunderbolt from His hand against the impudent impostor and bids him take himself away and not again deceive poor sinners with his vain pretensions.

He warns the defendant that the priest is an arrant knave, that whatever professions he may make of being a “successor of the Apostles,” he knows nothing about Apostolic doctrine, or else he would not have intruded his sinful, silly self between men’s souls and God. He bids him advise the man to dress himself like a person in his right mind who was about honest work and not as a sorcerer or priest of Baal—and give himself to preaching the Gospel—instead of propagating the superstitious inventions of Rome.

What is the poor defendant to do now? He is fairly beaten this time. He falls down on his knees, and with many tears and lamentations he cries, “I see how the case stands! I have nothing to plead, but I appeal to the mercy of the Plaintiff! I confess that I have broken His Commandments. I acknowledge that I deserve His wrath—but I have heard that He is merciful, and I plead for free and full forgiveness.” And now comes another scene. The Plaintiff, seeing the sinner on his knees with his eyes full of tears, makes this reply, “I am willing at all times to deal kindly and according to loving-kindness with all My creatures. But will the Arbitrator, for a moment suggest that I should damage and ruin My own perfections of truth and holiness?

“Does He suggest that I should belie My own Word? That I should imperil My own Throne? Does He recommend that I should make the purity of immaculate Justice to be suspect and should bring down the glory of My unsullied holiness because this creature has offended Me and now craves for mercy? I cannot, I will not spare the guilty—he has offended and he must die! As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. Still, this ‘would rather’ must not be supreme. I am gracious and would spare the sinner, but I am just, and must not unsay My own Words. I swore with an oath, ‘The soul that sins shall die.’ I have laid it down as a matter of firm decree, ‘Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.’ This sinner is righteously cursed and he must inevitably die. And yet I love him. How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I make you as Admah? How can I set you as Zeboim? And yet, how can I put you among the children? Would it not be a worse calamity that I should be unjust than that earth should lose its inhabitants? Better all men perish than that the universe should lose the Justice of God as its stay and shield.”

The Arbitrator bows and says, “Even so. Justice demands that the offender should die and I would not have You unjust.” What more does the Arbitrator say? He sits still and the case is in suspense. There stands the just and holy God, willing to forgive if it can be done without injury to the immutable principles of right. There sits the Arbitrator, looking with eyes of love upon the poor, weeping, trembling sinner and anxious to devise a plan to save him—but conscious that that plan must not infringe upon Divine Justice—for it were a worse cruelty to injure Divine perfections than it were to destroy the whole human race!

The Arbitrator, therefore, after pausing awhile, puts it thus—“I am anxious that these two should be brought together. I love them both—I cannot, on the one hand, recommend that My Father should stain His honor. I cannot, on the other hand, endure that this sinner should be cast eternally into Hell. I will decide the case and it shall be thus—I will pay My Father’s justice all it craves. I pledge Myself that in the fullness of time I will suffer in My own proper Person all that the weeping, trembling sinner ought to have suffered. My Father, will you stand to this?” The eternal God accepts the awful sacrifice! What do you say, Sinner, what do you say? Why, I think you cannot have two opinions!

If you are sane—and may God make you sane—you will melt with amazement! You will say, “I could not have thought this! I never called in a Mediator with an expectation of this! I have sinned and He declares that He will suffer! I am guilty and He says that He will be punished for me!” Yes, Sinner and He did more than say it, for when the fullness of time came—but you know the story—the officers of justice served Him with the writ and He was taken from His knees in the garden of Gethsemane away to the court. And there He was tried and condemned. And you know how His back was scourged till the white bones stood like islands of ivory in the midst of a crimson sea of gore!

You know how His head was crowned with thorns and His cheeks were given to those who plucked off the hair! Can you not see Him hounded through the streets of Jerusalem with the spittle of the brutal soldiery still upon His unwashed face and His wounds all unstanched and bleeding? Can you not see Him as they hurl Him down and fasten Him to the accursed tree? Then they lift the Cross and dash it down into its socket in the earth—dislocating every bone, tearing every nerve and sinew—filling His soul as full of agony as this earth is full of sin or the depths of the ocean filled with its floods? You do not know, however, what He suffered within. Hell held carnival within His heart! Every arrow of the infernal pit was discharged at Him and Heaven, itself, forsook Him!

The thunderbolts of vengeance fell upon Him and His Father hid His face from Him till He cried in His agony, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And so He suffered on and on and on, till, “It is finished,” closed the scene. Here, then, is the arbitration. Christ Himself suffers. And now I have to put the query, “Have you accepted Christ?” O dear Friend, if you have, I know that God the Holy Spirit has made you accept Him! But if you have not, what shall I call you? I will not upbraid you—my heart weeps over you! How can you be so mad as to forego a compromise so blessed, an arbitration so Divine! Oh, kiss the feet of the Daysman! Love Him all your life because He has decided the case so blessedly!

III. Let us now look at THE DAYSMAN’S SUCCESS. For every soul who has received Christ, Christ has made a full Atonement which God the Father has accepted. And His success in this matter is to be rejoiced in, first of all, because the suit has been settled conclusively. We have known cases go to arbitration and yet the parties have quarreled afterwards. They have said that the arbitrator did not rule justly, or something of the kind, and so the whole point has been raised again.

But O Beloved, the case between a saved soul and God is settled once and forever! There is no more conscience of sin left in the Believer. And as for God’s Book, there is not a sin recorded there against any soul that has received Christ! I know some of our Arminian Brethren rather think that the case is not settled—or they suppose that the case is settled for a time—but that it will one day come up again. Beloved, I thank God that they are mistaken! Christ has not cast His people’s sins into the shallows where they may be washed up again! He has cast them into the depths of the sea where they are drowned forever! Our Scapegoat has not carried our sins to the borders of the land where they may be found again—He has taken them away into the wilderness where, if they are searched for, they shall not be found! The case is so settled that in eternity you shall never hear of it again except as a case which was gloriously decided.

Again, the case has been settled on the best principles, because, you see, neither party can possibly quarrel with the decision. The sinner cannot, for it is all mercy to him—even eternal Justice cannot—for it has had its due. If there had been any mitigation of the penalty we might yet fear that perhaps the suit might come up again. But now that everything has been paid, that cannot be! If my creditor takes from me, by a settlement in the Court of Insolvency, ten shillings in the pound, I know he will not disturb me again. But I cannot feel quite at ease about the other ten shillings. And if I am ever able, I should like to pay him.

But, you see, Christ has not paid ten shillings in the pound, but He has paid every farthing—  
*“Justice now demands no more,  
He has paid the dreadful score.”*

For all the sins of all His people He has made such a full and satisfactory reconciliation that Divine justice were not Divine justice at all if it should ask to be paid twice for the same offense! Christ has suffered the Law’s fullest and most severe penalty—and there is now no fear whatever that the case can ever be revived, by writ of error, or removal into another court—because it has been settled on the eternal and immutable principles of Justice.

Again, the case has been so settled that both parties are well content. You never hear a saved soul murmur at the Substitution of the Lord Jesus. If ever I get to see His face, I’ll fall down before Him and kiss the dust beneath His feet! Oh, if ever I see the Savior who has thus delivered me from ruin, if I have a crown I will cast it at His feet and never, never wear it—it must, it shall be His! I feel like the good woman who said that if Christ ever saved her, He should never hear the last of it. And I am sure He never shall for I will praise Him as long as immortality endures for what He has done for me. I am sure that every saved sinner feels the same.

And Jehovah, on the other side, is perfectly content. He is satisfied with His dear Son. “Well done!” He says to Him. He has received Him to the Throne of Glory and made Him to sit at His right hand because He is perfectly content with the great work which He has accomplished. But, what is more and more wonderful still, both parties have gained in the suit. Did you ever hear of such a lawsuit as this before? No, never in the courts of man! The old story of the two oyster shells, you know, awarded to the plaintiff and defendant, while the oyster is eaten in court, is generally the result! But it is not so in this ease—for both the Plaintiff and the defendant have won by the arbitration!

What has God gained? Why, glory to Himself and such glory as all creation could not give Him, such glory as the ruin of sinners, though so well-deserved, could not give Him. Hark how—

*“Heaven’s eternal arches ring*

*With shouts of Sovereign Grace!”*  
Angels, too, as well as those who have been redeemed, strike their harps which they have tuned afresh to a nobler strain, as they sing, “Worthy is the Lamb and blessed is the eternal God!” And, as for us, the poor defendants, why, what have we NOT gained? We were men before—now we are something more than Adam was! We were “a little lower than the angels” before—now we are “lifted up far above all principalities and powers.” We were God’s subjects once, but this arbitration has made us His children!

We were at our very best only the possessors of a paradise on earth— but now we are joint-heirs with Christ of a Paradise above the skies! Both sides have won and both sides must therefore be blessedly content with their glorious Daysman. And, to conclude—through this Daysman both parties have come to be united in the strongest, closest, dearest and fondest bond of union. This lawsuit has ended in such a way that the Plaintiff and the defendant are friends for life—no, friends through death and friends in eternity! How near God is to a pardoned sinner—

*“So near, so very near to God,  
Nearer we cannot be.  
For in the Person of His Son,  
We are as near as He.”*

What a wonderful thing is that union between God and the sinner! We have all been thinking a great deal lately about the Atlantic Cable. It is a very interesting attempt to join two worlds together. That poor cable, you know, has had to be sunk into the depths of the sea in the hope of establishing a union between the two worlds—and now we are disappointed again. But oh, what an infinitely greater wonder has been accomplished! Christ Jesus saw the two worlds divided and the great Atlantic of human guilt rolled between. He sank down deep into the woes of man till all God’s waves and billows had gone over Him that He might be, as it were, the great telegraphic communication between God and the apostate race—between the Most Holy One and poor sinners!

Let me say to you, Sinner, there was no failure in the laying down of that blessed cable. It went down deep. The end was well secured and it went down deep into the depths of our sin and shame and woe. And on the other side it has gone right up to the Eternal Throne and is fastened there eternally fast by God Himself! You may work that Telegraph today and you may easily understand the art of working it, too. A sigh will work it! A tear will work it. Say, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” and along the wire the message will flash and will reach God before it comes from you! It is far swifter than earthly telegraphs—yes, and there will come an answer back much sooner than you ever dreamed of!

It is promised—“Before they call I will answer and while they are yet speaking I will hear.” Whoever heard of such a communication as this between man and man? But it really does exist between sinners and God, since Christ has opened up a way from the depths of our sin to the heights of His Glory. This is for you who are at a distance from Him. But He has done more for us who are saved, for He has taken us right across the Atlantic of our sin and set us down on the other side! He has taken us out of our sinful state and put us into the Father’s bosom—and there we shall dwell forever in the heart of God as His own dear children!

I would to God that some might now be led to look to the Savior—that some would come with weeping and with tears to Him and say— “*Jesus, lover of my soul,  
Let me to Your bosom fly.*

“Take my case and arbitrate for me. I accept Your Atonement. I trust in Your precious blood! Only receive me and I will rejoice in You forever with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

May the Lord bless you forevermore. Amen.  
*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Isaiah 53.*Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
Sermon #2314 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 10.12

THREE BLESSINGS OF THE HEAVENLY CHARTER  
NO. 2314

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JUNE 25, 1893. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 16, 1889.

**“You have granted me life and favor, and Your  
visitation has preserved my spirit.”  
Job 10:12.**

IT is well, sometimes, to sit down and take a grateful review of all that God has done for us, and with us, from our first day until now. We must not be like hogs under the oak, that eat the acorns but never thank the tree, or the Lord who made it grow. We must not receive the dew and yet never think of the Heaven from which it comes. To be ungrateful is to be unmanly—to be ungrateful to God is to commit high treason against the majesty of His goodness. I think that an hour would be well spent, by any person here, in sitting quietly and going over his autobiography. Turn over the pages of your diary—if you have none written, turn over the pages of your memory—and think of all that God has done for you from the day when you hung upon your mother’s breast until the present moment—

*“Streams of mercy, never ceasing,*

*Call for songs of loudest praise.”*  
But God does not hear the songs of praise because we let the streams of mercy glide by unnoticed. Far too often, we—

*“Let His mercies lie  
Forgotten in unthankfulness,  
And without praises die.”*  
We do not even put a tombstone over their graves, but let them lie as dead things, uncared for, forgotten, out of mind.  
If there is any time when it is unlikely for us to think of God’s mercies, but when it would be especially wise for us to do so. If there is one time more unlikely than another, it is when we are in great trouble. Here is poor Job, covered with sore boils, sitting on a dunghill, scraping himself with a bit of a broken pot. His children are dead. His property destroyed and even his wife not giving him a word of comfort—and his friends acting in a most unfriendly manner. Now it is that he talks to his God and says, “You have granted me life and favor, and Your visitation has preserved my spirit.” You are very ill—think of the time when you were well. You are poor—remember when you washed your feet in milk and your steps with butter—and had more than heart could wish. Friends have forsaken you— remember when you had plenty of friends.  
“Oh!” you say, “that will be rubbing salt into the wound.” No, no, I trust not. You will remember that you were not always unhappy, that you were not always full of pain. God has spared your life and given you many favors. If you do not feel that you can bless Him for the present moment, yet forget not to bless Him for the past. And when you once begin to do that, you will soon find that your praise will overlap the past and cover the present—if it does not even run into the future! Only begin to praise God and you will find that he who praises God for mercy will never be long without a mercy for which to praise Him! I therefore invite those of you who are sad, tonight, to think of God’s past goodness and, as I trust that the larger proportion here will not be found in that condition, I urge you to lead the way in taking a happy retrospect, tonight, of all that God has done for you in Providence and Grace.  
Job gives us, here, a charter with three blessings in it—“You have granted me life and favor, and Your visitation has preserved my spirit.” These are choice favors! As we dwell upon them, may our hearts gratefully bless God for all that He has done for us!  
I. The first blessing of this heavenly charter is LIFE—“You have granted me life.”  
Well, I think that we ought to thank God that we have lived at all. I know the pessimist version of the psalm of life is that, “‘Tis something better not to be.” Perhaps it would have been something better if that gentleman had not been—better, I should think, for his wife and family if they had not had to live with such a miserable creature! But the most of us thank God for our being, as well as for our well-being. We count it something not to be stones, or plants, or “dumb, driven cattle.” We are thankful to be intelligent beings with powers of thought and capable of mental and spiritual enjoyment. Truly, O Lord, it is no small thing to be, even to be a man, for what is man? Well, with all his sin, yet as You did make him, when he had no sin, he was but a little lower than the angels and You did make him to have dominion over all the works of Your hands. You have made him immortal! You have made him a king! You have crowned him with glory and honor and if he does but know his destiny, and works it out aright, You have made him to be glorified with Yourself—You have made him to stand even higher than the angels, now that You have redeemed him, for he has tasted of a love which unfallen angels could not know!  
If you choose to make your being to be your eternal curse, why, you must do it, I suppose—but not without our tears. But if you are rational beings, and use your reason reasonably, you will thank God that you live and pray that your life may always be a blessing to you.  
But we also thank God that we have lived on in spite of many perils. There are some here who ought very much to thank God that they live on after the perils through which they have passed. It was something to find ourselves alive after the terrible thunderstorm of the week before last. It is something to be alive after an earthquake, or a tremendous storm at sea, or to be alive in the midst of a pestilence, or alive after a battle, to be alive after some fearful accident—to be alive, I say, when there are so many gates to the grave—  
*“The rising morning can’t assure  
That we shall end the day,  
For death stands ready at the door  
To take our lives away.”*  
And yet, despite all these things, we are still here! Some of you, not long ago, were very ill. It was thought that you would die—you thought so yourself, you were brought very low—and yet here you are! While others have died, you are still spared. You went hard by the gates of death and seemed to look into eternity for a while, but you were allowed to pass on and you are yet among the living, to praise God, as I hope you are doing this very day!  
Yes, it is God’s Grace that has granted us life. I find that, in the Hebrew, it reads, “lives,” as if we had several lives, as though, if we had not had many lives, we should not have had any life at this moment. But life upon life has come to us, like wave upon wave at sea and, whereas one might have washed us on the shore of death, another has carried us back to the sea of life, again, and still we live!  
I am addressing some from whom our text asks for gratitude because they are alive notwithstanding constitutional weakness. Perhaps from a child you were always feeble. Oftentimes you have asked yourself, “How is it that I have lived? Strong and hearty men and women have died before me and I, who have always been ailing, find that the creaking door hangs long on its hinges.” Well, do not creak more than you can help, but bless God that you are not taken off the hinges! It is really very marvelous how some live, even, to old age when every day they seem to be on the very verge of departure. We account for their continued life by this fact, that they can say with Job, “You have granted me life.” Let us praise God, then, even if we can only do it with a feeble tongue, for it is something, to still live.  
And I am speaking to a great many here to whom this text should commend itself because they have lived so long. I suppose that, in no other place in London, or perhaps in the world, is there so large a number of old men and women gathered together as in this Tabernacle. One is often struck with the snow that lies about this place on the heads of so many. Do not blame us for getting old! We were all young, together, and I remember that many here were introduced into the Church as young men and young women. Nearly 40 years ago they said of me, “He takes into the Church a parcel of boys and girls.” Well, they have been cured of that fault, if it was a fault, long ago! And now, perhaps, some will complain that they are old! We do not complain—we are so much nearer Heaven. But when I look upon some dear friends, here, who have passed even their four-score years, who have quite run out their lease and now are living upon sufferance, as I trust they may for years to come—and when I remember what a poor tottering fabric this tent-body of ours is, I am amazed that we still live on!—  
*“Our life contains a thousand springs,  
And dies if one is gone.  
Strange that a harp of thousand strings  
Should keep in tune so long.”*  
Yet it has kept in tune so long and we ought to bless God, tonight, those of us who are somewhere between 50 and a hundred, and others who are somewhere between 60 and 200 ought to bless God, tonight, that we have been spared so long, and say, in the language of the text, “You have granted me life and favor.” You need not be frightened about that 200 that I mentioned—you will not, any of you, be likely to reach that figure! If any of us live for a century, we shall have done exceedingly well! We may thank God if we do not live as long as that, for, while it is well to live here, it is better for us, after all, before our infirmities multiply, to be up and away to our Father’s house above!  
Think of this a little longer, “You have granted me life.” You have thought of the perils through which you have passed and the weaknesses that you have survived. Now think, beloved Friends, of the sin which might have provoked God to make an end of such a guilty life. Am I not speaking to some here who have lived without any thought of God, their Maker? Up till this time, God has fed you and preserved you in being, and yet you have not even given Him a thought! It is an amazing thing that He should have spared your life in the midst of such wicked ingratitude. Perhaps, my Friend—I hope it is not so—but perhaps you have been worse than this, and that mouth of yours has uttered blasphemies, and the members of your body have been given over to uncleanness. If you will look back, tonight, it will be a wonder to you, that you, perhaps professedly an atheist, possibly a drunk—you may be setting an evil example to wife and children and doing evil on all sides—but you have been spared!  
One seems to say, “Cut down that upas tree, it drips with poison!” But God puts away the axe and He still spares you. Did you not, this very day, imprecate a curse upon yourself, and yet the curse has not come? There was a tract that used to be given away and which did much good. It was called, “The Swearer’s Prayer.” If every swearer would look upon his dreadful imprecation as a prayer, for such it is, he might well wonder that God has not, long ago, blasted him as he has said, like some oak of the forest that we have seen struck by lightning, standing there with its stag’s-horn branches high in the air, a monument of what Divine Judgment can do! God has granted you life, yet nothing in that life has been pleasing to Him, or good for your fellow men. Thank Him that He has not yet cut you down as a cumberer of the ground!  
But even if I speak to the best man and woman here, to those who have tried to be useful and are endeavoring to be holy, yet, dear Friends, what poor failures we are, after all! There is not one of us who can boast! We have to lay our hands upon our mouths and bow ourselves into the very dust. Truly, Lord, You have let us live, although we have done so little, and done that little so faultily. We can, tonight, praise You, and each one say, “You have granted me life.”  
I might thus continue to show you that our preservation in life is a theme for great gratitude—“You have granted me life.” But if we can say this in a higher sense, “You have granted me life,” spiritual life, how much greater should our gratitude be! I could not even feel the guilt of sin, I was so dead, but You have granted me life to repent. I could not look to Jesus as my Savior and find rest in Him, but You have granted me life to believe in Him. Oh, what a mercy it is to have spiritual life! I do not like to ask you whether you have it. I do not think that that ever ought to be a matter of question with anybody. A man is either alive or dead and he must know which he is—and however faint and feeble he may be, the very feeling of faintness and feebleness is a sign of life—for the dead man does not even feel that!  
If, tonight, you have only life enough with which to groan, to weep and to cry to God, thank God for it, and say, “You have granted me life.” But if you have that little life, do not be satisfied with it. Pray to have life more abundantly, that you may come to joy and peace through believing, that you may have the full assurance of faith, that you may be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, that you may tread down sin and may serve the Lord in your day and generation, and bring hundreds and thousands to Christ! Pray that it may be so and then, as each single increase of power comes to you, sing, in the words of the Patriarch, “You have granted me life.” Oh, for more life! Do you feel dull and dead tonight? Cry to God to grant you life! Cry for Divine Grace and then, when it comes, gratefully say, “You have granted me life.”  
II. The second blessing of this heavenly charter is DIVINE FAVOR— “You have granted me life and favor.”  
Have you ever thought of the many favors that God has bestowed upon you, even upon some of you who, as yet, have never tasted of His Grace? What a favor it is to many to be sound in body! Dear friends are here tonight who have not seen the light of the sun for many a day. God is gracious to them in their blindness, but do you not think that we ought to praise Him for our eyesight? There are many beloved Christian friends who used to sit on this lower platform and around here, for although they were deaf, they could hear my voice in the preaching of the Gospel. But with great sorrow they have come to me, one by one, and said, “I cannot even hear with the trumpet now, I am getting so deaf.” Bless God for your ears, if you still have the use of them—and take heed how you hear! Why, there is not a single faculty that God has given but what we ought to be thankful for it! When you see around you these who are crippled, those who are deprived of one limb or one sense, should you not say, “You have granted me life and favor”? They have favors, too, for which to thank God, but you have this particular favor which is denied to them. Do not fail to thank the Lord for it.  
It is a great mercy to have been born of good and honest parents and not to be the inheritors of disease, as some are who are born to a life of sorrow by no fault of their own. Be grateful for your ancestry, young man, if you have sprung of good sound stock, and say, “You have granted me life and favor.” Do not go and give that body to the devil, I beseech you! Do not go and plunge yourself into vice and sin if God has restrained your ancestors from evil.

By His Grace, may you also be kept back and enabled to say, “You have granted me life and favor, and I cannot sin against Your favor”!  
I cannot help reminding you, here, of the great favor of God in the matter of soundness of mind. There is a dear friend who has gladly heard the preaching of the Gospel, here, but now he has to be confined in an asylum, for it would be dangerous to have him at liberty. There is another and we often meet with such, who seemed as cheerful and happy as any of us, but he has now sunk into deep despondency. I have often prayed God to let me go anywhere sooner than into an asylum. It seems so dreadful to lose one’s reason. Be grateful that you have your senses. Surely you must already be lunatics if you do not bless God that you are not lunatics! There must be a madness in your heart if you do not thank Him for sparing you from so terrible a trial. These favors are looked upon as very common things—a sound mind and a sound body—but if they were universal, they would still be mercies for which we ought specially to bless the name of the Lord.  
I speak to many here to whom God has also given a comfortable lot in life. You work and you work pretty hard, but still, you are not starved and you are not ground to death by forced labor. There are many in this House of Prayer who ought to be very grateful for the easy circumstances in which they are found. Why am I talking about these things? Why, because I want, by stirring you up to gratitude, to bind you with cords of thankfulness to God! Will you not thank Him who has done so much as this for you? If you were suddenly brought into the deepest poverty and the most painful sickness, and did not know where to lay your heads, you would then reproach yourselves to think that when your lives were cast in pleasant places, and you had a goodly heritage, you were not more grateful and more obedient to the God of Love.  
Some here, too, some few, at any rate, have been favored with much prosperity. O self-made men, do not begin to adore yourselves because you made yourselves, for if you made yourselves, you are poor sticks, I know! I would not trust myself to make myself, I would make an awful mess of myself. No, thank God for your prosperity and devote your wealth to His service, who granted it to you. Grow not purse-proud! Be not exalted above measure among your fellow men! The more you have, the more you owe to God—therefore be humble and be devoted to Him who has treated you with so much favor.  
And I may say, tonight, that in this congregation, God has given you the favor of hearing the Gospel—no mean favor, let me remind you. Multitudes, multitudes, multitudes are without it, perishing for lack of knowledge! And there are some who once heard the Gospel who are now far removed from the sound of it. Friends who once used to join in our great assembly are now far away in those parts of South America where as yet there is no Gospel teaching, or they are far away in the backwoods of America or Canada, or away in the bush in Australia, where, as yet, the Message of Mercy is not, at any rate, regularly brought to them, and they very much miss the means of Grace. Be thankful that you have the Gospel at almost every street corner and, if you are willing to hear it, you may hear it.  
Still, putting all these things together, they do not come up to this last point, that many of us have received the favors of saving Grace—“You have granted me life and favor.” The highest favors of all, God has given to some of us—the favor of being chosen to be His from before the foundation of the world, the favor of being redeemed from among men, the favor of being called out by His effectual Grace, the favor of being renewed in the spirit of our minds, the favor of justification whereby we are made accepted in the Beloved—the favor of full, free, irreversible pardon, whereby our sin is blotted out forever, the favor of a Throne of Grace, the favor of answered prayer, the favor of Divine Providence which makes all things work together for our good, the favor of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who is with us, and shall abide in us forever!  
I cannot run over the list of God’s favors to His people, for it is too long. Only praise your God, each one of you, as you say tonight, “You have granted me life and favor.” Happy people, thrice-happy people, of whom this is true! If we did not praise the Lord, the stones in the street might well cry out against us.  
III. The last blessing of the charter, upon which I shall be a little longer, is DIVINE VISITATION—“Your visitation has preserved my spirit.” Does God ever come to man? Does He not? Yes, but it is a great wonder— “What is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man that You visit him?”  
May I remind some of you of how much you ought to praise God for His visitation? He visited you, first, with an awakening and conviction of sin. I remember when His Spirit came to me while I was yet a child, and made me feel a heavy burden on account of my childish sins. How I wept and cried, when alone, because I had been so guilty before God! And as a youth, that feeling still pursued me wherever I went. God visited me in the night, visited me often in the morning, when I woke up before anybody else, to read Baxter’s, “Call to the Unconverted,” and Alleine’s, “Alarm,” and suchlike books, over which I pored again and again, feeling the evil of my sin and having the sword of the Spirit piercing yet more deeply into my conscience at every page I read! I thank God for those early visitations! If any of you are having them now, quench not the Spirit of God! Be glad to know your real state as sinners while you are yet young. The visitations of God, in the form of conviction, if at first they bring us under bondage, are, nevertheless of the utmost value, for by these He preserves our spirit. After that first experience, there came visitations of enlightenment and conversion. Can you remember when Jesus first visited you and brought you up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay? Does not your heart leap within you, even now, as you are ready to sing—  
*“Happy day! Happy day!  
When Jesus washed my sins away”?*  
Yes, God’s visitations, by revealing Christ to your broken heart, preserved your spirit!  
Perhaps since then you have had visitations of another kind. You have had chastisement, or you have had affliction in the house. God’s visitations are sometimes very unwelcome. We dread that He should come to afflict or chastise us and yet, in looking back upon all such experiences, I think that you can say, “Your visitation has preserved my spirit.” I saw a young Sister, just before this service, and I said to her, “When did you find the Lord?” She replied, “It was when I was very ill.” Yes, it is often so—God makes us ill in body that we may have time to think of Him, and turn to Him. “Your visitation has preserved my spirit.” What would become of some people if they were always in good health, or if they were always prospering? Tribulation is the black dog that goes after the stray sheep and barks them back to the Good Shepherd! I thank God that there are such things as the visitations of correction and of holy discipline to preserve our spirit and bring us to Christ.  
But then, dear Friends, we have had other visitations, visitations of revival and restoration. Do you not sometimes get very dull and dead? Then you are glad to go and hear a sermon, or read some godly, soul-stirring book, or meet with some Christian friend, and you say afterwards, “Well, I do not know how it is, but I seem quite different from what I was. I have made a new departure, I have started off again.” I think that some of our friends have need to do that, tonight—it will not hurt any of us if we all seem to begin again, tonight, and take Jesus Christ into our heart once more, and let Him come as He came at the first, and be like a new Christ to us! Let us joy and rejoice in Him with our first love and our early delights. Lord, give us that visitation, tonight, and revive our spirits! Oh, what visitations of joy He sometimes gives us when He comes very near to us! We do not hardly know how to bear it! We cry when the vessel gets quite full, “Hold, Lord, I cannot bear more of Your joy.” “Ah!” you say, “we do not know much about that experience.” Do you not? Then pray the Lord to visit you often, that you may know more about it!  
The best of all is when the Lord visits us and never goes away, but stays with us always, so that we walk in the light of His Countenance, and go from strength to strength, always singing, “Your visitation never ended, daily continued, preserves my spirit.” You have all heard the phrase, generally used by juries at a coroner’s inquest when a man has died suddenly, “Died by the visitation of God.” No doubt some do thus die, but I want you to live by the visitation of God! That is a very different thing and that is the only way in which we truly can live—by God’s visiting us from day to day—preserving our spirit from the dangers that surround us. Live, then, by the visitation of God!  
You are sick, my Friend. Your heart is sick. Sin, like a grievous disease, is destroying you. The cancer of an evil habit is eating into your very vitals. What is to be done with you? Nothing but that Jesus Christ the Lord should come and give you a gracious visitation, come and look you in the face and feel your pulse, and lay His hand on your heart, and change it, and make you a new creature! And He will do all that if you send for Him. Doctors have a night bell, you know, and a night-tube, by which they may be called in cases of urgency. Now ring God’s night bell at once, and speak up that tube of prayer, “Lord, I am sick unto death! Come and heal me. Come and heal me!” Will not somebody in these pews, now, without the use of a word, yet say in the silence of his heart, “Lord, I am sorely vexed; I am sick unto death with sin; come and heal me”? And Jesus Christ will say, “I will come and heal you.” Then will you say, “Your visitation has preserved my spirit.”  
You know how a farm will sometimes get smothered with weeds and things seem to go all wrong. What is the matter? On enquiry, you find that the farmer has been out on the Continent, he has been away from his farm. Well, then, of course the farm goes wrong! But have him back, again, and the farmer’s eye does more than his hand—his foot manures the ground wherever he stands—and things soon get on better. Now, if the farm of your nature has fallen into a bad state, you need the Husbandman back. You need the Lord Jesus to come and survey the estate and give directions as to what is to be done to it. He will soon set the whole place right! Yes, if your farm has become like a desert, bare as the palm of your hand, He can come and turn it to fertility—He can make the wilderness like Eden, and the desert like the Garden of the Lord. A visitation from the Lord Jesus Christ is what we all need when we are barren and dead.  
May we expect it? Yes, He came on a visit here, once. We did not see Him when He came, but there were some who saw Him. You remember how George Herbert quaintly sings of His laying aside His azure mantle and making the sky with it? And taking off His bright rings, and hanging them up as stars?—  
*“He did descend, undressing all the way  
And when they asked what He would wear, He smiled, and said as He did come,  
He had new clothes a-making here below.”*And poor clothes they were, when He was born of the Virgin and lived in our inferior clay! He paid us a visit, but men did not let Him lodge comfortably. There was no room for Him in the inn. It was a sorry entertainment that they gave Him, for they pierced His side before He went away, and He carried with Him the marks in His hands and feet that He had received in the house of His friends. Well, but still, having once come, and died on this earth, He knows the way—and as He cannot die again, He will come again—and now, tonight, in spirit, by His Spirit, He will come to you, if you only cry to Him, “Come.” If you cry to Him, “Come,” tonight, that will be only the echo of what He says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden.” He cries, “Come,” catch up that word, and say, “Come.” Echo His, “Come,” by your own, “Come”—and you two will meet before the service is over, though we have reached the last few minutes of it. May your, “Come,” and Christ’s, “Come,” blend in one! Come, Lord Jesus, even so, come quickly, and set Your poor servants free from the taint of sin, and from the dread of the wrath of God!  
Yes, you need a visitation from Him who has already come and, beside that, He has sent His Holy Spirit to abide until He, Himself, descends from Heaven with a shout. The Holy Spirit is here in this assembly right now— plead and cry to Him for His visitation!  
And if my Lord will come anywhere, tonight, it is to you who think yourselves unfit for Him to come to you! To you who would give your eyes to have Him, but scarcely dare to hope that He will ever come to you! The Lord says, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word.” Do you not belong to that kind of people, trembling at God’s Word, wishing only that you dared to hope in His mercy? Come, now, and cast yourselves on Jesus! Come, now, and trust yourselves with the great Savior who has ascended on high to give repentance and remission of sins, and who is ready to give both the repentance and the remission to every soul that is willing to have them! If you would have them, they are yours! Believe for eternal life. Believe now! The Lord grant you such a visitation that you may be constrained to believe, for Jesus’ sake! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.  
**PSALMS 6, 8.**

Psalm 6: Here the Psalmist asks for a visit from God, for he is sick at heart, heavy and depressed. Be very thankful if that is not your case, but if it is, be very grateful that here is a prayer ready-made for you. Here you are taught how to cry to God and what to expect from Him. If you are very sick and sad, you are not worse off than David was. Send for David’s Physician—you cannot have a better doctor than the royal Physician! He who waited on King David is prepared to wait on you.

1. O LORD, rebuke me not in Your anger. “Rebuke me. It will do me good. I need it, Lord, but not in anger! Be gentle and tender with me— ‘Rebuke me not in Your anger.’”

1. Neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure. “Chasten me. It may be that the rod will be very curative to me, but let not the chastening be given in Your hot displeasure. Be not very angry with Your poor sinful servant. If You do not turn away Your rod, yet turn away Your wrath. It is a sweet prayer. Some people cry to God about their sickness. It is much better to cry to God about the cause of it—that is to say if it is a chastisement for sin, get rid of the sin—and the rod will then be removed.

2. Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed. “Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak.” This was a sweet reason for David to urge—“For I am weak.” He could not say, “For I am worthy.” He would not have dared to say that. He could not say that when he said, “Have mercy,” for mercy is for the unworthy. Justice is for the good! MERCY is for those who are guilty! “Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed.” Plead the greatness of your disease as a reason for the remedy. Do not come with your self-righteousness—that will hinder you. Come with your sorrow and your sin, your weakness and your pain, and plead these before God.

3. My soul is also sorely vexed. That is worse than the bones being vexed. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?”

3. But You, O LORD, how long? There is the pith of the prayer. David is troubled because God is away from him. He has lost communion with his Lord. He has gotten out of fellowship with his God and here comes the most necessary cry of all—

4. Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for Your mercies’ sake. Will not that prayer suit you who are here, tonight, you who are full of sin and are heart-broken about it, and dread the wrath to come? I put this prayer into your mouths and pray the Holy Spirit to put it into your hearts—“Oh save me for Your mercies’ sake.”

5. For in death there is no remembrance of You: in the grave who shall give You thanks? As much as to say, “If You let me die, You will lose one singer out of Your earthly choir. But if You will let me live, I will remember You—I will praise You; I will give You thanks.” Do you feel like saying, tonight, “Lord, if You shall destroy me, You will gain nothing by it. But if You will save me, there will be one who will give You thanks forever”? I have told you, sometimes, of that old woman who said, “If the Lord saves me, He shall never hear the last of it.” And you and I can also say that if He saves us, He shall never hear the last of it—we will praise Him throughout eternity for His great salvation!

6. I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. David was in a very sorry case when he wrote these words. So great was his pain, so acute his sorrow that all the sluices of his eyes were pulled up and he seemed to float his bed in tears and to be like George Herbert when he wrote—

*“O who will give me tears?  
Come, all you springs,  
Dwell in my head and eyes!  
Come, clouds and rain—  
My grief has need of all the watery things, That Nature has produced!  
Let every vein suck up a river to supply my eyes, My weary, weeping eyes, too dry for me,  
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies, To bear them out and with my state agree.”*

7. My eyes are consumed because of grief. He had almost wept his eyes out—they grew red with his weeping, so that he could not see.  
7. It waxes old because of all my enemies. His eyesight grew dim, like that of an old man. A cataract of grief had put a cataract of blindness into his eyes.  
8. Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity. He needs his God to come to him, so he bids God’s enemies clear out. If we keep company with the wicked, we cannot invite God to our house and expect Him to come. “Depart from me,” says David, “all you workers of iniquity.” “You who are singing what you call a jolly song, be off with you! You who are merry with your jokes against religion, be gone far from me.”

8. For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping. “And if He has heard my tears, I do not need you to be here. I cannot associate with God’s enemies, now that He has heard the voice of my weeping.” Is not that a beautiful expression, “The voice of my weeping”? Why, there was no sound, was there? Yet there are songs without words and there are voices without sounds.

9. The LORD has heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer. “I thought at first that He would not take my petition; but I see He stretches out His right hand. He receives my prayer—and if He receives my prayer, I shall soon receive His answer.”

10. Let all my enemies be ashamed and sorely vexed: let them return and be suddenly ashamed. Now let us read the Eighth Psalm in which David expresses great wonder that God, whom he had asked to visit him, should deign to do so. I think I see him sitting with his window open. It is night and he is feeling better—and he bids them throw open the window and he sits and looks at the stars, glad of the cool, fresh air.

Psalm 8:1. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth! Who has set Your Glory above the heavens? They are very high, but Your Glory is higher than the heavens.

2-4. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength because of Your enemies, that You might still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of Him? And the son of man, that You visit him? He, whose voice rolls the stars along, who makes those bright worlds to fly like sparks from the anvil of His Omnipotence, how can He stoop so low as to regard His fallen creature, man, who is so small, so insignificant?

5, 6. For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet. Man is God’s viceroy. He reigns over God’s works in God’s name. Let him not set up to be a king and try to usurp the honor of his great Lord, the Imperator, the Universal Governor!

7, 8. All sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the seas. What a king, man is! Let him not be cruel to the beasts of the field; let him not be a tyrant; God did not make him for that purpose. Let his reign be generous and kind—and if the animals must suffer, yet spare them as much suffering as possible. O man, be you a generous viceroy, for you are under a most generous King who is, Himself, the happy God and who delights in the happiness of all His creatures!

9. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth! Thus does the Psalmist finish as he began the Psalm, by praising the name of the Lord.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2682 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A SONG AND A SOLACE

NO. 2682

**A SERMON   
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 8, 1900.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,* AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MAY 1, 1881.**

***“You have granted me life and favor, and Y our visitation has preserved my spirit. And these things have You hid in Your heart: I know that thisis with You.” [Job 10:12](tw://bible.*?id=18.10.12|_AUTODETECT_|), [13](tw://bible.*?id=18.10.13|_AUTODETECT_|).***

**BEFORE I speak upon these two verses, I will read the four which precede them, that you may note the connection in which they are found. Job is in great trouble, in sore distress of soul. His heart is very heavy and his unfriendly friends are casting salt into his wounds instead of trying to heal them. In his distress, he turns to his God and appeals to Him in this fashion (beginning at the 8th verse)—“Your hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet You destroy me. Remember, I beseech You, that You have made me as the clay; and will You bring me into dust again? Have You not poured me out as milk and curdled me like cheese? You have clothed me with skin and flesh, and have fenced me with bones and sinews.” Then follows our text—“You have granted me life and favor, and Your visitation has preserved my spirit. And these things have You hid in Your heart: I know that this is with You.”**

**You see that Job is appealing to the pity of God and this is the form of his argument—“You are my Creator—be my Preserver. You have made me—do not break me. You are dealing very harshly with me, I am almost destroyed beneath the pressure of Your hands. Remember that I am Your own creature. Weak and frail as I am, I am the creation of Your hands. Therefore, despise not Your own work. Whatever I am, with the exception of my sin, You have made me what I am. ‘Tis You who has brought me into my present condition—consider, then, O God, what a poor, frail thing I am and stay Your hand and do not utterly crush my spirit.”**

**This is a wise prayer, a right and proper argument for a creature to use with the Creator. And when Job goes still further and, in the language of our text, addresses God not only as his Creator, but as his Benefactor, and mentions the great blessings that he had received from God, his argument still holds good. “Do not, Lord, change Your method of dealing with me. You have given me life, You have shown me special favor, You have hitherto preserved me. Cast me not away from Your Presence. Dismiss me not from Your service, let not Your tender mercies fail, but do unto me, now, and in days to come according as You have done unto me in the days that are past.”**

**In speaking about these two verses, I am going to use them in two senses. The first in one sense and the second in another, but both and each of them in its own true meaning, so far as I understand it. First, here is *a song for bright days.* “You have granted me life and favor, and Your visitation has preserved my spirit.” Secondly, here is *a solace for dark***

***nights.* “And these things have You hid in Your heart: I know that this is with You.”**

**I. First, then, let us use the former part of our text as A SONG FOR BRIGHT DAYS—“You have granted me life and favor, and Your visitation has preserved my spirit.”   
Whatever we have received that is good, has come to us from God as a matter of pure favor—certainly we have deserved nothing at His hands but displeasure, and everything short of death and Hell is a mercy—and a thing for which to magnify the goodness of God. In this first portion of our text, there is a mention of three blessings that must never be forgotten. The great charter of God’s bounty includes three notable things which He has granted to us—life, favor and His visitation which has preserved our spirit.   
Now, then, you joyful ones, unite with me while we, first, *bless God for granting us life*. To a Christian, life is a blessing in itself. Considered alone, it is a blessing. But to the ungodly man it may turn out to be a curse, for it would have been better for that man if he had never been born. But to a godly man like Job, it is a great mercy even to have an existence. Blessed be the Lord who brought us into the world and gave breath to these lungs, and the flowing life to these veins! Blessed be God for having made us! Sometimes, as I gaze upon the world in springtime, or in the summer, it appears to me that it is a great happiness to all Nature to simply exist. Look at the lovely lily, as it stands quite still and never speaks—it seems to praise God in silence by its beauty. But a Christian should go beyond a mere flower. He ought to feel that it is a great favor to be made by God. The man who knows that his eternal future is secured by the unfailing Grace of God may forever praise the Lord who has given him life!   
I find that in the Hebrew, this word, “life,” is in the plural—“You have granted me *lives*” and, blessed be God, we who believe in Jesus have not only this *natural*life which we share in common with all men, but the Holy Spirit has begotten in the hearts of Believers a new life infinitely higher than mere natural life—a life which makes us akin to Christ, joint-heirs with Him of the eternal inheritance which He is keeping for us in Heaven! A Christian is lifted into quite another sphere of action—he is no longer in the carnal but in the *spiritual*realm and, therefore, he understands things that are hidden from carnal eyes—and he lives in the midst of a world into which the unregenerate cannot possibly come. An unconverted man cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. He cannot even *see*it until he is born again, regenerated by the Holy Spirit! But once he is born again, he can bless God for giving him a second life infinitely better than the first one! Our well-being is a far higher thing than simply our being! The new creation is vastly superior to the first creation, good as that was, and the life of God in the soul is infinitely above the mere ordinary life of man!   
Let us praise God, then, for life, and especially for this higher life if it is ours. What a joy it is to live in this respect! You know that when a person is very sick and ill, and can scarcely turn in bed, or lift a hand—when every sense is deprived of enjoyment and every vein or nerve becomes a road for the hot feet of pain to travel over—then life is hardly to be called life. But when God graciously raises us up from sickness, we ought to bless Him for giving us life again— prolonged, restored, enjoyable life. And when the heart itself is sick—when the spirit flags and the soul is ready to burst with inward grief—then the spiritual life seems scarcely to be life. But when, through the mercy of God, the Holy Spirit comes to us and applies the pardoning blood of Jesus to our heart and conscience, and whispers peace to our troubled spirit so that we can read our title clear to mansions in the skies, then our spiritual life is life indeed! We run, we leap, we fly! We would scarcely exchange for the bliss of angels the joy which the spiritual life brings to us at such times. And we bless and magnify the Lord who has granted us this higher life, this life so blessed, so superlatively blessed that even here below it makes us anticipate and realize some of the glory of Heaven itself! Are you, my Brother, my Sister, enjoying these lives? Do you feel that it is your privilege to be one with Christ and to live because He lives? And do you really know that you have received this wondrous blessing? Oh, then, sing unto the Lord as long as you live, for it is the living, even the living in Zion who shall praise Him as we do this day! Let this be one of your songs in this bright day of your happy experience. Let the joy of your heart ring it out in the words of our text—“You have granted me life.”   
Next, we have to *praise God for granting us favor.* I am quite unable to tell you to the fullest all that is wrapped up in that word, “favor.” Favor from God! It is a great word in the original, a word big with meaning, for it means the love of God. What the expression, “the love of God,” fully means, we cannot tell, for Charles Wesley truly wrote— *“God only knows the love of God.”*God loves immeasurably. The force and extent of true love never can be calculated—it is a passion that cannot be measured by degrees as the temperature can be recorded on the thermometer. It is something that exceeds and overflows all measurement, for a man gives all his heart when he truly loves. So is it with God—He sets no boundary to His love. When He loves a man, the great infinity of His Being flows out towards His chosen. How much God loves you, my Brother, my Sister, if you are, indeed, one of His elect and redeemed people, it would not be possible even for an angel to calculate! Bernard of Clairvaux wrote—   
*“The love of Jesus—what it is,   
None but His loved ones know”—*but I correct the poet, for even His loved ones cannot know it, except in that sense which Paul intended when he wrote to the Ephesians, “that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.” We might rightly paraphrase Job’s words and say, “You have granted me life and love.” Oh, what wondrous words to put together, life and love! Life without God’s love is death. But put God’s love with it and then what a song we ought to send up to His Throne if we feel that He has given us both spiritual life and infinite love.   
The word, “favor,” however, means not only love, but, as we ordinarily use it, it means some special form of Divine Grace and goodness. I know that there are some people who never will admit that God favors anyone, or that He has any special love toward some more than toward others. They do not like that hymn which Dr. Watts wrote. I heard one alter the verse—   
*“Let those refuse to sing   
That never knew our God;   
But favorites ofthe heavenly King   
May speak their joys abroad.”*The gentleman did not like the word, “favorites,” so he gave out the line—   
*“But subjects of the heavenly King.”*I let him sing it in that fashion, for I thought that very likely he was only a subject. But I sang the line correctly because I knew that I was one of the King’s favorites, and I was resolved to rejoice in that fact! So I am at this moment, for I know that I have received special favor from God and that there are some who have not received such favor and mercy. If, at this hour, anyone of you is a child of God, it is because God has done more for you than He has done for others. If there is a difference between you and others, somebody made that difference—and whoever made it ought to be honored and praised for it. Did you make it yourself? Shall I put the crown on your head? Why, if you are right-hearted, you will cry, “No, no! It is God who has made me to differ from others! It is His Grace which has been given to me, to bring me out of the darkness in which others have been left.”   
So, whatever others may think or say, we, at any rate, believe in that special form of Grace which may be called favor—“You have granted me life and favor.” The Lord has given peculiar favor unto His own chosen people and this makes them sing a song that rises above all the others! “He has not dealt so with any nation.” “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy.” Let them praise the Lord with thanksgiving evermore and if you, dear Friends, belong to that privileged company, praise the Lord!   
By the word, “favor,” is also meant Grace in all the shapes which it assumes, so Job’s words might be rendered, “You have granted me life and Grace.” Come, my Brothers and Sisters, if you can say this, just think over all that it means. “You have granted me the Grace and favor of Your electing love and of Your redeeming love, the Grace of effectual calling, the Grace of regeneration, the Grace of justification, the Grace of adoption, the Grace of perseverance until this day, the Grace of sanctification,” (for all this is of Grace). “You have given it, You have granted it of Your free favor and granted it to me.”   
“I do not know whether God has granted this Grace to me,” says one. Well, my dear Brother, you cannot sing while you doubt this, but if, through faith in Jesus, you know that God has given you life and Grace, sing away, sing despite all that might stop you, for this is a mercy which should forever monopolize the music of everyone who has been thus favored of God! “You have granted me life and Grace.” I do not know what any other person in this place might say, but if no one else said it, I would be compelled, in the courts of the Lord’s House and in the midst of His people, to say, “I bless His name for giving me life and Grace. I am altogether undeserving of such mercy, yet He has favored me with His goodness, so that I cannot do otherwise than feel overwhelmed by His Grace.” I do not know whether you can all say the same, but I feel persuaded that there are scores, hundreds, yes, even *thousands*of you who might stand up and say, “We bless God that though unworthy of His notice, He has granted us life and Grace.”   
Now let us dwell, for a minute or two, on the third blessing of this Divine grant—“ *and Yourvisitation has preserved my spirit.*” There is a wonderful range of meaning in those words, but Job, no doubt, first refers to the Providence of God by which He makes, as it were, a visitation of all the world, but especially of His own people. As a man who possesses a large estate, if he is wise, goes around and looks over all his cattle and his servants and his fields—and makes a visitation to see whether all is going well, for he knows that the master’s eye does much—so does God visit the earth, inspect it and care for the creatures whom He has formed to live upon it. “He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.” The Lord keeps a watchful eye upon the whole universe. He leads out the stars, calling them all by their names, and nightly marshals their serried ranks. He counts even the sparrows, so that not one of them falls upon the ground without His knowledge. It has been the Providence of God that has preserved us up to now, so let us bless Him for this great favor.   
Some of us have had very special Providential deliverances. we will not mention them, tonight, because they are too many. It has been well said, “He that watches Providence shall never be without a Providence to watch.” I am sure it is so. You who have had your eyes divinely opened must have seen an act of God’s gracious Providence everyday. Some will only see God’s Providence in deliverance from a terrible catastrophe—such as an escape from fire, or from a railway accident, or something of that unusual and startling kind. But, indeed, the Providence of God is watching over us just as much when we sit in our home, or sleep in our beds, or go about our daily duties. People used to say of Dr. Gill, my illustrious predecessor, that they could easily find him, for he was always in his study. And someone remarked, “At any rate, he is in a safe place there—a man is out of harm’s way when he is studying at home.” It so happened that the Doctor was called away from his study one day when a high wind blew down a stack of chimneys—which crashed right through the house into his study—and would have surely killed him if he had been in the place where he was usually sitting! Truly, it is the Providence of God that preserves our lives as much when we are at home as if we were out on the vast deep when it is tossed with tempests.   
Now, Brothers and Sisters, is it not wonderful that some of us are alive at all? Have not most of you reason to praise God for some very singular instances of his guardian care which has preserved you in being until this day? Refuse not to sing to God the song of thanksgiving which is His due! Prolonged life should beget continual gratitude and votive offerings of joyful praise should ascend unto the Most High.   
Oh, but that is only the beginning of the meaning of Job’s words, “Your visitation has preserved my spirit.” God has visited those of us who are His people in other ways besides the watching of His Providence. Let me mention some of them. He has visited some of us with correction—and we do not like that form of visitation. We have been smitten heavily with His rod till all our bones have ached and the blows have been so severe that they have left black bruises. Or we have lost friend after friend, or we have been corrected by the scandal and the slander of wicked men, or in some way or other God has used man as the rod in His hand to chasten us. “Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” Look back and see whether you cannot say to God, “Your visitation in correction has preserved my spirit.” Can you not say, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now I have kept Your Word”? There have been times, in the lives of some of us, when nothing but affliction could have saved us from falling into gross sin. We would have been carried away with pride, but we suffered from grievous depression of spirit and so could not afford to be proud. There have been times when we would have been exalted above measure, but the thorn in the flesh was graciously given to us, a messenger of Satan came to buffet us, and so we were preserved in the hour of temptation.   
There are some whom God will yet permit to be rich, who would not have been capable of managing so much money to the Lord’s honor and glory if they had not, for a while, had to live on short commons. The very thing we regret most in Providence will probably be that in which we shall rejoice most in eternity. You know, in this world, we see the wrong side of the carpet that is being woven. We are like Hannah More in the carpet factory, when she said to the workman, “I cannot see any design—there seem to be a great number of loose pieces of wool, but I cannot perceive any pattern or order.” “No, Madam,” said the man, “of course you cannot, because you are standing on the wrong side of the carpet. If you will come to the other side, you will then see it all.” We are on the wrong side, at present, but God will take us to the other side, by-and-by, and then we shall each one say, “O my Lord, how wrongly did I judge You! How little did I understand Your dealings with me! I thought Your visitation would have crushed me, but it preserved my spirit.”   
There are other visitations, however, such as the visitations of consolation. Oh, how sweet those are to the soul when in trouble! You and I must have known times when our spirits have gone down below zero—when no earthly friend could comfort us and we could not think of any source of consolation for ourselves. Just then, some unnoticed promise of the Word of God has dropped into our soul with charming effect. It was, perhaps, but a sentence of half a dozen words, but they came from God, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and they were so powerfully applied to our spirit that we said, “I do not mind what burden I have to bear, for I know that Christ’s Grace will be sufficient for me. I cannot tell what the Divine will may be concerning me, or however dark and dreary may be the Valley of the Shadow of Death through which I shall have to pass, but God’s rod and staff are evidently with me and they will comfort me in the most trying hour and my Lord, Himself, will surely bring me through all my tribulations.” Cannot some of you say that your blessed Savior, who has suffered for you and who understands all your griefs, has come and bound up your broken hearts, and given you unfailing comfort when you were in such sorrow that you feared you would have lost your reason and, perhaps, even taken your own life? But here you are, the living to praise Him, and to say, “Your visitation by way of comfort has preserved my spirit.”   
Once more, how sweet are the visitations of God in communion! Have you not sometimes had such communion with your Lord, during a sermon, that you have said, “My steps had well-nigh slipped, but now my Lord has come near unto me and he has made me to stand so firmly that nothing can cast me down”? Or perhaps you have gone upstairs to your room when you have been weighed down under very heavy grief and you have told it all to Jesus—whispered it all into the ear that never wearies of His people’s complaints. And, after awhile, you have come down and you have felt, “Now I do not mind what happens. I can even face a frowning world, for Jesus Christ’s visitation has preserved my spirit.” I am also sure that many of us can say that at the Lord’s Table, in the breaking of bread, our spirits have been so refreshed that we could go out into our daily callings, or back to our domestic griefs and feel, “It really does not matter now. I can shoulder my cross, for I have seen the Crucified! I can bear my own sorrows, for I have had fellowship with Him in His sorrows. I could even die for His sake, for I have entered into fellowship with His death.”   
“Your visitation has preserved my spirit.” I want you, my Brother, my Sister, to pray for that visitation tonight. Ask the Lord Jesus not only to pay a visit to your soul, but to come and stay with you. You have only to open the door of your heart and He will come in. That is what He said even to lukewarm Laodicea. “If any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” So open wide the door at once. You say, “But there is nothing within—it is only an empty house.” That does not matter to Him, for He will bring with Him the provisions on which He will sup with you, and you with Him. Open the door, give Him heart-room! Say, “Come in, blessed Savior! Why do You stand outside?” He says to you who are slow to admit Him, “My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.” Oh, keep not the door of your heart closed against Him any longer! At least be willing that He should enter. *Pray*that He may enter! Cry to Him to enter and He will surely come in to you, and you shall have such a blessed season that you shall say, “Your visitation has preserved my spirit.”   
I have it deeply impressed upon me—so I must say it—that there are some of you who had better get a good feast tonight, for you have a great sorrow coming. You had better enter into close fellowship with Christ tonight, for the dark clouds of trouble are gathering about you. The tempest lowers and if your ship is not prepared to weather the storm by having Christ on board, it will go ill with you. Avail yourselves of this present opportunity of a visit from Christ! Creep to the Cross! Clasp it to your heart, hide yourselves there, for no lightning flash can strike you there—that Cross will conduct the lightning of Divine wrath right away from you and you will be saved! And you will say afterwards, “I am glad that I stayed for the Communion and that I communed, for I did not merely eat bread and drink wine, I spiritually ate the flesh and drank the blood of my Lord. And I had fellowship with Him and He has made me strong to suffer or to serve.” If it is so with us now, or if it has been so in the past, let us sing unto the Lord a glad song of thanksgiving for this trinity of blessing—life, favor and preserving visitation—yes, let us sing unto Him as long as we live!   
II. Very briefly must I speak upon the second part of our subject, that is, A SOLACE FOR DARK NIGHTS “And these things have You hid in Your heart: I know that this is with You.”   
There is another interpretation of this verse, quite different from the one that I am going to give you, but I do not think that Job ever could have meant what some people think he did. I believe that when he said, “These things”—that is, life, favor and God’s gracious visitation—“These things have You hid in Your heart: I know that this is with You,” that he meant, first, that *God remembers what He has done, and will not lose His pains.* “‘You have granted me life and favor,’ Lord, You have not forgotten that. You have hidden that in Your heart, You remember it well. Since You have done this for me, and You remember that You have done it, therefore You will continue Your mercy to me and not lose all the Grace and goodness which You have already bestowed upon me.”  
Just think of that for a minute. Even if you have forgotten all that God has done for you, God has not forgotten it! If you do a kindness to a man, it is very probable that he will not remember it, but you will. Many children forget all the kindness and love of their mother, but the mother remembers all that she did for her children in the days of their helplessness and she loves them all the more because of what she did for them. There is a little secret which I may whisper in your ear. If you want people to love you, do what you can for them, yet, possibly, you will not gain their love by that process. But if you let them do something for you, they will be sure to love you, then! When you have done much for anyone, you are especially bound to that person, so Job puts it thus, “You, Lord, have done much for me. You have all this in Your remembrance and I am persuaded that this binds You to me—Your great goodness in giving me life, and favor, and in visiting me—all this has bound You to me, and I am persuaded that You will not leave me.” That is the teaching of the verse many of us delight to sing—   
*“His love in time past forbids me to think   
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink.   
Each sweet Ebenezer I have inreview,   
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”*If the Lord had not meant to finish His work, He would never have begun it. If He had not meant to bring us to Heaven, He would not have snatched us like brands from the burning. If He had not meant to complete His work, He would not have spent so much upon us. “Spent so much upon us?” asks one. Yes, He lavished upon His people more than all the millionaires who were ever upon the earth have possessed! He expended more than there is in Heaven with the exception of that which He spent upon them. “What is that?” you ask. He spent the life of His only-begotten Son—and Heaven itself does not contain any other treasure that is at all comparable to the Father’s equal Son! He spent the best He had upon us and do you think that, after that, He will ever leave us? No, that can never be! Though He were to take away all our property. Though He were to deprive us of every one of our children. Though He were to cover us from head to foot with sores. Though He should cause us to sit upon a dunghill and scrape ourselves with a potsherd. Though the very wife of our bosom should bid us curse God and die. Though all our friends should become miserable comforters and make us ready to curse the day on which we saw the light—yet still, God must be gracious to us, and we must trust Him! Yes, though He should slay us, yet must we trust Him! All the goodness of the past is an infallible guarantee that He will be good to us even to the end, according to that Word concerning the Lord Jesus, “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” That is one meaning of the verse.   
But, next, I think that the words, “And these things have You hid in Your heart: I know that this is with You,” have this meaning, that *God sometimes hides His favor and love in His heart, yet they are still there.* At times it may be that you get no glimpse of His face, or that you see no smile upon it. When that is my experience, I love to turn to that verse in the 63rd Psalm—“Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.” It is all shadow, shadow, shadow—no sunshine—I cannot see my God, but the very shadow is the shadow of His wings and as you may often see the chickens cower down beneath the mother hen, and nestle there, so in the shadow of His wings will I rejoice! And you, dear Friend, may share that blessed and safe shelter. “He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His truth shall be your shield and buckler.”   
When there is no light, you shall walk on as steadily as if seven suns were shining! When there is no comfortable assurance for you. When there is no temporal deliverance. When there is nothing for you out of the winepress or out of the barn. When there is no friend nor helper near you, when the fig tree does not blossom, when you have no flocks, and your herds are cut off by the storm—when God’s mercy seems to be clean gone, forever, and His promises all appear to fail, it is not really so—   
*“He hides the purpose of His Grace   
To make it better known.”*The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, therefore, O tried child of God, learn what Job, here, teaches us, that these things are still hidden in the *heart of God*, and that Eternal Love holds fast to the objects of its choice.   
“I know that this is with You,” said Job, so the last thing I want you to learn from his words is that *God would have His people strong in faith to know this Truth.* Job says, “I *know* that this is with You.” I speak to many persons who say that they are Christians and who, perhaps, are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ—and one of their clearest evidences is that they are very happy. Dear young people, I am glad you are so happy. True religion makes people happy—it is a perennial fountain of delight. But do not set too much store by your emotions of delight, because they may be taken from you—and then where will your evidences be? God’s people sometimes walk in darkness and see no light. There are times when the best and brightest of saints have no joy. I will not say whether they are not to be blamed for that—it is probable that they are, in most instances, though I do not see that Job could be much blamed. I wish I were able to be a thousandth part as good as he was with a thousandth part of his pains and troubles. But it is a fact that whether rightly or wrongly, God’s people are not always joyous. As Peter says, “For a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” Whenever you get into that condition, dear young people, if you have learned to trust Christ before, trust Him still! If your religion should not, for a time, yield you any joy, cling to it all the same! Do not give it up, for if there is any time when you need faith, it is when your spirits sink and when your outward trials multiply.   
You see, God does not give you faith in order that you may merely run about in the meadows with it all among the fair spring flowers. I will tell you for what purpose He gives you faith—it is that you may put on your snow-shoes, go out in the cold wintry blast and glide along over the ice and the snow. He does not give you faith that you may put it on as I remember seeing Napoleon’s guard with armor in which I saw my face as well as ever I did in a mirror. The Lord does not give you faith merely that you may go on parade with it and show yourself—you are to fight with it! There is not a fragment of faith that you have which will not be dinted by the blows of the enemy and rusted through exposure to the weather. You will have difficulties, mark you, as surely as you have faith! You will have a difficulty in maintaining your faith against the assaults of the adversary, for wherever there is faith in the world, there are trials for it to encounter.   
Railway men do not build bridges over rivers without an intention of sending engines and trains across them—and God does not give faith without an intention of letting it be tried. And He wants you to know, when He does try you, or permit others to try you, that He still loves you. When He leaves you for a little while in the dark, He loves you just as much as when you were in the light. A little child cries and says that her mother does not love her because she has put her to bed and gone downstairs, and left her in the dark. She will always be a baby if the mother stays there with a candle by the hour together till she gets to sleep. The mother wants her child to grow into a woman and she trains her accordingly. So is it with us. God does often humor our littleness and weakness by doing many kind things to us as we do to poor feeble little children, but He wants us to grow up and become men and women in Christ Jesus and to be strong in the Lord.   
I pray that you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, may be stalwart Christians of this sort. You see, if our faith is to depend upon our disposition—our joy or our sorrow—it will always be fluctuating up and down—and we shall be apt to think that we may be saved today and lost tomorrow. That is not the teaching of the Bible! When you are on the mountain with Christ, you are safe, but when you are at the bottom of the valley with Christ, you are just as safe! When you sit at the table with Christ, you are safe, and so are you if you should be at sea with Christ in a vessel. Only have faith in Him and say, “My God, Your will towards me to give me life, and favor, and preservation may be hidden, but it is still in Your heart, ‘I know that this is with You.’”  
Now I must leave these things with you. You who know and love the Lord will seek a renewal of His visitations tonight. But as for you who do not know Him, oh, how I wish that you did! Often as I come on this platform and look upon this throng of people, I would wonder why so many came if I did not know that the earnest, simple preaching of the Gospel will never fail to bring people together. But as you have come to hear the Gospel, I pray you also to *receive* it. Do not merely hear it, but *accept*it. If there were diamonds to be given away, here, and I said that I would give them to everybody who was willing to have them, I am sure that you would not be content to hear me talking about their beauty, their facets, or their particular brilliance—but you would each one cry out, “Hand me one!” “Give me one!” “Pass me down one worth a hundred thousand pounds! I will be content with *that*and you may leave off talking if you like!”   
I will leave off talking about Christ if you will take Him as your Savior. I shall not need to extol Him when you have once accepted Him, for you will find out His excellence for yourselves. The Scripture says, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” Oh, that you would all taste and see for yourselves! You would know His goodness far better from that taste and sight than you can ever know it from any human language, however earnest it may be! God bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.**

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2683 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 10.2

THE SWEET USES OF ADVERSITY  
NO. 283

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 13, 1859, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“Show me why You contend with me.”  
Job 10:2.**

AND will God contend with man? If God is angry, can He not take away the breath of his nostrils and lay him low in the dust of earth? If the heart of the Almighty is moved unto hot displeasure, can He not speak in His anger and will not the soul of man sink into the lowest Hell? Will God contend—will He set himself in battle array against His creature? And such a creature?—the creature of an hour—a thing that is not, that is here today and gone tomorrow? Will the Almighty contend with the nothingness of man? Will the everlasting God take up the weapons of war and go out to fight against the insect of a day?

Well might we cry out to Him, “after whom is my Lord the King gone forth? After a dead dog—after a flea?” Will You hunt the partridge on the mountains with an army and will You go forth against a gnat with shield and spear? Shall the everlasting God who faints not, neither is weary, at whose reproof the pillars of Heaven’s starry roof tremble and start—will He become combatant with a creature?

Yet our text said so. It speaks of God’s contending with man. Ah, surely, my Brethren, it needs but little logic to understand that this not a contention of anger, but a contention of love. It needs, methinks, but a short sight for us to discover that, if God contends with man, it must be a contention of mercy. There must be a design of love in this. If He were angry He would not condescend to reason with his creature and to have a strife of words with him. Much less would He put on His buckler and lay hold on His sword, to stand up in battle and contend with such a creature as man! You will all perceive at once that there must be love even in this apparently angry word. This contention must, after all, have something to do with contentment and that this battle must be, after all, but a disguised mercy—but another shape of an embrace from the God of love. Carry this consoling reflection in your thoughts while I am preaching to you. And if any of you are saying today, “Show me why You contend with me,” the very fact of God contending with you at all—the fact that He has not consumed you—that He has not smitten you to the lowest Hell, may

thus, at the very outset, afford consolation and hope.

Now, I propose to address myself to the two classes of persons who are making use of this question. First, I shall speak to the tried saint. And then I shall speak to the seeking sinner, who has been seeking peace and pardon through Christ, but who has not as yet found it, but, on the contrary, has been buffeted by the law and driven away from the Mercy Seat in despair.

I. First, then, to THE CHILD OF GOD. I have—I know I have—in this great assembly, some who have come to Job’s position. They are saying, “My soul is weary of my life. I will leave my complaint upon myself. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me. Show me why You contend with me.” Sometimes to question God is wicked. As the men of Bethshemesh were smitten with death when they dared to lift up the lid of the ark and look into its sacred mysteries, so is it often death to our faith to question God. It often happens that the sorest plagues come upon us on account of an impudent curiosity which longs to pry between the folded leaves of God’s great council-book and find out the reason for His mysterious Providences.

But, methinks this is a question that may be asked. Inquiring here will not be merely curious—for there will be a practical affect following. Tried Saint, follow me while I seek to look into this mystery and answer your question and I pray you select one of several answers which I shall propound, which shall, to your judgment, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, seem to be the right one. You have been tried by trouble after trouble— business runs cross against you—sickness is never out of your house— while in your own person you are the continual subject of a sad depression of spirit. It seems as if God were contending with you and you are asking, “Why is this? Show me why You contend with me?”

1. My first answer on God’s part, my Brother, is this—it may be that God is contending with you that He may show His own power in upholding you. God delights in His saints. And when a man delights in his child, if it is a child noted for its brightness of intellect, he delights to see it put through hard questions—because he knows that it will be able to answer them all. So God glories in His children. He loves to hear them tried, that the whole world may see that there are none like them on the face of the earth and even Satan may be compelled before he can find an accusation against them, to resort to his inexhaustible fund of lies.

Sometimes God on purpose puts His children in the midst of this world’s trials. On the right, left, before, behind, they are surrounded. Within and without the battle rages. But there stands the child of God, calm amidst the bewildering cry, confident of victory. And then the Lord points joyously to His saint and He says, “See, Satan, he is more than a match for you. Weak though he is, yet through My power, he can perform all things.” And sometimes God permits Satan himself to come against one of His children. And the black Fiend of Hell in dragon’s wings meets a poor Christian just when he is faint and weary from stumbling in the valley of humiliation. The fight is long and terrible and, well it may be, for it is a worm combating with the dragon.

But see what that worm can do! It is trod under foot and yet it destroys the heel that treads upon it. When the Christian is cast down, he utters a cry, “Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, for though I fall yet shall I rise again.” And so God points to His child and says, “See there? See what I can do? I can make flesh and blood more mighty than the most cunning spirit. I can make poor feeble foolish man, more than a match for all the craft and might of Satan.”

And what will you say to this third proof that God puts us through? Sometimes God does as it were, Himself enter into the fight—oh, let us wonder to say it! God, to prove the strength of faith, sometimes Himself makes war on faith! Think not that this is a stretch of the imagination. It is plain simple fact. Have you ever heard of the brook Jabbok and of that angel-clothed God who fought with Jacob there and permitted Jacob to prevail? What was this for? It was thus had God determined—“I will strengthen the creature so much, that I will permit it to overcome its Creator.” Oh, what noble work is this, that while God is casting down His child with one hand, He should be holding him up with the other—letting a measure of omnipotence fall on him to crush him, while the like omnipotence supports him under the tremendous load. The Lord shows the world—“See what faith can do? “Well does Hart sing of faith—

*“It treads on the world and on Hell.  
It vanquishes death and despair,  
And, O! let us wonder to tell,  
It overcomes Heaven by prayer.”*

This is why God contends with you—to glorify Himself, by showing to angels, to men, to devils, how he can put such strength into poor puny man—that man can contend with his Maker and become a prevailing prince like Israel, who as a prince had power of God and prevailed. This, then, may be the first reason.

2. Let me give you a second answer. Perhaps, O tried Soul, the Lord is doing this to develop your graces. There are some of your graces that would never be discovered if it were not for your trials. Do you not know that your faith never looks so grand in summer weather, as it does in winter? Have you not heard that love is too often like a glowworm that shows but little light except it is in the midst of surrounding darkness? And do you not know that hope itself is like a star—not to be seen in the sunshine of prosperity and only to be discovered in the night of adversity?

Do you not understand that afflictions are often the black foils in which God does set the jewels of His children’s graces, to make them shine the better. It was but a little while ago that on your knees you were saying, “Lord, I fear I have no faith—let me know that I have faith.” But do you not know you were praying for trials? You cannot know that you have faith until your faith is exercised. Our trials, so to speak, are like wayfarers in a forest. When there is no intruder in the silent glades of the forest, the hare and the partridge lie. And there they rest and no eye sees them. But when the intruding footstep is heard, then you see them start and run along the green lane and you hear the whirr of the pheasant as it seeks to hide itself.

Now, our trials are intruders upon our heart’s rest. Our graces start up and we discover them. They had lain in their lair, they had slept in their forms, they had rested in their nests—unless these intruding trials had startled them from their places. I remember a simple rural metaphor used by a departed Divine. He says he was never very skillful at birds’ nesting in the summer time, but he could always find birds’ nests in the winter. Now, it often happens that when a man has but little grace, you can scarcely see it when the leaves of his prosperity are on him. But let the winter’s blast come and sweep away his withered leaves and then you discover his graces. Depend upon it, God often sends us trials that our graces may be discovered and that we may be certified of their existence.

Besides, it is not merely discovery, it is real growth that is the result of these trials. There is a little plant, small and stunted, growing under the shade of a broad spreading oak. And this little plant values the shade which covers it and greatly does it esteem the quiet rest which its noble friend affords. But a blessing is designed for this little plant. Once upon a time there comes along the woodman and with his sharp axe he fells the oak. The plant weeps and cries, “My shelter is departed—every rough wind will blow upon me and every storm will seek to uproot me.”

“No, no,” says the angel of that flower, “now will the sun get at you. Now will the showers fall on you in more copious abundance than before. Now your stunted form shall spring up into loveliness and your flower, which could never have expanded itself to perfection, shall now laugh in the sunshine and men shall say, ‘How greatly has that plant increased! How glorious has its beauty become through the removal of that which was its shade and its delight!’ ”

Don’t you see, then, that God may take away your comforts and your privileges to make you a better Christian? Why, the Lord always trains His soldiers, not by letting them lie on feather beds, but by turning them out and using them in forced marches and hard service. He makes them ford through streams and swim through rivers and climb mountains and walk many a long march with heavy knapsacks of sorrow on their backs. This is the way in which He makes soldiers—not by dressing them up in fine uniforms, to swagger at the barrack gates and to be fine gentlemen in the eyes of the loungers in the park.

God knows that soldiers are only to be made in battle. They are not to be grown in peaceful times. We may grow the stuff of which soldiers are made, but warriors are really educated by the smell of powder, in the midst of whizzing bullets and roaring cannonades—not in soft and peaceful times. Well, Christian, may not this account for it all? Is not your Lord bringing out your graces and making them grow? This is the reason why He is contending with you.

3. Another reason may be found in this. It may be the Lord contends with you because you have some secret sin which is doing you sore damage. Do you remember the story of Moses? Never a man better beloved than he of the Lord his God, for he was faithful in all his house as a servant. But do you remember how the Lord met him on the way as he was going to Egypt and strove with him? And why? Because he had in his house an uncircumcised child. This child was, so long as it had not God’s seal upon it, a sin in Moses. Therefore God strove with him till the thing was done.

Now, too often we have some uncircumcised thing in our house, some joy that is evil, some amusement that is sinful, some pursuit that is not agreeable to His will. And the Lord meets us often as He did Moses, of whom it is written—“The Lord met him by the way in the inn and sought to kill him”—Exodus 4:24. Now search and look, for if the consolation of God is small with you, there is some secret sin within. Put it away, lest God smite you still more sorely and vex you in His hot displeasure. Trials often discover sins—sins we should never have found out if it had not been for them.

We know that the houses in Russia are very greatly infested with rats and mice. Perhaps a stranger would scarcely notice them at first, but the time when you discover them is when the house is on fire. Then they pour out in multitudes. And so does God sometimes burn up our comforts to make our hidden sins run out. And then He enables us to knock them on the head and get rid of them. That may be the reason of your trial—to put an end to some long-fostered sin. It may be, too, that in this way God would prevent some future sin, some sin hidden from your own eyes into which you would soon fall if it were not for His troubling you by His Providence.

There was a fair ship which belonged to the great Master of the seas. It was about to sail from the port of grace to the haven of glory. Before it left the shore, the great Master said, “Mariners, be brave! Captain, be bold! For not a hair of your head shall perish. I will bring you safely to your desired haven. The angel of the winds is commissioned to take care of you on your way.” The ship sailed right merrily with its streamers flying in the air. It floated along at a swift rate with a fair wind for many and many a day. But once upon a time there came a hurricane which drove them from the course, strained their mast until it bent as if it must snap in two. The sail was shred to ribbons.

The sailors were alarmed and the captain, himself, trembled. They had lost their course. “They were out of the right track,” they said. And they mourned exceedingly. When the day dawned, the waves were quiet and the angel of the winds appeared. And they spoke unto him and said, “Oh angel, were you not bid to take charge of us and preserve us on our journeys?” He answered, “It was even so and I have done it. You were steering on right confidently and you knew not that a little ahead of your vessel lay a quicksand upon which she would be wrecked and swallowed up quickly. I saw that there was no way for your escape but to drive you from your course. See, I have done as it was commanded me—go on your way.”

Ah, this is a parable of our Lord’s dealings with us. He often drives us from our smooth course which we thought was the right track to Heaven. But there is a secret reason for it—there is a quicksand ahead that is not marked in the chart. We know nothing about it. But God sees it and He will not permit this fair vessel, which He has Himself insured, to be stranded anywhere. He will bring it safely to its desired haven.

4. I have now another reason to give, but it is one which some of you will not understand. Some however will. Beloved, you remember that it is written, that we “must bear the image of the heavenly,” namely, the image of Christ. As He was in this world even so must we be. We must have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, that we may be conformable unto His death. Have you never thought that none can be like the Man of Sorrow unless they have sorrows, too? How can you be like He, who sweat as it were great drops of blood, if you do not sometimes say, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death”?

Think not, O Beloved, that you can be like the thorn-crowned head and yet never feel the thorn. Can you be like your dying Lord and yet be uncrucified? Must your hands be without a nail and your feet without a wound? Can you be like He, unless, like He, you are compelled to say, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” God is chiseling you—you are but a rough block—He is making you into the image of Christ. And that sharp chisel is taking away much which prevents your being like He.

Must He who is our head be marred in His visage by reason of grief and must we forever rejoice and sing? It cannot be—  
*“The heirs of salvation, I know from His Word, Through much tribulation must follow their Lord.”*

Sweet is the affliction which gives us fellowship with Christ. Blessed is the plow that plows deep furrows—if the furrows are like He. Blessed is the mouth that spits upon us, if the spittle is from the same cause as that which defiled His face. Blessed are the nails and thorns and vinegar and spear, if they but make us somewhat like He, in whose glory we shall be partakers when we shall see Him as He is. This is a matter which all cannot understand, for it is a path which no unhallowed foot has trod and no careless eye has so much as seen. But the true Believer can rejoice in it, for he has had fellowship with Christ in His sufferings.

5. To the child of God I shall give only one more reason. The Lord, it may be, contends with you, my Brothers and Sisters, to humble you. We are all too proud. The most humble of us do but approach to the door of true humility. We are too proud, for pride, I suppose, runs in our very veins and is not to be gotten out of us any more than the marrow from our bones. We shall have many blows before we are brought down to the right mark. And it is because we are so continually getting up that God is so continually putting us down again. Besides, don’t you feel, in looking back on your past troubles, that you have, after all, been best when you have had troubles?

I can truly say there is a mournfulness in joy and there is a sweet joy in sorrow. I do not know how it is, but that bitter wine of sorrow, when you once get it down gives such a warmth to the inner man as even the wine of Lebanon can scarce afford. It acts with such a tonic influence upon the whole system, that the very veins begin to thrill as the blood leaps in it. Strange influence! I am no physician, but yet I know that my sweet cup often leaves bitterness on the palate and my bitter cup always leaves a sweet flavor in the mouth. There is a sweet joy in sorrow I cannot understand. There is music in this harp with its strings all unstrung and broken. There are a few notes I hear from this mournful lute that I never get from the loud-sounding trumpet.

Softness and melody we get from the wail of sorrow, which we never get from the song of joy. Must we not account for this by the fact that in our troubles we live nearer to God? Our joy is like the wave as it dashes upon the shore—it throws us on the earth. But our sorrows are like that receding wave which sucks us back again into the great depth of the Godhead. We should have been stranded and left high and dry upon the shore if it had not been for that receding wave, that ebbing of our prosperity, which carried us back to our Father and to our God again. Blessed affliction! it has brought us to the Mercy Seat—given life to prayer. It has enkindled

love—strengthened faith—brought Christ into the furnace with us and then brought us out of the furnace to live with Christ more joyously than before.

Surely, I cannot answer this question better. If I have not hit upon the right reason, search and look, my dearly Beloved. For the reason is not far off if you but look for it—the reason why He contends with you.

II. I have thus done with the saints. I shall now turn myself to address THE SEEKING SINNER who is wondering why he has found no peace and comfort. By the way—running a little apart from the subject—I heard a Brother saying the other evening in describing his experience, that before he was converted he was never sick, never had an affliction at all, but from the very hour when he became converted, he found that trials and troubles came upon him very thick. I have been thinking of that ever since and I think I have found a reason for it. When we are converted, it is the time of the singing of birds. But do you know the time of the singing of birds is the time of the pruning of vines and as sure as the time of the singing of birds is come the time of the pruning of vines is come also.

God begins to try us as soon as He begins to make our soul sing. This is not running away from the subject. I thought it was. It has just brought me to address the sinner. You have come here this morning saying to yourself, “Sir, not long ago I was awakened to a sense of my lost estate. As I was directed I went home and sought mercy in prayer. From that day till now I have never ceased to pray. But, alas, I get no comfort, Sir. I grow worse than ever I was before—I mean I grow more desponding, more sad. If you had asked me before conviction, Sir, whether the path to Heaven was easy, I should have said ‘yes.’ But now it seems to me to be strewn with flints. That I would not mind but, alas, methinks the gate is shut which lies at the end of the road—for I have knocked and it has never opened. I have asked and I have not received. I have sought and I have not found. In fact, instead of getting peace I receive terror. God is contending with me. Can you tell me, Sir, why it is?” I will try to answer the question, God helping me.

1. My first answer shall be this. Perhaps, my dear Hearer, God is contending with you for awhile, because as yet you are not thoroughly awakened. Remember, Christ will not heal your wound till He has probed it to its very core. Christ is no unqualified physician, no foolish surgeon, who would close up a wound with proud flesh in it. But He will take the lances and cut and cut and cut again crossways and He will lay the sore open, expose it, look into it, make it smart. And then after that, He will close up its mouth and make it whole.

Perhaps you have not as yet known your own vileness, your own lost state. Now, Christ will have you know your poverty before He will make you rich. His Holy Spirit will convince you of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come. He will strip you and though the pulling off of your own righteousness is like flaying you and tearing off the skin from your breast, yet He will do it. For He will not clothe  
you with the robe of His own righteousness till every rag of your own selfsufficiency is pulled away. This is why God is contending with you. You have been on your knees. Go lower, man—go lower. Fall flat on your face. You have said, “Lord, I am nothing.” Go lower, man—say, “Lord, I am less than nothing and the very chief of sinners.”

You have felt somewhat—go ask that you may feel more, may be yet more fully convicted of sin—may learn to hate it with a more perfect hatred and to bewail your lost estate with a wailing like that of Ramah, when Rachel wept for her children and would not be comforted because they were not. Seek to know the bottom of your case. Make it a matter of conscience to look your sins in the face and let Hell also blaze before you. Realize the fact that you deserve to be lost forever. Sit down often and take counsel with the Lord, your God, whom you have grievously offended. Think of your privileges and how you have despised them. Remember the invitations you have heard and how often you have rejected them. Get a proper sense of sin and it may be that God will cease to contend with you, because the good is all obtained which He sought to give you by this long and painful contention.

2. Another answer I will give you is this—perhaps God contends with you in order to try your earnestness. There are many Mr. Pliables, who set out on the road to Heaven for a little time and the first boggy piece of road they come to, they creep out on that side which is nearest to their own house and go back again. Now, God meets every pilgrim on the road to Heaven and contends with him. If you can hold your own and say, “Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him.” If you can dare to do it and be importunate with God and say, “Though He never hear me, if I perish I will pray and perish only there.” Then you have got the mastery and you shall succeed.

God’s Spirit is teaching you how to wrestle and agonize in prayer. I have seen a man, when he has become solemnly in earnest about his soul, pray as though he was a very Samson, with the two gates of mercy in his hand, rocking them to and fro as though he would sooner pull them up—gates and bar and all—than he would go away without obtaining a blessing. God loves to see a man mighty in prayer, intent upon getting the blessing, resolved that he will have Christ, or he will perish seeking Him. Now, be in earnest. Cry aloud! Spare not! Rise in the night-watches! Pour out your heart like water before the Lord, for He will answer you when

He has heard the voice of your crying. He will hearken to your supplication and give you the desire of your heart.

3. Yet, again, another matter. “May it not be, my dear Hearers, that the reason why God contends with you and does not give you peace is, because you are harboring some sin” Now, I will not say what it is. I have known a man solemnly under conviction of sin, but the company which he kept on market-day was of such a caste, that until he was separated entirely from his companions, it was not possible he should have peace. I do not know what your peculiar besetting sin may be. It may be a love for frivolity. It may be the desire to associate with those who amuse you. It may be worse. But remember, Christ and your soul will never be one till you and your sins are two.

Your desires and longings must make a clean sweep of the devil and all his crew, or else Christ will not come and dwell with you. “Well,” says one, “but I cannot be perfect.” No, but you cannot find peace till you desire to be. Wherever you harbor a sin, there you harbor misery. One sin willfully indulged in and not forsaken by true repentance will destroy the soul. Sins given up are like goods cast out at sea by the mariners in days of storm. They lighten the ship and the ship will never float till you have thrown all your sins overboard. There is no hope whatever for you till you can truly say—

*“Whatever consists not with Your love,  
O help me to resign.  
“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whatever that idol is,  
Help me to tear it from its throne,  
And worship only You.”*

4. Then drawing near to a conclusion let me have your most solemn attention while I give one more hint as to the reason why you have not yet found peace. My dear Hearers, perhaps it is because you do not thoroughly understand the plan of salvation. I do feel that all ministers—and here, perhaps, I am as great a sinner as any other and I condemn myself while I chastise others—we all of us do in some way or other, I fear, help to dim the luster of God’s grace, as manifested in the Cross of Christ. Often am I afraid lest I should prefer Calvinism to Calvary, lest I should put the sinner’s sense of need like a quickset hedge round the Cross and keep the poor sinner from getting as near as he would to the bleeding Lamb of God.

Ah, my dear Hearers, remember if you would be saved, your salvation comes wholly and entirely from Jesus Christ, the dying Son of God. View Him yonder, Sinner, sweating in the garden! See the red drops of blood as they fall from that dear face! Oh, see Him Sinner, see Him in Pilate’s hall. View the streams of gore as they gush from those lacerated shoulders. See Him, Sinner, see Him on His Cross! View that head still marked with the wounds with which the thorns pierced His temples! Oh, view that face emaciated and marred! See the spittle still hanging there—the spittle of cruel mockers! See the eyes floating in tears with languid pity! Look, too, at those hands and view them as they stream like founts of blood! Oh, stand and listen while He cries, “Lama Sabachthani!” Sinner, your life is in Him that died. Your healing is in yonder wounds. Your salvation is in His destruction.

“Oh,” says one, “but I cannot believe.” Ah, Brother, that was once my mournful cry. But I will tell you how I came to believe. Once upon a time, I was trying to make myself believe and a voice whispered, “Vain Man, vain Man, if you would believe, come and look!” Then the Holy Spirit led me by the hand to a solitary place. And while I stood there, suddenly there appeared before me One upon His Cross. I looked up. I had then no faith. I saw His eyes suffused with tears and the blood still flowing—I saw His enemies about Him hunting Him to His grave. I marked His miseries unutterable. I heard the groaning which cannot be described. And as I looked up, He opened his eyes and said to me, “The Son of Man is come into the world to seek and to save that which was lost.” I clapped my hands and I said, “Jesus, I do believe, I must believe what You have said, I could not believe before, but the sight of You has breathed faith into my soul. I dare not doubt—it were treason, it were high treason to doubt Your power to save.” Dissolved by His agonies, I fell on the ground and embraced his feet and when I fell, my sin fell also! And I rejoiced in love Divine that blots out sin and saves from death.

Oh my Friend, you will never get faith by trying to make yourself have it. Faith is the gift of Christ! Go and find it in His veins. There is a secret spot where faith is treasured up. It is in the heart of Christ—go and catch it, Sinner, as it flows from there. Go to your chamber and sit down and picture Christ in holy vision, dying on the tree and as your eyes see, your heart shall melt, your soul shall believe and you shall rise from your knees and cry, “I know whom I may believe and I am persuaded He is able to save that which I have committed to Him until that day.”

And now, may the love of Christ Jesus and the grace of His Father and the fellowship of His Spirit be with you forever and ever. Amen and Amen. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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÷Job 11.16

COMFORT FROM THE FUTURE  
NO. 2676

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MAY 27, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 30, 1881.

**“You shall forget your misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.” Job 11:16.**

JOB’S misery was extreme and it seemed as if he could never forget it. He never did forget the fact of it, but he did forget the pain of it. That he had been utterly miserable would always remain recorded upon the tablets of his memory, but the wretchedness itself would not remain. It would be so entirely removed that it should be as a thing that has been altogether forgotten. Nothing better can happen to our misery than that it should be forgotten in the sense referred to in our text, for then, evidently, it will be clean gone from us. It will be as it is when even the scent of the liquor has gone out of the cask, when even the flavor of the bitter drug lingers no longer in the medicine glass, but has altogether disappeared. So is it with the sorrow that has so effectually gone out of the mind that it is just as though it had never been there.

If anyone here is in misery of any kind—whether it is misery of physical pain, or misery of need, or misery of soul on account of sin, or the loss of the light of God’s Countenance—I can only pray for you, dear Friend, that you may speedily forget your misery and only remember it as waters that pass away. The thing goes to be done—it is quite possible, and you may expect it. If you look carefully at the connection of our text and give earnest attention to the matter, I do not doubt that you will experience this blessed forgetfulness. When we are in pain of body and depression of spirit, we imagine that we never shall forget such misery as we are enduring. The sharp plowshare has gone down so deeply that we think it has made a mark in the soul that can never be erased. We seem to lie all broken in pieces, with our thoughts like a case of knives cutting into our spirit, and we say to ourselves, “We never shall forget this terrible experience.” And yet, by-and-by, God turns the palm of His hand towards us and we see that it is full of mercy. We are restored to health, or lifted up from depression of spirit and we wonder that we ever made so much of our former suffering or depression. We remember it no more, except as a thing that has passed and gone, to be remembered with gratitude that we have been delivered from it, but not to be remembered so as to leave any scar upon our spirit, or to cause us any painful reflection whatever. “You shall forget your misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.”

I. I am not going to limit the application of the text to Job and his friends, for it also has a message for many of us at the present time. And I shall take it, first, WITH REFERENCE TO THE COMMON TROUBLES OF LIFE WHICH AFFECT BELIEVING MEN AND WOMEN.

These troubles of life, more or less, happen to us all. They come to one in one shape and, perhaps, he thinks that he is the only man who has any real misery. Yet they also come to others, though possibly in another form. There is certainly a cross for every shoulder to bear. Simon must not bear the cross alone and all the rest go free. There is no road to Heaven without its stones, or without its Hill Difficulty. And I think that there are few pilgrims from the City of Destruction who get to the Celestial City without passing through the Valley of Death and having to fight with giants and even with Apollyon, himself. Cowper truly wrote—

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

There is much joy in true religion. Wisdom’s “ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her and happy is everyone that retains her.” But, still, notwithstanding the joy, in addition to it there is sorrow. There is misery lurking close by the Believer’s pathway and it is always ready to pounce upon him somewhere between here and Heaven. The Lord of the pilgrims was “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” And His disciples must expect to fare even as their Master fared while here below—it is enough for the servant if he is as his Lord.

You, dear Friends, who are just now enduring misery, should seek to be comforted under it. Perhaps you will ask me, “Where can we get any comfort?” Well, if you cannot draw any from your present experience, seek to gather some from the past. You have been miserable before, but you have been delivered and helped. There has come to you a most substantial benefit from everything which you have been called to endure. You must be conscious that when you think of your troubles, you can say, with Hezekiah, “O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so will You recover me, and make me to live.” Or you can say, with the Psalmist, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your word.” I believe that, very often, God sends His very choicest love tokens to us in black-edged envelopes—and many a time has it happened that the great rumbling wagons of tribulation have been those which have brought the heaviest weight of treasure to the doors of the saints! Do we ever learn much without the rod? I fear we do not. Most of us are quickest learners, I think, when we smart the most. Well, then, if affliction has been profitable in the past, let us rest assured that it will be so in the future.

Let us gather consolation, also, from the future. If, as the Apostle truly says, “No chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous,” recollect how he goes on to say, “Nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” I have been trying to ring the changes on those two words, during the last few weeks, while I have been laid aside by illness—“nevertheless afterward”—“nevertheless afterward”—“nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” The Apostle James tells us that “the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth and has long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain.” He does not complain because his corn is buried under the clods and covered with the snow. But he lives upon hope and rejoices in the future harvest, pleading the promise, “He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” In your own case, dear Friend, if you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, what will happen in the future? For it is with that I would comfort you at this time. Why, this is what will happen—“You shall forget your misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.” How will that be?

Well, first, by the lapse of time. Time is a wonderful healer. Hearts that seem as if they must break when first the trial comes, at last grow quite used to it. Look through the veil of a few minutes. Gaze through the longer vista of a few years and that which seemed dark as tempest wears quite another aspect! Oh, if you whose hearts seem now almost ready to burst, could but project yourselves only six months ahead—if you could leap forward a year and then look back—probably even in that time you would almost have forgotten your misery!

Yes, but there is something better than the lapse of years and that is when, during a considerable time, you are left without trial. That is a sharp pain you are now enduring, but what if you should have years of health afterwards? Then you will forget your misery. That is a sad loss which you have been called to suffer—it seems to you to be a crushing disaster—but what if it should be succeeded by years of prosperity? Remember how Job forgot his misery when, in a short time, he had double as much of all that he possessed as he had before? He had back twice the amount of all his former wealth. He had, again, a smiling family around him, so he might well forget his misery. Year after year and, perhaps, even to his death—it was so as far as we know—Job was again a man who had a hedge made round about him and all that he had! And in the happiness of his later life he might well forget his former misery. Well, now, it is very likely to be so with you after you get through this present struggle. Therefore, keep your heart up, believe in God, have confidence in Him and all shall be well. There is wonderfully smooth sailing on ahead for some of you when you are once over this little stretch of broken water. If you can safely pass over this stony portion of the road, it will be good traveling for you all the way to Heaven! Remember that the horses’ heads are towards home—you are journeying to your Father’s House, so be of good courage, for you shall forget your misery and only remember it as waters that pass away!

And besides the lapse of time, and an interval of rest and calm, it may be—it probably is the fact with God’s people—that He has in store for you some great mercies. When the Lord turns your captivity, you will be like they that dream—and you know what happens to men who dream. They wake up. Their dream is all gone, they have completely forgotten it. So will it be with your sorrow! Through God’s goodness, you will seem suddenly to wake up out of a dreary dream and then you will begin to laugh and soon your mouth will be filled with laughter. You will almost despise your former depression of spirit! And when you see the abundant mercy of God toward you, all your misery shall seem like a dream that has gone, a vision of the night—unreal—that has melted into nothingness! Some of you have no idea what is reserved for you—you would not be weeping, but laughing, if you knew what God has in store for you—I mean, even here below. It is good for us not to be able to read the roll closed by the hand of God, but we may be sure that there are such blessed things in it concerning our future that each Believer may well say, “I will not be bowed down by the trials of the present, but my spirit shall rejoice in God who does for me what eye has not seen, nor ear heard and what my heart has never conceived.”

Be of good courage, Brothers and Sisters, in these dark, dull times, for, perhaps, this text is God’s message to your soul, “You shall forget your misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.” It has been so with many, many, many Believers in the past. What do you think of Joseph sold for a slave, Joseph falsely accused, Joseph shut up in prison? But when Joseph found out that all that trial was the way to make him ruler over all the land of Egypt and that he might be the means of saving other nations from famine, and blessing his father’s house, I do not wonder that he called his elder son “Manasseh.” What does that name mean? “Forgetfulness”—“for God said He has made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house.” Why, sitting on the throne, feeding the nation and blessing his father and his brothers, he must have thought that the being cast into the pit, being sold to the Ishmaelites and being put into prison was not worth recollecting, except for gratitude to God that it ever happened as a means to the grand end of helping him into that position of usefulness!

And Joseph is not the only one who has had such an experience as that. Read the Scriptures through and you will find that those whom God has called and anointed to eminent service have been put, like the blades of Damascus, into the fire and drawn through the fire again and again, that in the day of battle they might strike on the northern iron and steel and yet not turn their edge! These servants of the Lord have been prepared for an immortal destiny by desperate griefs and—

*“The deeper their sorrows, the louder they’ll sing.”*As a woman remembers no more her travail, for joy that a man is born into the world, so has it happened to the Believer in the time of his sorrow—he has forgotten it, cast it all away because of the greater joy which God has brought out of it. Jabez is the child of sorrow, but he is, therefore, more honorable than his brethren. The more stormy the sea, the sweeter the haven. The rougher the road on earth, the better the rest above. So, poor tried child of God, believe that this text is intended to be a Divine message of comfort to your heart, “You shall forget your misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.”

Thus much on the first head.  
II. I should be greatly rejoiced if, in the second place, I might speak A

CHEERING WORD TO POOR SOULS UNDER DISTRESS ON ACCOUNT OF SIN. I mean you who long to be saved, yet cannot understand how it is to come to pass, or who, understanding the plan of salvation, are somehow unable to appropriate it to yourselves. You feel as if you have your eyes bandaged and your feet fast fixed in the stocks, so that you cannot go to Christ, cannot even look to Christ and, therefore, your souls are full of sorrow. I want you, dear Friends, to especially notice what Zophar recommends to a man who has sin upon him. Read the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th verses of this chapter—“If you prepare your heart, and stretch out your hands toward Him; if iniquity is in your hands, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in your tabernacles. For then shall you lift up your face without spot; yes, you shall be steadfast, and shall not fear: because you shall forget your misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.” I recommend these words to you, also. But I have something even better to recommend to you. Does any man here say, “I cannot get peace with God. I am full of misery on account of sin?” I know all about you, Friend. I have gone that road, long ago. I have been splashed up to my very eyes in the mire of the Slough of Despond and I sometimes get a little of its mud in my eyes even now.

Well, now, I exhort you, first of all, to look to Christ and lean on Christ. Trust in His atoning Sacrifice, for there, alone, can a troubled soul find rest. If you say that, somehow, you cannot get peace, then I shall have to ask you to see whether, perhaps, sin may not be lying at the door. To use Zophar’s expression, have you prepared your heart? Have you gone to Christ with your whole heart and soul? Have you sought Him with all your might? I hope you realize that repentance and faith are very bad things to play with, for such play will damn a man’s soul. These are things to be earnestly used in a most solemn undertaking. “The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence” in this matter. We can neither repent nor believe with half our heart—it is our whole soul that is required if salvation is to be ours. Now, have you sought the Lord with all your heart? If you have, you will surely find Him. I am certain that you will. And then, afterwards, “you shall forget your misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.” There was never a man yet who, with all his heart, sought the Lord Jesus Christ, but sooner or later found Him. And if you have been long in seeking, I lay it to the fact that you have not sought with a prepared heart, a thoroughly earnest heart, or else you would have found Him.

But, perhaps, taking Zophar’s next expression, you have not stretched out your hands toward the Lord, giving yourself up to Him like a man who holds up his hands to show that he surrenders. You must come and say, “My opposition is over. I now have no quarrel with God. I yield unconditionally to Him.” The word may refer to one who stretches out his hands to grasp whatever may come from God within his reach. He stretches out his empty hands, asking to have them filled. He stretches out his entreating hands, pleading that God will bless him. Well now, if you have done that, you shall get a blessing.

Further, you may and you shall forget your misery, provided you fulfill one more condition mentioned by Zophar, and that is that you are not harboring any sin. “If iniquity is in your hands, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in your tabernacles.” There is an old-fashioned Grace that I am never ashamed to preach, though some, who call themselves evangelists, have folded it up and put it away in the back cupboard. They never mention this old-fashioned Grace which is called repentance. Now, I learn from the Scriptures that repentance is just as necessary to salvation as faith is—and the faith that has not repentance going with it will have to be repented of one of these days. A dry-eyed faith is a faith that will save no man. Peter’s message was, “Repent you, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” And our Lord’s own declaration was, “Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” He began His public ministry by crying, “Repent and believe the Gospel,” which means just this—that if any man is living in sin, it is no use his praying, or pretending to believe until he gives up that sin. If there is any passion that you are indulging, any lust that is your master—if you are carrying on a wicked business—if you are living in willful transgression of God’s Law, Christ can save you from your sins, but even Christ cannot save you in your sins. If you will have your sin, you must be lost—so stands God’s decree. Christ must, by His Grace, separate you from your sin or else you will be separated from Him forever. I want this to be a very heart-searching word and, therefore, I say to any miserable man or miserable woman here—“You shall forget your misery if you give up your sin and trust in the sin-atoning Savior. Come, Friend, you shall not say that I am flattering you, for I tell you plainly that you must flee for your life from the dearest sin that now lays hold upon you.”

“Oh” you say, “but how am I to do it?” Christ will help you. Trust Him to help you. But if you say, “I will trust Him to save me,” and yet continue to live in sin, He will not save you. That is not the salvation that we preach! We proclaim salvation from sin, for that is the salvation which Jesus came to bring us. You must, as Zophar said to Job, put your iniquity far away—and you must not let wickedness dwell in your tabernacles—that is to say, in your tents, in your houses. I know some men who will never get peace of conscience and rest of heart while they let their wives live as they do, and while they allow their children to live as they do. Some of you will not find mercy for yourselves while you neglect your children’s highest welfare as you do. I know some men—I hope they are good men, but certainly they are not good fathers—they are so peaceful and gentle that they never like to utter a word of reproof. Their boys and girls may go where they like—I might almost say that they may go to the devil if they like—yet their father has not a word to say to them. Do you call that proper conduct for a professedly Christian? There are some parents who allow their children to do such things that God is grieved with them for their children’s sakes—and they will never get peace of mind till they set their house in order. What? Is God coming to live where there is no family prayer, where there is no care for His name or His day, where there is no rebuke of open sin? It has filled me with unspeakable sorrow when I have heard of Christian parents whose boys swear and whose girls are allowed to go where, if they are not ruined, body and soul, it is little short of a miracle! Oh, do see that you let not wickedness dwell in your tabernacles, you who are the people of God, and you who wish to be His, if you would have Zophar’s words to Job fulfilled in your experience, “Then shall you lift up your face without spot; yes, you shall be steadfast, and shall not fear: because you shall forget your misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.”

III. Now let me tell you HOW SWEETLY GOD CAN MAKE A SINNER FORGET HIS MISERY.  
The moment a sinner believes in Jesus Christ with true heart and repentant spirit, God makes him forget his misery, first, by giving him a full pardon. All his sin is forgiven and, therefore, he feels ready to dance for joy and he soon forgets his misery. By faith, he gets a sight of the great, pardoning Lord and of His atoning blood. He sees the Son of God suffering and dying for him on the Cross and he is overjoyed at the Revelation of such a wondrous redemption. He claps his hands and he forgets his misery.  
Next, he rejoices in all the blessings that God gives with His Grace. He reads that those whom Christ has pardoned “are justified from all things,” from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. He learns that they are clothed with the robe of Christ’s perfect righteousness and he forgets his own nakedness while he rejoices that he is so wondrously clothed. He feeds on the Bread of Heaven and forgets his former hunger. He drinks of the Water of Life and forgets his previous pangs of thirst. He enjoys the liberty of the sons of God and he forgets the chains he used to wear as Satan’s slave. He has peace with God and he forgets the trouble that was such a burden on his heart! He is so full of joy that there is no room for sorrow and if, perchance, the tear of repentance still lingers in his eyes, it is not sullen but sweet sorrow, and the tear glistens in the sunlight of God’s Countenance like a diamond, or like some choice pearl that slumbers in its shell. Oh, Beloved, if you will but come to Christ and leave your sin, whatever your misery is, you shall forget it! Or, if you do remember it at all, it shall only be to remember it as the snow that has melted and vanished, or as the rain that has soaked into the earth, “as waters that pass away.”  
Now, dear Friends, all that I have been saying to the sinner is quite as applicable to every backsliding child of God! It may be that some of you who are here are Christians—that is, you have trusted in Christ to save you—but you have got into a very sad state of heart. You have not half the spiritual life that you once had and, therefore, you do not glorify God as you once did. It is most grievous to think how many professing Christians live at a poor dying rate—they seem to be barely alive, or hardly that. Well, dear Brother or Sister, if you have become miserable, I am rather glad that you have! That is part of the way towards a better state of things. When a man cannot be happy in a backsliding state, he will soon seek to get out of it! The hurt is a part of the cure. Solomon says, “The blueness of a wound cleanses away evil,” and the chastisement which follows sin is often for the healing of the sinner.  
IV. I will bring my discourse to a close with this last reflection. THIS TEXT WILL COME TRUE TO THE SICKENING, DECLINING, SOONDEPARTING BELIEVER.  
Ah, dear Friend, when you first found out that the complaint from which you are suffering really was consumption, what a chill seemed to come over everything! When the physician said to you, very tenderly but very faithfully, “I fear I cannot do much for you. I can perhaps give you a little relief, but I dare not deceive you, for you have an incurable disease”—then, although you are a child of God, you endured a great deal of misery and spent many long, sleepless nights looking forward to, you scarcely knew what. Are you still in that state, my dear Sister? As you get worse and worse, do your spirits continue to sink? My dear Brother, as you gradually fade away, does the light seem to fade, too? Well, then, listen!  
If you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and if you are resting alone upon Him, remember that in a very short time, “you shall forget your misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.” In a very, very, very short time, your suffering and sadness will all be over! I suppose the expression, “waters that pass away,” signifies those rivers which are common in the East and which we meet with so abundantly in the South of France. They are rivers with very broad channels, but I have often looked in vain for a single drop of water in them. “Then,” perhaps you ask, “what is the use of such rivers?” Well, at certain times, the mountain torrents come rushing down, bearing great rocks, stones and trees before them—and then, after they have surged along the riverbed for several days, they altogether disappear in the sea! Such will all the sorrows of life and the sorrows even of death soon be to you, dear Friend, and to me also. They will all have passed away and all will be over with us here. The passage to the grave may be sharp, but it must be short—

*“The road may be rough, but it cannot be long, So I’ll smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song.”*

And then, you know, dear Friends, those waters that have passed away will never come back again. Water that is spilt upon the ground can never be gathered up again—and it is one of the charms of the heavenly world that our sorrows will never reach us there. No more poverty, no more cold, no more heat, no more sin, no more depression of spirits, no more pain, no more forsaking of friends, no more sorrow of any kind, for, “the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” That is a very beautiful expression— “Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Here, they keep clinging to us, one on one arm and the other on the other! Sorrow and sighing will come with us wherever we go and we sometimes say to them, “Now, you might go somewhere else, for we do not want you,” yet they still hold fast to us. But when we get up to the golden gate, no sooner shall the eternal light flash on our eyes than we shall look in vain for our old companions, for they will be gone! “Sorrow and sighing shall flee away” and lest there should be any trace of their mournful companionship left, we are expressly told that “God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

Thank God, we shall recollect our sorrows in Heaven only to praise God for the Grace that sustained us under them! We shall not remember them as a person does who has cut his finger and who still bears the scar in his flesh. We shall not recollect them as one does who has been wounded and who carries the bullet somewhere about him. In Heaven, you shall not have a trace of earth’s sorrow! You shall not have, in your glorified body, or in your perfectly sanctified soul and spirit, any trace of any spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing that shall show that you ever had a pain on earth, or even that you ever committed a sin! Some diseases, you know, leave marks on our hands or faces, so that we say to our friends, “Do you see that lump? It was a time of terrible pain that brought that up, and I fear it will not go away.” Ah, but in Heaven there will be no trace of anything like pain or sorrow of any sort. All sorrow and suffering shall be gone and we shall forget our misery, or only remember it as waters that have passed away, never to come back again.

This is the sum and substance of all that I have been trying to say to you—“Be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the Lord.” Christians do not live on the comforts of this world—their inheritance is on the other side of Jordan. If you are like Esau and can be content with red pottage, well, you may have it, but you will lose the birthright if you do not prize it. But if you are God’s true Jacob, you will gladly give up the pottage to get the promise of the future inheritance. Oh, what a blessed thing is the faith that enables the soul to postpone the present in order to obtain that blessed future! For what is the present, after all, but a fleeting show, an empty dream? But the future is eternal and incorruptible, reserved in Heaven at the right hand of God, where there are pleasures forevermore!

Now that, by God’s mercy, I again find myself in your midst after a season of sore suffering, I desire to forget my miseries—and some of them have been very sharp ones. I am so glad to be here, again, to see you all, and I pray that it may be a long time before I am deprived of the great privilege of speaking to you in the name of the Lord. I bless God tonight and praise His name in the great congregation. And I ask for every Brother and Sister that, when your time of misery comes, you may be brought through it all and come out of the big end of the horn, rejoicing in the cornucopia of God’s bounty and blessedness, and praising His name, as I do at this time with all my heart! Oh, may every one of you find this text to be true to you, “You shall forget your misery, and remember it as waters that pass away”! The blessing of the Lord be with you all forevermore! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOB 11.**

The words we are about to read were spoken by one of Job’s three friends—or what if I call them his three tormentors? These men did not speak wisely and their argument was not altogether sound. But, for all that, in the instance before us, Zophar the Naamathite spoke that which was truthful. Although he made a great mistake in turning it against Job, yet what he said was, in the main, correct, and we may learn from it as we read it. Remember, dear Friends, that whenever you read the words of these three men, you must take them with a good many grains of salt. They are not to be accepted as if they were God’s Word, because they are not. Those three men were mistaken in many points, yet very much of what they said was weighty and valuable—and is still worthy of our careful consideration.

Verses 1-3. Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, Should not the multitude of words be answered? And should a man full of talk be justified? Should your lies make men hold their peace? And when you mock, shall no man make you ashamed? This was a very bitter and cruel speech. Zophar was not using the language of friendship, or even of common courtesy. First, he charged Job with being a great talker, “a man full of talk.” No doubt Job did speak well and eloquently, but to retort upon him that he was a man abundant in words was a very cruel thing, especially when he was in such a condition of distress and suffering. Yet, dear Friends, it is an evil thing to be men of tongue and not of hand. It is a dreadful thing to be men—or, for that matter, women—who are “full of talk” and, therefore, have no room for anything else. There are some people who seem to think that simply by their volubility they can carry all before them! In such a case we may say with Zophar, “Should not the multitude of words be answered? And should a man full of talk be justified?” But he went beyond these questions and charged Job with downright lying because he had pleaded his own innocence—“Should your lies make men hold their peace?” Zophar also insinuated that Job fumed and frothed, as it were, and spoke folly, which he certainly did not do, for he spoke in solemn, sober earnest if ever a man did.

4. For you have said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in Your eyes. Job did not say that. At least he did not say it in so many words. He did endeavor to prove his own innocence of the false charges that were brought against him, but he never said that he was clean in God’s eyes.

5, 6. But oh that God would speak, and open His lips against you; and that He would show you the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Oh, that God would enable you, dear Friends, to see your sin and make you perceive that there is a double meaning in His Law—a deep, underlying, spiritual meaning, as well as that which is apparent on the surface, so that a man may be guilty of transgression even when he thinks it is not! Oh, that God would unveil the secrets of His wisdom so as to make you see that He is wiser than all His works, that His hidden wisdom is double that which you have been able to perceive in Nature, or in Providence, and infinitely greater than He has ever made it appear before men’s eyes!

6. Know therefore that God exacts of you less than your iniquity deserves. That was a hard thing for Zophar to say to Job but, still, it was true—and it is true in the case of all of us! “He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” Even when a man sits down among the ashes, robbed of all his property and bereaved of all his children—and when he has to scrape himself with a potsherd because of his many boils—even then it may be truly said to him, “God exacts of you less than your iniquity deserves.”

7 *.*Can you, by searching, find out God? Can you find out the Almighty unto perfection! What amazing questions these are! How they ought to convict those who glibly talk of God as if they could measure Him with a ruler and understood exactly what He ought to do and ought to be. We are constantly meeting with statements that such-and-such a thing, which is revealed in Scripture, cannot be true because it is inconsistent with the modern idea of the benevolence of God! Our only answer to the quibbler is, “Can you, by searching, find out God? Can you find out the Almighty unto perfection?”

8, 9. It is as high as Heaven; what can you do? Deeper than Hell; what can you know! The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. God is incomprehensible by any finite mind—and He is Omnipotent, too.

10. If He cuts off, and shuts up, or gathers together, then who can hinder Him? If He sees fit to destroy men, or for a while to make them prisoners. Or if He pleases to gather them together and multiply them like the hosts of Heaven, who can hinder Him?

11. For He knows vain men. He sees wickedness, also. Will He not then consider it? Wickedness hidden under the veil of night, God sees as clearly as in the blaze of noon. Wickedness which never comes out of the heart, but tarries there, and does not lead into overt action, God sees. “Will He not then consider it?” Of course He will!

12. For vain man—That is just what man is by nature! The best of men are vanity—emptiness. “For vain man”—  
12. Would be wise. He pretends to wisdom. He wishes to be thought wise. He likes to wear a wise man’s title. “Vain man would be wise.”  
12. Though man is born like a wild ass’s colt. As untamed, as ignorant, as willful as a wild ass’s colt are we by nature. Zophar seems to think that he has sufficiently rebuked Job for pretending to be wise and for complaining that God was dealing unjustly with him. So now he begins to admonish him to repent.  
13-18. If you prepare your heart, and stretch out your hands toward Him; if iniquity is in your hands, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in your tabernacles. For then shall you lift up your face without spot; yes, you shall be steadfast, and shall not fear: because you shall forget your misery, and remember it as waters that pass away: and your age shall be clearer than the noonday; you shall shine forth, you shall be as the morning. And you shall be secure, because there is hope; yes, you shall dig about you, and you shall take your rest in safety. It is a great mercy when God enables men to pursue their daily callings and to take their nightly rest in safety. And it is a still greater mercy when they feel secure, whether they live or die, because they have a good hope concerning the hereafter. It is an unspeakable blessing when sin is washed away and a man can lift up his face to God without spot, and walk in the light of Jehovah’s Countenance all the day long!  
19, 20. Also you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid; yes, many shall make suit unto you. But the eyes of the wicked shall fail. Carefully notice this very solemn prophecy—the eyes that have looked upon sin with pleasure—the eyes that have flashed with lascivious desire—the eyes that have dared to look towards God with defiance or derision—“the eyes of the wicked shall fail.”  
20. And they shall not escape. To what place could they escape from God, when He is everywhere? During the days when the Roman empire extended all over the world, people said that the whole earth was one great prison for Caesar’s enemies. And the universe itself is a vast prison for those who are condemned of God! Where shall they go to avoid arrest? Where shall they flee to get beyond God’s reach? They cannot escape anywhere! There is neither hole nor corner, even in the bowels of the mountains, or in the flinty hearts of the rocks, where a sinner can hide himself from the hand of God! “They shall not escape.”  
20. And their hope. The last thing that ever dies, “their hope”—  
20. Shall be as the giving up of the ghost. Like death itself, their hope shall be. Then, if “their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost,” what hope is there for them? Let us not have our portion with them, else we shall be as hopeless as they are!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—30, 595, 683 AND FROM “FLOWERS AND FRUITS”—14.  
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÷Job 12.9

EVERYWHERE AND YET FORGOTTEN  
NO. 326

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 29, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

**“Who knows not in all these that the hand of the Lord has worked this?**

**In whose hand is the soul of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.”  
Job 12:9, 10.**

THESE verses occur in Job’s answer to Zophar the Naamathite. Job had his failings but certainly he appears less faulty in this dialogue than those three men who sought to reprove him and convict him of error. Zophar the Naamathite had the very highest opinion of his own personal wisdom. He addressed Job as though he had been an inferior And all in the eleventh chapter he used language which though extremely beautiful, must have been very grating upon the ear of such a sufferer as Job. For it is a lecture full of high-flown language, abounding in poetry and noble images, but containing little solid sense and less sympathy.

Job being exceedingly irritated both with the style and with the matter of Zophar’s speech, begins at once to pluck off his plumes and to pull to pieces his fine language. In biting irony Job cries from his dunghill—“No doubt but you are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you. I am not inferior to you; yes, who knows not such things as these?” You have put into flowery language things which an ordinary observer might discover. You have pointed to the Heaven above and to the depth beneath, to prove a truth which the creeping insect of the earth could tell you, and which the fishes of the sea might proclaim. Ask now the beasts and they shall teach you and the fowls of the air and they shall tell you—or speak to the earth and it shall teach you—and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto you. Who knows not in all these that the hand of the Lord has worked this?”

There is much temper here, but there is very much of good common sense. I would we had another Job to chastise the high-sounding language of modern theologians. There are starting up in our midst, men, who if they are not heretics in doctrine, are aliens in speech. They are men described by the old preachers who say, “Mark!” and there is nothing to mark and who shout, “Observe!” and there is nothing to observe, except the want of everything that is worth observing. We know ministers who cannot speak in the common language of mankind, but must needs adopt the jargon of Carlyle, who sets language on its head and puts the last word first.

These men must make the English language a slave to the German— the glorious grand old Saxon must buckle to their heresies and conceal the depths of their falsehoods. I pray God the time may come when some man may unmask them, when all these wind-bags may be rent and all these bladders may be pricked. When if teachers have anything to tell us they will deliver themselves so that all can understand. If they cannot use

plain language let their tongues go to school till they have learned it. There is something so enticing and yet so flimsy in the modern theological school that I feel constrained to warn you constantly against it—its mystery is absurdity and its depth is pompous ignorance.

There is no theology in it. It is a futile device to conceal the want of theological knowledge. A man with an education that may be complete in every department except that in which he should excel, stands up and would teach Christians that all they have learned at the feet of Paul has been a mistake. That a new theology has been discovered—that the old phrases which we have used are out of date—the old creeds broken up. Well, what shall we do to this wiseacre and his fellow sages? Serve them? Wherever you meet them or their disciples, as Job did Zophar—laugh at them, dash their language to pieces and remind them that the best things they tell us are only what the fishes of the sea, or the fowls of the air knew before them. And that their grandest discoveries are but platitudes which every child has known before, or else they are heresies that ought to be scouted from the earth.

The doctrine upon which Job spoke was this—he wished to show that the fact of the presence of God in all things was so clearly discernible that men need not borrow the eagle’s wing to mount to Heaven. Nor need they enter into the heart of the Leviathan to find a chariot wherein to enter the depths of the sea. “No,” said he, “no. The present Deity the beasts proclaim.” The actual existence and the constant working of the Eternal God is sung by the very fowls of Heaven and the mute fishes of the sea leap up and in their joyous reaping, seem to say, “The sea is His and He made it.” This doctrine I wish to bring out this morning. Or, rather, thus would I speak of it. First, the present hand of God everywhere in the universe. Secondly, our present and complete dependence upon that hand of God. And then let us learn some useful lessons from the whole subject of Divine Providence.

I. The first doctrine is THE PRESENT HAND OF GOD.  
1. That there is a God you need not that I should prove—that God is here and there and everywhere, you also firmly believe. But, alas, it is one thing to believe this truth and quite another thing to hold it in perpetual remembrance. We may write it down far more easily upon the tables of our creed than upon the tablets of our memory. In fact, this is one of the doctrines which all men are constantly forgetting. And even the righteous may often check themselves because they begin to degenerate into the fools who say in their hearts, “There is no God here.” Strange is it that the name of the Lord should be written everywhere so clearly that even the blind might see it. And yet man is so doubly dark that he does not observe his God even where God is most manifest and visible. Methinks, my Brethren, this forgetfulness of God is growing upon this perverse generation.  
Time was, in the old Puritan days when every shower of rain was seen to come from Heaven, when every ray of sunshine was blessed and God was thanked for having given fair weather to ingather the fruits of the harvest. Then, men talked of God as doing everything. But in our days where is our God? We have the laws of matter. Alas, alas, that names with little meaning should have destroyed our memory of the Eternal One. We talk now of phenomena and of the chain of event, as if all things happened by machinery—as if the world were a huge clock which had been wound up in eternity and continued to work without a present God. No, not only our philosophers, but even our poets rant in the same way. They sing of the works of Nature. But who is that fair goddess, Nature? Is she a heathen deity, or what? Do we not act as if we were ashamed of our God, or as if His name had become obsolete?  
Go abroad wherever you may, you hear but little said concerning Him who made the heavens and who formed the earth and the sea. But everything is “nature,” and the “laws of motion” and of “matter.” And do not Christians often use words which would lead you to suppose that they believed in the old goddess, Luck, or rested in that equally false deity, Fortune, or trembled before the demon of Misfortune? Oh for the day when God shall be seen and little else beside! Better, my Brethren, that philosophical discoveries were lost, than that God should be concealed behind them. Better that our poets had ceased to write and that all their flaming words were buried with their ashes, than that they should serve as a cloud before the face of the Eternal Creator.  
We must go back again to the remembrance of our God and especially must the true Believer make the worldling feel that the Christian has a God with him, a God about him and a God within him, one who is his constant companion and his Fiend. So act, my Brethren, that men may be compelled to say of you, “That man has a God whom he observes in all the events of his family, ascribing to His Divine hand every sickness that falls upon his child and every loss that occurs to him in his business.” My Brethren, it is a doleful truth that there is nothing more easy to forget than the grand doctrine that God is everywhere at work in the midst of us all.  
2. Now, let me proceed to say that though this is a truth so frequently forgotten, it is a fact of universal force. God works ever and everywhere. There is no place where God is not. You may traverse the silent valleys where the rocks enclose you on either side till you can see but a strip of the blue sky. You may be the only traveler that has passed through that glen. The bird may start up frightened and the moss may tremble beneath the first tread of man. But God was there of old, upholding yon rocky barriers, filling the flower cups with their perfume and refreshing the lonely pines with the breath of His mouth.  
Or, descend if you will into the lowest depths of the sea where undisturbed the water sleeps. The very sand is motionless in eternal quiet, but the footsteps of the Lord are there, reigning within the silent palace of the sea. You may borrow the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, but God is there. Mount to the highest Heaven or dive into the deepest Hell and God is in both—hymned in everlasting song, or howled in eternal tortures. Everywhere and in every place, God dwells and is manifestly at work.  
And not merely, my Friends, in every place, but in every time the Lord is present. From the beginning of the year even to the end thereof, there is God. His eyes never sleep, His hands never rest. In the silent watches of midnight when the city sleeps, God is the Watchman and when the sun wakes up and draws aside the curtains of the night, the Lord is abroad before him—on the waters and on the snow-white summits of the mountains. And when again high noon is gained and all the world is busy with its toil and God forgotten, He is there amid the throng of men as well as in the deserts’ wilds. Every place feels His footstep and every time trembles at His Presence. From everlasting to everlasting, O God, You are sensibly felt in every passing moment. The pulsing of the eternal sea of time are caused by You and there never is an instant when You have fled and left us to ourselves.  
And as in every place and every time, so in every event there is God. Is the earth shaken by inward convulsions? It is God that heaves the mountains to and fro. Or, do the valleys laugh in the sunshine and do the rejoicing husbandmen carry home their harvests? God is there right manifest in the lavish bounty of His hand. The greatest political disasters are predestinated, guided and overruled by God. When an Attila scourges the earth and reddens her soil with blood, his steps are ordered, arranged and foreordained, as much as the flight of the eternal angel who shall blow the trumpet of the Gospel and proclaim the year of jubilee.  
There is no event, however base and vile, however grand and good, which is not within the management of the dread Supreme. His dominion has no limit. Even the dark gulf of evil is spanned by the bridge of His wisdom. Journey onward till you seem to go where goodness is not found and grace is all eclipsed—in the thick darkness there He dwells. He makes the clouds His chariot and yokes the whirlwinds to His cart. Be of good cheer, Beloved, in every event you may behold your God. If invasion should ravage this fair island, if tyrants should set their foot on the neck of your liberties, if the streets should run with blood—God were even there supreme—His people still secure.  
And if it is so, that God is in every event, permit me to remind you that God is where there is no event. When there is a lull upon the waters and all is stagnant. When political affairs are quiet, when in the lesser world of your own house and your own soul there is a dead calm, perhaps the woeful prelude of a tempest, God is there. Great God, You stand in the midst of the silent desert, where not even the hum of the bee disturbs the dread solemnity of stillness! You are far down in the cleft of the rock where creature could not live! No, in the heart of the solid adamant You have Your palace and beneath the surging of the ever-tossing sea You have a tabernacle.  
In the unknown ravine, the untraversed gorge, the Lord Jehovah has His dwelling-place. He keeps yon rocks from tottering to their fall. He swells those rivers till they roll along. Let Him but remove His hand and earth’s pillars totter to their fallen creation reels and the universe expires. As dies the spark struck from the steel, so dies creation if God ceases to be present there. Oh, learn then evermore, that not only in His doings but in His testing. Not only in His acting but in His standing still, God is most manifest to you if you will but see Him—if your eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve are but open to behold your Father and your King. This, I may well say, is a Truth of God which though much forgotten is of universal force.  
3. Let me proceed a little further and remind you that this is a Truth of God worthy of perpetual remembrance. Do not look at it as a mere speculation. I beseech you, do not think of a present God as a fact in which you have no interest. There is scarcely a Truth in the compass of revelation which is more instructive, profitable and consoling to the people of God than this—a present God in everything. Come, let me show you how worthy a remembrance it is. You have many mercies. Your God is in them all. Does not that thought sweeten the bread you eat? Will it not give a relish to the water that you drink?  
The air you breathe, the clothes that are on your back—God is in each of them. Go to your home, where your best pleasures dwell—your own sweet home. Be it ever so homely and when you look on your mercies say, “I see my gracious God here.” Cast your eye upon the prattlers that climb your knee and remember that they are a heritage from the Lord. Look at her who is the partner of your bosom and see God’s love and kindness in so good a gift. Look on all the prosperity that attends your business. Look on your growing crops and your verdant fields and see God in every mercy you receive.  
I would not have the worldling’s wealth, for it is a wealth that came not from God. At least so far as he is concerned it came not from a father’s hand. But oh to have benefits every one of which smells of the treasury out of which it came. To look on your gold and on your silver, no, on your very pence—and see the impress of your God stamped there more clearly than the image of Caesar’s own self. To sit down to your table and eat and drink and feel that every meal is a sacrament, that every robe you wear is a vestment sent from Heaven, that in all these mercies there is the hand of a covenant, promise-keeping God—why it will make you live a noble life.  
It was thought by the old heathens to be the grandest thing they could say of a man that he should one day eat at the tables of the gods. My Brethren, we eat at these tables every day. At the table of my God I feast and from His cup I drink. I have nothing which I have not received from Him. The Lord has given me all that I have.  
But if it is very sweet to see God in our mercies, it is most consoling to discern Him in all our trials. Say not these are evil times. No times are evil where God is, for His presence scatters all that is ill. Say not that you dwell in an evil place. There is no evil place to the man who dwells with God. Think not that evil circumstances have happened unto you. They seem to be big with evil, but those clouds shall break in blessings on your head.  
Oh, if you can but look at your troubles as sent from God, it will take the sharpness from them and turn them from wasps that sting into bees that gather honey. Say, now, when your family is sick, “The Lord has placed His hand upon my wife and on my children.” When your treasure vanishes away, say, “The Lord has put His hands into my coffers and emptied them.” And when the ship is wrecked, say, “The Lord has my vessel on the rocks.” And when the corn is spoiled and the harvest is not gathered, say, “The Lord has sent the rain from Heaven. He has done it.” Join with Job the author of our text and exclaim, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away and blessed be the name of the Lord.” Regard not the second causes but the first cause, not the trying creature but the supporting Creator.  
If it is pleasant to see God in our trials, I add it is very seasonable to remember Him in our dangers. To be at sea when every timber creaks in the ship and when the mast is strained and then to feel, “He holds the waves in the hollow of His hand.” To stand in places where the danger is present and terrific, and then to say, “My Father’s shield is over me.” To walk through the midst of plague and pestilence, through the valleys that are steaming with miasma and malaria and to feel that God holds our breath and that all the arrows that Death ever stored within his quiver can never find a place in our heart until Jehovah bids them—oh, these things are sweet and pleasant! A man is never in danger when he feels this.  
At God’s command, through Death’s dominions and through Hell’s domains, a man might march securely trusting in the voice which cries, “Fear not, I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God.” A present God! My Brethren, I cannot suggest a theme that may make you more full of courage in times of danger and trouble. I think I need not enlarge upon this point further than to add you will find it exceedingly helpful and consoling if you can discover God in your trifles. Our life is made up of trifles and if we had a God only for the great things and not for the little things, we should be miserable, indeed. If we had a God of the temple and not a God of the tents of Jacob, where were we?  
But blessed be our heavenly Father, He that wings an angel, guides a sparrow. He that rolls a world along, molds a star and marks its orbit when it trickles from its source. There is a God in the motion of a grain of dust blown by the summer’s wind, as much as in the revolutions of the stupendous planet. There is a God in the sparkling of a fire-fly, as truly as in the flaming comet. Carry home, I beseech you, to your houses the thought that God is there—at your table, in your bed-chamber, in your workroom and at your counter. Recognize the doing and being of God in every little thing.  
Think for a moment and you will find that there are many promises of Scripture giving the sweetest consolation in trivial matters. “He shall give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands.” Why? Lest you fall from a precipice? Lest you dash yourself from a pinnacle? No, “Lest you dash your foot against a stone.” A little danger, but a great Providence to ward us from it. And what says the Scripture also? Does it say, “The very days of your life are numbered?” It says not so, though that were true. But it says, “the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”  
And what says the Scripture, yet again? Does it say, “The Lord knows the eagles and not an eagle falls to the ground without your Father?” No. But, “are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.” A great God in little things, I am sure, will spare you a world of vexation if you will but remember this, for it is Hence our vexations come. We often get into a bad temper about a trifle, when a great trial does not agitate us. We are angry because we have scalded ourselves with a little water or have lost a button from our clothes and yet the greatest calamity can scarcely disturb us. You smile, because it is true with all of you.  
Job himself, who said, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away,” might have grown angry, because of some rough edge in his potsherd. Take care that you see God in little things, that your mind may be always calms and composed and that you be not foolish enough to suffer a trifle to overcome a saint of God.  
II. Now, my dear Friends, having thus brought forward the doctrine of a God present everywhere, let me remind you of the second head—OUR ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE UPON A PRESENT GOD AT THIS VERY MOMENT. We are absolutely dependent upon the will and pleasure of God for our life, our comforts, our means to enjoy our comforts and especially for all spiritual blessings.  
First, then, our life is entirely dependent upon God. One sees strange sights in journeying—scenes which will never be erased from the memory. It was but a few days ago, just under a tremendous rock, I saw a vast mass of broken stones and earth tossed about in wild confusion and raised in huge hillocks. My driver said to me, “That is the grave of a village.” Some years ago, there lived upon that spot a joyful and happy people. They went forth to their daily work. They ate. They drank—as men do to this day. One time they saw a great crack in the mountain that hung overhead. They heard alarming noises, but they had heard such sounds before and the old men said, “There might be something coming,” but they did not know.  
Suddenly, however, without further notice, the whole side of the hill was in motion and before the villager could escape from his hut, the village was buried beneath the fallen rocks. And there it lies. And neither bone of man, nor piece of the habitation of man has ever been discovered in the wreck. So thoroughly was everything crushed and buried, that nothing by the most diligent search could ever be discovered. There are many villages standing in a like position at this day.  
I passed another spot, where there was a shelving mountain with its layers slanting towards the valley. A town which had been built at the foot had been entirely covered and a lake filled up by one tremendous slide from the top of the hill. Yet, there stand new houses still and men venture to live among the graves of their sires. We are apt to say, “How these people ought to look up every morning and say, ‘O Lord, spare this village.’ ” Standing there where they might be crushed in a moment, where the slightest motion of the earth within would bring down the hill upon them, they ought to lift up their hearts to the Preserving One and say, “Oh keeper of Israel, keep us both day and night.”  
Ah, but my Friends, you and I are in the same position

Though no crags overhang our homesteads, though no mountain threatens to leap upon our city—yet are there a thousand gates to death. There are other agencies beside these which can hurry mortals to their tombs. You are sitting today as near to the jaws of death, as those villagers who are dwelling there. Oh that you felt it! One breath choked up and you are dead. Perhaps your life is a thousand times in danger every moment. As many times as there are ebbing and flowing of the blood, as many times as there are breathing from the lungs—so many times does your life hang in such jeopardy that it only needs your God to will it and you fall dead in your seat and are carried out a pale lifeless corpse.  
There are parts of the mountain passes of the Alps of such danger to the traveler that when you traverse them in winter the muleteers muffle the bells of their beasts, lest the faintest sound should bring down an avalanche of snow and sweep you into the bottomless precipice beneath. Then, one would think, the traveler must feel that he is in God’s hand. Yes, but you are in the same position now, though you see it not. Open but the eyes of your spirit and you may see the avalanche overhanging you today and the rock trembling to its fall at this very moment. Only let your soul behold the latent lightning that God conceals within His hand and you may soon see that to crush a gnat with your finger is not so easy for you, as for God to take away your life now, or whenever He pleases.  
As it is with our life, my Brethren, so is it with the comforts of life. What would life be without its comfort? Much more, what would it be without its necessities! And yet how absolutely dependent are we upon God for the bread which is the staff of life! I never felt more truly the dependence of man upon his God than I did last Friday week. At the foot of the Alpine pass of the Splugen, I saw in the distances the whole road black, as if it had been spread over with heaps of black earth. As we neared it, we discovered it was a group of locusts in full march—tens of thousands of myriads of them.  
As we drew nearer they divided as regularly as if they had been an army and made room for the carriage. No sooner was it passed than the ranks were filled up again and they went on in their devouring march. On we went for several miles and there was nothing to be seen except these creatures, literally covering the ground here and there in thick layers like a shower of black snow. Then I realized the language of the Prophet— “Before them was like Eden. Behind them was a desert.” They had eaten up every green blade. There stood the Indian corn with just the dry stems, but every green particle was gone. In the front of their march you saw the vines beginning to ripen and the fields of grain hastening to perfection.  
There stood the poor cottager at his door. The wheat that he had planted and the vines that he had tended, must all be eaten and devoured before his own eyes. The pastures were literally alive with these fiery creatures. When they first entered the field there was green pasture for the cows of the poor cottagers. Let them stop there an hour and you might take up the dust by handfuls and nothing left besides. “Ah,” said my guide, “it is a sad thing for these poor people—in a month’s time those creatures will be as big and as long as my finger and then they will eat up the trees. The mulberry trees with which the poor men feed their silkworms and which furnish them with a little wealth—they will devour every green thing until there is nothing left but the bare dry stem.”  
In armies countless as the sands of the sea and fierce to look upon, well described by the Prophet Joel, in his terrible picture of them, as “a great army of the Lord.” Ah, I thought within myself, if God can thus sweep this valley and make a waste of it with these little creatures, what a mercy it is that He is a kind and gracious God, or else He might let loose the like on all the people of the earth and then nothing would stare us in the face but famine, despair and death!  
Perhaps you say to me, “Ah, but we do not expect the locusts here. We shall gather our harvest joyously.” Speak not too quickly. God has been teaching us during the last two months our absolute and entire dependence upon Him. Let this rain continue but a little longer, let it continue till the appointed weeks of harvest shall come and where are our people then?  
You may open your shops, you citizens of London and you may imagine that the harvest in the country will little affect you. But famine stares you in the face unless God withdraws the clouds and bids the sun shine down upon us. The days shall come which we have heard our fathers speak of, when the bread was such that it could not be eaten. When it was not hard enough for one to hold in his hand. When you had a crust without and then within it was a mass of jelly—wheat swimming in water and not capable of being eaten by any except those pinched by hunger.  
The like must inevitably come unless God withdraws those clouds. Let the rain continue much longer and there will scarcely be a harvest, nothing for men to feed upon. Oh, my dear Friends, we never know from year to year how dependent—how absolutely dependent we are upon God. Does not the corn spring out of the land? And does not every man, from the king to the peasant, live on bread? And if that staff fail, must not all totter to the ground with leanness on our bones and paleness on our faces? You are for that bread and for that nourishment and for all you have—as absolutely dependent upon God as a prisoner in his dungeon is dependent upon his keeper for his daily bread and water. Oh that I could make you feel this and realize the force of the fact!  
Again—I said we were not simply dependent upon God for the comforts, but for the power to enjoy the comforts. It is an evil which we have seen under the sun—a man who had wealth and riches and plenty, but who had not power to eat thereof. I have seen a man hungry and full of appetite, but no bread to eat. But I have seen a sight perhaps more sad—a man with food of the most luxurious kind—to whom taste seemed denied, to whom every mouthful was a thing of detestation. The Lord has but in His judgment to smite any of us with only nervousness—that nervousness at which the strong may laugh, but which makes the weak tremble and everything will become dark before you. He has but to affect some portion of your body and you shall see no brightness in the sum. The very fields shall lose their verdure before you. The most happy event shall only be a source of deeper gloom. You shall look on everything through a dark glass and see nothing but darkness and despair.  
He has but to touch you with sickness and motion may be misery and even to lie upon a bed may be a repetition of tortures as you toss from side to aide. Worse still, the Lord has but to put His finger on your brain and you become a raving lunatic, or what may seem better, but more despicable, a driveling idiot. Oh, how little, then, has He to do to overturn your all, to pull down that mighty castle of your joys and darken the windows of your hope. You are, again, for life, for necessities, for comforts, as absolutely in the hand of God as the clay upon the wheel is in the hand of the potter.  
You may rebel, but your rebellion is but the writhing of a worm. You may murmur, but your murmurs cannot affect Him. You may ask your comrades to join in league with you against the Almighty God but His purpose will stand fast and you must submit. Bound in the iron chains of destiny, you must go the way He bids you and you suffer or you must rejoice at His beck and will. Tremble, oh, Man, tremble before God, for never was creature in the hand of creature, as creature is in the hand of Creator.  
Let me briefly remark, that if this is true concerning temporals, how doubly true is it with regard to spiritual things. There is no Christian grace which has in it a particle of self-existence. Faith, love, courage—are all sweet flowers—but their roots are in God. There may be streams of gratitude in your heart, but the springs thereof are in Him. Your soul may be devoted and consecrated, but the locks of your devotion will be shorn off, as was the hair of Samson, unless the eternal God preserves it. If you and I shall endure to the end, if we shall pass through the valley of death with calmness, if we shall stand before the Throne of God with confidence, if we shall enter into bliss with joy—all these things must come of God.  
Let Him lock up the treasury of His Grace, or dry up the channel of His love—the noblest Christian that breathes must become the vilest of reprobates. And he who has best served his God must become the most abject minion of Hell. Oh, learn that you are absolutely dependent upon God. He can leave you and where are you? He can help you and you shall stand securely. So is it with the sinner—he is in God’s hand to save him or to destroy him. He can give him up, like Pharaoh, to hardness of heart, or He can melt his heart and bow his stubborn will. He can throw the reins upon his neck and say, “Let him alone, Ephraim is given unto idols.” Or He can make him willing in the day of His power, create in him a new heart and a right spirit and save him from the wrath to come.  
O God, You are over all and You are all. Man is nothing before You. You have Your will. You do as You please among the angels in Heaven and among the inhabitant of this lower world. “Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.”  
III. I come to my third and last point, namely, THE LESSONS FROM THIS SUBJECT. First, a few lessons to the saint and then to the sinner.  
To the saint first. Child of God, see where you are. You, even you, are completely in the hand of your God, Your life, your death, your prosperity in this world, your growth in grace, your peace—all things rest upon His sovereign will. Nothing can harm you, unless He bids it. Nothing can cheer you, unless He commands it. You rest not in your own hand. Be your will ever so headstrong, be your mind ever so stubborn, either you must yield cheerfully, or else you must bend unwillingly. You are absolutely and entirely and in every respect placed at the will and disposal of Him who is your God.  
And now, child of God, let me ask you this question. Are you grieved because of this? Does this doctrine trouble you? Let God lay aside His scepter. Say, are you prepared to wield it? Had you rather have followed your will than be at God’s disposal? Would you rather that He should be in everything and that He should do as He wills, or that it should be left to you? Oh, I see you, you countless armies of God—I see you bow your knees at once and cry, “O Lord, we bless You that it is not so, we praise You that You have left nothing to our disposal, but that You everywhere have sway.”  
This is not the subject of groaning but of mirth and joy to us. We set up our banners with this watchword, “The Lord reigns.” We go on our journey with this as our constant cordial, “God is here.” With this as our shield, we lift up our arm against calamity. With this as our sword, we rush into the thick of the battle against sin. The Lord reigns—“Let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.” “Great God, if I could have it otherwise I would not. If I could reverse your decision and if I could erase the lines of trial and write in the place thereof the gilded lines of joy, I could not and I would not do it. If the book of my destiny were in my power today, I neither would erase a word nor insert a syllable. Be it unto me even as You will. Not my will but Yours be done.”  
It is easy to say this, but oh, how hard to feel it when it comes to the trial. When darkness fills the sky, when the coffin lies in the silent chamber and the precious one is sleeping in the arms of death. When the tide has swept away all we have, when beggary stares us in the face, when slander follows us at the back, still to say, “Jehovah, Your tempests are better than my sunshine and the storm which You have brewed is better to me than the brightest days if I had made them for myself.” Take care, child of God, that you hold fast and firm this your confidence, which shall have great recompense of reward.  
But mind one other thing, O heir of Heaven. Let your conversation be such as becomes this doctrine. Speak of what you will do and of what will happen, always in respect to the fact that man proposes but God disposes. When you hear your enemy vow something against you, smile, because your enemy is not God. And when you propose to yourself something which seems to you good and pleasant, weep over your own folly if you are too confident, for you are not God. None but God can promise so as to cheer a sensible mind. None but God can threaten so as to alarm a Christian mind.  
The threats and promises of God are true, but neither the threats of man nor his promises are worth the words in which they are uttered. Oh, my dear Christian Brethren, tried as some of you are in various and in arduous ways, I wish I could burn this Truth of God into your souls. But God the Holy Spirit must do it. I pray you stand to it that there is God in everything and I am sure as the result of it you will be driven to more constant and earnest prayer. For if there is God in everything, take everything to God. If God has done you in, take the ill to God and He will set it right.  
This very season of the year suggests prayer. Prayer can reverse the winds and stay the clouds and let the infidel world see it is so. In the days of that eminent Scotch minister, Robert Blair, there had been for a long time a terrible rain, until at the time of harvest the wheat had grown an inch long after it had ripened. The people met together for prayer and that day it rained more furiously than it had done before. Yet they separated in the firm belief that God had heard their prayer. Mr. Blair said to the assembly that he was sure, though God might seem as if he mocked them, yet he was a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God still.  
That night the clouds were scattered and driven away and the harvest was ingathered. Some of the wheat had been spoiled, but most of it was housed in safety. Trust your God, then. Tempt Him not by murmuring. But prove Him—not as the children of Israel did—but prove Him as Malachi exhorts us and see if He will not pour out blessings and make the earth rejoice with the harvest. At any rate, be not as they that tremble in the day of calamity. Stand still, you children of God. You wear an armor that no weapon of man can pierce. You dwell within a city, the bulwarks of which are impregnable. Let no fear invade you. Be strong and of good courage, your God is with you. He is better than all your fears. No, He shall exceed all your hopes. Set up your banners and shout aloud and rejoice in Him. God is with you, and the Lord Jehovah reigns.  
In conclusion, my last word is to the sinner. You, who have not been converted and have no part or lot in present salvation, to you I say this much—Man! Man! You are in the hand of God. Whether you shall live to reach your home today or not, depends absolutely upon His will. Rich though you are, the wealth you possess can take to itself wings and fly away at His will. He can fill your body with pains so terrible that you shall long for death itself to escape from them. He can make visions flit before your eyes, both when you sleep and when you wake, that shall so scare you that you would prefer the company of the devils in Hell to solitude.  
God can make you such a Hell to your own self that you would seek either knife or poison to escape from your own thoughts. And that He can do and you cannot escape. No wings can bear you above His dominion. No depth can hide you from his sway.  
But now, what is the path of wisdom! Is it wise to curse God, in whose hand your breath is? Is it a rational thing to treat with indifference Him upon whom you depend for time and for eternity? Your own self-interest would dictate a wiser course. Dash not your head against the bosses of His buckler. Be not mad enough to run upon His glittering spear. What does wisdom say to you if you will but listen? It cries, “Be reconciled to God.”  
You cannot resist Him effectually—throw down your weapons and yield. And what does the Scripture say to you? It says, “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.” What says the Church  
to you? It says, “Christ has received us—the Bride says, come.” What says Christ to you? “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake.” “Look unto Me and be you saved all the ends of the earth.” “Bow the knee and kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little.”  
Oh, Spirit of God, speak to the madmen and make them sane. Speak to the men that fight against God and bid them tremble at Him and yield and seek His favor. O Sinner remember what He has said, “He that being often reproved hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.” Hear you, in conclusion, that sweet word of His—“Whoever will, let him come. The Spirit and the Bride say, come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whomever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

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÷Job 13.15

FAITH’S ULTIMATUM

NO. 1244

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JULY 18 1875, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”  
Job 13:15.**

THIS is one of the supreme sayings of Scripture. It rises, like an alpine summit, clear above all ordinary heights of speech. It pierces the clouds and glistens in the Light of God. If I were required to quote a selection of the most sublime utterances of the human mind, I should mention this among the first—“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” I think I might almost say to the man who thus spoke, what our Lord said to Simon Peter when he had declared him to be the Son of the Highest— “Flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you.” Such tenacious holding, such immovable confidence, such unstaggering reliance are not products of mere nature, but rare flowers of rich Divine Grace!

The text contains a precious jewel of Grace, fitly set in the purest gold of choice speech. Happy is the man upon whose arm it can be worn as an ensign in the day of battle. It is well worthy of observation that in these words Job answered both the accusations of Satan and the charges of his friends. Though I do not know that Job was aware that the devil had said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not set a hedge about him and all that he has?” yet he answered that base suggestion in the ablest possible manner, for he did, in effect, say, “Though God should pull down my hedge and lay me bare as the wilderness, itself, yet will I cling to Him in firmest faith.”

The arch-fiend had also dared to say that Job had held out under his first trials because they were not sufficiently personal. “Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life. But put forth Your hand, now, and touch his bones and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face.” In the brave words before us, Job most effectually silences that slander by, in effect, saying, “Though my trial is no longer the slaying of my children, but of myself, yet will I trust in Him.” He thus, in one sentence, replies to the two slanders of Satan and, thus, unconsciously, does Truth overthrow her enemies, defeating the secret malice of falsehood by the simplicity of sincerity.

Job’s friends also had insinuated that he was a hypocrite. They inquired of him, “Who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off?” They thought themselves quite safe in inferring that Job must have been a deceiver, or he would not have been so specially punished. To this accusation Job’s grand declaration of his unstaggering faith was the best answer possible, for none but a sincere soul could thus speak. Will a hypocrite trust in God when He slays him? Will a deceiver cling to God when He is smiting him? Assuredly not! Thus were the three miserable comforters answered if they had been wise enough to see it.

Our text exhibits a child of God under the most severe pressure and shows us the difference between him and a man of the world. A man of the world under the same conditions as Job would have been driven to despair and, in that desperation, would have become morosely sullen, or defiantly rebellious! Here you see what, in a child of God, takes the place of desperation. When others despair, he trusts in God. When he has nowhere else to look, he turns to his heavenly Father. And when, for a time, even in looking to God, he does not meet with conscious comfort, he waits in the patience of hope, calmly expecting aid and resolving that even if it does not come, he will cling to God with all the energy of his soul!

Here, all the man’s courage comes to the front, not, as in the case of the ungodly, obstinately to rebel, but bravely to confide. The child of God is courageous, for he knows how to trust. His heart says, “My Lord, it is bad with me, now, and it is growing worse, but should the worst come to the worst, still will I cling to You and never let You go.” In what better way can the Believer reveal his loyalty to his Lord? He evidently follows his Master, not in fair weather only, but in the worst and roughest days. He loves his Lord, not only when He smiles upon him, but when He frowns.

His love is not purchased by the liberality of his Lord’s golden hands, for it is not destroyed by the smiting of His heavy rod. Though my Lord puts on His sternest looks. Though from fierce looks He should go to cutting words. And though from terrible words He should proceed to cruel blows which seem to beat the very life out of my soul, yes, though He take down the sword and threaten to execute me, yet is my heart steadfastly set upon one resolve, namely, to bear witness that He is infinitely good and just! I have not a word to say against Him, nor a thought to think against Him! Much less would I wander from Him! And, though He slay me, I would trust in Him!

What is my text but an Old Testament version of the New Testament, “Quis separabit?”—Who shall separate? Job does but anticipate Paul’s question, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Was not the same Spirit in both Job and Paul? Is He also in us? If so, we are men, indeed, and our speech is with power and this declaration, to us, is no idle boast, no foolish bravado, though it would be ridiculous, indeed, if there were not a gracious heart behind it to make it good. It is the conquering shout of an all-surrendering faith which gives up all but God. I wish that we may all have its spirit this morning, that whether we suffer Job’s trial or not we may, at any rate, have Job’s close adherence to the Lord, his faithful confidence in the Most High.

There are three things in the text— a terrible supposition—“though He slay me.” A noble resolution, “yet will I trust in Him.” And, thirdly, a secret appropriateness. This last will require a little looking into, but I hope to make it clear that there is a great appropriateness in our trusting while God is slaying us—the two things go well together, though it may not so appear at first.

I. First, then, here is A TERRIBLE SUPPOSITION—“Though He slay me.” The Lord is here set forth as a slayer of His trusting servant! An idea full of terror. It is a supposition which, in some senses, cannot be tolerated for a minute—“Though He slay me.” Here I am, His dear child. One whom He has loved from before the foundation of the world. One for whom He laid down His life upon the Cross. One of whom He has said, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.” How can He slay me? If He does so, it can only be in a minor sense. As to my best and truest life, it must be safe, for He is its Author and Guardian, and cannot be its Destroyer.

Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she could not have compassion on the son of her womb? Could she suffer a child of hers to die while she had power to keep it alive? Would she lay violent hands upon the child of her love and destroy it? God forbid! Neither will God destroy, or suffer to be destroyed, any of His own dear children! Jesus has solemnly said—“I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” The fairest children of the earth will die, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and all flesh is as decaying grass. But the feeblest child of God will live forever, for the life of God in every degree is immortality!

Time will put out the sun. The lamp of the moon will grow dim in ages yet to come, but neither time nor age shall quench a solitary spark of Heaven-born Grace and Light. Though faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, it is essentially a living thing, and it is not conceivable that God, Himself, should slay that which is quickened with His Life. Though it is imperceptible, sometimes, even to the possessor of it, and though it should raise many painful questions as to whether it is there at all, yet if it is there, God will preserve it even to the end.

Come, child of God, you must not suppose that the Lord will slay you forever! You must not allow suppositions which would dishonor your God! You may suppose what you like if it is innocent, but you must not suppose that which would blaspheme the Divine Love, or cast a slur upon God’s fidelity to His promise! He may cast you aside for awhile, but He cannot cast you away forever! He may take away your goods, but not your highest good. He may allow a cloud to rest upon your reputation, a blight to fall upon your usefulness and a storm to sweep away your happiness, but His mercy is not clean gone forever—He has not in anger turned away His heart from you!

He has chastened you sorely, but He has not given you over unto death. No, you must not interpret the supposition of the text as though it said, “Though He leave me to perish, though He cast me into Hell,” for that can never be! But I make bold to say that even if the devil were to whisper in your ear that the Lord would finally destroy you, it would be a glorious thing if you could bravely reply, “And if He did I would still trust Him.” One old saint once used very daring and, perhaps, unjustifiable language when he said, “If ecstasy of love of God casts me into Hell, I will hold so fast by Him that He shall go there, too. I will not let Him go and Hell, itself, will be no Hell to me while He is there.”

Beloved, say in your soul—“Though the Lord should condemn me, I will not rebel, but confess that He is just. Though He should refuse to hear my prayers, yet He is an infinitely good and blessed God, and I will still praise Him.” But, Beloved, it cannot be that God should slay or condemn a Believer, and you need not tolerate the supposition. Blessed be His name, He has not cast away the people whom He did foreknow! Neither has one soul that trusted in Him ever been forsaken!

The terrible supposition before us is inclusive of all possible ill s. “Though He slay me.” He means that if every form of evil up to actual death should come upon him, yet would he trust in God. Though he should lose all that he had in flock or field, in purse or portion, yet would he trust. In Job’s case, away went the oxen and the asses, away went the sheep, away went the camels and away went all the servants. And each time, as the messenger came breathlessly running in, he said, “I, only, am left alone to tell you.” At last the worst news of all came, for all his children were taken away at a stroke. All was gone, for his wife was as good as lost, too, since she went over to the enemy, and said, “Curse God and die.”

Well says Job, “Though my troubles have left me bare of all but life. Though nothing remains to me but this dunghill and the broken potsherd with which I scrape my sores, yet will I trust in the Lord.” Oh, it was bravely said! In this resolve, as we have seen, he includes not only all losses of property, but all bereavements of friends! And I should like you Christian people to look this in the face. Perhaps the Lord may suddenly take away from you the dearest object of your heart’s affection—your husband or your wife—can you trust Him, then? The almost idolized children may be removed, one by one, and leave sad vacancies within your heart. O fond wife, the beloved of your soul may pass away in the prime of his manhood, the brother may be cut down as the green herb and the sister fade as a flower!

Parents, children, Brethren—any and all of these may be put far from you—and you may find yourselves as lone trees, whereas now you are surrounded by a kindred forest. You may be the last of the roses, left alone, scarcely blooming, but bowing your head amid the heavy showers of sorrow which drench you to the soul. Now, Believer, if you are in such a deplorable case as that, can you still say, “If the Lord should go even further than this, should His next arrows penetrate my own lacerated heart, even then, as I bleed to death, I will kiss His hand”? Job included in his supposition all kinds of pain. We can hardly imagine the bodily agony of Job when he was covered with boils from the soles of his feet unto his head.

None could approach him, the disease was so foul, neither could he endure to be touched. He says, “Though I have all these boils and even should they grow worse, so that the pains I now endure should become unendurable. And should I suffer the very anguish of death, itself, yet still would I put my trust in my God. Neither poverty, loneliness, nor fierce torment shall make me forsake the Lord, nor shall all put together cause me to doubt Him.” What a victory of faith is this! Job, at that time, also suffered from dishonor, for those who once looked up to him with respect now despised him in their hearts. He says that those whose fathers he would have disdained to have set with the dogs of his flock, opened their mouths against him, and whereas, when he stood in the street, princes were silent in his presence to listen to his wisdom, now among the most base of mankind he had become a song and a byword.

As for his mistaken friends, he had grown so weary of them that he said, “O that you would altogether hold your peace and it would be your wisdom.” Poor Job was sorely galled with the scorn poured on him at a time when he deserved both sympathy and honor, but yet his faith cries, “If I am still more despised and forgotten as a dead man out of mind, yet will I trust in You, my God.” Connected with all this, the afflicted Patriarch must have felt much depression of spirit. Did he not say, “Even today is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. For God makes my heart soft and the Almighty troubles me”?

Those of us who are subject to depression of spirit find much that is congenial in the Book of Job. His music is in tune with our own. How bitterly does he wail at times! What wondrous insight has he into the mystery of sorrow! Though his grief has never been thoroughly weighed, nor his calamities laid in the balances together, yet have his woes been considered by thousands of mourners! They have ministered a wealth of consolation to them. Job does not exclude his own despondencies from his resolves. No, he mainly intends them, for these are, in a special sense, a man’s own personal slaying and he says, “Though He slay me”—though my heart should break with anguish, pierced through with despondency, yet will I put my trust in God.

I began by calling the supposition of our text a terrible one, and now I claim that I have shown it to be so, since it includes the coming upon us of all sorts of ills. Listen, yet again. This supposition goes to the extreme of possibility, if not beyond it, for it will be hard to find a case in which God has really slain any of His servants. The martyrs were slain for Him, but not by Him. To none of His children, save One, has the Lord been as Abraham was to Isaac when he unsheathed the knife to slay him. If it had been so, could we have been as the lamb beneath the sacrificial knife? The stones which slew Stephen and the sword which slew James were in the hands of cruel men, and not in the hands of God. But God, Himself, is here supposed to slay us.

Now, though He has not actually done so, we may enquire whether we could resign ourselves to Him, even if He should take life and all with His own hands. Could we lie on the altar and not struggle? Do we hate, even, our own life for love of Him? What do we say? Is our love stronger than death? God grant it may be found so! But this supposition goes further than matters ever will go. Why, then, does the Patriarch suppose such a case? I answer because only by such suppositions can he express his faith to the fullest. Remember that Psalm, “Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea”? We are not expecting the earth to move nor the mountains to plunge into the ocean—but in order to express our confidence we declare that even such a quaking would not affect the foundation of our faith.

God Himself meets His people in the same manner, by saying, “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed.” Child of God, you may suppose what never will occur, if you like, and project your soul by that supposition into depths of woe and grief into which you will never actually come, and yet, through Divine Grace you will resolve, “If it came even to that, I would still trust in Him.” Though the text supposes what will not actually occur, yet it is a just description of what often does occur as far as our conceptions go. Have you ever known what it is to be, in your own conceptions, slain by God? My heart has known it often. It is as death, itself, to feel all your religion melt away like the hoar frost of the morning when the sun has risen. All your joys in which you delighted fly away like birds when a man claps his hands.

Have you ever had to begin all over again, at the very alphabet of repentance and childlike faith—and find even that no easy work? Did you never know what it was to get your cup right full of what you thought was holy joy and sweet experience and then for the Lord to turn it, bottom upward, and let you see that it was a mixture of self-conceit and sentimentalism, with thick dregs at the bottom of pride and falsehood? Can you say with David, “I have seen an end of all perfection”? Have you ever been brought down from imaginary riches to bitter but honest poverty? Have you ever thought you were becoming so wonderfully sanctified that you could scarcely lay a split sheet of tissue paper between you and perfection—and then all of a sudden the Lord has laid you naked and made you loathe the sight of your inborn corruptions? You have been as a cup which bubbled at the top and frothed over, and the Lord has blown off the froth and made you see the black draught of your inward vileness.

God has many ways of thus slaying, in His children, all that ought to die. Thus He kills the spiritual hypocrisy which is so common in us all. Our life seems, at times, to run all into puffballs and bloated fungi of selfglorying. We think that we are something when we are nothing! And then the Lord prunes us back to our real condition. Do you know what it is to be thus slain? Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, at times our life is a long experience of the power of death. Do you know what it is to say, “Is this prayer? Why, while I prayed, my thoughts were perplexed, distracted and wandering. Is this faith? Why, even on the most vital points my soul dares scarcely speak with confidence! Is this love?—love to Christ, which even while I exercise it accuses me on account of its lukewarmness and lack of self-denying ardor! Can this be spiritual life? Life at which I blush and over which I mourn! Life which scarcely reaches so far as feeling and when it does, soon subsides into insensibility!”

Beloved Brethren, I speak from experience! All this is a kind of slaying by which the Lord hides pride from men and keeps them from the snares of vain confidence. Has He not written, “I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal”? In these times of wounding and killing, which are very common to the experience of some of the children of God, the only thing we can do is still to trust—“Though He slay me, I will trust in Him.” Trust Him though He sifts out nine-tenths of your hopes, burns up all your experiences, grinds your evidences to powder, crushes all your realized sanctities and sweeps away all your rests and refuges! Then, indeed, is the best time of all to exercise true faith!

Once more, the grim supposition of the text, if ever it were realized by anybody, was realized by our Lord Jesus. Our great covenant Head knows to the full what His members suffer. God did slay Him and, glory be to His blessed name, He trusted God while He was being slain. “It pleased the Father to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief.” Yet from the lips of our dear Lord we hear no expressions of unbelief. Read the 22nd Psalm, where He says, “Our fathers trusted in You, they trusted in You and You did deliver them, but I am a worm, and no man.” Hear how He pleads with God and specially listen to His dying words, where, though He says, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” yet a few minutes later He cries, “Into Your hands I commit My spirit.”

What? Into the hands of a God who had forsaken Him and smitten Him? Did He commit Himself into those hands? Yes, into those very hands! And herein we must follow in His steps. Though the Lord cuts, hews, hacks, tears and grinds us to powder, yet out of the dust, the tears and the blood of the conflict we must look up to Him and say, “I still trust You.” Here is the patience of the saints! Here is the glory of faith! Blessed is the man who thus becomes more than a conqueror. I say it calmly, I would sooner be able to do as Job did, than to be one of yonder seraphim who have never suffered and, consequently, have never clung to a slaying God! I count it the grandest possibility of a created being that it is able to completely yield itself up into the Creator’s hands and, unwaveringly believing in the Creator’s love! O, royal word of a right royal soul, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

II. Secondly, we have before us A NOBLE RESOLUTION—“Yet will I trust in Him.” Job meant that he was confident that the Lord was just. And though he did not feel that the suffering he was then enduring was sent upon him for his sins, yet he never doubted the righteousness of God in so afflicting him. His friends said, “You see, Job, you suffer more than anybody else. Therefore you must have been a hypocrite, for God will not lay upon any man more than is just.” “No,” said Job, “I have been upright before the Lord. And yet, on the other hand, I do not accuse the Lord of injustice, I am sure He does what is right. And I trust Him as much as ever.”

There were two things to which Job stuck very firmly—“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him, but I will maintain my own ways before Him”— that is, I will not admit that I have been a hypocrite, for I have been sincerely obedient to Him. Nor will I be driven to the other conclusion, that God is unjust in afflicting me. Job did not understand the Lord’s reasons, but he continued to confide in His goodness. He set no terms or limits to the Lord’s actions, but left all to His absolute will and was sure that whatever He might do, it must be right. Should death prevent all apparent possibility of making up to him all his losses and woes, his faith leaped over the sepulcher and saw Justice and Mercy alive in the realms beyond, making all things right in the end. O, it was grand, thus, to champion almighty goodness in the teeth of Death, itself!

Now, dear Brethren, you and I, if we are resting upon God, may say, “Whatever happens, though I may not be able to understand God’s dispensations to me any more than Job understood God’s dispensations towards him, yet I am quite sure of this—that He will help me in my trouble and I will, therefore, cast myself upon Him—believing that as my days my strength shall be. Or if He does not aid me in my trouble with manifest help, I will still trust that He will bring me out of it, that if He seems to forsake me for a while, yet it shall be said of me as of God, “a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last.” If I should neither receive present help nor immediate deliverance, yet I am persuaded that my good is designed by my long trial and that God is making the worst things work out my everlasting benefit and His own Glory—therefore I will subunit to His will and expect, in the end, to see the lovingkindness of the Lord.

Yes, and if I should have neither present help nor deliverance, nor see any immediate good come of my affliction, yet will I repose myself upon God, for in some mysterious way or other I shall yet know that His Providence was right and good, for He cannot err! His dealings must be wise, He cannot be unkind! His actions must be tender. Though the sharp edge of death, itself, invades me, I will hold to this belief, that You, O Lord, do all things right. If down to the sepulcher my steps must go and through the gloomy valley’s darkest shade my pilgrimage must wind, yet will I fear no evil, for Your rod and staff shall be my confidence! And I will be sure that He who bids me die will bid me live again—up from the grave my body shall yet rise—and in my flesh I see shall God. As for my spirit, though it pass through the death shade, it shall come forth into a brighter light and in the eternity of Glory it shall receive abundant recompense for the sorrows of the present time. This is the faith for us to hold at all times—“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

Why, do you think, Job was able to speak so positively about his trusting God? Was it not because he knew God? “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.” If you would believe God, you must know Him! Those who are strangers to Him cannot trust Him. O, Beloved, only think what God is! Sometimes, when I am contemplating His Being and Character, I feel as if I could leap for joy! And when I touch upon the theme in the pulpit I feel as if I could talk on forever in His praise and use the grandest, sweetest, richest words in human language to tell what a blessed God my God is. What? The Lord do wrong to any of us? Impossible! The Lord be unkind to us? The supposition cannot be endured for a single moment! After once knowing Him, we feel that all the goodness and kindness of fathers, mothers, Brethren, children, husbands, wives—all put together—is only like one single drop of sweetness compared with that ocean full of honey which is to be found in His infinite love!

Besides, we have not only His attributes to trust, but His past actions to us. Did my Lord forgive me all my sin? And after that will He ever be unkind to me? Did He lay down His life for me upon the accursed tree and can I dream that He will desert me? Have I looked into the wounds of my dying Savior and shall I ever murmur if He should multiply pains and sufferings and losses and crosses to me? God forbid! Such love as His forbids all fear! Did you ever lean on the Bridegroom’s arm? Have you ever sung like the bride in the canticle, “His left hand is under my head, and His right arm does embrace me”? Did He ever stay you with dragons and comfort you with apples while your soul was sick with too much delight? And after all that, will you indulge harsh thoughts of Him? O, no! Till the day breaks and the shadows flee away, we cannot think harshly of Him who has dealt so kindly with us!

His ways must be right! Such wondrous acts of love as His have proved to us beyond all question that He is Love, essential Love and cannot, therefore, do us an ill turn. Beside this, we know the relationship in which He stands to us. It has been said that you cannot trust an enemy and it has been equally well added you cannot trust a reconciled enemy— suspicion lingers long! But our God is no reconciled enemy, though He is sometimes represented as if He were so. He has loved us with an everlasting love. His is no friendship of yesterday, no passion which began to burn a month or two ago. Long before the hills lifted up their heads, He loved us. The bands of His Fatherhood are upon us and we can well commit ourselves into His hands.

Are any of us in great trouble, this morning? Then let us trust in the Lord, now, for what else can we do? Suppose we give up trusting in Him— to whom or where should we go? If this anchor drags, what other holdfast can there be? Let us continue to trust our Lord, for He deserves it! He has never done anything that could justify our doubting Him. Has He ever been false to us? Ah, Judas, you sold your Master, but your Master never sold you! Ah, unbelieving Heart, you have wandered from Jesus, but He never wandered from you! If you do not doubt Him till you have cause for doubting Him, it will not be soon!

Let us trust our God, for this is the sweetest comfort a man can have. This side of Heaven nothing can yield the afflicted man such support under trial as when he can fall back upon the strong love of God and believe that the wisdom of God is overruling all. Nothing tends to sanctify our trials and produce good results from them, as faith in God. This is the Samson which finds honey in the lion. For a thousand reasons I would say, “Trust in the Lord at all times: you people, pour out your hearts before Him. God is a refuge for us.” Say, each one of you, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!”

III. And, now, the last point is this—A SECRET APPROPRIATENESS about it all. There is a something about our Lord’s slaying us which should help us to trust Him. I would sooner the Lord should slay me with troubles and trials than let me alone in my sin. What says the Scriptures? “If you are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards and not sons, for what son is he whom the father chastens not?” I do not so much pity the children of God who have a cross to carry—I reserve my fears for those worldlings who are not in trouble as other men, neither plagued like other men. It would be very foolish for the afflicted one to say, “I am no child of God because He smites me”—there would be more reason in the sinner’s saying, “I am no child of God, for I have my portion in this life.”

Surely there is something in you which God loves, or else He would not be killing that which He hates. If He hates the sin in you, it is a good sign, for where do we hate sin most? Why, in those we love most! If you see a fault in a stranger, you wink your eye and say but little. But in your own dear child you are deeply grieved to observe it. Where there is true love there is a measure of jealousy and the more burning the love, the more fierce the jealousy, especially on the part of Jesus Christ. Where He sees sin in those who are very dear to Him, His fury burns not against them, but against their sin—and He will not stop until He has slain it!

His rebukes are severe, not because of lack of love, but because He loves so much. An ungodly man met me some years ago, when I was suffering, and said to me in a jeering way, “Ah, whom the Lord loves, He chastens, I see.” I said, “Yes, it is His custom.” “Ah,” he said, “so long as I am without the chastisement I am very content to be without the love.” Oh, it brought the red into my cheeks and the tears into my eyes, and I cried, “I would not change places with you for 10,000 worlds! If my God were to afflict me from head to foot I would bear it joyfully sooner than live a moment without His love.” When the Lord flogs us, we love Him, and we would not leave Him though the devil should bribe us with all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them. Our Father puts us, sometimes, into the black hole, and we are there crying bitterly under a sense of His wrath, but we love Him still, by His Grace. And if anybody were to find fault with Him, we would be up at once and say, “He is a good God and blessed be His name.”

Note, again, that the slaying of the creature is the very condition in which Faith was born and in which she delights to display her power. We are saved by passing from death unto life. As Noah was like a dead man, out of mind, shut up in the ark and, by this burial, passed into the new world. And as in the ordinance of Baptism we are in like figure buried with Christ that we may rise with Him. So Faith took her birth in the death of the creature at the time when the new life was breathed into us. When God is slaying all that is capable of death and our new immortal life, alone, survives, Faith feels as if her birthday had come over again and brought with it her native air.

Notice again, it is at times when God is slaying us that our faith is being tested whether it is true or not. When all the winds are fair, how can you tell whether your boat would bear a storm? How much faith some of us have at times! Have you ever felt as if you could fight seven devils with one hand? There was not a devil within seven miles when you were so bold— but when the smallest fiend has drawn near—your courage has oozed out! We are like an old man whom I once knew, who said to me, “Here am I, 80 years old, and through the winter I often think I wish I had a bit of mowing or reaping to do, for I feel quite young again. But as soon as harvest comes on, and I get down my old sickle, I have not done much before I feel the old man is a very old man and had better leave that work alone.”

Slaying times let us know whether our strength is real strength and whether our confidence is true confidence! And this is good, for it would be a great pity for us to be stocked with heaps of vain faith, fictitious Grace and ready-made holiness. Some of my friends talk as if they had boldness enough for a dozen people, but I am afraid if they were tried, as some of us are, they would find they had not half enough for one! This is the benefit of trial—it lets us see what is gold and what is tinsel—what is fact and what is fiction. Alas, how much religious fiction is abroad at this time! Note further, that slaying times are the most favorable for trusting God. I have been putting a little riddle to myself. Here it is. Is it easier to trust God when you have nothing, or when you have all things?

Is it easier to say, “Though He slay me, I will trust in Him,” or to say, “Though He make me alive, I will trust in Him”? Will you think it over? Shall I help you? Here is a man without a farthing in the world. His cupboard is bare, his flocks are cut off from the field and his herds from the stall. Is it hard for that man to trust in God? If you say so I will not dispute with you. But here is another man who has a bank full of gold. His meadows are covered with flocks and herds, his barns are ready to burst with corn and his trade prospers on all hands. Now, Sirs, is it easy for that man to trust God? Do you say, “Yes”? I say, “No.”

I say that he has a very hard task, indeed, to live by faith, and the probabilities are that when he says, “I trust God,” he is trusting his barn or his bank. All things considered, it occurs to me that it is easier to trust God in adversity than in prosperity, because whatever trust there is in adversity is real trust. But a good deal of the faith we have in prosperity is a kind of trust which you will have to take upon trust—and whether it is faith or not is a matter of serious question. Sirs, where is the room for faith when you can see, already, all that you need? A full barn has no room for faith if she is any bigger than a mouse. But in an empty barn faith has scope and liberty. When the brook Cherith is dried up, when the poor widow has nothing left but a handful of meal and a little oil, then there is room for the Prophet to exercise faith!

O, Brothers and Sisters, it is well to go into action with clear decks. In the name of God, with double-barreled guns full of strong faith you can let the world and the flesh and the devil know what faith is! But while your deck is all hampered with comforts and visible resources, faith can scarcely stir a hand or move a gun. “Though He slay me”—well, that means everything is gone—only breath enough left for me just to exist. And now, my Lord, You are All in All to me. Now can I say, “Whom have I in Heaven but You? There is none upon the earth that I desire but You.”

Once more, these slaying times are very desirable occasions, because they allow the child of God to show that he is not a mercenary professor, held to Christ by a cupboard love. If God were always to prosper us the world would say, “These Christians follow their God as stray dogs follow those who give them bones, but they have no sincere love.” When the Lord falls a whipping us and we love Him all the more, then they cannot say but what we are faithful! Nor can they deny the work of Grace in our souls. Oh, you that are Christians as long as it is pleasant to be Christians! You who make your love to Christ depend upon your feeling happy—what despicable beings you are!

Our Lord wants not such base disciples, but such as can say, “If I lose all I have, still I love You, O my Savior. Your sweet love is so precious that if death were threatened me I would still choose You to be my All in All.”

Love desires opportunities for proving her disinterestedness and such is the opportunity of the text. There are seeking souls here, this morning, and I daresay they have said, “Mr. Spurgeon has been describing great faith—we shall never get to that.” I have been thinking, dear Souls, what kind of a man is most like a little child. Is it not a very old man? What kind of faith is most like new-born faith? Why, the ripest and most advanced faith! My text is very old faith—“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

But the very first faith I had in Christ—I remember it well—was just like it! I thought He would destroy me. I could not see how He could do otherwise and be a just God. I thought He must strike me down if I went to Him. He seemed to stand with a drawn sword in His hand. But I felt, “Well, if He does slay me, I had better die by His hand than remain His enemy.” And I went to Him. I was like the boy who ran away from his homes and dared not return because he feared his father would flog him. He was out all night, shivering, cold and wet. He had nothing to eat all day. By the time he got to the next evening, such was his dread of being alone all through another night, that he said to himself, “I would sooner feel my father’s rod than lie here.” And so he went home and was received with tenderness!

So with me. I thought if I went to the Lord, I should have to smart for it, but I concluded I would rather smart than be as I was. And so I went to Him and found I was safe. O poor Souls, come to Jesus Christ in that fashion! Say—

*“I can but perish if I go,  
I am resolved to try,  
For, if I stay away, I know  
I must forever die.  
But if I die with mercy sought,  
When I the king have tried;  
That were to die, delightful thought,  
As sinner never died.”*

Say, “If I go to Hell, I will trust Christ. If I am cast away forever, I will trust Christ—and that cannot be, for, “he that believes in Him is not condemned.” God grant you true faith, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 73.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—73 (PART 2), 689, 46 (VERS. 3).  
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FAITH TRIED AND TRIUMPHING  
NO. 3265

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 31, 1911. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.”  
Job 13:15.

THERE are some speeches which could not be made by ordinary men. As soon as you hear them, you feel that there is a ring about them which is by no means common. Certain expressions which have been heard and remembered could have been uttered only by great warriors, or by men who have navigated the vast ocean. Certain other still nobler expressions, because spiritual ones, could have been uttered only by those who have had to fight with spiritual foes, or have done business on the great waters of soul trouble. When you hear the expression, “If there are as many devils at Worms as there are tiles on the housetops, I will go there in God’s name,” you are quite certain the speaker is Martin Luther. No other than he could have said it! And just as certainly, I think, I would have felt if I had read tonight’s text for the first time, that it was Job who said it and nobody else.

Job was a master sufferer. No man went deeper into grief than he—his children all dead, his wealth all swept away, his whole body covered with sore boils and blisters and the friends who pretended to comfort him, only accusing him of being a hypocrite, while his own wife bids him, “curse God, and die.” He was brought lower than any and, therefore, being a man of faith, having overcome and triumphed by faith, it was like he to utter such a noble speech as that which our text brings before us. “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him,” is not the utterance of any ordinary commonplace Believer! It is a sort of word which, we are quite sure, could only come from a triumphant Job—triumphant by victorious faith! However, I trust there are some here who could use this expression, now that another has fitted it for their lips, and I hope that all of us who have any faith at all, may have that faith so increased that yet, without boasting, we may still be able to say, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.”

I. In speaking upon this text I would note, first, THAT FAITH IS THE HABITUAL GRACE OF THE CHRISTIAN. To trust in God is his usual mode of life. He does not sometimes trust and sometimes cease to trust, but, “the just shall live by faith.” Faith is not a Grace of luxury but a Grace of necessity. We must have it and if we have it not, we would not be the people of God at all! The common habit of the Christian, then, is a habit of trusting. The Christian’s walk is faith and his life is faith!

Faith is to the Christian all the spiritual senses , not one, but all. The natural man has his eyes, but by faith we see Him who is invisible! The natural man has his hands and his feelings. We live not by feeling, but our faith is the hand by which we take fast hold upon eternal realities! The natural man has his ears, and they are delighted with sweet sounds, or through them the language of friendship enters his heart. Our faith is the ear through which we hear the voice of God and, sometimes, even catch stray notes from the harps of the angels! The natural man has the nostrils with which he becomes aware of sweet perfumes—and to our faith the name of Jesus is as choicest ointment poured forth! If we receive Christ as our heart’s Lord, all the inlets by which we receive Him and His Grace are made of the agate of faith. Gates of carbuncle, windows of agate are true faith. The Light of God and the Love of God come into our consciousness by our faith.

Faith, too, is with the Christian his first and his last. Faith looking to Christ is the very beginning of spiritual life! We began to live at the foot of the Cross when we looked up and saw the flowing of those founts of forgiveness—the five wounds of Christ! And as faith was the first, so it will be the last. We expect to die looking for our Lord’s appearing and still resting upon His finished work. And all between the alpha and the omega—all the other letters—we read them all by faith! There is no period of our life in which it is safe for us to live by feeling, not even when our enjoyments run highest. On the mountain where Christ is transfigured and where, in the midst of the Glory we shall fall asleep in amazement, we cannot live by sense! Even there we can only enjoy the Glory as faith shall continue to be in exercise. We must all the way through, from the first to the last, look out of ourselves and look above to the things which are seen, to grasp the things which are not seen, to be touched with the eternal hand and realize that which does not seem real to sense. This is the life of the Christian from the first to the last!

And I would add, as it is his first and last, so faith is the Christian’s highest and his lowest. If we ever get upon the mountain summit and bask our foreheads in the sunlight of fellowship with God, we stand there only by faith! It is because our faith is strong and in active exercise that we realize the things not seen as yet, and behold the God whom mortal eyes cannot gaze upon! Our very noblest, happiest and most heavenly times are those which are the results of faith. And so in our lowest. We can only live there by faith. Have you never lain shattered and broken, crushed and destroyed, expecting something yet more terrible? And have you not felt that now in your faintness you could fall back into the Savior’s arms? That now in your brokenness you could drop into His hands? That now in your abject nothingness He must be All-in-All to you, or else there will be an utter end to you? Oh, the faith that is as wings to us when we fly, becomes a lifebuoy to us when we sink! The faith which bears us up to the gates of Heaven, also lifts us up from the very gates of Hell! ‘Tis our first and our last! ‘Tis our highest and our lowest! It is all the senses of our spiritual nature. We must have it and always have it. We must trust in the Lord!

The matters about which the true Christian is to trust are very many, but they are chiefly these.  
We trust for the pardon of our sins to our God in Christ Jesus. The only hope that any Christian has for the forgiveness of his iniquity lies in the Sacrifice presented on Calvary by the Lamb of God whom God has given for the sins of the world. If any shall ask us whether we trust that our sins are forgiven us because of our repentance, or because of a long life of active Christian service, we shall reply that we are thankful if God has given us these things, but our sole reliance is in our dear Lord and Master who was once fastened to the Cross, but now sits in power in the highest heavens! Our trust for the pardon of sin in every degree and every respect lies in Christ, the Son of God—and there only! In this matter we can use the language of Job and say, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him,” for the fact is, the more fully we are slain, the more truly we trust! When we see ourselves to be utterly dead, slain by the two edged sword of the Lord, and all hope of our own self-salvation to be a corpse—then it is more easy than ever to come and cast ourselves upon the Christ of God and rest there for all our salvation from the guilt of sin!  
But in God also we trust for the purification of our spirits from all the indwelling power of sin. Some Christians do not appear to make this a matter of faith and, therefore, they do not succeed therein. You can no more conquer sin in yourself—really conquer it by your own strength— than you can remove the guilt of it by your own merits. The same Christ who is made unto us “justification” and “redemption,” is also made unto us “sanctification,” and we must never forget that while we wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb as to pardon, we also overcome our sins through the blood of the Lamb! The same Savior who takes away the guilt, takes away the power and the defiling power of sin. Well has Toplady put it—  
*“Let the water and the blood  
From Your riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure*—  
*Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”*  
Now, the true Christian can say that he trusts in God for his effectual purification and his final perfection. He does not hope to drive out one of these Canaanites by his own arm. He does not think that he shall slay one of his corruptions in his own strength. But his eyes are unto the hills from where comes his help and he believes that the Eternal Spirit will, like refining fire, go through and through his soul till everything in him shall be burnt up except that which is of God—that which will endure the fire and be well-pleasing in Jehovah’s sight!  
The matters upon which we rely upon God, then, are as far as I have yet gone, the finished work of Jesus Christ and the power that there is in Christ and in the Blessed Spirit to sanctify us—spirit, soul and body.  
But our trust is in God in another sense, namely, first—we trust Him believing that He always must be just. It does not occur to us now that God could be unjust. In the days of our flesh we used to think, if we suffered some extreme pain, or if we passed suddenly from wealth to poverty, that God had dealt very harshly with us, but now we feel that His strokes are fewer than our crimes and lighter than our guilt. And it does not occur to us in any way to impeach the Justice of God, let Him do what He will. We feel that if He not only should slay us, but if He should cast us into Hell forever—remembering what we are in ourselves and standing on our own footing, we could not complain against Him. This is our firm confidence, that whatever our position is, God has always dealt justly with us, that He will never deal unjustly with us and we shall never have to say of any one transaction that we have with Him, “This is not according to the rule of right.”  
But we go a great deal further. Having believed in Christ Jesus, and having become His children, we trust, believing that God will never do anything to us but that which is full of love. We are assured that His eternal love does not only come forth, now and then, that it does not only permeate and infuse itself into a few of His actions—but that all His conduct towards His children are actuated by the motive power of love. He is always Love towards those who put their trust in Him. We are sure that He never gives us a pain more than is necessary and that He never lets us suffer a loss more than is necessary. “Though for a season, if necessary, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations,” we know and are convinced that there is a necessity for it. We trust His Justice and we trust His Goodness.  
And, more, we trust His Wisdom mingled with all this. He has said that “all things work together for good to them that love God,” and we believe it. We have had some bitters in our cup, but we still believe it. We may yet have a great many more, but we are assured that through the help of God’s Spirit we shall still believe this—that come what may, expected or unexpected, in the ways of grief and sorrow, still that ultimate good shall come out of the whole! God’s purpose of love shall not be thwarted, but rather shall be answered by every circumstance of our history. Therefore do we trust in God that He is just and cannot do us an unrighteous action! That He is loving and cannot do a cruel thing to us! That He is wise and loving and just—and will make all things work together for good!  
In fine, we trust Him as a child trusts its parent, that is, for everything. There are many things about Him that we cannot understand—as there were about our parents in our childhood—but we trust Him and know that there is none like He. “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun.” We trust Him in all that He does. We cannot understand Him, for His way is in the sea and His footsteps are not known. But we are sure that they are footsteps of holiness and they are ways of righteousness. We trust Him for all the past and all the present, yes, and for all the future, too—that future which sometimes looms before us in the mist—and half alarms us till we are ready to shrink back from it. We gather up the skirts of our robe, again, and though we fear as we enter into the cloud, yet are we comforted with the full conviction that He who has done so well in the past, will be with us even to life’s close.  
Thus have I tried to show you that the whole tenor of the Christian’s life is trust—that, as in the text, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.”  
II. Now the second point shall be that those of us who have learned to trust in God expect that OUR FAITH SHALL BE TRIED. The text holds the plain supposition that it shall be extremely tried. He does not say, “Though I die”—that would be a great trial. Death is not a pleasant thing. It is no child’s play even to the strongest Believer. Job does not say, “Though I die,” but, “Though He slays me.” That is more. He does not say, “Though He permit me to be slain,” but, “Though He slays me— though He should seem to be so much my enemy as to turn round and kill me! Though I may not believe His action, I will believe Him—I will believe His Infallible Word. “Even though He slays me.” It is not, “Though He makes me hunger.” Or, “Though He puts me in prison, though He allows me to be mocked, though He allows me to be banned from all my friends and to live a solitary and wretched life.” No, it is more than that— “Though He slays me.” And mark, it is not, “Though He slays my children. Though He takes away my wife. Though He removes all my dear kindred.” It is more than that. “Though He slays me. Though it comes right home to myself.”  
Ah, Job knew what He meant, for all other things had been done except the slaying of him! His children were dead and the house in which they had met was a ruin. All he had was gone—his health had gone and he could not rest by reason of the disease which was all over him—most painful and most acute. He had nothing left on earth that was worth having. He was even friendless and he was worse than wifeless, for his wife had turned against him. Yet he says there is but one thing more that can be done—and God has kept Satan back from that. He said, “Only you shall not take his life.” But if the Lord chose to let loose the dog without even the link of a chain upon him—though He allows me now to lose my life itself—  
*“Though He slays me, I will trust,  
Praise Him even from the dust*—  
*Prove, and sing it as I prove,  
His eternal gracious love.”*  
Now, the text evidently implies that faith will be tried and tried severely. Let us think a moment about this. Has it not been always the case that if any man has had a faith beyond his fellow men, it has met with trial? If you go a step beyond the ordinary rank and file, you will be shot at for that very reason! Columbus believes that there is another part of the world undiscovered—what ridicule is heaped upon him! Galileo says the world moves—he must be put into the Inquisition—the poor old man must be forced to deny what he was quite sure was the truth. It was dangerous in those days to know too much and to believe a little more than other people. And in spiritual things it is just the same. The world is against the true faith. The faith of God’s elect is not a flower that men delight to admire and praise—it is a thing which, wherever they see it, they count as a speckled bird and they are sure to be against it! If you have faith in God, remember that this is not the world of faith, but the world of unbelief—and the darkness that is in the world will try to quench your Light!  
But remember that true faith scorns trial and outlives it. It is not worth having if it does not. If I believe in the friendship of my friend and yet it cannot bear a little trial, it is not real friendship. Perhaps in your youth, as with most of us, there was someone exceedingly dear to you. In your boyish or girlish days you would walk with some companion and you swore inseparable friendship. Ah, how many of those friendships did you make—and they were broken? Since then, perhaps, we have thought that someone with whom we took sweet counsel could never, by any possibility, betray us—but there came a test of our friendship. We were not worth as much as we once were, or we were not as much esteemed as we used to be, or there happened to be a misunderstanding—and in a little tiff, the friendship was marred. But that faith which a man has in his fellow men that is worth having will not yield so easily. No, says the man, “If you say anything to me against my friend, I do not believe you! I think there is some other way of reading it. If you speak the truth, you do not know all about it—there is something else that would change the complexion of it. And even if you were to convict him of a fault, I would still love him, for there are many virtues in him and if he did this thing, he must have made a mistake. I will defend him.”  
Now, transfer this from common life to faith in God. If a man says, “I trust in God,” and it is all smooth sailing, and his children are about him and he has plenty upon the table, his body in full health and he has all that heart could wish—well, we will see what sort of faith that is! It is not yet proven—will the man believe his God when God begins to take away all he loves? Will he believe Him when

he wife pines away with a long and painful sickness? Will he believe Him when child after child is taken to the tomb? Will he believe Him when he sees his property taken away before his eyes? Will he believe his God when he, himself, can scarcely move hand or foot upon the bed off sickness? Will he still be able to bless the name of the Lord when he is stripped of everything? If he can, then this is faith worth having! But if he cannot, then it is not the faith that is worthy of God and it is well it does give way, for then it may drive the man to seek the true faith which would bear these tests!  
You see, then Brothers and Sisters, if we have faith, we must expect to have it tried by reason of faith being an unusual thing in the world and because if it would not bear trial it would not be worth having! History tells us that the best servants of God have had their trials—and why should we expect to escape? We turn over the historical pages of this Book which are so full of instruction to us and we find that all the Lord’s children have had to do battle for the preservation of their faith. There is no smooth road to Heaven! Steam rollers can be used for the earth, for our common roads, but you shall find flint stones on the road to Glory! They have never been rolled smooth and they never will be— *“The path of sorrow, and that path alone Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”*Faith must and shall be tried as surely as it is the faith of God’s people! And if the best of saints have been obliged to say that through much tribulation they have inherited the Kingdom, we must not expect that God will change His rule in His treatment of us. I would not, however, encourage one thing which I have sometimes noticed, namely, the fear which comes into some Christians that they are not God’s people because they have not been much tried. All the saints meet with trial. I know a dear friend who is suffering just now, who says that he was occasionally afflicted with a fear that he could not be a child of God because he was so long without a sickness or without a trial. Ah, you will have that case met quite soon enough! Do not run after trouble—remember troubles of our own seeking would not be genuine strokes of the rod. You may leave that in God’s hands. Do not fret yourself there. Only when the trials do come to you, let this console you, that—  
*“Bastards may escape the rod,  
Plunged in sensual vain delight!  
But the true-born child of God  
Must not—would not, if he might!”*  
In our peace of soul, if God has given it to us by lot and by inheritance, some thorns and thistles must and will spring up in this present world.  
Moreover, dear Brothers and Sisters, the trial is greatly for our good and greatly for God’s Glory. Our faith could never grow, neither could we be sure of it, if it had not been tested. They do not send steam vessels out to sea at once. Often you see on the Clyde, vessels being tried—tried on the Gairloch—before they go out to sea. And God tries us here, before we take the great ocean of judgment—before we come to the time of death. We have our trials here and we grow by our trials. Among the best mercies we have ever received are those mercies that have come to us dressed in the somber garb of mourning which have carried treasures in both their hands. God be thanked for the fire! God be thanked for the refiner’s furnace and the crucible! They have been among the best things we have inherited from His mercy!  
Thus I have brought out two ideas of the text. The Christian lives by faith and he expects that faith to be tried.  
III. But now the next point is the main point of the text—that A TRUE FAITH, PUT ON TRIAL, WILL CERTAINLY BEAR IT. “Though He slays me.” It is an extreme expression. “Though He does His worst. Though He gives the last and uttermost stroke that can be taken, yet will I believe Him. Though He slays me.”  
Faith will be justified to the uttermost. It is very easy to believe the creature too much. It is a common fault. It is impossible to trust the Creator too much! To trust Him too little is one of the most usual of sins. Faith in the creature is hardly ever warranted. Faith in the Creator can be warranted, push it as far as ever you like. You know that there is a point where faith in the creature must stop. Our dearest friends can go with us only to the Jordan’s brink and then they can help us no longer. But though we go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, God is with us and we need fear no evil. Though it actually comes to the slaying and to the death, still we may trust in Him—for He cannot—He will not fail us!  
Why is it that the Believer is warranted in trusting in God to the very last extremity? The answer is because He is always the same God. If He is worth trusting one day, He is worth trusting another. He cannot change. His Character is such that if it is infinitely worthy of my confidence today, it will be just the same in the rough weather that may come tomorrow! Could He change, then my faith in Him ought to change—but if He is always the same true, faithful, loving and tender God, ruling all things by His power—there can be no reason why my faith should make a change. I ought to trust Him, who at all times is the same!  
I ought to trust Him, also, to the last, because outward Providences prove nothing to us about God. We cannot read outward events correctly—they are written in hieroglyphics. The book of God is readable—it is written in human language! But the works of God are often unreadable— *“Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His work in vain.  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.”*  
We begin spelling God’s works and making mischief out of them because we do not know the letters or understand the alphabet, and cannot readily know what He means. If the Lord says He loves us, do we believe it though He smites us? Do we believe that—  
*“Behind a frowning Providence  
He hides a smiling face?”*  
Be wise, then, and believe in the God you cannot see—not in the outward Providence which you can see—for if you could see that outward Providence aright as God sees it, you would see it to be as full of love as assuredly God’s heart is to you if you are a Believer in Him! Therefore, since the outward is no sign to us, let us, when it gathers all the black it can, still believe in Him. When it shall seem most severe and deep calls unto deep at the noise of God’s waterspouts, let us still hope in Him, for He is the health of our countenance and our God!  
Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, there is another cause why we should always trust in Him. To whom else can we go? We are shut up to this. When it comes to slaying, to cutting, to striking and to killing work, what can the soul do but fall into the Creator’s arms? When it comes to dying, what words shall fit these lips so well as these—“Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.” The course of the Christian’s life is such that he feels it more necessary to trust every day he lives. He does not get off the line of faith—he gets more into the middle of it as he feels his weakness more. And at the last, when his weakness will be more apparent, he will need faith more than ever—and he will have it! He shall be able to say, “My flesh and my heart fails, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” Ah, I ask again—To whom should we go in our trouble but unto God? All other sources are then dried up! The world mocks us, it seems to be a howling wilderness. ‘Tis only from Heaven the manna can come—only from the Rock, Christ Jesus, the living water can gush forth!  
And there is one other word I will say before I leave this point—we may depend upon it, God will always justify our faith if we do trust Him. There was never one who in the long run had to say, “I was a fool to trust in God.” Many have said to us, in time of trouble, “He trusted in God that He would deliver him, let Him deliver him,” and they have hissed between their teeth that hideous taunt, “Where is their God now?” But God has not left the righteous to be ashamed and to be offended forever! They have had, perhaps, a blush on the cheek for a moment, for the flesh is weak, but they have not been confounded for long. Faith has come to the rescue and God has fulfilled their faith! Many a man has trusted in himself and been deceived. Many have trusted in their wealth and been disappointed. Thousands have relied on friends and have been betrayed. But blessed is the man, O Lord of Hosts, who stays Himself on You! You can go beyond your friend’s line and measure—you may readily expect too much of him. You can try the temper of the dearest one you have on earth and at last feel that you have tried it too much. But you can never go beyond the line of God! Your sin will rather be in limiting the Holy One of Israel! You will never open your mouth too wide for Him! You will never ask too much at His hands! You will never expect too much! You will never believe too much! Has He not, Himself, said, “I am the Lord your God which brought you out of the land of Egypt, open your mouth wide and I will fill it”? The wider you open it, the better! The larger your expectations, the better, for according to your faith so shall it be done unto you!  
Now, in closing I would observe that if we say the text, it will take a good deal of saying and, if it is true, it will need the power of God, Himself, to make it true. You can stand up tonight and say, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.” But how would it be if He took you at your word? Did you ever question yourself thus, Christian Brothers and Sisters? You have said, “Well, I hope I have a faith that will bear me safely into the Presence of God.” Did you ever put yourself in the posture of a dying man and think whether you could look Death in the face? You have said, “I hope when I am weighed in the balances I shall not be found wanting.” Did you ever get in the scales and try? Have you made a self-examination, an earnest praying, testing, trying of yourself? They do not send out a gun from the foundry without putting it into the proofhouse to see whether it will bear the discharge of the powder. Have you ever put yourself into the proof-house?  
But beware, above all things, of religious boasting! Remember that God does not care for our words—it is the heart, it is the reality and truth of what we say—not the verbiage—that commends us to Him. Many a man says very boldly, “Though God should slays me, I will trust Him,” and yet when God denies him a week’s work, he does not trust Him! If he had a sick child, his faith would begin to waver. A little puff of wind will alter some people’s faith, for heaviest the heart is in the heavy air! O for a faith that can stand the test! Seek such faith, look to the Strong for strength in this matter and cry loudly unto Him who is the Author and the Finisher of faith, that He would strengthen it in you. Say, “Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief and bring me to this—that I can look anything in the face.” And then say, “Let all the floods of earth, and all the out-flowing from Hell, and even the drenching trials that come from Heaven, itself, come upon me, yet will I stay myself on the Lord, for He will not fail me, neither will He leave me! His mercy cannot depart from His chosen. He will keep to the end those who have rested in Him.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 26.**

No doubt this Psalm was written by David when his cruel persecutor, Saul, the more effectually to stab at him, spread false reports concerning his character. When the wicked can use no other weapons, they always have their quivers full of slanderous reports. Let us learn, here, that the best of men must expect to be misrepresented and to have the worst of crimes laid to their charge. Let us learn, also, from the example of David, to carry our case to the highest court at once, not to meddle with the lower courts of earth, but to go at once to the Court of King’s Bench in Heaven and there plead our cause before the Eternal Throne.

Verse 1. Judge me, O LORD—As if he turned away from all other judges, bribed and false as they had proved themselves to be in his case, and put himself on trial before God. “Judge me, O Lord—

1. For I have walked in my integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide. He pleads two things. First the outward life and second the inward faith, which as it is the main-spring and source of the outer life of integrity, is also the more important of the two. Mark that as the case is between himself and his accusers, he pleads his life, for though we are justified before God by faith and not by works, yet before men we must be justified by our works, rather than by our faith. It is in vain for me to plead my faith when I am slandered. The only answer that can effectually shut the mouth of the adversary is to point to a blameless life. Hence in this case he not only brings his faith before his God, but he also brings the fruit of his faith. Note the inference which he draws from God’s mercy to him in enabling him to walk uprightly and to trust Him— “therefore I shall not slide.” He rests for the future upon his God! His position was slippery, his enemies were always busy trying to trip up his heels, but he says—“I shall not slide.”

2. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. This is a wonderful verse. One would hardly dare to pray it. Here are three kinds of trial. According to the etymology of the Hebrew, the first is the trial by touch—“Examine me.” The next is the trial by smell—“Prove me.” And the next is the trial by fire—“Try my reins and my heart.” You see how anxious he is to really have the matter decided by God. “Lord, search me through and through. You know I am not a hypocrite.” Now who dares to say this but that true man of God whose soul is wholly fixed upon the Lord? The reins and the heart are mentioned because those were believed to be the seat of the affections—and when the affections are right the whole man is right. The heart is the fountain from which issue streams of life and if the fountain is pure, the streams cannot be impure—hence he asks chiefly that the examination may be directed to his reins and to his heart.

3. For your loving kindness is before my eyes—Right straight before his eyes he had God’s loving kindness. Some people appear to have their miseries, their sorrows, their sins before their eyes, but happy is that Believer who always has God’s loving kindness before him!

Come, my Brothers and Sisters, forget for a little while the burden of your business cares—now for a little season let the sickness that is in your house be left in the hands of your God and let His loving kindness be before your eyes. Loving kindness—pull the word to pieces. Remember the ancientness of it, the constancy of it, the variety of ways in which it shows itself and the lavish bounties which it bestows upon you! Do not turn your back to God’s goodness, but now, right straight before you sets the loving kindness of your God!

3. And I have walked in Your truth. By which he may mean two things. First that he endeavored to hold fast to the Truths of God both in Doctrine and in practice. Or, secondly, that by God’s truthfulness in giving him the promised Grace, he had been enabled to walk uprightly.

4. I have not sat with vain persons—I never took counsel with them. They never were my choice companions.  
4. Neither will I go in with dissemblers. He makes a vow for the future that all crafty, lying, and foolish men shall never have his companionship.  
5. I have hated the congregation of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked. By which he does not mean that he does not associate with them in any way, for we must go out of the world if we will not have communion with sinners—but he means that he did not seek their company, found no pleasure in it and never went in it to abet them in their evil deeds.  
6. I will wash my hands in innocence. Pilate did this, but alas, the water was very dirty in which he washed his hands! This was an old Jewish rite when a man was found murdered—if the people in the valley in which he was found would be free from the crime of murder, they took a heifer, slew it, and then washed their hands in water over the head of the victim. They were then clear. So here he says—“I will wash my hands in innocence.”  
6. So will I compass Your altar, O LORD. He is innocent as far as men are concerned, but he still confesses that he is a sinner, for he goes to God’s altar. Perfect men need no altars. It is the sinner that needs a sacrifice. So let the saint always know that though he can plead innocence against the charges of men—yet before God his hope lies in the bloodsprinkled altar of which Jesus Christ is the great High Priest!  
7, 8. That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Your wondrous works. LORD, I have loved the habitation of Your House, and the place where Your honor dwells. I am sure many of us can say this, that when the Sabbath comes round, it is the best day of all the week! And that hour in the week-night when we can get to the House of God—what an inexpressible relief is that! It is to us like a green oasis in the midst of the sandy desert. There are no beauties in Nature and no changes to be perceived in traveling that I think can ever compensate for the loss of the constant means of Grace—after all, God’s House is the fairest spot on earth! Zion, I will prefer you above my chief joy! If I forget you, let my right hand forget her cunning. “I have loved the habitation of Your House, and the place where Your honor dwells.”  
9, 10. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: in whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. See, he so loves God’s House that he cannot bear the thought of being shut in with sinners! And this is our comfort—that if we have loved God’s House on earth, we shall dwell in His House forever!  
11. But as for me, I will walk in my integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me. See again, my Beloved, how in the Christian’s practice, good works and faith are seen happily blended. He declares that he will walk in his integrity, but still, still note, he prays as one that is conscious of a thousand imperfections—“Redeem me and be merciful unto me.” We rest on Christ, alone, but still we desire to walk in holiness with as much exactness as though our salvation depended upon our good works!  
12. My foot stands in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.

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÷Job 13.22

HOW TO CONVERSE WITH GOD  
NO. 1255

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 19, 1875, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Then call, and I will answer: or let me speak, and You answer me.” Job 13:22.**

JOB might well have been driven frantic by his miserable comforters. It is wonderful that he did not express himself far more bitterly than he did. Surely Satan found better instruments for his work in those three ungenerous friends than in the marauding Sabeans, or the pitiless whirlwind. They assailed Job remorselessly and seemed to have no more hearts of compassion than so many flint stones. No wonder that he said to them many things which otherwise he would never have thought of uttering and, a few, which I dare say, he afterwards regretted.

Possibly the expression of our text is one of those passages of too forcible speech. The tormented Patriarch did what none but a man of the highest integrity could have done so intensely as he did. He made his appeal from the false judgement of man to the bar of God and begged to be forthwith summoned before the tribunal of the Judge of All, for he was sure that God would justify him. “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him: but I will maintain my own ways before Him. He, also, shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before Him.” He was ready to appear at the Judgement Seat of God, there to be tried as to his sincerity and uprightness!

He says, “Only do not two things unto me: then will I not hide myself from You. Withdraw Your hand far from me: and let not Your dread make me afraid.” He offers, in the words of our text, to come before the righteous Judge in any way which He might appoint—either he will be the defendant and God shall be the plaintiff in the suit—“Call and I will answer,” or else he will take up the part of the plaintiff and the Lord shall show cause and reason for His dealings towards him, or convict him of falsehood in his pleas—“Let me speak, and You answer me.” He feels so sure he has not been a hypocrite that he will answer to the All-Seeing, then and there, without fear of the result.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, we are far from condemning Job’s language, but we would be quite as far from imitating it. Considering the circumstances in which Job was placed. Considering the hideous libels which were brought against him. Considering how he must have been stung when accused so wrongfully at such a time, we do not wonder that he thus spoke. Yet it may be that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips, but, at any rate, it is not for us to employ his language in the same sense, or in any measure to enter upon self-justification before God! On the contrary, let our prayer be, “Enter not into judgement with Your servant: for in Your sight shall no man living be justified.”

How shall man be just with God? How can we challenge His judgement before whom the heavens are not pure and who charged His angels with folly? Unless, indeed, it is in a Gospel sense, when, covered with the righteousness of Christ, we are made bold by faith to cry, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies, who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that has risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

I am going to use the words of Job in a different sense from that in which he employed them and shall apply them to the sweet communion which we have with our Father God. We cannot use them in reference to our appearance before His Judgement Seat to be tried, but they are exactly suitable when we speak of those blessed approaches to the Mercy Seat when we draw near to God to be enriched and sanctified by sacred communion. The text brings out a thought which I wish to convey to you—“Call, and I will answer: or let me speak, and You answer me.” May the Holy Spirit bless our meditation.

The three points this morning will be, two methods of secret conversation—“Call, and I will answer: or let me speak, and You answer me.” Secondly, the method of combining the two, and here we shall try to show how the two modes of conversation should be united in our communion with God. And thirdly, we shall show how these two modes of fellowship are realized to the full in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our answer to God and God’s answer to us.

I. First, then, here are TWO METHODS OF SACRED CONVERSATION BETWEEN GOD AND THE SOUL—sometimes the Lord calls to us and we reply, and at other times we speak to God and He graciously deigns to answer us. A missionary, some years ago, returning from South Africa, gave a description of the work which had been accomplished there through the preaching of the Gospel. Among other things, he pictured a little incident of which he had been an eye-witness. He said that one morning he saw a converted African chieftain sitting under a palm tree with his Bible open before him.

Every now and then he cast his eyes on his book and read a passage, and then he paused and looked up a little while, and his lips were seen to be in motion. Thus he continued alternately to look down on the Scriptures and to turn his eyes upward towards Heaven. The missionary passed by without disturbing the good man, but a little while after he mentioned to him what he had seen and asked him why it was that sometimes he read, and sometimes he looked up? The African replied—“I look down to the Bible and God speaks to me. And then I look up in prayer and speak to the Lord, and in this way we keep up a holy talk with each other.” I would set this picture before you as being the mirror and pattern of communion with Heaven—the heart hearkening to the Voice of God— and then replying in prayer and praise.

We will begin with the first method of communion. Sometimes it is well in our conversation with God that we should wait till our heavenly Father has spoken—“Call, and I will answer.” In this way the Lord communed with His servant Abraham. If you refer to those sacred interviews with which the Patriarch was honored, you will find that the record begins— “The Lord spoke unto Abraham and said.” After a paragraph or two you hear Abraham speaking to the Lord and then comes the Lord’s reply, and another word from the Patriarch. But the conversation generally began with the Lord Himself.

So it was with Moses. While he kept his flock in the wilderness he saw a bush which burned and was not consumed. He turned aside to gaze upon it and then the Lord spoke to him out of the bush. The Lord called first and Moses answered. Notably this was the case in the instance of the holy child, Samuel. While he lay asleep, the Lord said to him, “Samuel, Samuel,” and he said, “Here I am,” and yet a second and a third time the Voice of God commenced a sacred communion. No doubt the Lord had heard the voice of the child in prayer at other times, but upon this notable occasion the Lord first called Samuel, and Samuel answered, “Speak Lord, for Your servant hears.”

So was it with Elijah. There was a still small Voice and the Lord said to the Prophet, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” Then Elijah replied, “I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, for they have thrown down Your altars and slain Your Prophets with the sword.” To which complaint his great Master gave a comfortable answer. Now, as it was with these saints of old so has it been with us—the Lord our God has spoken to us by His Spirit—and our spiritual ears have listened to His words and thus our communion with Heaven has commenced. If the Lord wills to have the first word in the holy conversation which He intends to hold with His servants, God forbid that any speech of ours should interpose!

Who would not be silent to hear Jehovah speak? How does God speak to us, then, and how does He expect us to answer? He speaks to us in the written Word. This “more sure Word of testimony, whereunto you do well if you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place.” He speaks to us, also, in the ministry of His Word, when things new and old which are in Holy Scripture are brought forth by His chosen servants and are applied with power to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Lord is not dumb in the midst of His family, though, alas, some of His children appear to be dull of hearing!

Though the Urim and Thummim are no longer to be seen upon the breasts of mortal men, yet the oracle is not silent. O that we were always ready to hear the loving Voice of the Lord! The Lord’s Voice has many tones, all equally Divine. Sometimes He uses the voice of awakening and then we should give earnest heed. We are dead and He quickens us. We are sluggish and need to be awakened and the Lord, therefore, cries aloud to us, “Awake you that sleep!” We are slow to draw near to Him and, therefore, He lovingly says, “Seek you My face.” What a mercy it is if our heart at once answers, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.”

When he awakens us to duty there is true communion in our hearts if we at once reply “Here am I, send me.” Our inmost souls should reply to the Lord’s call as the echo answers to the voice. I fear it is sometimes far otherwise—and then our loving Lord has His patience tried. Remember how He says, “Behold I stand at the door and knock”? He knocks because He finds that door closed which should have been wide open. Alas, even

His knocks are, for a while, in vain, for we are stretched upon the bed of ease and make idle excuses for remaining there—“I have taken off my coat, how can I put it on? I have washed my feet, how can I defile them?”

Let us no longer treat Him in this ungenerous manner lest He take it amiss and leave us, for if He goes away from us we shall seek Him but find Him not. We shall call Him but He will give us no answer. If we will not arise at His call it may be He will leave us to slumber like sluggards till our poverty comes as one that travels and our need as an armed man. If our Beloved cries, “Rise up My Love, My fair One, and come away,” let us not linger for an instant! If He cries “Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion,” let us arise in the power of His call and shade ourselves from the dust! At the first sound of Heaven’s bugle in the morning, let us leave the bed of carnal ease and go forth to meet our Lord and King. Herein is communion—the Lord draws us and we run after Him! He awakens us and we wake to serve Him! He restores our soul and our hearts praise Him!

Frequently the voice of God is for our instruction. All Scripture is written for that purpose and our business is to listen to its teachings with open ears and willing heart. Well did the Psalmist say, “I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace unto His people.” God’s own command of mercy is, “Incline your ear and come unto Me, hear and your soul shall live.” This is the very Gospel of God to the unsaved ones and it is an equally important message to those who have, through Grace, believed, for they, also, need to receive of His Words. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God shall men live.”

Therefore one of the saints cried out, “Your Words were found and I did eat them.” And another said, “How sweet are Your Words unto my taste, yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth.” God’s Word is the soul’s manna and the soul’s Water of Life. How greatly we ought to prize each Word of Divine teaching! But, dear Brothers and Sisters, do you not think that many are very neglectful of God’s instructive Voice? In the Bible we have precious doctrines, precious promises, precious precepts and, above all, a precious Christ! If a man would really live upon these choice things, he might rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But how often is the Bible left unread? And so God is not heard. He calls and we give no heed. As for the preaching of the Word, when the Holy Spirit is in it, it is the “power of God unto salvation,” and the Lord is pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. But all Believers do not hear the voice of the Lord by His ministers as they should. There is much carping criticism, much coldness of heart, much glorying in man, and a great need of teachableness of spirit and thus the Word is shut out of our hearts. The Lord would gladly teach us by His servants, but our ears are dull of hearing.

Is it any wonder that those professors cannot pray who are forever grumbling that they cannot hear? God will be deaf to us if we are deaf to Him. If we will not be taught, we shall not be heard. Let us not be as the adder which is deaf to the charmer’s voice. Let us be willing, yes, eager to learn. Did not our Lord Jesus say, “take My yoke upon you and learn of Me”? And is there not a rich reward for so doing in His sweet assurance, “you shall find rest unto your souls”? Search the Scriptures that no Word from the Lord may be inadvertently slighted by you! Hear the Word attentively and ponder it in your heart. Daily make this your prayer, “What I know not, teach me.” “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law.”

Let us strive against prejudice and never let us dream that we are so wise that we need learn no more. Jesus Christ would have us be teachable as little children and ready to receive, with meekness, the engrafted Word which is able to save our souls! You will have a blessed fellowship with your Lord if you will sit at His feet and receive His Words. O for His own effectual teaching! Call, O Lord, and I will answer!

The Lord also speaks to His servants with the voice of command. Those who trust Christ must also obey Him. In the day when we become the Lord’s children we come under obligations to obey. Does He not, Himself, say, “If I am a father, where is My honor?” Dear Friends, we must never have a heavy ear towards the precepts. I know some who drink in the promises as Gideon’s fleece did the dew, but as for the commands, they refuse them as a man turns from wormwood. But the child of God can say, “Oh, how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day: I will delight myself in Your Commandments which I have loved.”

The will of God is very sweet to His children. They long to have their own wills perfectly conformed to it. True Christians are not pickers and choosers of God’s Word—the part which tells them how they should live in the power of the Spirit of God is as sweet to them as the other portion which tells them how they are saved by virtue of the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Dear Brothers and Sisters, if we shut our ears to what Jesus tells us, we shall never have power in prayer, nor shall we enjoy intimate communion with the Well-Beloved. “If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love,” He says, “even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.”

If you will not hear God, you cannot expect Him to hear you! And if you will not do what He bids you, neither can you expect Him to give you what you seek at His hands. An obedient heart is necessary if there is to be any happy conversation between God and the soul! The Lord sometimes speaks to His servants in the tone of rebuke and let us never be among those who harden their necks against Him. It is not a pleasant thing to be told of our faults, but it is a most profitable thing.

Brethren, when you have erred, if you are on good terms with God, He will gently chide you. His voice will sound in your conscience, “My Child, was this right? My Child, was this as it ought to be? Is this becoming in one redeemed with precious blood?” When you open the Bible, many a text will, like a mirror, show you yourself and the spots upon your face. And Conscience, looking on, will say, “Do not so, my Son, this is not as your Lord would have it.” “Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more. That which I see not

teach me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.”

If we do not listen to God’s rebuking voice in His Word, He will probably speak in harsher tones by some addicting Providence. Perhaps He will hide from us the light of His Countenance and deny us the consolations of the Spirit. Before this is the case, it will be wise to turn our hearts unto the Lord, or if it has already come to that, let us say, “Show me why You contend with me. Make me to know my faults, my Father, and help me to purge myself from them.” Brothers and Sisters, be you not as the horse, or as the mule, but pray to be made tender in spirit. Be this your prayer—

*“Quick as the apple of an eye,  
Oh, God, my conscience make.  
Awake, my soul, when sin is near,  
And keep it still awake.  
Oh may the least omission pain  
My well instructed soul  
And drive me to the blood again,  
Which makes the wounded whole!”*

Let us hear Nathan as kindly when he rebukes us as when he brings a promise, for in both cases the Prophet speaks his Master’s own sure word. Let us thank the Lord for chiding us and zealously set about destroying the idols against which His anger is lifted. It is due to the Lord and it is the wisest course for ourselves.

But blessed be His name, the Lord will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever! Very frequently the Lord speaks to us in consolatory language. How full the Bible is of comforts! How truly has God carried out His own precept to the Prophet—“Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God.” What more, indeed, could God have said than He has said for the consolation of His own beloved? Be not slow to hear when God is swift to cheer you. Alas, our mischief sometimes turns a deaf ear even to the sweetest note of Jehovah’s love! We cannot think that all things will work together for our good. We cannot believe that the Providence which looks so evil can really be a blessing in disguise.

Blind unbelief is sure to err and it errs principally in stopping its ear against those dulcet tones of everlasting lovingkindness which ought to make our hearts leap within us for joy! Beloved, be not hard to comfort, and when God calls, be ready to answer Him, and say, “I believe You, Lord, and rejoice in Your Word, and therefore my soul shall put away her mourning and gird herself with delight.” This is the way to keep up fellowship with God—to hear His consolations and to be grateful for them. And last of all upon this point, God speaks to His people, sometimes in the tones which invite to innermost communion. I cannot tell now how they sound—your ear must, itself, have heard them to know what they are.

Sometimes He calls His beloved ones to come away to the top of Amana, to ascend above the world and all its cares, and to come to the Mount of Transfiguration. “There,” says He, “will I show you My loves.” There the Lord seems to lay bare His heart to His child and to tell him all the heights and depths of love unsearchable. There the Lord allows him to understand his eternal union with Christ and the safety that comes of it. There the Lord reveals the mystical Covenant with all its treasures, “for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant.” It is a sad thing when the Lord calls us into the secret chamber, where none may approach but men greatly beloved, and we are not prepared to enter.

That innermost heart-to-heart communion is not given to him who is unclean. God said even to Moses, “Put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground.” There is no enjoying that extraordinary nearness to God with which He sometimes favors His choice ones, unless the feet have been washed in the bronze laver and the hands have been cleansed in innocence. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” He that is of clean hands and a pure heart, he shall dwell on high, but only he, for God will not draw inconsistent professors and those who are dallying with sin into close contact with Himself. “Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord,” and especially be you clean who hope to stand in His holy place and to behold His face, for that face is only to be beheld in righteousness.

Brethren, it is clear that the voice of God speaks to us in different tones and our business, as His children, is to answer at once when He speaks to us. This is one form of holy fellowship. The second and equally common form is that we speak to God and He graciously replies to us. How should we speak to the Most High? I answer, first, we ought constantly to speak to Him in the tone of adoration. We do not, I fear, adore and reverently magnify God one hundredth as much as we should. The general frame of a Christian should be such that whenever his mind is taken off from the necessary thoughts of his calling, he should at once stand before the Throne blessing the Lord, if not in words, yet in heart.

I was watching the lilies, the other day, as they stood upon their tall stalks with flowers so fair and beautiful. They cannot sing, but they seemed to me to be offering continual hymns to God by their very existence! They had lifted themselves as near to Heaven as they could. Indeed, they would not commence to flower till they had risen as far from the earth as their nature would permit—and then they just stood still in their beauty and showed to all around what God can do—and as they poured out their sweet perfume in silence they said by their example, “Bless the Lord as we, also, do by pouring out our very souls in sweetness.”

Now, you may not be able to preach and it would not be possible to be always singing, especially in some company. But your life, your heart, your whole being should be one perpetual discourse of the lovingkindness of the Lord and your heart, even if the Lord is silent, should carry on fellowship by adoring His blessed name. Coupled with adoration, the Lord should always hear the voice of our gratitude. One of our Brethren in prayer, last Monday night, commenced somewhat in this fashion. He said, “Lord, You do so continuously bless us that we feel as if we could begin to praise You now and never leave off any more. We are half ashamed to ask for anything more because You do always give so promptly, and so bountifully.”

In this spirit let us live! Let us be grateful unto Him and bless His name and come into His Presence with thanksgiving! The whole life of the Christian man should be a Psalm of which the contents should be summed up in this sentence, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name.” Now, adoration and thanksgiving, if rendered to God with a sincere heart through Jesus Christ, will be acceptable to God and we shall receive an answer of peace from Him so that we shall realize the second half of the text. “Let me speak, and You answer me.” But, my Brothers and Sisters, it would not suffice for us to come before God with adoration, only, for we must remember what we are.

Great is He and, therefore, to be adored, but sinful are we and, therefore, when we come to Him there must always be confession of sin upon our lips. I never expect, until I get to Heaven, to be able to cease confessing sin every day and every time I stand before God. When I wander away from God, I may have some idea of being holy, but when I draw near to Him I always feel as Job when he said, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes.” If you would have the Lord hear, be sure you speak to Him in humble notes. You have rebelled against Him. You are a sinner by nature and though forgiven and accepted, and therefore freed from dread of wrath, you can never forget that you were a rebel—and if it had not been for Sovereign Grace you would have been so still—therefore speak with lowliness and humility before the Lord if you wish to receive an answer.

Beloved Friends, we should also speak to God with the voice of petition and this we can never cease to do, for we are always full of needs. “Give us this day our daily bread” must be our prayer as long as we are in the land where daily needs require daily supplies. We shall always need to make request for temporals and for spirituals, for ourselves and for others, too. The work of intercessory prayer must never be allowed to cease. Speak to the Lord, you that have His ear! Speak for us, His servants, who are His ambassadors to men! Speak for the Church, also! Plead for rebellious sinners and ask that unnumbered blessings may be given from above.

We should also speak to Him, sometimes, in the language of resolution. If the poor prodigal was right in saying, “I will arise and go to my father,” so are Christians right in saying, “Therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live,” or in saying, “As long as I live I will bless the Lord.” Sometimes when a duty is set before you, very plainly, which you had, for a while, forgotten, it is very sweet to say unto the Lord, “Lord, Your servant will rejoice to do this, only help me!” Register the secret vow before the Lord, and honorably fulfill it. We should often use the language of intimate communion. “What language is that?” you ask and, again, I answer, “I cannot tell you.”

There are times when we say to the blessed Bridegroom of our souls love words which the uncircumcised ear must not hear. Why, even the little that is unveiled before the world in the Book of Solomon’s Song has made many a man quibble, for the carnal mind cannot understand such spiritual secrets. You know how the Church cries out concerning her Lord—“Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine.” There are many love passages and love words between sanctified souls and their dear Lord and Master which it were not lawful for a man to utter in a mixed assembly—it were like the casting of pearls before swine, or reading one’s love letters in the public streets. Oh, you chosen, speak to your Lord! Keep nothing from Him!

He has said, “If it were not so, I would have told you.” He has told you all that He has seen with the Father! Tell Him everything that is in your heart and when you speak, speak with sacred child-like confidence, telling Him everything! You will find Him answering you with familiar love and sweet will be the fellowship thus created. Thus I have shown you that there are two forms of the Believer’s communion with God.

II. Let us now consider THE METHOD OF THE COMBINATION OF THE TWO. With regard to this subject I would say that they must be united. Brethren, we sometimes go to prayer and we want God to hear us, but we have not heard what God has to say. This is wrong. Suppose a person neglects the hearing of the Word of God, but is very fond of prayer? I feel certain that his prayer will soon become flat, stale and unprofitable, because no conversation can be very lively which is all on one side. The man speaks, but he does not let God speak and, therefore, he will soon find it hard to maintain the conversation.

If you are earnest in regular prayer, but do not as regularly read or hear the Scriptures, your soul gives out without taking in and is very apt to run dry. Not only thoughts and desires will flag, but even the expressions will become monotonous. If you consider how it is that your prayer appears to lack vivacity and freshness, the probable reason is that you are trying to maintain a maimed fellowship. When conversation is all onesided, do you wonder that it flags?

If I have a friend at my house, tonight, and we wish to have fellowship with each other, I must not do all the talking, but I must wait for him to answer me or to suggest new topics, as he may please. And if he is wiser than I am, there is the more reason why I should play second in the conversation and leave its guidance very much to him. It is such a condescension on God’s part to speak with us that we ought eagerly to hear what He has to say. Let Him never have to complain that we turned our ears away from Him.

At the same time, we must not be silent. For to read the Scriptures, to hear sermons and never to pray would not bring fellowship with God. That would be a lame conversation! Remember how Abraham spoke with God again and again, though he felt himself to be but dust and ashes? Remember how Moses pleaded? Do you remember how David sat before the Lord and then spoke with his tongue? Above all, remember how Jesus talked with His Father as well as listened to the Voice from Heaven. Let both forms of conversation unite and all will be well.

Again, it will be well sometimes to vary the order. Dear Mr. Muller, who is a man living near to God, whose every word is like a pearl, said, the other day, “Sometimes when I go into my closet to pray, I find I cannot pray as I would. What do I do then? Why, since I cannot speak to the Lord, I beg the Lord to speak to me and therefore I open the Scriptures and read my portion. And then I find the Lord gives me matter for

prayer.” Is not this a suggestion of much weight? Does it not commend itself to your spiritual judgement?

Have you not observed that when somebody calls to see you, you may not be in a fit condition to start a profitable conversation? But if your friend will lead, your mind takes fire and you have no difficulty in following him! Frequently it will be best to ask the Lord to lead the sacred conversation, or wait awhile till He does so. It is a blessed thing to wait at the posts of His door, expecting a Word of Love from His Throne. It is generally best, in communion with God, to begin with hearing His voice, because it is due to His sacred majesty that we should first hear what He has to say to us. And it will especially be best for us to do so when we feel out of order for communion. If the flesh, in its weakness, hampers the spirit, then let the Bible reading come before the praying, that the soul may be awakened thereby.

Still, there are tines when it will be better to speak to our heavenly Father at once. For instance, if a child has done wrong, it is very wise of him to run straight away to his father, before his father has said anything to him, and say, “Father, I have sinned.” The prodigal had the first word and so should our penitence seek for speedy audience and pour itself out like water before the Lord. Sometimes, too, when our heart is very full of thankfulness, we should allow praise to burst forth at once. When we have received a great favor, we ought not to wait till the Giver of it speaks to us, but the moment we see Him we should at once acknowledge our indebtedness.

When the heart is full of either prayer or praise, and the Presence of Jesus is felt, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we begin addressing the Lord with all our hearts. The Lord has spoken and it is for us to reply at once. On the other hand, when for wise reasons our Lord is silent unto us, it is well to take with us words and come to Him. If you have read your Bible and have felt no visit from the Holy Spirit, or if you have heard a sermon and found no dew from the Lord attending it, then turn at once to prayer. Tell the Lord your condition and entreat Him to reveal Himself to you. Pray first and read afterwards, and you will find that your speaking with God will be replied to by His speaking to you through the Word. Take the two methods—commonsense and your own experience will guide you— and let sometimes one come first and sometimes the other.

But let there be a reality about both. Mockery in this matter is deadly sin. Do not let God’s Word be before you as a mass of letterpress, but let the Book speak to your soul. Some people read the Bible through in a set time and in great haste—they might just as well never look at it at all! Can a man understand a country by merely tearing through it at a railway pace? If he desires to know the character of the soil and the condition of the people, he walks leisurely through the land and examines with care. God’s Word needs digging, or its treasures will lie hidden. We must put our ear down to the heart of Scripture and hear its living throbs. Scripture often whispers, rather than thunders, and the ear must be duly trained to comprehend its language.

Resolve emphatically, “I will HEAR what God the Lord shall speak.” Let God speak to you and in order that He may do so, pause and meditate, and do not proceed till you grasp the meanings of the verses as far as the Spirit enables you. If you do not understand some passages, read them again and again, and remember it is good to read even those parts of Scripture which you do not understand, even as it is good for a child to hear his father’s voice whether he understands all his father has to say or not. At any rate, faith finds exercise in knowing that God never speaks in vain, even though He is not understood. Hear the Word till you understand it.

While you are listening, the sense will gradually break in upon your soul, but mind that you listen with opened ears and willing heart. When you speak to God, do not let it be a dead form, for that is an insult to the Most High. If the heart is absent, it is as wicked to say a prayer as to be prayerless. If one should obtain an audience of Her Majesty and then should read a petition in which he took no interest, which was, in fact, a mere set of words, it would be an insult of the worst kind. Beware lest you thus insult the Majesty of Heaven!

III. The last thought is only meant to be dropped before you for you to enlarge upon it at your leisure—THE BLESSED REALIZATION OF THESE TWO FORMS OF COMMUNION IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST. “Call, and I will answer.” Infinite majesty of God, call upon me and ask for all You can ask, and I bless You that I have an answer for You. Ask Your poor servant for all You can demand of him and he will gladly reply. Brethren do you ask in wonder—“How can we answer Him?” The answer is clear—“By bringing Jesus to remembrance!” Our Lord Jesus Christ is man’s complete answer to God.

Divine Justice demands death as the penalty of sin—behold the Son of God taken down from the Cross because He was surely dead, wrapped in the cerements of the grave and laid in Joseph’s tomb! God’s Justice demands suffering, demands that the sinner be abandoned of God. See yonder Cross and hear the cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”! Great God, You have, in Jesus, all the suffering Your Justice can ask, even to death itself. God’s holiness righteously demands a life of obedience—man cannot be right before God unless he renders perfect obedience to the Law. Behold our answer, we bring a perfect Savior’s active and passive obedience and lay it down at Jehovah’s feet—what more can He ask for?

He requires a perfect heart and an unblemished person, and He cannot accept less than a perfect manhood. We bring the Father His OnlyBegotten, the Son of Man, our Brother! And here is our answer—there is the perfect Man, the unfallen Head of the race. Oh, never try to reply to God with any other answer than this! Whatever He asks of you, bring Him your Savior! He cannot ask for more. You bring before Him that which fully contents Him, for He, Himself, has said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Let your answer, then, to the Justice of God, be Christ!

But I said that Christ fulfilled the other purpose. He is God’s answer to us. What have you to ask of God this morning? Are you so far away from Him that you enquire, “How can I be saved?” No answer comes out of the excellent Glory except Christ on the Cross—that is God’s answer— believe in Him and live! By those wounds, by that bloody sweat, by that sacrificial death you must be saved! Look! Can you say unto the Lord, “I have trusted Christ, but am I secure of salvation?” No answer comes but Christ risen from the dead to die no more! Death has no more dominion over Him, and He has said, “Because I live, you shall live also.” The risen Christ is the Lord’s assurance of our safety for eternity!

Do you ask the Lord, “How much do You love me?” You have asked a large question, but there is a large answer for you. He gives His Son— behold what manner of love is born! Do you enquire, “Lord, what will You give me?” His Son is the answer to that question, also! Behold these lines written on His bleeding Person, “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?” Would you need more? Do you say, “What sign do You show that all these things are so?” He gives you Christ in Heaven!

Yes, if you ask, “Lord, what shall Your servant be when You have completed Your work of Grace upon me? He points you to Jesus in Glory, for you shall be like He is! If you ask what is to be your destiny in the future, He shows you Christ coming a second time without a sin-offering unto salvation! Dear Friend, you can ask nothing of your God, but what He gives you at once as a reply is Jesus. Oh what blessed talk is that when the Christian’s heart says Jesus, and the Christian’s God says Jesus! And how sweet it is when we come to Jesus and rest in Him and God is in Jesus and makes Him His rest forever.

Thus do Believers and their God rest together in the same Beloved One! May the Lord add His blessing to our meditation and make this kind of communion common among us for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 84 and 85.** HYMN FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—84 (SONG III), 95 (SONG III), 782.  
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÷Job 13.23

STRUGGLES OF CONSCIENCE  
NO. 336

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 22, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

**“How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin.”  
Job 13:23.**

THERE are many persons who long to have a deeper sense of their sinfulness and then with a certain show of conscientious scruple, they make an excuse for the exercise of simple faith. That spiritual disease, which keeps sinners from Christ, assumes a different shape at different times. In Luther’s day the precise evil under which men labored was this—they believed in being self-righteous—and so they supposed that they must have good works before they might trust in Christ.

In our day the evil has taken another and that a most extraordinary shape. Men have aimed at being self-righteous after quite a singular fashion. They think they must feel worse and have a deeper conviction of sin before they may trust in Christ. Many hundreds do I meet with who say they dare not come to Christ and trust Him with their souls, because they do not feel their need of Him enough.

They have not sufficient contrition for their sins. They have not repented as fully as they have rebelled. Brethren, it is the same evil, from the same old germ of self-righteousness, but it has taken another and I think a more crafty shape. Satan has wormed himself into many hearts under the garb of an angel of light and he has whispered to the sinner, “Repentance is a necessary virtue. Stop until you have repented and when you have sufficiently mortified yourself on account of sin, then you will be fit to come to Christ and qualified to trust and rely on Him.”

It is with that deadly evil I want to grapple this morning. I am persuaded it is far more common than some would think. And I think I know the reason of its great commonness. In the Puritanical age, which was noted certainly for its purity of doctrine, there was also a great deal of experimental preaching and much of it was sound and healthy. But some of it was unscriptural, because it took for its standard what the Christian felt and not what the Savior said—the inference from a Believer’s experience, rather than the message which goes before any belief. Those excellent men, Mr. Rogers, of Dedham, who has written some useful works and Mr. Sheppard who wrote The Sound Believer and Mr. Flavel and many others give descriptions of what a sinner must be before he may come to Christ, which actually represent what a saint is, after he has come to Christ. These good Brethren have taken their own experience— what they felt before they came into light—as the standard of what every other man ought to feel before he may put his trust in Christ and hope for mercy.

There were some in the Puritanical times who protested against that theology and insisted that sinners were to be bid to come to Christ just as they were—with no preparation either of feeling or of doing. At the present time there are large numbers of Calvinistic ministers who are afraid to give a free invitation to sinners. They always garble Christ’s invitation thus—“If you are a sensible sinner you may come.” Just as if stupid sinners might not come. They say, “If you feel your need of Christ, you may come.” And then they describe what that feeling or need is and give such a high description of it that their hearers say, “Well, I never felt like that,” and they are afraid to venture for lack of the qualification.

Mark you, the Brethren speak truly in some respect. They describe what a sinner does feel before he comes, but they make a mistake in putting what a sinner feels, as if that were what a sinner ought to feel. What the sinner feels and what the sinner does, until he is renewed by grace, are just the very opposite of what he ought. We always get wrong when we say one Christian’s experience is to be estimated by what another Christian has felt. No, Sir, my experience is to be measured by the Word of God. And what the sinner should feel is to be measured by what Christ commands him to feel and not by what another sinner has felt.

Comparing ourselves among ourselves is not wise. I believe there are hundreds and thousands who remain in doubt and darkness and go down to despair because there is a description given and a preparation for Christ demanded to which they cannot attain—a description indeed which is not true—because it is a description of what they feel after they have found Christ and not what they must feel before they may come to Him.

Now, then, with all my might I come this morning to break down every barrier that keeps a soul from Christ. And, as God the Holy Spirit shall help me, to dash the battering ram of the Truth of God against every wall that has been built up, whether by doctrinal truth or experimental truth, that keeps the sinner from Christ, who desires to come and to be saved by Him.

I shall attempt to address you in the following order this morning. First, a little by way of consolation. Then, a little by way of instruction. A little more upon discrimination or caution. And in the last place, a few sentences by way of exhortation.

I. First, Beloved, let me speak to you who are desiring to feel more and more your sins and whose prayer is the prayer of the text, “Lord how many are my iniquities and my sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin.” Let me try to COMFORT YOU. It ought to give you much solace when you remember that the best of men have prayed this prayer before you. The better a man is, the more anxious is he to know the worst of his case. The more a man gets rid of sin and the more he lives above his daily faults and errors, the more does he cry “Search me, O God and know my heart. O try me and know my thoughts and see if there are any wicked ways in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Bad men do not want to know their badness. It is the good man, the man who has been renewed by grace, who is anxious to discover what is his disease, that he may have it healed. Ought it not then to be some ground of comfort to you, that your prayer is not a prayer which could come from the lips of the wicked, but a prayer which has constantly been offered by the most advanced of saints, by those who have most grown in grace?

Perhaps that is a reason why it should not be offered by you, who just now can scarcely hope to be a saint at all. Yet it should be a matter of sweet rejoicing that your prayer cannot be an evil one, because the “Amens” of God’s people, even those who are the fathers in our Israel, go up to God with it. I am sure my aged Brothers and Sisters in Christ now present, can say unanimously, “That has often been my prayer, Lord let me know my iniquity and my sin; teach me how vile I am and lead me daily to Christ Jesus that my sins may be put away.”

Let this reflection also comfort you—you never prayed like this years ago when you were a careless sinner. It was the last thing you would ever think of asking for. You did not want to know your guilt. No! You found pleasure in wickedness. Sin was a sweet morsel to you. You only wanted to be let alone that you might roll it under your tongue. If any told you of your evil, you would rather they let it alone. “Ah,” you said, “what business is that of yours? No doubt I make some mistakes and am a little amiss, but I don’t want to be told so.”

Why, the last meditation you would ever have thought of entertaining would have been a meditation upon your own criminality. When conscience did speak, you said, “Lay down, Sir, be quiet!” When God’s Word came home sharp to you, you tried to blunt its edge—you did not want to feel it. Now, ought it not to be some comfort that you have had such a gracious change worked in you, that you are now longing for the very feeling which at one time you could not endure? Surely, Man, the Lord must have begun a good work in you, for you would not have such wishes and desires as these unless He had put His hand to the plow and had begun to plow the barren, dry, hard soil of your heart!

Yet further, there is another reason why you should take comfort. It is very probable you do already feel your guilt and what you are asking for, you already have in measure realized. It often happens that a man has the grace which he seeks for and does not know he has it, because he makes a mistake as to what he should feel when he has the blessing. He has already got the blessing which he asks God to give him.

Let me just put it in another shape. If you are sorry because you cannot be sorry enough on account of sin, why, you are already sorry! If you grieve because you cannot grieve enough, why, you do grieve already! If it is a cause of repentance to you that your heart is very hard and that you cannot repent, why you do repent. My dear Hearer, let me assure you, for your comfort, that when you go down on your knees and say, “Lord, I groan before You, because I cannot groan. I cannot feel. Lord help me to feel,” why, you do feel and you have got the repentance that you are asking for!

At least you have got the first degree of it. You have got the mustard seed of repentance in tiny grain. Let it alone, it will grow. Foster it with prayer and it will become a tree. The very grace which you are asking of God is speaking in your very prayer. It is repentance which asks God that I may repent more. It is a broken heart which asks God to break it. That is not a hard heart which says, “Lord I have a hard heart—soften my heart.” It is a soft heart already. That is not a dead soul which says, “Lord I am dead—quicken me.” Why, you are quickened! That man is not dumb who says, “Lord I am dumb—make me speak.” Why, he speaks already! And that man who says, “Lord I cannot feel,” why, he feels already! He is a sensible sinner already—so that you are just the man that Christ calls to Him.

This experience of yours, which you think is just the opposite of what it ought to be, is just what it should be. Oh, be comforted in this respect. But sit not down in it. Be comforted enough to make you run to Jesus now—just as you are. I take you, Sinner, to be just the man the minister is always seeking after. When we say that Christ came that there might be drink given to the thirsty, you are just the man we mean—you are thirsty. “No,” you say, “I don’t feel that I am thirsty, I only wish I did.” Why, that wish to feel thirsty is your thirst. You are exactly the man. You are far nearer the character than if you said, “I do thirst, I have the qualification.” Then, I should be afraid you had not got it. But, because you think you have it not, it is all the clearer proof that you have this qualification, if indeed there is a qualification.

When I say, “Come unto Christ all you that labor and are heavy laden.” And you say, “Oh, I don’t feel heavy laden enough,” why, you are the very man the text means. And when I say, “Whoever will, let him come,” and you say, “I wish I were more willing, I will to be willing,” why, you are the man! It is only one of Satan’s quibbles—a bit of Hell’s infernal logic to drive you from Christ. Be a match for Satan now this once and say, “You lying Fiend, you tell me I do not feel my need of a Savior enough. I know I feel my need. And, inasmuch as I long to feel it, I do feel it. Christ bids me come to him and I will come—now, this morning. I will trust my soul, just as it is, in the hands of Him whose body hung upon the tree. Sink or swim, here I am resting on Him and clinging to Him as the Rock of my salvation.”

Take, then, these words of comfort.  
II. I must now go on to my second point and give a few words of INSTRUCTION.

And so, my Hearer, you anxiously long to know how many are your iniquities and your sins. And your prayer is, “Lord, make me to know my transgression and my sin.” Let me instruct you, then, as to how God will answer your prayers. God has more than one way of answering the same prayer. And though the ways are diverse, they are all equally useful and efficacious. It sometimes happens that God answers this prayer by allowing a man to fall into more and more gross sin. At our last Church meeting, a Brother, in giving his experience of how he was brought to God, said he could not feel his guilt, his heart was very hard—till it happened one day he was tempted to the utterance of an untruth and no sooner had he uttered it than he felt what a despicable creature he was to tell a lie to another.

So that that one sin led him to see the deceitfulness and vileness of his own heart. And from that day he never had to complain that he did not feel his guilt enough, but, on the contrary, he felt too guilty to come to Christ. I believe many a man who has been educated morally, who has been trained up in such a way that he has never fallen into gross sin, finds it very difficult to say, “Lord, I feel myself to be a sinner.” He knows he is a sinner and he knows it as a matter of fact, but he cannot altogether feel it.

And I have known men who have often envied the harlot and the drunkard, because, they say, “Had I been like they, I should feel more bitterly my sin and should feel I was one of those whom Jesus came to save.” It may be, though I could hope it may not be so, that God may suffer you to fall into sin. God grant it may never be so. But if you ever should, you will then have cause to say, “Lord, I am vile. Now my eyes sees myself. I abhor myself in dust and ashes, because of this, my great sin.” Or possibly, you may not actually fall into sin, but be taken to the very verge of it.

Did you ever know what it was on a sudden to be overtaken by some fiery temptation, to feel as if the strong hand of Satan had gripped you about the loins and was pulling you, you knew not where, nor why, nor how—but against your will, to the very verge of the precipice of some tremendous sin and you went on and on, till, on a sudden, just as you were about to take a dive into sin, your eyes were opened and you said, “Great God, how came I here—I, who hate this iniquity?—I, who abhor it?—and yet my feet had almost gone, my steps had well-near slipped.”

Then in the recoil you say, “Great God, hold me up, for if You do not hold me up, I fall, indeed.” Then you discover that there is inbred sin in your heart only lacking opportunity to spring out. That your soul is like a magazine of gunpowder, only needing the spark and there shall come a terrible catastrophe. Then you realize that you are full of sin, grim with iniquity and evil devices, and that it only wants opportunity and strong temptation to destroy you body and soul forever. It happens sometimes that this is the way God answers this prayer.

A second method by which the Lord answers this prayer is by opening the eyes of the soul. Not so much by Providence as by the mysterious agency of the Holy Spirit. Let me tell you, my Hearer, if you should ever have your eyes opened to see your guilt, you will find it to be the most awful sight you have ever beheld. I have had as much experience of this as any man among you. For five years as a child there was nothing before my eyes but my guilt. And though I do not hesitate to say that those who observed my life would not have seen any extraordinary sin, yet as I looked upon myself, there was not a day in which I did not commit such gross, such outrageous sins against God, that often and often I wished I had never been born.

I know John Bunyan’s experience when he said he wished he had been a frog, or a toad, rather than a man, so guilty did he feel himself to be. You know how it is with yourselves. It is as when a housewife cleans her chamber, she looks and there is no dust. The air is clear and all her furniture is shining brightly. But there is a chink in the window shutter, a ray of light creeps in and you see the dust dancing up and down, thousands of grains, in the sunbeam. It is all over the room the same, but she cannot see it only where the sunbeam comes.

It is just so with us. God sends a ray of Divine light into the heart and then we see how vile and full of iniquity it is. I trust, my Hearer, that your prayer may not be answered as it was in my case, by terrible conviction, awful dreams, nights of misery and days of pain. Take care. You are praying a tremendous prayer when you are asking God to show you your wickedness. Better for you to modify your prayer and put it thus—“Lord, let me know enough of my iniquity to bring me to Christ. Not so much as to keep me from Him, not so much as to drive me to despair. But only enough to be divorced from all trust in myself and to be led to trust in Christ alone.” Otherwise, like Moses, you may be constrained to cry out in a paroxysm of agony, “O Lord, kill me I pray you, out of hand, if I have found favor in your sight and let me not see my wretchedness.”

Still, however, the practical question recurs and you ask me again, “Tell me how I can feel the need of my Savior.” The first advice I give you is this—particularize your sins. Do not say “I am a sinner.” It means nothing—everybody says that. But say this, “Am I a liar? Am I a thief? Am I a drunkard? Have I had unchaste thoughts? Have I committed unclean acts? Have I in my soul often rebelled against God? Am I often angry without a cause? Have I a bad temper? Am I covetous? Do I love this world better than the world to come? Do I neglect prayer? Do I neglect the great salvation?”

Put the questions upon the separate points and you will soon convict yourself much more readily than by taking yourself in the gross as being a sinner. I have heard of a hypocritical old Monk who used to whine out, while he whipped his back as softly as he could, “Lord, I am a great sinner, as big a sinner as Judas.” And when someone said, “Yes that you are—you are like Judas, a vile old hypocrite,” then he would say, “No, I am not.” Then he would go on again, “I am a great sinner.” Someone would say, “You are a great sinner, you broke the First Commandment.” And then he would say, “No, I have not.”

Then when he would go on and say, “I am a great sinner,” someone would say, “Yes, you have broken the Second Commandment,” and he would say, “No, I have not.” And the same with the third and the fourth and so on right through. So it came to pass he had kept the whole ten according to his own account and yet he went on crying he was a great sinner. The man was a hypocrite, for if he had not broken the Commandments, how could he be a sinner at all? You will find it better not to dwell on your sins in the mass, but to pen them, count them over and look at them individually, one by one.

Then let me advise you next to hear a personal ministry. Sit not where the preacher preaches to you in the plural number, but where he deals with you as a man alone, by yourself. Seek out a preacher like Rowland Hill, of whom it is said that if you sat in the back seat in the gallery, you always had a notion that Mr. Hill meant you. Or, that if you sat in the doorway where he could not see you, yet you were quite convinced he must know you were there and that he was preaching right at you. I wonder indeed, if men ever could feel their sins under some ministers— genteel ministers, intellectual, respectable, who never speak to their hearers as if they did anything wrong.

I say of these gentlemen what Hugh Latimer said of many ministers in his day, that they are more fit to dance a Morris-dance than to deal with the souls of men. I believe there are some this day more fit to deliver smart lectures and bring out pleasing things to soothe carnal minds, than to preach the Word of God to sinners. We want the like of John the Baptist back again and Boanerges. We want men like Baxter to preach—

*“As though they might not preach again,  
As dying men to dying men.”*

We want men like John Berridge, who have pulled the velvet out of their mouths years ago and cannot speak fine words—men that hit hard, that draw the bow and pull the arrow to its very head and send it right home, taking deadly aim at the heart and the conscience of men, plowing deep, hitting at the private lusts and at the open sins—not generalizing, but particularizing, not preaching to men in the mass but to men in the detail—not to the mob and the crowd, but to each man separately and individually.

Grow not offended with the minister if he comes home too close to you—remember that is his duty. And if the whip goes right round you and stings you, thank God for it, be glad of it. Let me, if I sit under a ministry, sit under a man who uses the knife with me sometimes, a man who will not spare me, a man who will not flatter me. If there should be flattery anywhere, let it not be at any rate in the pulpit. He who deals with men’s souls should deal with them very plainly. The pulpit is not the place for fine words, when we have to deal with the solemnities of eternity. Take that advice, then and listen to a personal, home-smiting ministry.

Next to that, if you would know your sins, study much the Law of God. Let the twentieth chapter of Exodus be often before your eyes and take with it as a commentary, Christ’s sermon and Christ’s speech when he said, “He that looks on a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery already with her in his heart.” Understand that God’s Commandments mean not only what they say in words, but that they touch the thought, the heart, the imagination. Think of that sentence of David, “Your Commandments are exceeding broad.” And thus, I think, you will soon come to detect the heinousness of your sin and the blackness of your guilt.

And if you would know still more, spend a little time in contemplating the fatal end of your sin, should you die impenitent. Dare to look downward to that fire which must be your eternal doom, unless Jesus Christ saves you. Be wise, Sinner and look at the harvest which you shall surely reap if you sow tares. Sometimes let these words ring in your ears, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” Open your ears and listen to the end of this text—“Where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Let such a passage as this be chewed over in your soul, “The wicked shall be cast into Hell with all the nations that forget God.” These solemn thoughts may help you. Such books as Allaine’s Alarm, Baxter’s Call to the Unconverted, Doddridge’s Rise and Progress may have a good effect on your mind, in helping you to see the greatness of your guilt—by making you meditate upon the greatness of its punishment.

But if you would have a better and more effectual way still, I give you one other piece of advice. Spend much of your time in thinking upon the agonies of Christ. The guilt of your sin is never so clearly seen anywhere as in the fact that it slew the Savior. Think what an evil thing that must be which cost Christ His life, in order to save you. Consider, I say, poor Soul, how black must be that vileness which could only be washed out with His precious blood! How grievous those offenses which could not be expiated unless His body were nailed to the tree, His side pierced and unless He died in fever and in thirst, crying, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”

Go to the garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives and see the Savior in His bloody sweat! Go to Pilate’s hall and see Him in His shameful accusations! Go to the hall of Herod’s praetorian guard and see there how the mighty men set Christ at nothing! And go then, last of all, to Calvary and see that spectacle of woe—and if these do not show you the blackness of your sin, then nothing can. If the death of Christ does not teach you your need of a Savior, then what remedy remains for a heart so hard, for a soul so blind as yours?

Thus have I given you words of instruction. Forget them not. Put them into practice. Be not hearers only, but doers of the Word.  
III. And now, very briefly indeed, a few sentences by way of DISCRIMINATION.  
You are longing, my Hearer, to know your great guilt and to feel your need of Jesus. Take care that you do discriminate between the work of the Spirit and the work of the devil. It is the work of the Spirit to make you feel yourself a sinner, but it never was His work to make you feel that Christ could forget you. It is the work of the Spirit to make you repent of sin—but it is not the work of the Spirit to make you despair of pardon. That is the devil’s work. You know Satan always works by trying to counterfeit the work of the Spirit.  
He did so in the land of Egypt. Moses stretched out his rod and turned all the waters into blood. Out came Jannes and Jambres and by their cunning and sleight of hand, they have a large piece of water brought and they turn that into blood. Then Moses fills the land with frogs—the ungracious sorcerers have a space cleared and they fill that with frogs. Thus they opposed the work of God by pretending to do the same work. So will the devil do with you. “Ah,” says God the Holy Spirit, “Sinner you can not save yourself.” “Ah,” says Satan, “and He cannot save you, either.”  
“Ah,” says God the Holy Spirit “you have a hard heart, only Christ can soften it.” “Ah,” says the devil, “but He won’t soften it unless you soften it first.” “Ah,” says God the Spirit, “you have no qualification, you are naked and ruined and undone.” “Yes,” says the devil, “it is no use your trusting Christ, because you have no good in you and you cannot hope to be saved.” “Ah,” says God the Spirit, “you do not feel your sin. You are hard to repent, because of your hardness.” “Ah,” says the devil, “and because you are so hard-hearted Christ cannot save you.”  
Now learn to distinguish between the one and the other. When a poor penitent sometimes thinks of destroying himself, do you think that is the Spirit’s work? “It is the devil’s work, he was a murderer from the beginning.’” One sinner says, “I am so guilty, I am sure I can never be pardoned.” Is that the Spirit’s teaching—that lie? Oh, that comes from the father of lies! Take heed, whenever you read a biography like that of John Bunyan’s Grace Abounding, as you read, say, “that is the Spirit’s work, Lord send me that”—“that is the devil’s work, Lord keep me from that.”  
Do not be desirous to have the devil tearing your soul to pieces, the less you have to do with him the better and if the Holy Spirit keeps Satan from you, bless Him for it. Do not wait to have the terrors and horrors that some have, but come to Christ just as you are. You do not want those terrors and horrors, they are of little use. Let me remind you of another thing. I ask you not to acquaint yourself with your sins so as to hope to know them all, because you cannot number them with man’s poor arithmetic. Young, in his Night Thoughts, says, “God hides from all eyes but His own, that desperate sight—a human heart.”  
If you were to know only the tenth part of how bad you have been you would be driven mad. You who have been the most moral, the most excellent in character, if all the past sins of your heart could stand before you in their black colors and you could see them in their true light you would be in Hell, for indeed it is Hell to discover the sinfulness of sin. Do you mean to say that you would go down on your knees and ask God to send you to Hell, or drive you mad? Be not so foolish—say, “Lord, let me know my guilt enough to drive me to Christ. But do not gratify my curiosity by letting me know more. No, give me enough to make me feel that I must trust Christ, or else be lost and I shall be well content if You give me that, though You deny me more.”  
Once again, my dear Hearers, listen to this next oration, for it is very important. Take care you do not try to make a righteousness out of your feelings. If you say, “I may not go to Christ till I feel my need of Him”—that is clear legality. You are on the wrong tack altogether, because Christ does not want you to feel your need in order to prepare for Him. He wants no preparation and anything which you think to be a preparation is a mistake. You are to come just as you are—today, as you are, now—not as you will be, but just now, as you now are.  
I do not say to you, “Go home and seek God in prayer. I say come to Christ now at this very hour.” You will never be in a better state than you are now, for you were never in a worse state and that is the fittest state in which to come to Christ. He that is very sick is just in the right state to have a doctor. He that is filthy and begrimed is just in the right state to be washed. He that is naked is just in the right state to be clothed. That is your case. But you say, “I do not feel my need.” Just so—your not feeling it proves you to have the greater need. You cannot trust your feelings, because you say, you have not any.  
Why, if God were to hear your prayers and make you feel your need, you would begin to trust in your feelings and would be led to say, “I trust Christ because I feel my need.” That would be saying, “I trust myself.” All these things are but Popery in disguise. All this preaching to sinners that they must feel this and feel that before they trust in Jesus, is just selfrighteousness in another shape.  
I know our Calvinistic Brethren will not like this sermon—I cannot help that—for I do not hesitate to say that Phariseeism is mixed with HyperCalvinism more than with any other sect in the world. And I do solemnly declare that this preaching to the prejudice and feelings of what they call sensible sinners, is nothing more than self-righteousness taking a most cunning and crafty shape, for it is telling the sinner that he must be something before he comes to Christ. Whereas the Gospel is preached not to sensible sinners, or sinners with any other qualifying adjective, but to SINNERS as sinners, to sinners just as they are. It is not to sinners as repentant sinners, but to sinners as sinners, be their state what it may and their feelings whatever they may.  
Oh, Sinners, Mercy’s door is flung wide open to you this morning. Let not Satan push you back by saying, “You are not fit.” You are fit! That is to say, you have all the fitness Christ wants and that is none at all. Come to Him just as you are. “Oh,” says one, “but you know that hymn of Hart’s?—  
I cannot get that.” Let me counsel you then, never to quote part of a hymn, or part of a text—quote it all—  
*“All the fitness he requires  
Is to feel your need of him;  
This he GIVES YOU,  
It is His Spirit’s rising beam.”*  
Come and ask Him to give it to you and believe He will give it you. Do believe my Master is longing to save you—trust Him, act on that belief, Sinner and you shall be saved, or else I will be lost with you. Do but believe that my Master has got a loving heart and that He is able to forgive and that He has a mighty arm and is able to deliver you. Do Him the honor now of not measuring His corn with your bushel. “For His ways are not your ways, neither are His thoughts your thoughts.” “As high as the Heaven is above the earth, so high are His ways above your ways and His thoughts above your thoughts.”  
Today He says to you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Sinner, if you believe and are not saved, why God’s Word is a lie and God is not true! And will you ever dream that to be the case? No, Sinner—close in now with the proclamation of this Gospel and say— *“I’ll to the gracious King approach,  
Whose scepter mercy gives.  
Perhaps He may command my touch,  
And then the suppliant lives.  
Perhaps He will admit my plea,  
Perhaps will hear my prayer;  
But if I perish, I will pray,  
And perish only there.”*  
You cannot perish trusting in Christ. Though you have no good works and no good feelings, yet if yours arms are round the Cross and if the blood is sprinkled on your brow, when the destroying angel shall pass through the world, he shall pass over you. Thus is it written—“When I see the blood, I will pass over you”—not “when I see your feelings about the blood”—not even, “when I see your faith in the blood,” but “when I see the blood. I will pass over you.” Learn to discriminate between a sense of sin which would humble you and a sense of sin which would only make you proud. When you have come to say, “I have felt my sin enough and therefore I am fit to come to Christ,” it is nothing but pride dressed in the garb of humility.  
Let me tell you one more thing before I have done with you on this point. Anything which keeps you from Christ is sin—whatever thought you have which keeps you from trusting Christ today is a sinful thought. And every hour you continue as you are, an unbeliever in Christ, the wrath of God abides on you. Now why should you be asking for a thing which may help to keep you from Christ all the longer? You know now that you have nothing good in you. Why not trust in Christ for all? But you say, “I must first of all feel more.” Poor Soul, if you were to feel more acutely, you would find it all the harder to trust Christ. I prayed to God that He would show me my guilt. I little thought how He would answer me. Why I was such a fool that I would not come to Christ unless the devil dragged me there. I said, “Christ cannot have died for me, because I have not felt miserable enough.”  
God heard me and, believe me, I will never pray that prayer again. For when I began to feel my guilt, then I said, “I am too wicked to be saved,” and I found the very thing I had been asking for was a curse upon me and not a blessing. So, if you should feel what you ask to feel, it might be the cause of your condemnation. Be wise, therefore and listen to my Master’s voice. Stay not to gather together the fuller’s soap and the refiners fire, but come, and wash now in the Jordan, and be clean. Come and stop not till your heart is turned up with the plow and your soul hewn down with the axe.  
Come as you are to Him now. What, man? Will you not come to Christ, when He has said, “Whomever will, let him come?” Will you not trust Him when He looks down and smiles on you and asks, “Trust Me, I will never deceive you”? What, can you not say to Him, “Master, I am very guilty, but You have said, ‘Come now and let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool’ ”? Lord, this mercy is too great, but I believe it, I take You at Your word.  
You have said, “Return, you backsliding children and I will forgive your iniquities.” Lord, I come to You, I know not how it is that You can forgive such an one as I am, but I believe you can not lie and on that promise do I rest my soul. I know You have said, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Lord, I cannot understand how there can be power in the blood to wash away all manner of blasphemy, but You have said it and I believe it. It is Your business to make your own word true, not mine and you have said, “Whoever will, let him come.” Lord, I am not worthy, but I do will to come, or if I do not will, yet I will to will, therefore will I come, just as I am. I know I have no good feeling to recommend myself to You, but then You do not want good feelings in me, You will give me all I want.  
Oh my dear Hearers, I feel so glad I have such a Gospel as this to preach to you! If you have not received it, I pray God the Holy Spirit to send it home to you. It is so simple that men cannot believe it is true. If I were to bid you take off your shoes and run from here to York and you would be saved, why you would do it at once and the road to York would be thronged. But when it is nothing but the soul-quickening words, “Believe and live,” it is too easy for your proud hearts to do. If I told you to go and earn a thousand pounds and endow a Church with it and you would be saved, you would think the price very cheap. But when I say, “Trust Christ and be saved,” you cannot do that—it is too simple.  
Ah, madness of the human heart! Strange, strange, besotted sin—when God makes the path plain, men will not run in it for that very reason. And when he sets the door wide open, that is the very reason they will not come in. They say if the door were half open and they had to push it open, they would come in. God has made the Gospel too plain and too simple to suit proud hearts. May God soften proud hearts and make you receive the Savior.  
IV. Now I come to my last point, which I have already touched upon and that is by way of EXHORTATION.  
Poor Sinner, seven years ago you were saying just what you are saying now and when seven more years shall have come, you will be saying just the same. Seven years ago you said, “I would trust Christ, but I do not feel as I ought.” Do you feel any better now? And when another seven years are come you will feel just as you do now. You will say, “I would come, but I do not feel fit—I do not feel my need enough.”  
Yes and it will keep going on forever, till you go down to the pit of Hell, saying as you go down, “I do not feel my need enough,” and then the lie will be detected and you will say, “It never said in the Word of God, ‘I might come to Christ when I felt my need enough,’ but it said ‘Whoever will, let him come.’ I would not come as I was, therefore I am justly cast away.” Hear me, Sinner, when I bid you come to Jesus as you are, and give you these reasons for it.  
In the first place, it is a very great sin not to feel your guilt and not to mourn over it, but then it is one of the sins that Jesus Christ atoned for on the tree. When His heart was pierced, He paid the ransom price for your hard heart. Oh, Sinner, if Christ had only died that we might be forgiven of other sins except our hard hearts, we should never go to Heaven, for we have, all of us, even we who have believed, committed that great sin of being impenitent before Him. If He had not died to wash that sin away as well as every other sin, where should we be? The fact that you can not weep, nor sorrow as you would, is an addition to your guilt. But did not Christ wash you from that sin, black though it is? Come to Him— He is able to save you, even from this.  
Again, come to Jesus because it is He only who can give you that heart for which you seek. If men were not to come to Christ till they feel as they should feel, they would never come at all. I will freely confess that if I had never trusted Christ until I felt I might have trusted Him, I never could have trusted Him and could not trust Him now. For there are times with me when after I have preached the Gospel as plainly as I could, I have returned to my own chamber and my heart has been dead, lumpish, lying like a log within my spirit and I have thought then, if I could not come to Christ as a sinner, I could not come anyway else.  
If I found in the text one word before that word “sinners”—“Jesus Christ came into the world to save”—and then an adjective and then “sinners,” I should be lost. It is just because the text says, “sinners” just as they are, that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,” that I can hope He came to save me. If it had said Jesus Christ came into the world to save soft-hearted sinners, I should have said, “Lord, my heart is like adamant.” If it had said Jesus came into the world to save weeping sinners, I should have said, “Lord though I press my eyelids I could not force a tear.  
If it had said Jesus came into the world to save sinners that felt their need of Him, I should say, “I do not feel the need of it. I know I do need you, but I do not feel it.” But, Lord, You came to save sinners and I am saved. I trust You came to save me and here I am, sink or swim, I rest on You. If I perish, I will perish trusting You. And if I must be lost, in Your hands it shall be. For in my own hands I will not be in any respect, or in any degree saved. I come to that Cross and under that Cross I stand— “Your perfect righteousness is my beauty—my glorious dress.”  
Come, Sinner, to Christ, because He can soften yours heart and you can never soften it yourself. He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. Not merely the remission, but the repentance, too. He gives His Grace not merely to those who seek it, but even to those that seek it not. He gives repentance not to those who repent themselves, but to those who cannot repent. And to those who are saying, “Lord I would, but cannot feel”—“I would, but cannot weep”—I say Christ is just the Savior for you—a Christ that begins at the beginning and does not want you to begin—a Christ that shall go to the end and won’t want you to finish—a Christ that does not ask you to say Alpha and then He will be the Omega—but He will be both Alpha and Omega.  
Christ who is the beginning and the end, the first and the last. The plain Gospel is just this, “Look unto Me and be you saved all the ends of the earth.” “But, Lord, I cannot see anything.” “Look unto Me.” “But, Lord, I do not feel.” “Look unto Me.” “But, Lord, I cannot say I feel my need.” “Look unto Me, not unto yourself—all this is looking to yourself.” “But, Lord, I feel sometimes that I could do anything, but a week passes and then I am hard of heart.” “Look unto Me.” “But Lord, I have often tried.” “Try no more, look unto Me.” “Oh, but Lord, You know.” “Yes, I know all things, I know everything—all your iniquity and your sins, just look unto Me.”  
“Oh, but often, Lord, when I have heard a sermon I feel impressed, yet it is like the morning cloud and the early dew. It passes away.” “Look unto Me, not to your feelings or your impressions, look unto Me.” “Well,” say some, “but will that really save me, just looking to Christ?” My dear soul, if that does not save you, I am not saved. The only way in which I have been saved and the only Gospel I can find in the Bible, is looking to Christ. “But if I go on in sin,” says one. But you cannot go on in sin. Your looking to Christ will cure you of that habit of sin.  
“But if my heart remains hard?” It cannot remain hard. You will find that looking to Christ will keep you from having a hard heart. It is just as we sing in the penitential hymn of gratitude—  
*“Dissolved by Your mercy I fall to the ground, And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”*You will never feel as you ought until you do not feel what you ought. You will never come to Christ until you do not feel that you can come. Come as you are. Come in all your poverty and stubbornness and hardness, just as you are now. Take Christ to be your All in All.  
Sound your songs you angels! Stroke your golden harps you redeemed ones. There are sinners snatched from Hell today! There are men who have trusted Christ this morning. Though they scarcely know it, their sins are all forgiven. Their feet are on the Rock. The new song shall soon be in their mouths and their goings shall be established. Farewell, my Brothers and Sisters. Turn to God this morning. God shall keep you and you shall see His face in glory everlasting. Amen.

*‘All the fitness He requires Is to feel your need of Him,’*  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #3269 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 13.25

A FRAIL LEAF  
NO. 3269

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1911. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“Will You break a leaf driven to and fro?”  
Job 13:25.

POOR Job! Who could have been brought lower than he? He had lost his possessions, his children, his health—he was covered with sore boils—and he was aggravated by the unkind speeches of his friends. In his deep distress he turns to God and finding no other plea so near at hand, he makes a plea out of his own distress. He compares himself to the weakest thing he could think of and then he says to God, the Great and the Merciful, “Will You, so glorious in power and so matchless in goodness—will You break me, who am like a poor leaf fallen from the tree, sere and dry, and driven to and fro in the wind?” Thus he draws an argument out of his own weakness. Because he is so low and insignificant and powerless, he lays hold upon the Divine strength and pleads for pity1

It is a common figure he uses, that of a leaf driven to and fro. Strong gusts of wind, it may be in the autumn when the leaves hang but lightly upon the trees, send them falling in showers around us. Quite helpless to stay their own course, fluttering in the air to and fro, like winged birds that cannot steer themselves, but are guided by every fitful blast that blows upon them, at last they sink into the mire to be trodden down and forgotten. To them Job likens himself—a helpless, hopeless, worthless, weak, despised, perishing thing—and he appeals to the awful Majesty on High and he says to the God of thunder and of lightning, “Will You put out Your power to destroy me? Will You bring forth Your dread artillery to crush such an insignificant creature as I am? With all the goodness of Your great heart—for your name is God That Is Good—will You turn Your Almighty power against me? Oh, be that far from You! Out of pity upon my utter weakness and nothingness, turn away Your hands and break not a leaf that is driven to and fro!”

The apprehension is so startling, the appeal so forcible that the argument may be employed in a great many ways. How often have the sick used it, when they have been brought to so low an ebb with physical pain that life, itself, seemed worthless? Stricken with disease, stung with smart and fretted with acute pains and pangs, they feel that if the affliction continues much longer, it were better for them to die then live! They long for the shades of death, that they might find shelter there. Turning their face to the wall, they have said, “O God, as weak as I am, will You again smite me? Shall Your hand again fall upon me? You have laid me very low. Why do You lift up Your rod again? Break not, I beseech You, a leaf that is driven to and fro!”

Not less applicable is the plea to those who are plunged into the depths of poverty! A man is in trouble arising from destitution. Perhaps he has been long out of work. Bread is not to be found. The children are crying, hungry, starving! The habitation has been stripped of everything which might procure a little nourishment. The poor wretch, after passing through seas of trouble, finds himself no nearer a landing place than before, but—

*“Sees each day new straits attend,*

*And wonders where the scene will end.”*  
Passing through the streets he is hardly able to keep his feet from the pavement or his skin from the cold by reason of his tattered garments. Homeless and friendless, like a leaf that is driven to and fro, he say, “O God! Will You continue this much longer? Will You not be pleased to stop Your rough wind, mitigate the sharpness of the winter, ease my adversity and give me peace?”

So, too, with those who are in trouble through bereavement. One child has been taken away and then another. The shafts of death flew twice. Then came sickness with threatening omen upon one that was still nearer and dearer. Still did not the desolation stay its gloomy portents. It seemed at length as though the widow would be bereft of her last and only child and then she cried, “O God! I am already broken. My heart is like a plowed field—cross-plowed—till my soul is ready to despair! Will You utterly break me? Will You spare me no consolations, no props for my old age? Must I be altogether driven away before the whirlwind and find no rest?”

Perhaps it is even more harassing in cases of mental distress for, after all, the sharpest pangs we feel are not those of the body, nor those of the estate, but those of the mind. When the iron enters into the soul, the rust thereof is poison. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?” You may be surrounded with all the comforts of life and yet be in wretchedness more gloomy than death if the spirits are depressed. You may have no outward cause whatever for sorrow and yet if the mind is dejected, the brightest sunshine will not relieve your gloom. At such a time, you may be vexed with cares, haunted with dread and scared with thoughts which distract you. You fear that your sins are not pardoned, that your past transgressions are all brought to remembrance and that punishment is being meted out to you in full measure. The threats rise up out of God’s Book and seem to lift sharp swords in their hands with which to smite you. Time is dreadful to you because you know it is hurrying you to eternity—and the thought of eternity stings as does an adder because you measure the future reckoning by the present distress. At such a time, when you are faint with longing, ready to despair and driven to the verge of madness, I can imagine your crying out, “O Lord God of Mercy, I am as a leaf that is driven to and fro—will You quite break me and utterly destroy me? Have compassion, and show Your favor to Your poor broken creature!”

Many a child of God may have used this, and if he has not used it yet, he may still use it. There are times when all our evidences get clouded and all our joys are fled. Though we may still cling to the Cross, yet it is with a desperate grasp. God brings our sins to remembrance till our bones, as David puts it, “are sorely broken by reason of our iniquity.” Then it is that, all broken, we can turn to the Strong for strength and use the plea of the text, “Will You break a leaf driven to and fro?” And we shall get for our answer these comforting words, “A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench.”

I. THE PLEA IS SUCH AS ARISES FROM INWARD CONSCIOUSNESS. What plea is more powerful to ourselves than that which we draw from ourselves? A man may not be sure of anything outside him, for eyes and ears may deceive—but he is always pretty well assured of anything within him, for that which he perceives in his own consciousness he is very tenacious about. Now, in this case, Job was quite certain about his own weakness. How could he doubt that? He looked upon his poor body covered with sores. He looked upon his friends who had perplexed and vexed him so much and he felt that he was, indeed, just like a sere leaf. I trust that many of us have been brought by God the Holy Spirit into such a humble frame of mind as to feel that, in a certain sense, this is true of

us. O God, if we know ourselves right, we are all like withered leaves! We once thought ourselves fresh and green—we reckoned that we were as good as others, we made a fine and verdant profession—but, lo, You have been pleased to deal with us and all the fresh verdure of what we thought to be our piety—the natural piety which we thought we possessed—has faded and withered and now we are convinced that we are altogether as an unclean thing, and that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags! No, the hope that we clung to as the leaf clings to the tree, we have had to give up. We are blown away from that. We were once upon the tree of good works—we seemed as if we had life and would always be happy there, but the winds have taken us away and we cannot hold on to our frail hope. We once thought that we could do everything—we now perceive that without Christ we can do nothing! We are cast forth as a branch separated from the vine—we are withered! What can a leaf do? What power has it to resist the wind? Just so we feel now—we can do nothing—even the sin that dwells in us, like the wind, carries us away and we are like the leaf in the wind, subject to its power.

O my Brothers and Sisters, what a great blessing it is to be made to know our own weakness! To empty the sinner of his folly, his vanity and conceit is no easy matter. Christ can easily fill him with wisdom and prudence, but to get him empty—this is the work! This is the difficulty. To make a man know that he is in himself utterly lost, ruined, and undone—this is the Spirit of God’s own work! We ministers cannot make a man see that, however diligently we may point it out. Only the Spirit of God can enlighten the heart to discern it and yet, until a man does see it, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, for there are none within the pearly gates who were not once brokenhearted sinners! Who could possibly come there and sing, “Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,” but those who once said, “Pardon my iniquity, for it is great”?

While it is a confession of weakness, it is also an acknowledgment of God’s power to push that weakness to a direful conclusion. “Will You break me?” says the text—“Lord, You can do it. In one minute You could take away hope from every one of us now in this House of Prayer.” Some there are who are in the house of doom, where prayer can never be answered, and where Mercy’s proclamation can never be heard! God could break us. It is an easy thing for Him to destroy! And more, He is not only able, but He has the right to do it if He will, for we are such worthless creatures through our disobedience that we may say, in the words of the hymn—

*“If my soul were sent to Hell,  
Your righteous Law approves it well.”*

When we feel this, then let us make a proper use of our own consciousness, not to despond and faint, but to arise and go to our Father! So we shall come to God and say, “You can destroy me. You may destroy me justly and I cannot resist You. I cannot save myself from Your vengeance, nor can I merit anything at Your hand. I am as weak as water and altogether as perishing a thing as a poor withered leaf—but will You destroy me? I plead for pity. Oh, have pity upon me! O God, let Your heart yearn towards me and show me Your great compassion! I have heard that You delight in mercy and as Ben-Hadad of old, with the rope about his neck, went in unto the king and confessed that he deserved to die, so do I confess! And as the king forgave him, even so do You with me—a guilty culprit trembling in Your Presence!—

*“Show pity, Lord! O Lord, forgive!*

**Let a repenting rebel live.”**  
II. This is also A PLEA FULL OF PITY.  
Though there is weakness, yet there is also power, for weakness is, for

the most part, a prevalent plea with those who are strong and good. I trust you could not see on your road home tonight a poor fainting woman, and pass her by. You could not have brought in before your presence a half-starved child who could not drag its weary limbs along without feeling that you must give relief. The mere sight of weakness draws pity. As a certain town was being sacked, one of the rough soldiers is said to have spared a little child, because it said, “Please, Sir, don’t kill me, I am so little.” The rough warrior felt the urgency of the plea. You may yourselves plead thus with God. “O God, do not destroy me! I deserve it, but oh, I am so little! Turn Your power upon some greater thing and let Your heart move with compassion towards me!”

The plea gathers force when the weakness is confessed. If a man shall have done you some wrong and shall come and acknowledge it, and bow down before you and confess it, why, then, you feel that you cannot take him by the throat, but you say, “Rise, I have forgiven you!” When weakness appeals to strength for protection and confession of guilt is relied on as an argument for mercy, those who are good and strong are pretty sure to be moved with compassion.

But, best of all, going from the positive to the comparative, and from the comparative to the superlative, how a confession of weakness touches your heart when it comes from your own child. If your child has been chastised, has confessed his wrong and pleads with you, how you stay your hand! Or, if the child is sick and something is done to it which pains it, if while the operation is being performed he should look you in the face, and say, “Father, spare your child! I can bear no more!” you have already felt more than you can make him feel, forthwith your own tears blind you and you stay your hand. “Like as a father pities his children, even so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” If you have faith to bring your weakness before God with the sense of a child towards Him, you surely must prevail. Come, them, you timid trembling children of your Father who is in Heaven, use this plea—“Will You break a leaf that is driven to and fro?”

III. This PLEA IS RIGHTLY ADDRESSED.  
It is addressed to God. As I thought it over, it seemed to me as if I could use it with reference to each Person of the Blessed Trinity in Unity. Looking up to the great Father of our spirits, from whom every good and perfect gift comes down, it seemed to me that out of weakness I could say to Him, “Will You, whose name is Father, will You break a leaf that is driven to and fro? You are the God that made us—will You utterly destroy the earthen vessel which You have fashioned on Your wheel? Your name is ‘Preserver of Men.’ Will You annihilate us and break us into shivers? Have You not revealed Yourself as delighting in mercy? Are You not the ‘Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by iniquity, transgression and sin’? Have you not said, ‘ Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool’? O God, the Father of Heaven, will You break a leaf that is driven to and fro?”  
And then, I thought I could address myself to the blessed Son of God who is also our Brother in human flesh, and say to Him, “Will You break—O You ‘faithful High Priest, touched with a feeling of our infirmities’—‘bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh’—Brother of our soul, by whose stripes we are healed—will You break a leaf that is driven to and fro? No, by Your thorn-crowned head and Your bloody sweat, by Your Cross and passion, by Your wounds and by Your death cry, You cannot, will not, be unmerciful and unkind! Surely they who in confidence turn to You and lay hold upon You, shall find that Your strength shall be ready to help—for though Your arm is strong to smite—it is no less strong to save.”  
Again, it comes across me sweetly, “O blessed Spirit! Could You break a leaf that is driven to and fro? You are no eagle—you did descend on Christ in Jordan as a dove—your influences are soft and soothing. Your name is, ‘The Comforter.’ You take of the things of Christ, not to blast us, but to bless us therewith. You are not a destroying Spirit, but a quickening Spirit, not a terrifying but an enlivening Spirit—will You break a leaf that is driven to and fro?”  
Yes, I address You, You Triune God, You who are so full of mercy, and love, and Grace, and truth, that those who have known You best have been compelled to say, ‘Oh, how great is Your goodness which You have laid up for them that fear You! Oh, the depths of Your loving kindness!’ is it possible that You can cast away a poor, broken-hearted trembler, a poor, fearing, doubting one who would gladly be saved, but who trembles lest he should be cast away?”  
IV. THIS PLEA IS BACKED UP BY MANY CASES OF SUCCESS.  
We will not give many, for we have not time, but there is one case which we will mention. There was a woman whose life was exceedingly sorrowful. She was an Eastern wife and her husband had been foolish enough to have a second mistress in the house. The woman of whom we speak, a holy woman, a woman of refined and delicate mind, a poetess, indeed, of no mean order—this poor woman, having no children was the constant butt of her rival, whose sneering spiteful remarks chaffed and chafed her. Her adversary, it is said, “vexed her sore to make her afraid.” Though her husband was exceedingly kind to her, yet as with a sword that cut her bones did she continually go. She was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, her spirit being broken. Still, “she feared the Lord exceedingly,” and she went up to God’s House, and it was in God’s House that she received what was to her, perhaps, the greatest blow of her life! If it was from her rival that she received the harshest word, it was from the High Priest of God that she received this hardest blow! As she stood there praying, using no vocal sound, but her lips moving, the High Priest—an easy-going soul who had brought his own family to ruin by his slackness—little knowing her grief, told her that she was drunk! Being a woman to whom the thought of such a sin was as bitter as gall, it must have smitten her as with the chill blast of death, that God’s Priest had said she was drunk! But, as you will all remember, the Lord did not break the leaf that was driven to and fro. There came to her a comfortable promise. Ere long that woman stood there to sing! The mercy of God had made the barren woman to rejoice and to be the joyful mother of children! The song of the Virgin Mary was modeled after the song of Hannah—that memorable poem in which she sang of the Lord who had filled the hungry with good things, while the rich He had sent away empty. In that case the Lord did not break the leaf that was driven to and fro!  
In later years—to take an example of another kind—there was a king who had sinned desperately, slaying God’s servants with both hands. But he was taken captive by a powerful monarch and thrown into prison—such an offensive prison that he was among thorns—in mental as well as in material darkness. Then, troubled in spirit, tossed to and fro, and without power to help himself, Manasseh sought the Lord and he found the Lord—he prayed unto the Lord and the Lord heard him! Out of the low dungeon He did not break the leaf that was driven to and fro!  
Take a later case, in our Savior’s time. The picture of those proud Pharisees hurrying into our Savior’s Presence a poor fallen woman is even now in your mind’s eye. Yes, Sirs, she was taken in adultery. There was no doubt of it. She was “taken in the very act,” and there she stands—no, she kneels—all covered with blushes before the Man who is asked to judge her! And you remember His words? He never said a word to excuse her guilt—the Savior could not and would not condone her shame! Nor would He, on the other hand, lend Himself to crush the woman who had sinned, but He said—“Where are those, your accusers? Go and sin no more!” Let His words come unto you, poor leaf, driven to and fro! Oh, if there should be such a leaf as that driven here tonight, driven in, perhaps, by stress of weather! Men despise you—from your own sex you get faint pity—but Jesus, when you appeal to Him—will not break such a leaf that is driven to and fro!  
Shall I tell another story of the woman who came behind the Master, in the press, and stole a cure by touching His garment? She thought she would receive a curse, but He said—“Be you of good cheer. Your faith has made you whole. Go in peace.” It was poor faith—it was very much like unbelief, but yet it was rewarded with a rich acceptance, for He will not break a leaf that is driven to and fro!  
V. Once more, my text is A FAINT PLEA WHICH INVITES FULL SUCCOR.  
“Will You break a leaf that is driven to and fro?” O Job! There is much wrapped up in what you have said!  
He meant this—“Instead of breaking it, You will spare it; You will gather it up, You will give it life again.” It is like that text, “A bruised reed He will not break.” Oh, it means more than that—it means that He will heal its bruises. “A smoking flax He will not quench.” That is good, but it means more! It means that He will stoop down to it and with His soft breath He will blow that smoking flax into a flame—He will not let it go out! He will preserve its heat and make something more of it. O you who are brought to the very lowest of weakness, use that weakness in pleading with God, and He will return unto you with such a fullness of blessing that you shall receive the pardon of sin! You shall be accepted through the righteousness of Christ! You shall be dear to the heart of God! You shall be filled with His Spirit and you shall be blessed with all the fullness of God!  
My Lord is such an One that if a beggar asks a penny of Him, He gives him gold! And if you ask only for the pardon of sins, He will give you all the Covenant blessings which He has been pleased so bounteously to provide for the necessities of His people! Come, poor guilty one—needy, helpless, broken and bruised—come by faith and let your weakness plead with God through Jesus Christ!  
VI. WE MAY USE THIS PLEA—MANY OF US WHO HAVE LONG KNOWN THE SAVIOR.  
Perhaps our faith has got to be very low. O Lord, will You destroy my little faith? I know there is sin in it. To be so unbelieving as I am is no little crime, but Lord, I thank You that I have any faith. It is weak and trembling, but it is faith of Your own giving. Oh, break not the poor leaf that is driven to and fro!  
It may be your hope is not very bright. You cannot see the golden gates, though they are very near. Well, but your hope shall not be destroyed because it is clouded. You can say, “Lord, will You destroy my hope because it is dim?” No, that He will not!  
Perhaps you are conscious that you have not been as useful, lately, as you once were, but you may say, “Lord, will You destroy my usefulness because I have been laid aside, or have not done what I ought to have done in Your service?” Bring your little Graces to Christ as the mothers brought their little children, and ask Him to put His hands upon them and to bless them. Bring your mustard seed to Christ and ask Him to make it grow into a tree, and He will do it! But never think that He will destroy you, or that He will destroy the works of His own hands in you!  
Oh, that I could so preach as to give the comfort to you which I have felt in my own soul while musing over these words! I wish that some who feel how lost, how empty and how ruined they are, could now believe in the great and the good heart of my Lord Jesus Christ. Little do they know how glad He will be to save them. You will be glad to be saved, but He will be more glad to save you. You will be thankful to sit at the feast, but of all that come to the banquet, there is no heart as glad as the heart of the King! When the King came in to see the guests, I know there were gleams of joy in His face which were not to be found in the faces of any of the guests. He has the joy of benevolence! Perhaps you have sometimes felt a thrill of pleasure when you have done some good to your poor fellow creatures. Now, think what must be the joy of Christ, the joy of the Father and the joy of the Holy Spirit—the joy of doing good to those who do not deserve it, the joy of bestowing favors upon the wicked and the unthankful, the joy of showing that He does good because He is good—not because you are good, but because He is good! Thus the Lord God will leap over the mountains of your sins, your prejudices and the rivers of your iniquities, that He may come unto you and display the full Glory of His loving kindness and His tender mercy!  
Oh, that some might now for the first time be drawn to Jesus, put their trust in Him and find pardon and peace!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *[PSALM 130:1-8](tw://bible.*?id=19.130.1-19.130.8|_AUTODETECT_|); [1 JOHN 1:1-10](tw://bible.*?id=62.1.1-62.1.10|_AUTODETECT_|); [2:1-2](tw://bible.*?id=62.2.1-62.2.2|_AUTODETECT_|).*

Verse 1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto You,O LORD.* The most eminent of God’s saints have been in the depths. Why, then, should I murmur if I have to endure trials? What am I that I should be exempt from warfare? How can I expect to win the crown without first carrying a cross? David saw the depths and so must you and I. But David learned to cry to God out of the depths. Learn, therefore, that there is no place so deep but prayer can reach from the bottom of it up to God’s ear, and then God’s long arm can reach to the bottom and bring us up out of the depth! “Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.” Do not say, “Out of the depths have I talked to my neighbors and sought consolation from my friends.”—

*“Were half the breath thus vainly spent   
To Heaven in supplication sent,   
Your cheerful song would oftener be   
Hear what the Lord has done for me!”*

2. *LORD, hear my voice: letYour ear be attentive to the voice of my supplications.* Now a main part of prayer must be occupied by confession and the Psalmist proceeds, therefore—  
3. *If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* That is to say, apart from Christ, if God exercises His Justice to its utmost severity, the best of men must fall, for the best of men, being men at the best, are sinners even at their best!   
4. *But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.* If there were no mercy, there would be no love in any human heart—and that would be an end to religion if there were an end to forgiveness! Here let us observe that the best of men dare not stand before an absolute God—that the holiest of God’s saints need to be accepted on the footing of a Mediator—to receive forgiveness of sins.   
5. *I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and inHis Word do I hope.*There is a waiting of expectancy. We believe that He is about to give us the mercy, and we hold out our hands for it. There is a waiting of resignation, we know not what God may do nor when He may appear, but we wait. Aaron held his peace. It is a great virtue to wait for God when we know not what He does, but to wait His own explanations and be content to go without explanations if He does not choose to give them.   
6. *My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.* And many a mariner has watched for the morning with an awful anxiety, for he could not know where his vessel was until the day should break! Many a weary patient tossed upon the bed of pain has waited for the morning, saying, “Would God it were morning, for then, perhaps, I might find ease.” And you know that sometimes the watchers upon the castle top, who have to be guarding the ramparts against the adversary by night, watch for the morning. So does David’s soul watch. Lord, if I may not have You, permit me to watch for You. Oh, there is some happiness even in waiting for an absent God! I recollect that Rutherford said, “I do not see how I can be unhappy, for if Christ will not love me, if He will but permit me to love Him, and I feel I cannot help doing that—the loving of Him will be Heaven enough for me.” Waiting for God is sweet, inexpressibly delightful—   
*“To those who call, how kindYou are, how good to those who seek! But what to those who find? Ah, this, nor tongue nor pen can show The love of Jesus, what it is, none but His loved ones know!”*Happy are they who, having waited patiently, at last behold their God!   
7, 8. *Let Israel hope in the LORD: for withthe LORD there ismercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption and He shall redeemIsrael from all his iniquities.* He shall do this in a double and perfect way—He shall redeem us from the effect of all our iniquities through the atoning Sacrifice and from the presence of all iniquity by His sanctifying Spirit. They are without fault before the Throne of God! “I will purge their blood that I have not cleansed, says the Lord that dwells in Zion.” May my soul have a part and lot in this precious promise!   
*[1 John 1](tw://bible.*?id=62.1.0|_AUTODETECT_|)—*Verse 1. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which wehavelooked upon, and our hands have handled,of the Word of Life.* The fact that Christ was really in the flesh, that He was no phantom, no shadow mocking the eyes that looked upon Him, is exceedingly important and, therefore, John—(whose style, by the way, in this Epistle is precisely like the style which he uses in his Gospel)—John begins by declaring that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who in His eternity was from the beginning, was really a substantial Man, for he says—“We have heard Him”—hearing is good evidence. “Which we have seen Him with our own eyes”— certainly eye-sight is good, clear evidence. “Which we have looked upon”—this is better, still, for this imports a deliberate, careful, circumspect gaze! But still better—“which our hands have handled,” for John had leaned his head on Jesus Christ’s bosom and his hands had often met the real flesh and blood of the living Savior! We need have no doubt about the reality of Christ’s Incarnation when we have these open eyes and hands to give us evidence!  
2. *(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us).* That same eternal Being who is Very God of Very God, and is worthy to be called essentially Life, was made flesh and dwelt among us, and the Apostles could say—“We beheld His Glory.”   
3. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you—* See how he does hammer this nail as if he will drive it fast! How he rings this bell that it may toll the death-knell of every doubt!   
3. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship withus.* But John, what is the value of fellowship with *you—*even you and your brethren—a parcel of poor fishermen? Who wants fellowship with you—hooted, despised, mocked and persecuted in every city—who wants fellowship with you?   
3. *And truly our fellowship iswith the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.* What a leap from the fisherman to the Father’s Throne! From the poor, despised son of Zebedee up to the King of Kings! Oh, John, we would have fellowship with you now! We will have fellowship with your scorn and spitting, that we may have fellowship with you and with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ!   
4. *And these things write I unto you thatyour joy may be full.* Some Christians have joy, but there are only a few drops in the bottom of their cup. But the Scriptures were written, and more especially the Doctrine of an Incarnate God is revealed to us, that our joy may be full! Why, if you have nothing else to make you glad, the fact that Jesus has become Brother to you, arrayed in your flesh, should make your joy full!   
5. *This, then, is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God isLight, and in Him is no darkness at all.* Not *a*light, nor *the*light, though he is both, but that He is Light! Scripture uses the term, *light*, for knowledge, for purity, for prosperity, for happiness and for truth. God is Light and then, in his usual style, John, who not only tells you a Truth of God but always guards it, adds—“in whom is no darkness at all.”   
6. *If we saythat we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not speak the truth.* Mark here, this does not mean walking in the darkness of sorrow, for there are many of God’s people that walk in the darkness of doubts and fears and yet they have fellowship with God! No, they sometimes have fellowship with Christ all the better for the darkness of the path along which they walk, but the darkness here meant is the *darkness of sin*, the darkness of untruthfulness. If I walk in a lie, or walk in sin, and then profess to have fellowship with God, I have lied and do not speak the truth.   
7. *But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light—*Not to the same degree, but in the same manner—   
7. *We have fellowship, one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.* So you see that when we walk the best—when we walk in the light, as He is in the light—when our fellowship is of the highest order, yet still we need daily cleansing. It does not say—mark this, O my Soul—it does not say, “The blood of Jesus Christ cleansed,” but, “cleanses.” If guilt returns, His power may be proved again and again—there is no fear that all my daily slips and shortcomings shall not be graciously removed by this precious blood! But there are some who think they are perfectly sanctified and have no sin—   
8, 9. *If we say that we have no sins, we deceive ourselves, and the truth isnot in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Oh, those words, and more especially that glorious word, “all”! This must include the vilest sin that ever stained human nature, the blackest grime that ever came from the black heart of man! And now John is very careful when he strikes a blow, to hit completely. He has already smitten those who say they have no sin, and now he smites those who say they did not, at one time, have any—   
10. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.   
[1 John 2:1-2](tw://bible.*?id=62.2.1-62.2.2|_AUTODETECT_|)*Verse 1. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not.* He is anxious that they should not sin. He knows they do, and that if they say they do not, they lie. Still the Christian’s objective is sinless perfection, and though he will never have it till he gets to Heaven, that is all the better because he will always, then, be pressing forward and never reckoning that he has attained it!

1, 2. *And if any man sins, wehave an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. And Heis the Propitiation for oursins: and not for ours, only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* By which is meant, not only that Jesus Christ died for Gentiles as well as Jews, and for some of all nations, but that there is that in the Atonement of Christ which might be sufficient for every creature under Heaven if God had so chosen every creature! The limitation is lying not in the value of the Atonement, itself, but in the design and intention of the Eternal God. God sent His Son to lay down His life for His sheep. We know that Christ redeemed us from among men, so that the redemption is particularly and especially for the elect. Yet at the same time the price offered was so precious—the blood was so Infinite in value— that if every man that ever lived had to be redeemed, Christ could have done it. It is this that make us bold to preach the Gospel to every creature, since we know there is no limit in the value of the Atonement, though we also know that the design of it is only for the chosen people of God!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection***, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3270 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1**

**÷Job 14.14**

A VOICE FROM THE HARTLEY COLLIERY  
NO. 432

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 30, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“If a man dies, shall he live again?”  
Job 14:14.**

ONCE more the Lord has spoken. Once again the voice of Providence has proclaimed, “All flesh is grass and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of grass.” O sword of the Lord, when will you rest and be quiet? Why these repeated warnings? Why does the Lord so frequently and so terribly sound an alarm? Is it not because our drowsy spirits will not awaken to the realities of death? We fondly persuade ourselves that we are immortal, that though a thousand may fall at our side and ten thousand at our right hand, yet death shall not come near unto us.

We flatter ourselves that if we must die, yet the evil day is far away. If we are sixty, we presumptuously reckon upon another twenty years of life. And the man of eighty, tottering upon his staff, remembering that some few have survived to the close of a century, sees no reason why he should not do the same. If man cannot kill Death, he tries at least to bury him alive. And since Death will intrude himself in man’s pathway, we endeavor to shut our eyes to the ghastly object. God in Providence is continually filling our path with tombs.

With kings and princes there is too much forgetfulness of the world to come. God has, therefore, spoken to them. They were but few in number—one death might be sufficient in their case. That one death of a beloved and illustrious prince will leave its mark on courts and palaces. As for the workers, they also wish to put far from them the thought of the coffin and the shroud—God has spoken to them, also. There were many— one death would not be sufficient. It was absolutely necessary that there should be many victims, or we should have disregarded the warning.

Two hundred witnesses cry to us from the pit’s mouth, a solemn fellowship of preachers all using the same text, “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!” If God had not thus spoken by the destruction of many, we should have said, “Ah, it is a common occurrence. There are frequently such accidents as these.” The rod would have failed in its effect had it smitten less severely. The awful calamity at the Hartley Colliery has, at least, had this effect, that men are talking of death in all our streets.

Oh, Father of Your people, send forth Your Holy Spirit in richer abundance, that by this solemn chastisement higher ends may be answered than merely attracting our thoughts to our latter end. Oh, may hearts be broken, may eyes be made to weep for sin, may follies be renounced, may Christ be accepted and may spiritual life be given as the result of temporal death to the many who now sleep in their untimely graves in Earsdon Churchyard.

This text is appropriate to the occasion but God alone knows how applicable the discourse may be to some here present. Yes, to young hearts little dreaming that there is but a step between them and death. To aged persons, who as yet have not set their house in order but who must do it, for they shall die and not live. We will take the question of the text and answer it upon Scriptural grounds. “If a man dies, shall he live again?” NO!—YES!

I. We answer the question first with a “No.” He shall not live again here—he shall not again mingle with his fellows and repeat the life which death has brought to a close. This is true of him with regard to himself and equally true with regard to his neighbors. Shall he live again for himself? No. Shall he live again for his household? No.

1. Dwell for a moment on the first thought. “If a man dies, shall he live again.” Shall he live for himself. No. If he has lived and died a sinner, that sinful life of his shall never be repeated. Sinner, you may empty the cups of drunkenness in this world throughout a long life, but you shall never have another season to spend in intoxication! You who have broken through all the bounds of morality, you may live in this life debauched, depraved and devilish—but death shall put an end to your career of lust. Let the cup be sweet. It is the last time you shall ever drink it.

If there are any pleasures in sin, you shall never taste them again. The sweets shall be over once and for all, and at the bottom you shall find the bitter dregs which shall be gall forever. Once you shall insult high Heaven, but not twice. Once shall you have space to blaspheme—once shall you have time proudly to array yourself in self-righteousness. Once shall you have power to despise the Christ who is the Savior of men but not twice. The long-suffering of God shall wait for you through your life of provocations. But you shall not be born again into this world.

You shall not a second time defile its air with blasphemies, nor blot its beauties with impiety. You shall not live again to forget the God who has daily loaded you with mercies. You have your daily bread now. The clothes that are on your back shelter you from the cold. You go to your house and you have comforts and mercies there—but like the swine which feed beneath the oak, forgetful of the green bough which yields the acorn, or like the brute which is content to eat the grass but never thanks the sun or the cloud which nourished the pasture, so you live in this world—forgetful of the God who made you, in whom you live and move and have your being.  
In this life you are unthankful, but you shall have no further opportunity for this ingratitude. All your candles shall go out in eternal darkness. There shall be no more dainty meals for you, no more joyous holidays, no more quiet slumbers. Every mercy shall be taken from you. That which makes life desirable shall be removed if you die impenitent, till you shall hate your existence and count it your highest blessing if you could cease to be. You shall not live again, I say, to treat your God worse than the ox treats its owner. The ass knows his master’s crib, but you know not, though you shall know, for this is the last season in which you shall play the brute.

My dear Hearers, many of you have something more than the common mercies of God. You have His Word, Sabbath after Sabbath, preached in your ears. I may say truthfully concerning you who attend this House of Prayer, that you hear one who, when he fails for want of power, fails not for want of will to do you good. I have not shunned to warn you and to preach in all simplicity the whole counsel of God, so far as I have been taught by the Holy Spirit. If you die you shall not live again to stifle the voice of your conscience and to quench the Spirit of God. You shall have no more Sabbaths to blaspheme when this life is over.

There shall be no Church bells for you, after your knell is tolled. No affectionate voice shall beseech you in Christ’s place to be reconciled to God. No warning hand shall point you to the Cross—no loving lips shall cry, “This is the way! Walk in it.” You have your last warnings now, Sinners. If you reject them you shall have no more. You hear in this life your last invitations—despise them and the door shall be shut in your face forever. Christ is lifted up before your eyes, look to Him now and live. Refuse Him and there remains no more sacrifice for sin and no other life in which you may lay hold of Him—

*Fixed is their everlasting state,  
Could man repent, it is then too late;  
Justice has closed mercy’s door,  
And God’s long-suffering is no more.*

Here you may have a mother to weep for you—a wife to pray for you— friends who will counsel you. The blessings of a Christian country, an open Bible, and a House of Prayer—but it is your last time. Now or never. Now or never. Lost in time. Lost in eternity. Saved now, saved forever. Sinner, it is your last turn. Will you choose to be damned? Then damned you are without hope! If God saves you now, then saved you are beyond fear of perishing. But it is your last, your only opportunity. Where the tree falls there it must lie forever.

“Return, O wanderer to your home, It is madness to delay. There are no pardons in the tomb, and brief is mercy’s day. Return! Return!”  
Solemnly let us say it, awful as it appears—it is well that the sinner should not live again in this world. “Oh,” you will say, when you are dying, “if I could but live again, I would not sin as I once did.” When you are in the pit of Hell, perhaps your pride will lead you to imagine that if you could come back to earth again you would be another man. Ah, but you would not be so! Unless you had a new heart and a right spirit, if you could live again, you would live as you did before. Keep the fountain unchanged and the same streams will flow. Let the cause remain and the same effects will follow.  
If the lost spirits could escape from Hell, they would sin as they did before. If they could again listen to the Gospel they would again reject it, for he that is filthy will be filthy still. The flames of Hell shall work no change in character. For they have no sanctifying influence. They punish, but they do not cleanse. Sinners, it is well that you will not live again, for if you did you would but increase your condemnation. There would be two lives of sin, of rejection of Christ, of unbelief and, if it were possible, Hell would then be no less tolerable for you than it shall be now. Oh, my poor dying Hearers, by the corpses in the dark smothering gas of Hartley Pit, I pray you be awakened, for your death hour is hastening on, and you have but today in which to find a Savior.  
“Sinner beware—the axe of death is raised and aimed at you—while your Maker spares your breath, Beware, O barren tree.” Every time you hear your clock tick, let it say to you, “Now or never, NOW OR NEVER, NOW OR NEVER.”  
In the case of the child of God, it is the same, so far as he himself is concerned. When he dies he shall not live again. No more shall he bitterly repent of sin. No more lament the plague of his own heart and tremble under a sense of deserved wrath. No more shall the godly pitman suffer for righteousness’ sake, despising the sneer of his comrades. The battle is once fought—it is not to be repeated. If God has safely guided the ship across the sea, and brought it to its desired haven, it casts anchor forever—and goes not out a second time into the storm.  
Like those earnest Methodist miners, we have one life of usefulness, of service, of affliction, of temptation. We have only one life in which to glorify God on earth in blessing our fellow men. One life in which faith may be tried and love made perfect. One life in which we may prove the faithfulness of God in Providence. And one life in which we may see Christ triumphant over sin in our mortal bodies. We shall not return to the scene of conflict.  
Brethren, is it not a mercy for you and for me if we are in Christ, that our furnace is not to be re-lit? Oh, Brethren, it were unkind for us to wish back the dead! Ah, when we think of those Brethren, those men of God, who in the pit held Prayer Meeting when they knew that the fatal gas would soon take away their lives—though we look at their weeping widows and their sorrowing children—it were wrong to wish them back again. What would any of us who fear God think, if we were once in Heaven? Would not the very suggestion of return, though it were to the most faithful spouse and best-beloved children, be a cruelty?  
What? Bring back again to battle, the victor who wears the crown? Drag back to the storm and the tempest, the mariner who has gained the strand? What? Bring me back again to pain and sorrow, to temptation and to sin? No. Blessed be You, O God, that all the wishes of friends shall not accomplish this, for we shall be far from this world of grief and sin, with God, eternally shut in.  
This world is not so lovely as to tempt us away from Heaven. Here we are strangers and foreigners. Here we have no abiding city. But we seek one to come. There is one wilderness, but we bless God there are not two. There is one Jordan to be crossed, but there is not another. There is one season when we must walk by faith, and not by sight, and be fed with manna from Heaven. But blessed be God, there is not another, for after that comes the Canaan—the rest which remains for the people of God.  
What man among you, immersed in the cares of business, would desire two lives? Who, that is tired today with the world’s noise, and vexed with its temptations, who that has come from a bed of sickness, who that is conscious of sin—would wish to leave the haven when once it is reached? As well might a galley-slave long to return to his oar, or a captive to his dungeon! No, blessed be God, the souls which have ascended from the coal mine to glow are not to leave their starry spheres but rest in Christ forever!  
2. But now we pass to the other thought under this first head. If a man dies, shall he live again?” Shall he live for others? No. The sinner shall not live to do damage to others. If there were any fathers who perished in the pit who had neglected the training of their children, they cannot live again to educate them for Christ. If there were any there—we hope there were not, and there is a hopeful sign, for I am told that there was not a single public-house within a mile of the village—but if there were there any who by their ill example taught others to sin, they shall never do it again.  
If there were any there who led others astray by bold speeches against God, they have done once and for all their life’s mischiefs. And so with each of us tonight. Do I speak to one here who is living a useless life—a tree planted in rich soil but bearing no fruit—a creature made by God but rendering Him no service? Do I not speak to some such tonight? I know I do. You cannot be charged with outward vice, or with positive irregularity of conduct, but still, it may be said of you, “I was hungry and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; naked and you clothed Me not; sick and in prison and you visited Me not.”  
You have not done it unto one of the least of these, His Brethren, and you have not done it unto Christ. It is not necessary to do anything in order to be lost. The way to perdition is very simple. It is only a little matter of neglect. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation.” Well, Sinner, this is the last life of negligence that you shall ever spend. The very last season when you shall turn upon your heel and say, “Ha! Ha! There is nothing in it!” The last time in which you shall put off the messenger by saying, “When I have a more convenient season I will send for you.”  
The neglect of our own souls is a most solemn mischief to others. When others see that we neglect, they take courage and neglect, too— *“One sickly sheep infests the flock,  
And poisons all the rest.”*  
But there are others whose example is bad. What sorrow it is to notice men who carry the infection of sin wherever they go about them. In some of our villages and especially in our towns, we have men who are reeking dung-hills of corruption. To put them by the side of a youth for an hour would be almost as dangerous as to make that youth walk through Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace. Men who, as Saul breathed out threats, breathe out lasciviousness.  
Ah, do I speak to such a wretch? It is your last rebellion—your last revolt. You shall never do this again. Never again shall you lead others down to Hell and drag them to the pit with you. Remember that. And there are some who, not only by example, but by overt teaching drive others astray. We have still, in this enlightened Christian land, wretches who boast the name of “infidel lecturer”—whose business it is to pervert men’s minds by hard speeches against the majesty of Heaven. Let them labor hard if they mean to subvert Jehovah’s Throne, for they have little time left to do it.  
Well may the enemies of the Lord of Hosts be desperately in earnest, for they have an awful work to do. And if they consider the puny strength with which they go forth to battle against the Judge of all the earth, and the brevity of the time that can be given to the struggle, well may they work and toil. This is their only time—their sure damnation draws near. Hushed shall be their high words. Cold shall be their hot and furious hearts. God shall crush them in His anger and destroy them in His hot displeasure. If a man dies, he shall not live again to scatter hemlock seed and sow sin in furrows.  
I do not know what your life is, my Friend. You have stepped in here tonight. It is not often you are in a place of worship but listen, now. You know that to your family you are sometimes a terror and always an ill example. Ah, you are a co-worker with Satan now, but God shall put you where you shall do no more hurt to that fair child of yours. Where you shall not teach your boy to drink—where you shall not instill into your daughter’s mind unholy thoughts.  
The time shall come, masters, when you shall be taken away from those men who imitate you in your evil ways. The time shall be over with you, working-man yonder—you shall not much longer jeer at the righteous and sneer at the godly. You will find it hard work to laugh at the saints when you get into Hell. You will find, when God comes to deal with you, and your life is over, that it will be utterly impossible for you, then, to call them fools, for you will be thinking yourself the greatest fool that ever was, that you did not, like they, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.  
Well, jeer and joke and point the finger and slander and persecute as you may—it is the last time and you shall never have another opportunity to mock the saints. O remember, it were better for you that a millstone were about your neck, and that you were cast into the depths of the sea, than that you should thus offend Christ’s little ones. Well, I think we may say it is a great mercy that the sinner shall not live again in this sense. What? Bring him back again—that old drunkard of the village tap room—restore him to life?  
No, no! Good men breathed more freely when he was gone. What? Bring back that vile old blasphemer who used to curse God? No, no! He vexed the righteous long enough. Let him abide in his place. What? Bring back that lewd, lascivious wretch to seduce others and lead them astray? What? Bring back that thief to train others to his evil deeds? Bring back that self-righteous man who was always speaking against the Gospel and striving to prejudice other men’s minds against Gospel light? No, no! With all our love of one man, the love of many is stronger, still, and we could not wish for the temporary and seeming good of one, to permit him to go raging among others.  
Natural benevolence might suggest even the loosing of a lion as a creature but a greater benevolence says, “No, let him be chained, or he will rend others.” We might not wish to crush even a serpent. Let it live, it has its own sphere, and its own enjoyment. But if the serpent creeps among men, where it can bite and infuse its poison into human veins, let it die. Without compunction we say it—“It were better that one man should die for the nation, that the whole nation perish not.” If a man dies, then, as far as others are concerned, he shall not live again to curse his kind.  
And now, we remind you that it is the same with the saint, “If a man dies, shall he live again?” No. This is our season to pray for our fellow men and it is a season which shall never return. Mother, you shall never come back to pray for your daughters and your sons again! Ministers, this is your time to preach. We shall never have an opportunity of being God’s ambassadors anymore. Oh, when I sometimes think of this, I am ashamed that I can preach with dry eyes, and that sobs do not choke my utterance. Methinks if I were lying upon my dying bed, I might often say, “O Lord, would that I could preach again and once more warn poor souls.”  
I think Baxter says he never came out of his pulpit without sighing, because he had played his part so ill, and yet, who preached more earnestly than he? And so, at times when we have felt the weight of souls, yet in looking back, we have thought we did not feel it as we should. And when we have stood by the corpse of one of our own hearers, we have had the reflection, “Would that I could have talked more personally and spoken more earnestly to this man!” I often feel that if God should ever permit me to say I am clear of the blood of you all, it is about as much as I can ever hope to have.  
That must be Heaven to a man, to feel that

God has delivered him out of his ministry—it is such an awful thing to be responsible before God for the souls of men. “If the watchman warn them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman’s hands.” And so, remember, it is with each one of you. Now is your time to rescue the fallen, to teach the ignorant, to carry the lambs in your bosom, or to restore the wandering. Now is your season for liberality to the Church, for care of the poor, for consecration to Christ’s service and for devotion to His cause.  
If there could be sorrow among the spirits that are crowding around the Throne of Christ, methinks it would be this—they had not labored more abundantly and were not more instant in season and out of season in doing good. If those godly pitmen over whom we mourn tonight, had not done their utmost while they were here, the deficiency could never be made up. Let me commend to you the example of some of those who were in the pit, praying and exhorting their fellow men just as they were all in the last article of death.  
They were Primitive Methodists. Let their names clothe Primitive Methodism with eternal honor! I conceive that in employing poor unlettered men to preach, the plan of the Primitive Methodists is New Testament and a Scriptural policy. Such methods of usefulness we have endeavored to pursue and hope to do so yet more fully. The Primitive Methodists think that a man may preach who never went to college. That a man may preach to his fellow miners even though he cannot speak grammatically.  
And hence they do not excite their ministers to labor after literary attainments but after the souls of men. And the local preachers are chosen solely and wholly for their power to speak from the heart and to make their fellow men feel. We should have done more for London if we had not been so squeamish. Real Primitive Methodism we have seen in London, in the person of Mr. Richard Weaver. And if you would put a score of the ministers who have preached in the theatres altogether, they would not have made one such a man as Richard Weaver, for real effect upon the masses.  
And yet what teaching had he, and what wisdom? None—but that he feels the power of God in his own soul and speaks out of his heart, roughly and rudely—but still mightily to others. We want all our Churches to feel that they must not say, “Who is John So-and-So? He is only a cobbler. He must not preach. What is Tom So-and-So? He is only a carpenter—why should he preach?” Ah, these are the men who shook the world. These are the men whom God used to destroy old Rome. With all our getting, while we seek to get education in the ministry, we must take care that we do not despise those things that are not, which God shall make mightier than the things that are—and those base things which God has chosen to stain the pride of human glorying and to bring into contempt all the excellent of the earth.  
I know that I address some working men here. Working men, oh, that you knew Christ in your own hearts as they did in the Hartley pit! You see they had no preacher down there. Do not get the notion that you want a minister in order to come to Christ. Priest-craft is a thing we hate and as you hate it, too, we are quite one in that opinion. I preach the Word but what am I more than you? If you can preach to edification, I pray you do so. Your poor Brethren in the pit, though not set apart to that work, were yet as true priests unto the living God and ministers for Christ, as any of us. So you, too. Hasten to work while it is called today. Gird up your loins and run the heavenly race, for the sun is setting never to rise again upon this land.  
II. “If a man dies shall he live again?” Yes, yes, that he shall. He does not die like a dog. He shall live again. Not here, but in another and a better—or a more terrible land. The soul, we know, never dies, but when it leaves the clay it mounts to sing with angels or descends to howl with fiends. The body itself shall live again. The corpses in the pit were, some of them, swollen with foul air. Some of them could scarcely be recognized—but as the seed corn has not lost its vitality, shriveled though it is—neither have those bodies. They are now sown and they shall spring up, either to bear the image of condemnation, or of immortality and life.  
Scattered to the winds of Heaven, devoured of beasts, mixed with other substances and other bodies—yet every atom of the human body has been tracked by the eye of Omniscience and shall be gathered to its proper place by the hand of Omnipotence. The Lord knows every particle of the bodies of them that are His. All men, whether they are righteous or wicked, shall certainly live again in the body, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”  
This much comes to all men through Christ, that all men have a resurrection. But more than that. They shall all live again in the eternal state—either forever glorified with God in Christ, blessed with the holy angels, forever shut in from all danger and alarm—or in that place appointed for banished spirits who have shut themselves out from God and now find that God has shut them out from Him. They shall live again, in weal or woe, in bliss or bane, in Heaven or in Hell.  
Now you that are unconverted, think of this, I pray you, for a moment. You shall live again. Let no one tempt you to believe the contrary. Whatever they shall say and however speciously they may put it, mark this word—you shall not rot in the tomb forever. There shall not be an end of you when they shall say, “Earth to earth, dust to dust and ashes to ashes.” You shall live again. And hark, Sinner, let me hold you by the hand a moment—your sins shall live again. They are not dead. You have forgotten them but God has not.  
You have covered them over with the thick darkness of forgetfulness, but they are in His book and the day shall come when all the sins that you have done shall be read before the universe and published in the light of day. What do you say to this, Sinner? The sins of your youth, your secret sins—oh, Man, let that thought pierce through you like a point of steel and cut you to the very quick—your sins shall live again. And your conscience shall live. It is not often alive now. It is quiet, almost as quiet as the dead in the grave. But it shall soon awaken, the trumpet of the archangel shall break its long sleep—depend on that.  
The terrors of Hell shall make you lift up your eyes which have so long been heavy with slumber. You have had an awakened conscience, but then you are still in the land of hope. You will find, however, that an awakened conscience when there is no Christ to flee to is an awful thing. Remorse of conscience has brought many a man to the knife and to the halter. Ah, careless Sinner, you dare not, tonight, sit up an hour alone and think over the past and the future. You know you dare not. But there will be no avoiding conscience hereafter—it speaks now—but it will thunder then.  
It whispers now, and you may shut your ears but its thunder-claps then shall so startle you that you cannot refuse to listen. Oh, Transgressor, your conscience shall live again, and shall be your perpetual tormentor! Remember that your victims shall live again. Am I addressing any who have enticed companions into sin and conducted friends to destruction? Your dupes shall meet you in another world and charge their ruin upon you. That young lad whom you led astray from the path of virtue shall point to you in Hell and say, “He was my tempter.” That woman— let us cover up that deed—bright eyes shall sparkle upon you through the black darkness like the eyes of serpents and you shall hear the hissing voice, “You did bring me here,” and you shall feel another Hell in the Hell of that other soul.  
Oh, God, save us! Let the sins of our youth be covered. Oh, save us! Let the blood of Jesus be sprinkled on our conscience, for there are none of us that dare meet our conscience alone! Shelter us, Rock of Ages. Deliver us from blood-guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation! Sinner, remember your God shall live. You think Him nothing now. You shall see Him then. Your business now stops the way. The smoke of time dims your vision. The rough blasts of death shall blow all this away, and you shall see clearly revealed to yourself the frowning visage of an angry God. A God in arms, Sinner! A God in arms, and no scabbard for His sword!  
A God in arms and no shelter for your soul—a God in arms and even rocks refusing to cover you! A God in arms and the hollow depths of earth denying you a refuge! Fly, soul! While it is yet time—fly, the cleft in the rock is open now. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” Fly, Sinner, to the open arms of Jesus! Fly! For He casts out none that come to Him.  
And then, lastly, as this is true of the sinner, so it is true of the saint. He shall live again. If in this life, only, we had hope, we were of all men the most miserable. If we knew that we must die and not live forever, our brightest joys would be quenched. And in proportion to the joy we lost would be the sorrow which followed. We shall live again. Godly wife, your Christian husband, though he perished by the fatal “damp,” shall live again, and you shall sit with him before the Eternal Throne.  
He finished his life with prayer amid his comrades. He shall begin anew with praise amid the cherubim. Widow, bereaved of your many children, you have lost them all—not lost, we hope, but gone before. Oh, there shall be joy when every link that was snapped shall be re-fitted. When again the circle shall be completed and all losses restored— *“Far, far removed from fear and pain,  
Dear Brethren we shall meet again.”*  
That sweet hymn of the children is a blessed one after all—  
*“We shall meet to part no more.”*  
Death, you can not rob us! You can not tear away a limb from Jesus’ body! You can not take away a single stone from the spiritual temple. You do but transplant the flower, O Death! You do not kill it. You do but uproot it from the land of frost to flourish in the summer’s clime—you do but take it from the place where it can only bud, to the place where it shall be full blown. Blessed be God for Death, sweet friend of regenerated man! Blessed be God for the grave, safe wardrobe for these poor dusty garments till we put them on afresh, glowing with angelic glory.  
Thrice blessed be God for resurrection, for immortality and for the joy that shall be revealed in us. Brethren, my soul anticipates that day. Let yours do the same. One gentle sigh and we fall asleep—perhaps we die as easily as those did in the colliery. We sleep into Heaven and wake up in Christ’s likeness. When we have slept our last on earth and open our eyes in Heaven, oh, what a surprise! No aching arm, no darkness of the mine! No gases, no labor and no sweat! No sin, no stain there! Brethren, is not that verse near the fact which says—  
**“We’ll sing with rapture and**surprise,  
**His loving kindness in the skies”?**  
Shall we not be surprised to find ourselves in Heaven? What a new place for the poor sinner. From the coal mine to celestial spheres. From black and dusty toil to bright and heavenly bliss. Above ground once and for all, yes and above the skies, too. Oh, long-expected day, begin! When shall it come? Hasten it, Lord!—  
*“Come, Death, and some celestial hand,  
To bear our souls away!”*  
I have thus tried to bring forward the text. Oh that the Lord, in whose name I desire to speak, may bless it to some among you. I have now to ask you kindly to think of those who are suffering through this terrible calamity. More than four hundred widows and orphans are left bereaved and penniless—for the working man has little spare cash to provide for such contingencies. As a congregation we can do but little to alleviate so great a sorrow, let us, however, bear our part with others.  
I have no doubt the wealthier ones among you have already contributed in your different connections, either through the Lord Mayor, or Mark Lane, or the Coal Market, or the Stock Exchange, or in some other way—but there are many of you who have not done so, and those who have, may like an opportunity of doing so again.  
Let us do what we can tonight, that we may show our gratitude to God for having spared our lives. And as we drop our money into the box, let us offer a prayer that this solemn affliction may be blessed to all in the land and that so Christ may be glorified.

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OUR LIFE, OUR WORK, OUR CHANGE

NO. 764

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 4, 1867, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change comes.” Job 14:14.**

JOB was well near driven to desperation by the fearful torment of his bodily pains, by the exasperating remarks of his friends, and the cutting suggestion of his wife. It is no wonder if he became somewhat impatient. Never were words of complaint more excusable than in the sad case of Job when he cried, “O that you would hide me in the grave!” Everything that could make life bearable had been taken from him and every evil which could make death desirable came upon him.

Yet, after Job had uttered those exclamations, he seems to have been half ashamed of his weakness, and girding up his loins he argues with himself, reasoning his soul into a cooler, calmer frame. Job looks his life in the face—he perceives that his warfare is severe, but he remembers it is but once—and that when once over and the victory won, there will be no more fighting! Therefore he encourages himself to put up with his present sorrows and even with future evils, be they what they may, and registers this solemn resolution—far more glorious than the resolve of Alexander to conquer the world—to conquer himself and to abide with patience, the will of God.

He fixed it steadfastly in his heart that all his appointed days, until a change should come, he would endure the Divine decree with constancy of resignation. None among us can afford to cast a stone at the Patriarch for sighing and complaining, for we should not act one half so well ourselves. We are too much at times like Jonah—we turn cowards and would gladly flee from our work when it becomes arduous or yields us no honor. If we do not seek a ship to convey us to Tarshish, we sigh for a seraph to bear us to Heaven.

This huge Nineveh has made most of us quail in times of depression. I fear that frequently we act like lineal descendants of those children of Ephraim who, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. We shrink as a bone out of joint which slips aside under pressure. We are not only like Jacob, who halted upon one thigh, but we limp upon both legs at times! We are often disinclined for conflict and pine for rest, crying, “When will the day be over? When shall we be perfectly at ease?”

It is against such a spirit as this that we must struggle. And to help us in the struggle, it seemed to me to be good to consider the text now before us. To that end may God bless it, that we may be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” “All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change comes.”

We shall call your attention this morning, first, to the aspect of life which Job gives us. Secondly, to his estimate of our work. And thirdly, to his view of the future.

I. First, let us observe THE ASPECT UNDER WHICH JOB REGARDED THIS MORTAL LIFE. He calls it an “appointed time,” or, as the Hebrew has it, “a warfare.” Observe that Job styles our life a time. Blessed be God that this present state is not an eternity! Though its conflicts may seem long they must have an end. We are in the finite state, at present, in which all griefs have their closes and conclusions. Long as the night may last it must yield, in due season, to the light of the morning. The winter may drag its weary length along but the spring is hard upon its heels.

The tide may ebb out till nothing remains but leagues of mud, and we lament that all the bright blue deep will vanish, but it is not so—the tide must flow again for God has so decreed. Our whole life is brief, indeed. Compared with eternity, a mere span—a hand’s-breadth. From the summits of eternity, how, like a flying moment, will this transient life appear! The pains of this mortal life will seem to be a mere pin’s prick to us when we get into the joys never ending and overflowing! And the toils of this life will be as child’s play when we reach the everlasting rest.

Let us then, my Brothers and Sisters, judge immortal judgment. Lets us not weigh our troubles in the ill-adjusted scales of this poor human life, but let us use the shekel of eternity. We are born for eternity, and although it is true we have to struggle through this one brief hour of toil and conflict, an hour with our God in Glory will make up for it all. “I reckon,” said that master of heavenly arithmetic, the Apostle Paul, who was never wrong in his reckoning, “that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

The longest and most sorrowful life is but a “time.” Whisper that simple Truth of God into the ear of the languishing sufferer! Tell this glad Truth to the son of sorrow, poor and despised! Tell it to every daughter of grief— life is but a time—it is not eternity! O Mourner, contrast your present sorrows with the griefs of lost spirits to whom there is no time—who are cast away forever—who cannot expect a termination to their bitter griefs, but who see this word written in letters of fire before their weeping eyes, “Forever! Forever! FOREVER! FOREVER!”

Job also calls our life an “appointed” time. You know who appointed your days. You did not appoint them for yourself and therefore you can have no regrets about the appointment. Neither did Satan appoint them, for the keys of Hell and of death do not hang at his waist—

*“An angel’s arm can’t cast me to the grave:*

*Millions of angels cannot keep me there.”*  
To the almighty God belong the issues from death. He alone can speak the irrevocable word and bid the spirit return to God who gave it. God alone can wing the shaft that shall end this mortal existence—until He puts His hand to the bow all the archers of earth and Hell shall shoot in vain.

Our pilgrimage has an appointed beginning and end. In yonder hourglass which measures your existence, the sands which trickle to the nether globe were all measured into the upper bulb by the Divine hand! There is not a sand too few, nor a grain too many. You shall find that God has appointed with exact wisdom, with profound knowledge, and with irreproachable love all the days and the doings of your life. Remember that you will live out, but not outlive your allotted years! You will live up to the last minute and neither plague, nor pestilence, nor dangers of flood, or field, or battle can deprive you of the last second which God has measured out to you.

Beyond the boundary He appointed you shall not pass though you take great care and call in the physician—you cannot add a second of time to your determined period. Inexorable Death will make no tarrying but perform his errand promptly when the Master sends him—

*“Then to the dust,  
Return you must  
Without delay.”*

Should not this cheer us—that the appointment of our lot has been made by a loving Father’s prudence and that the days and bounds of our habitation are not left to the winds of chance or to the waves of uncertainty— but are all decreed immutably by our Father who is in Heaven? In the volume of the book our life-story is written—in that same volume where the Savior’s Covenant engagements were recorded.

You will observe, also, dear Friends, that Job very wisely speaks of the “days” of our appointed time. It is a prudent thing to forbear the burden of life as a whole and learn to bear it in the parcels into which Providence has divided it. Let us live as life comes, namely, by the day. Our God does not trust us with so much life as a month at once—we live as the clock ticks—a second at a time. Is not that a wiser method of living rather than to perplex our heads by living by the month, or by the year? You have no promise for the year—the Word of Mercy runs, “As your days your strength shall be.” You are not commanded to pray for supplies by the year, but, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

Said a good man to me the other day who had many troubles, who has borne them manfully to my knowledge, for these 15 or 20 years, when I asked him how his patience had held out—“Ah,” he said, “I said to my afflicted wife the other day when the coals came in, ‘It takes several big fellows to bring in the sacks, but yet our little kitchen maid, Mary, has brought the whole ton up from the cellar into our parlor. But she has done it a scuttle-full at a time. She has as surely moved those tons of coal as ever did the wagons when they brought them in, but she has moved them little by little, and done it easily.’ ”

This is how to bear the troubles of life—a day’s portion at a time. Wave by wave our trials come and let us breast them one by one and not attempt to buffet the whole ocean’s billows at once. Let us stand as the brave old Spartan did, in the Thermopylae of the day, and fight the Persians as they come on one by one. Thus shall we keep our adversities at bay and overcome them as they advance in single file. But let us not venture into the plain amidst the innumerable hordes of Persians or we shall speedily be swallowed up and our faith and patience will be overcome.

I would gladly live by the day and work by the day and suffer by the day till all my days are over. And I see the Ancient of Days in that land where days are lost in one eternal day, and the soul swims in seas of joy forever! I must not fail to remind you of the Hebrew: “All the days of my warfare will I wait.” Life is, indeed, a “warfare.” And just as a man enlists in our army for a term of years, and then his service runs out and he is free, so every Believer is enlisted in the service of life to serve God till his enlistment is over and we sleep in death. Our charge and our armor we shall put off together.

Brethren, you are enlisted soldiers when you believe in Jesus. Let me remind you that you are a soldier—you will be always at war—you will never have a furlough or conclude a treaty. Like the old knights who slept in their armor, you will be attacked even in your rest. There is no part of the journey to Heaven which is secure from the enemy, and no moment, not even the sweet rest of the Lord’s Day, when the clarion may not sound. Therefore prepare yourselves always for the battle. “Put on the whole armor of God,” and look upon life as a continued battle.

Be surprised when you do not have to fight—be wonderstruck when the world is peaceful towards you—be astonished when your old corruptions do not rise and assault you. You must travel with your swords always drawn, and you may as well throw away the scabbard, for you will never need it. You are a soldier who must always fight, and by the light of battle you must survey the whole of your life.

Taking these thoughts together as Job’s view of mortal life, what then? Why, Beloved, it is but once—as we have already said—we shall serve our God on earth in striving after His glory but once. Let us carry out the engagements of our enlistment honorably. He who enters into Her Majesty’s service for a term of years, if he is an honorable man, resolves that he will act worthily so long as he is in the ranks. So let it be with us—we shall never enter upon another war—let us wage the present warfare gloriously. We carry in our hands a sword, we have but to use it in one great lifebattle, and then it shall be hung up on the wall forever.

Let us use our weapon well, that we may not have to resign it, rusty and dishonored, as a memorial of our disgrace. Let us march cheerily to the fight, since it is but once! Let us play the man and be like David’s mightiest, who feared no risks, but accepted deadly odds and won and held their own against all comers. Come, Beloved, we have an appointed time and it is running out every hour! Let us rejoice to see it go. Our Captain appointed it, He commanded us to stand sentry, or to rush into the front of the battle. Since the time is appointed by our well-beloved King, let us not dishonor His appointment, but in the name of Him who gave us our commission to live and fight, let us war a good warfare, living at the highest bent of our force, and the utmost strength of our being!

And since, dear Friends, it is the Lord’s war that we are engaged in, we are enlisted under the great Captain of our salvation who leads us on to sure and certain victory! Let us not be discouraged! Let not our hearts fail us! Let us quit ourselves like men and be strong, for the Lord our God is with us, and we have the Mighty One of Israel to be our Captain! Let us glorify the Grace of God while we are permitted to remain on earth to glorify it! Let us be up and at our enemies while there are enemies for us to fight!

Let us carve out victory while we have the raw material of conflict to carve. There are no battles to be fought, and no victories to be won in Heaven. So now, in this life, let us resolve, in the name and strength of God the Holy Spirit, with all our force and vigor to glorify God who has appointed us our warfare. We now leave this head to turn to the second, and may God the Holy Spirit bless us in so doing.

II. JOB’S VIEW OF OUR WORK while on earth is that we are to wait. “All the days of my appointed time will I wait.” The word “wait” is very full of teaching. It contains the whole of the Christian life, if understood in all its various senses. Let us take up a few very briefly.

In the first place, the Christian life should be one of waiting—that is, setting loose of all earthly things. Many travelers are among us this morning. They are passing from one town to another, viewing many countries. But if they are only travelers, and are soon to return to their homes, they do not speculate in the various businesses of Lombard Street or Cheapside. They do not attempt to buy large estates and lay them out, and make gold and silver. They know that they are only strangers and they act as such.

They take such interest in the affairs of the country in which they are sojourning as may be becoming in those who are not citizens of it. They wish well to those among whom they sojourn and dwell, but that is all, for they are going home. Therefore they do not intend to bind themselves with anything that might make it difficult to part from our shores. They know that they are on the wing and therefore they live like strangers and sojourners.

As a Bedouin wandering across the desert, so is a Christian—a bird of passage—a voyager seeking the haven. This is not our rest, it is polluted— *“Sad thought were this to be our home!”*

The wisdom of the Christian is to disentangle himself as much as possible from the things of this life. He will act kindly towards the citizens of the country where he is called to dwell, and he will seek their good. Still, he will remember that he is not as they are. He is an alien among them. He may have to buy and sell in this world, but that is merely as a matter of transient convenience. He neither buys nor sells for eternity, for he has “bought the Truth,” and he “sells it not.”

He has received God to be His treasure—and his heart and his treasure, too, he has sent on ahead. On the other side of the river all his joys and all his treasures are to be found. Here he looks upon his earthly joys as things that are lent him—borrowed comforts. If his children die, he does not wonder—he knew that they were not immortal. If his friends are taken away, he is not astonished—he understood that they were born of women and therefore would die like the rest. If his wealth takes to itself wings, he does not marvel—he knew that it was a bird of passage and he is not astonished when, like the swallows, it flies elsewhere.

He has long ago learned that the world is founded on the floods, and therefore when it moves beneath him he understands that this is the normal state of things and he is not at all amazed, but rather wonders that the world is not all panic and confusion since it is so unsubstantial. As Samson shook the Philistine temple, so shall the Word of the Lord in the hour of final doom lay all nature prone in one common ruin! And vain is he who boasts of his possessions where all is waiting to be overturned.

Brethren, are you doing so? Some of you professors, I am afraid, are living as though this were your rest. You do not wish to go Home, do you? The nest is very comfortable. You have feathered it warmly. You have all that heart could wish. Here you would gladly abide for ages! Ah, well, may this worldliness be cast out of you and may you be seized with Homesickness—that sweet disease which every true patriot ought to have—an insatiable longing for his dear fatherland.

Have you ever heard of the Swiss soldiers in the French army who would fall sick when they heard the music of the songs which reminded them of their native mountains, with their chalets and peasants, and the cowboy’s song? Ill could they rest in sunny France when their hearts were among Helvetia’s rugged hills. Are there no sweet songs of Zion which remind you of that blessed land where our best friends, our kindred dwell— where God our Savior reigns? If we are true citizens of the New Jerusalem, we shall long for that fair country, the home of the elect—

*“Ah, then my spirit faints  
To reach the land I love,  
The bright inheritance of saints,  
Jerusalem above.”*

It is your duty, Christian, and your privilege, to let loose of the things of earth and say with Job, “All the days of my appointed time I will wait”— like a mere waiter—“till my change come.”

A second meaning of the text, however, is this—we must wait expecting to be gone—expecting daily and hourly to be summoned by our Lord. The proper and healthy estate of a Christian is to be anticipating the hour of his departure as near at hand. I have observed a great readiness to depart in many dying Believers, but the same readiness ought to characterize living Believers, also.

Our dear Friend, Mr. James Smith, whom some of you remember as preaching the word at Park Street, and afterwards at Cheltenham, when I saw him some little while before his departure, described himself thus: “You have seen a passenger that has gone to the station, taken his ticket, all his luggage brought in, all packed up, strapped, directed. And you have seen him sitting with his ticket in his hand waiting till the train comes up.” That, said he, “is exactly my condition. I am ready to go as soon as my heavenly Father pleases to come for me.”

And is not that how we should always live—waiting for the Lord’s appearing? Mr. Whitefield used to say of his well-known order and regularity, “I like to go to bed feeling that if I were to die tonight there is not so much as a pair of my gloves out of their proper place.” No Christian man ought to live without having his will made and his estate put in proper condition, in case he should die suddenly. That hint may be useful to some of you who have neglected to set your house in order. No Christian man should live expecting to live another day. You cannot reckon upon an hour! You should rather be so ready, that if you were to walk out of this tabernacle and fall down dead upon the steps it would not make any derangement in your affairs because you are equally ready for life or death.

One of our beloved Sisters this week was walking down Paternoster Row. Her mourning friends sit here but they have no cause to mourn! Sudden faintness came over her. She was taken into a shop and water was offered to her, but she could not drink. No, she was already drinking of the water of the River of Life that flows from the Throne of God and of the Lamb! In a moment she closed her eyes to the sorrows of earth and opened them to the joys of Heaven! When we visit the graves of those who have died in Christ we ought not to weep for them, or, if we weep at all it should be with the regret that we are not yet admitted to the same reward! To “die daily” is the business of Christians.

It is greatly wise to talk about our last hours, to make ourselves familiar with the grave. Our venerable forefathers had a strange habit of placing on the dressing table a death’s head as a memento. More—either a real skull, or else an ornament fashioned in the form of it—to remind them of their end. Yet, so far as I can gather, they were happy men and happy women and none the less so because they familiarized themselves with death! A genuine Puritan, perhaps, never lived a day without considering the time when he should put off the garments of clay and enter into rest— and these were the happiest and holiest of people—while this thoughtless generation which banishes the thought of dying is wretched with all its hollow pretense of mirth!

I exhort you, Brothers and Sisters, wait! Wait always for the trumpet call! Live as looking for the Lord to come and take you from this mortal state, waiting for the convoy of angels to take you to the city of the blessed in the land of the hereafter! Nor is this all. Waiting means enduring with patience. We are put into this world for one appointed time of suffering and in sacred patience we must abide steadfast the heat of the furnace. The life of many Christians is a long martyrdom—they are to bear it patiently. “Here is the patience of the saints.”

Many Believers go from one sickness to another, from one loss to another. But here they fulfill their life’s design if through abundant Grace they learn to bear their woes without a murmur, and to wait their appointed time without repining. Serving is also another kind of waiting. The Lord Jesus gives us plain directions as to service in the parable recorded in the 17th chapter of Luke: “But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird yourself and serve me, till I have eaten and drunk; and afterwards you shall eat and drink?”

In this world we are to wait upon the Lord Jesus, running His errands, nursing His children, feeding His lambs, fighting His foes, repairing the walls of His vineyard, doing anything and everything which He may please to give us. And mark you, this is to be attended with perseverance, for Job says, “All the days of my appointed time will I wait.” He would not be a servant sometimes, and then skulk home in idleness at another season, as if his term of service were ended. Every saint should say, “I will wait upon You, my God, as long as I live. So long as I have breath to draw, it shall be spent for You. So long as I have life to spend here below I will spend it and be spent in Your service.”

This should be the spirit of the Christian all his days, to his last day— waiting still, like a holy man of God among the American Indians, who, when he lay dying, was observed to be teaching a poor little Indian to read his letters. He said, “What a mercy, now I am laid aside from preaching that I can teach this poor little child to read his letters! God has still something for me to do, and my prayer is that I may not live an hour after I cannot do anything for Christ.” May we be in just such a state of heart!

Moreover, to close this aspect of Christian life, we should be desirous to be called Home. No Christian ought to desire to go out of the field of battle till the victory is won, nor to leave the field till the plow has gone up to the headland for the last time. But still he may desire to be at Home and must desire it because of the love which he bears his Lord. I cannot understand you if you do not sometimes sing that hymn*—*

*“My heart is with Him on His Throne,  
And ill can brook delay.  
Each moment listening for the voice,  
‘Rise up, and come away.’”*

Do you love your husband, Wife, if you do not really wish to see him? Do you love your home, Child, if you do not wish for the time when the school shall break up, and you shall leave for home? Oh, it is a weary world, even though our Lord makes it bearable by the sweet glimpses we get of Him through the telescope of faith when He throws the lattices aside and shows Himself. Yet these sweets only cause us to long for more! I tell you heavenly food on earth is a hunger-making thing! It makes you desire fresh supplies. You cannot sip from the waters of Divine Grace on earth without longing to lie down at the wellhead and drink your full of glory!

Do you ever have a heart-sickness after Heaven? Do you ever feel the cords that bind you to Christ tugging at your heart strings to draw you nearer? Oh, yes! You must feel this! And if you are mixing up these longings to be with Christ, these expectations to depart, with a patient endurance of the Divine will, you have hit upon Job’s true idea of life! May you not only have the idea, but carry it out practically—may all Believers do so to the praise and glory of Divine Grace.

III. Now comes JOB’S ESTIMATE OF THE FUTURE. It is expressed in this word, “Till my change come.” He refers to the two great changes which he views at one glance—the change of death when we shall “shuffle off this mortal coil” and the change of resurrection when we shall put on our imperishable garments—shall be girt about with eternal gladness!

Beloved, let it be observed that in a certain sense death and resurrection are not a change to a Christian—they are not a change as to his identity. The same man who lives here will live forever! The same Believer who serves God on earth will wake up in the image of Christ to serve Him day and night in His temple—and that identity will exist not only with regard to the soul, but the body—“My eyes shall see Him and not another.” These very eyes which have wept for sin shall see the King in His beauty! And these hands which here have served the Lord, shall embrace Him in His Glory!

Do not think that death will destroy the identity of the resurrection body! It will be as much the same as the full-blown flower is the same as the seed out of which it grew. There will be a mighty development but it will still be the same. It is sown a natural body, and the same it is raised a spiritual body. There will also be to the regenerate no change as to his vitality. We are quickened now by the life of Christ which is the same life that will quicken us in Heaven, the incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.”

He has it now—the same life which he is to live in Heaven, where it will be more developed, more glorious, but still the same. There will be no difference in the Christian’s object in life when he gets to Heaven. He lives to serve God here—he will live for the same end and aim there. Here holiness is his delight and it shall be his delight there. And his occupation will not change, either. He served his Master like a waiting servant during his days on earth—he will be taken up to serve Him day and night in His temple.

And the Christian will not experience a very great change as to his companions. Here on earth the excellent of the earth are all his delight. Christ Jesus his Elder Brother abides with him. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is resident within him. He communes with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The fact is, Heaven and earth to the Christian are the same house, only the one is the lower floor, and the other is the upper story! The one is so low and near the ground that sometimes the water of trouble rushes into it. And the windows of the rooms below are so dark that but a small degree of the light of Heaven ever enters them, and the view is contracted. But the other rooms upstairs have a fair view, and the sun shines always through their windows and they are furnished with a matchless skill.

But still it is the same house. Heaven is thus but a slight change in some respects, yet it is a change, and we shall see that readily enough. To the Christian it will be a change of place. He will be away from the dull and coarse materialism of this defiled, sin-stricken earth where thorns and thistles grow, and he will arrive at the place where the inhabitants shall no more say, “I am sick”—the Paradise of God, where flowers wither not.

He will change his neighborhood. He is vexed here with the ungodly conversation of the wicked. He often finds his neighbors to be like the men of Sodom, exceedingly vile. But there angels shall be fellow citizens with him and he shall commune with the spirits of the just made perfect. No vain discourse shall vex his ears, no sin shall come before him to disgust his mind. He shall not be a stranger in a strange land, but a child at home.

There, too, will be a great change as to his outward circumstances. No sweat will need to be wiped from his brow, no tear from his eyes. There are no funeral knells to be heard in Heaven, no open graves to be filled with the dead. In Heaven there is no poverty, no proud man’s scorn, no oppressor’s heavy heel, no persecutor’s fiery brand. But there “the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest.”

Especially will it be a change to the Christian as to that which will be within him. No body of this death to hamper him. No infirmities to cramp him. No wandering thoughts to disturb his devotion. No birds to come down upon the sacrifice, needing to be driven away. As the body shall be free from the corruption which engenders death, so shall the soul be free from the corruption which engenders strife against the new law which is in the Believer’s members. He shall be perfectly free from sin! There will be this change, too, that he will be delivered from that dog of Hell who once howled in his ears—as the world will be afar off, and cannot tempt—so Satan will be afar off, and cannot molest!

A change, indeed, it will be, in a special manner, to some. Have you ever visited the hospital and sat by the side of the poor Christian woman who has lain upon that bed for months—her hearing almost gone, her sight failing, scarcely able to breathe, palpitations of the heart, life a protracted agony? Oh, what a change from the bed of languishing to the Throne of God! What a difference between that hospital, with its sounds of sickness and of sorrow, and yonder New Jerusalem and the shout of them that triumph, the song of them that feast! What an escape from the dying bed to the living glory—from the glazing eyes and the wasting frame, and the cold death sweat, to the glory which excels and the harps of angels, and the songs of the glorified!

What a change, too, for some of the poor—for some of you sons of penury who are here this morning—from that hard work which scarcely knows a pause. From those weary fingers and that flying needle, and that palpitating heart. From that sleep which gives but little rest because the toil begins so soon that it seems to pervade and injure the sleep itself. What an exchange from that naked room, that unfurnished table, that cup which, so far from running over, you find it difficult to fill! From all those various pains and woes that penury is heir to, to the wealth and happiness of Paradise! What a change for you, to the mansions of the blessed, and the crowns of immortality, and the company of the princes of the blood royal with whom you shall dwell forever!

And what a change, again, for the persecuted! I know how a father’s angry words break your heart, and how a husband’s cruel remarks grieve you. But you shall soon escape from it all. The jeer of the workshop sometimes reminds you of the cruel mocking you have often read of. What a change for you to be in sweet company where friends shall cheer and make you glad! My Brothers and Sisters, what a leap it must have been for the martyrs—right away from their stakes to their thrones! What a change for the men who rotted in dungeons till the moss grew on their eyelids—to the immortal beauty of the fairest of the fair, midst the bright ones doubly bright! What a change! Right well, good Patriarch, did you use the term, for it is the greatest of all changes!

If you require a commentary upon this word “change,” turn to the 15th chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians and read it through. We read it in your hearing just now. You will there see that all that needs to be changed will be changed. All that must be changed to make the Believer perfectly blessed will be transformed and transfigured by the Master. If you desire a glimpse of what we shall be in Heaven, remember the face of Moses when it glowed so that he covered it with a veil! Remember Stephen’s face when they looked upon him and saw it looked as if it were the face of an angel! Remember our Lord transfigured till He was whiter than any fuller could make Him!

Those were transient gleams and glimpses of the Beatific Glory which shall surround every one of the blessed before long. My Brethren, perhaps to you it will be a sudden change. Last Sunday our sister sat here. This Sunday she sits there in Heaven! Others, too, have gone this week to their Home. I suppose week by week about two in this congregation die almost as regularly as I come into this pulpit. So you melt away one after the other, and you disappear—but blessed thought if, when you disappear, it is to shine forever in Heaven!

Well, let the change come suddenly. There is much to be envied in sudden death. I never could understand why it should be put in the litany, “From sudden death, good Lord deliver us.” O Brothers and Sisters, sudden death may God send to us so long as we are but prepared—for then we miss the pain of sickness in the gradual breaking down of the frame! It must be desirable, a choice favor which God only gives to some of His peculiarly beloved ones—a thing to pray for—not to pray against! Well it may be sudden! There is this about it, however, that if we are in Christ, let it come suddenly—we are fully prepared.

“For you are complete in Him.” “He that believes has everlasting life.” “He that lives and believes in Me shall never die.” Death has lost all its terror to you who are in Christ. And there is one very sweet thought to my mind, and that though a change, it is the last change. Glory be to God, there will be no more of it, once changed into the likeness of Christ! And there will be no more changes, but immortality forever!—

*“Forever with the Lord.”*  
We may well add*—  
“Amen! So let it be.”*

O you who have no hope in Jesus, death must be to you a gloomy thing, indeed! It puts out your candle and leaves you forever in the dark. But you who have a good hope through Divine Grace and have built your house upon the Rock—you may joyfully look forward to the end of your appointed days. You may wait joyfully until your change comes—blessing God that it will come in its appointed time and that when it comes it will be a change for the better to you in all respects—a change which shall never be followed by another change, a change which shall make you like your Lord forever and ever! May God give His blessing! Amen.

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÷Job 14.4

OUT OF NOTHING COMES NOTHING  
NO. 2734

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 7, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 21, 1880.

**“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” Job 14: 4.**

JOB considered himself to be unclean in the sight of God. Yet, if we speak the plain truth about him, we must say that he was as clean as any man who lived in that age, or, indeed, in any other! We have the witness of the Holy Spirit, in this very Book, that Job, “was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” We have also the practical confirmation by the devil of the same fact, for, when the Lord said to him, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil?” he could not deny it, but could only insinuate that there was an evil motive at the back of the Patriarch’s uprightness—“Does Job fear God for nothing?” Sometimes the unwilling acknowledgment of an enemy is a stronger proof than the hearty declaration of a friend—and it was so in Job’s case.

He was one of the best, truest, sincerest, cleanest men to be found throughout the whole world, yet he called himself unclean and he probably did so because, just in proportion as a man becomes really pure, he discovers his own impurity. The impure man has a very low standard of what true holiness is, and possibly he thinks that he comes nearly up to it or, if not, he tries to lower the standard down to his own level. But the man who is really pure in heart has a very high ideal of what the Truth of God is, and uprightness is, and holiness is and, because his ideal is so high, he feels that he has not yet attained to it and he thinks more of the distance between his present condition and his idea of perfection than he does of all that he has as yet attained. Such a man says, with the Apostle Paul, “Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

It is always a bad sign when a man begins to think exceedingly well of himself. I had rather, a great deal, hear a man complain and cry out before God, under a deep sense of humiliation, than hear him utter a single word that reveals a spirit of complacency with his own condition. What we are in Christ is a thing to be perfectly satisfied with and rejoiced over, for, in Christ, Believers are justified and accepted. But as for what we are in our own personal character, the very best of us must still feel that there is much over which we have to mourn. However nearly we may have approached to the example of Christ, that very nearness will make us the more regret the points in which we have fallen short of a complete imitation of Him and we shall still cry out, “O wretched man that I am”— blessed to have come so far on the way of holiness, but wretched that I have not gone still further—“who shall deliver me from the present thralldom of the body of this death? Who shall perfectly emancipate me from its control, that I may live wholly unto God and be holy even as God is holy?”

Then, as Job considered himself an unclean thing, we need not wonder that he should have despaired of ever, by his own power, bringing out of himself anything that should be perfectly clean in God’s sight. And we need not be surprised at his question, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” As I have already reminded you, what he brought out of himself in his daily life was clean in the eyes of men. He vindicated his character against false accusations with great earnestness and sincerity, and with considerable warmth of temper, for he felt that it was clean before men—yet he was conscious that it was not clean before God.

There are two kinds of perfection—there is a measure of cleanness in which a man may wash his hands in innocence, and say to his fellow men, “I am free from any transgression,” as the Prophet Samuel fearlessly challenged all Israel to produce anyone whom he had defrauded or oppressed. “And they said, You have not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither have you taken anything of any man’s hand. And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.” That ought to be the character of every Christian—he should be white as the driven snow, aiming to always be honest and upright in all his dealings with his fellow creatures. But, Beloved, God’s judgment, and yours, and mine concerning cleanness, differ very greatly. Our weights and scales are rough and coarse, though they suffice for the common purposes of the life we live here on earth. But God’s scales will turn if a single hair falls upon them—the small dust of the balance will move them!

No, the metaphor is not a perfect one all round. I use it, but I make a reservation concerning it. God does not regard any sin of ours as the small dust of the balance and His judgment is right judgment. He does not find much evil where there is but little, for the great evil is there all the while! And because God is perfectly holy, He discovers what our impure eyes cannot perceive. In contrast with His absolutely perfect holiness, none of us are clean. Job’s friend Bildad said, “The stars are not pure in His sight. How much less man, who is a worm?” And Eliphaz said, “Behold, He puts no trust in His servants; and His angels He charged with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moths.” The purity of God is incorruptible—and when we look at ourselves, we despair of ever attaining to such perfection as His without His help!

I. Now, coming to our text, I want first to speak of SOME MATTERS OF IMPOSSIBILITY IN NATURE—the bringing of clean things out of unclean ones.

And the first matter of impossibility I will mention is that there should be born into this world a pure child, perfectly holy in nature, from impure parents. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” Whatever the new-fangled teaching may say about the old-fashioned doctrine that we are shaped in iniquity, and conceived in sin, that doctrine is true! It matters not who may deny its truth, it still stands fast, for it is founded upon the rock of the Inspired Word of God. Men will never be able to gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. An unfallen Adam and Eve would have had an unfallen progeny—but fallen men and women, such as we are, will certainly have for our children those whose tendencies are towards evil. Though there is, in every child, much that is very beautiful, which a mother’s eye is quick to detect, yet who that has carefully watched his own offspring can fail to have seen that temper which, sometimes early in life, becomes more terrible than it does in grown-up people?

I have seen little children turn black in the face through passion, yet, when reason comes to them, they will learn to control themselves somewhat. The tendency to evil is there all the while and, according to the disposition of the child, it displays itself sooner or later. David said, “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.” Certainly, a child who has never heard a lie, will often lie very terribly—and various forms of deception will be practiced by those who have had the best possible example set before them. If any of you think that you have a perfect child, you will find yourselves grievously mistaken—the time will come when you will discover that evil is lurking there as it is in you, the father, or in you, the mother—and it will only need a suitable opportunity to display itself! It will scarcely need fostering by ill companions—but even in a godly household where the atmosphere of piety abounds—sin will grow up in the child as naturally as weeds grow in a garden that is left to itself.

If you leave a plot of ground to itself, you do not find that there will come out of it vegetables fit for your table. And you will not find that a child, left to himself, will produce virtues and excellences acceptable to God. No, evil is inherent in the heart of man and, being there, in due time it comes out of him. From our very birth, we “were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” It was an Apostle who said that, but it was Christ Himself who said to Nicodemus, “You must be born again.” The children of God are “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” “Except a man is born again, (from above), he cannot see the Kingdom of God,” for his nature is evil. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” and only “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

That, then, is one matter of impossibility—the birth of innocent children from fallen parents.  
The next is the bringing of a pure nature out of the depraved mature of any individual. Here are we, possessed of an impure nature, but cannot we, by some means, educate impurity into purity? Our whole system is depraved, but cannot we, somehow or other, out of depravity develop excellence, love to God, consecration to His service? No, never! You may, if you like, watch a skeleton till your eyes ache, but you will never see a trace of life springing up within those ribs of death. You may look at a foul stream as it comes rolling along and you may stir it to its depths, or you may alter its channel—but as long as the source, from which the stream flows, is impure, the water that comes from it will also be impure and it will not be able to purify itself. So, human nature may pass through as many processes as you please, but as long as it remains merely human nature, and God the Holy Spirit has not transformed it and made it like the Nature of God, it will still be an impure thing—and no clean thing can come out of it.  
“But,” says someone, “can we not change human nature by reading the Bible to it?” Ah, you may read the Bible to the devil as long as you like, but it will not make an angel of him! And you cannot change a sinner into a saint simply by reading Scripture to him. “Can we not preach him into a right state of heart?” asks another. You might as well hope to preach a lion into a lamb as to change the unholy into the holy without the power of God. “Oh, but,” say others, “we can surely do a great deal with him by example, by repression and by encouragement.” Of course you can affect him morally, but, with regard to the great spiritual matter of being clean in the sight of God—all that you can do will avail about as much as when they sought to wash the Blackamoor white! The tubs were full of hot water, soap in abundance was used, the brushes were worn out with the efforts of the scrubbers, but the black man came out as black as he went in! The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, or the leopard his spots—and out of an unclean thing, cleanness cannot come! God must work the miracle by His Grace, for of itself evil will produce only evil, and not good.  
Another impossibility also follows on the heels of this one. That is, pure acts cannot come out of an impure heart. A man who is what he is by nature, unrenewed by Grace, may do a great deal that is very excellent. Some of the most beautiful of the virtues towards man will grow in unrenewed hearts. It has sometimes been asserted that only true religion can produce a beautiful character towards man, but I think it must be admitted, by all who know the facts of the case, that such a statement as that is not true. Generosity, honesty, heroism and other virtues and excellences have been displayed by men who have been unbelievers—and even by those who have disregarded God altogether! And there has often been much that we have been bound to admire in men to whom skepticism was all the religion that they had. We must say as much as that in fairness to those from whom we greatly differ—but it is quite another matter when we begin to talk about their conduct towards God—that cleanness of heart which God has a right to demand from all His creatures!  
These men may be able to pay off their pence creditors, the people who are round about them, but it is a different thing when we bring them face to face with the great Creditor, their Maker to whom their enormous debt is due. As long as a man is not right in the sight of God. As long as his nature is unrenewed by Grace, nothing that he does can be pleasing to God—there is nothing in it that God can accept. He may even have an outward religiousness of a certain kind, but he presents his religion to God with such filthy hands that there are dirty marks all over it! He may even bring to God a sacrifice out of his flock, but you can see that the motive of doing it, the way of doing it, and the pride in having done it, spoil it all. He comes before God with a reverent appearance, but with a wandering heart. He sings lustily with his mouth, but his soul is not really praising and magnifying the Lord. He bows his head when others pray and he seems to be praying, too—but there is no confession of sin, there is nothing that can be acceptable with God—nor can there be until God has changed the nature of the man. That which comes out of an impure heart, however pure it may seem, is impure—it is tainted with the smell of the evil place from which it arose!  
There is another impossibility over which some of us have often to groan—that is, perfect actions cannot be performed by imperfect men. I think that you who love the Lord must know what it is to grieve over things over which you have at first rejoiced. For instance, I have preached a sermon. I have been earnest in delivering the Truth of God, I have had liberty in proclaiming it and I have felt hopeful that God would bless it. But I know what it is to get home and to lie upon my bed and think over what I omitted to say, and how I ought to have said it in a better way—the way in which I think I would say it if I could get up right then and call you all together and repeat it—and so I cry out, “Lord, I thought I had brought forth a clean thing, but I find that I have not! And I have learned that it is not possible to bring a perfectly clean thing out of that which is unclean.”  
However cleansed the human heart may be, by Divine Grace, yet there remains still so much of impurity about it that “we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” There is about all that comes from us imperfection, infirmity, fault, flaw, much to weep over, much to deplore—and the wonder is that God accepts it at all! Yet it is no wonder when we remember that we and our service are “accepted in the Beloved,” and there is enough Grace and virtue in Him to make even such poor creatures as we are, and such poor works as we present, to be fully acceptable for His dear sake.  
One more phase of this difficulty and impossibility is this—“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean,” in another person? If you believe in human ability, I wish you would addict yourself to the effort to convert souls. If you think that you have the power to convert a soul, choose even a little child and set to work upon it! I could pick you out some men whom I know, and some women, too, upon whom I should like you to try your wonderful sword. If they do not laugh you to scorn and turn the edge of your weapon, I am greatly mistaken! God knows how to thrust at them so that every stroke shall tell, for He has said, “I kill, and I make alive. I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand.” But, apart from that Divine Power, who among us can convert a single soul? Who can dart faith into the unbelieving heart? Who can fetch a penitential tear out of that stolid impenitent soul? Who can beget love to Christ in that chill, indifferent heart? Ah, often have God’s servants had to cry with the Reformer, “Old Adam is too strong for young Melanchthon,” and they have had to go home and confess that no human being can bring a clean thing out of an unclean!  
These are all matters of impossibility in nature which the text sets before us.  
II. Now, in the second place, let us notice CERTAIN SUBJECTS FOR PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION FOR ALL OF US that arise out of a right contemplation of this subject. First, we see here that we are unclean by nature. Do we all know that it is so with us? Have we made this great discovery? Has the Spirit of God taught us this humbling Truth of God? Are we in the track of the footsteps of the flock? If so, we shall say, with Isaiah, “All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way.” And, with David, we shall confess that we were “shapen in iniquity,” and conceived in sin. It is well for us to deal with our birth sin, our original depravity, and the natural tendencies of our spirit—we do not get to the truth about ourselves till we get there. Well, now, do we all know ourselves to be naturally unclean? It is well to know that, sad as the truth is.  
Then the next consideration is that we must be clean if we are to be accepted by God. We never can have fellowship with God while we remain unclean. We may have a measure of fellowship with God when He has cleansed us by the precious blood of Christ, but that fellowship will never be perfect till the last trace of sin has been removed from us. Absolutely perfect fellowship with the thrice-holy Jehovah will only come to us, above, because then we shall be absolutely clean and shall be with Him, and near Him, and like He is—and only then shall we have become akin to Him in holiness. We must be cleansed if we are ever to be in His Presence in Glory. There is no possibility of getting to Heaven foul and stained with sin! There is no possibility of sitting among the white-robed hosts above in these rags of ours. This filthiness of ours must be put away somehow, but how can it be put away?  
The fact that we cannot work this great change ourselves will not relieve us of our responsibility. When a man becomes so much a liar that he cannot speak the truth, or so dishonest that he cannot keep his hands from picking and stealing—when the very nature is defiled—it does not excuse the acts which the guilty one commits. Although we cannot cleanse our heart, the Word of God contains the plain command. “Wash you, make you clean,” so that the responsibility still rests upon us, although we are totally unable to obey the injunction.  
It is quite clear that we cannot, in our own strength, do this necessary work of cleansing. If any man asserts that he can purify himself, I would answer, “Yes, you may cleanse yourself from many faults, from evil speaking, lying, and slandering, from dishonesty, from drunkenness, from unchastity—all of which you ought to do—but it is not possible for you to cleanse yourself so as to be perfectly pure in God’s sight.” Only think a minute and you will agree with me that it must be so. When you have done all that you can with yourself, will you believe that you are fit to be in God’s company, and to speak with Him? God is present with us at this moment, but none of you can conceive that, in our present condition, we are fit to have communion with Him. If you are in Christ, you are able to commune with the Most High, through Jesus the Mediator, but I am supposing that you are not in Christ, and if that is the case, you must shrink from the Presence of the perfectly holy God! And can you ever hope to make yourself fit to stand among the glorified spirits above, to walk yon golden streets and to have fellowship with those who have never sinned, or with those who, having sinned, have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? I think that every reasonable man with any sort of conscience would start back, and say, “I cannot hope to enter there as I am, nor do I think that I can ever make myself fit to go there.”  
Do you not think that our wisdom lies in being driven to despair as to ourselves? I thought I heard somebody say, “This doctrine would drive men to despair.” That is exactly what we wish to do, for self-despair is the doorstep of confidence in God! When you know you are helpless, you will then begin to look away from yourself, to find help somewhere else— but as long as you can do a stitch of patching and mending, you will not put down the needle and look to God alone to cover you with the robe of righteousness which the Savior has worked. When you realize that you can do nothing, but that an almighty power must be exerted on your behalf—making you look away from yourself and bringing you to think of the great God in Heaven as your only Helper—that is half the battle! So I say that to drive you to despair of yourself is the very thing we are aiming at! Therefore, would it not be wise for you to now begin to look to the Strong for strength, to the Righteous One for righteousness, to the Creating Spirit for new creation? You cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean, so do not attempt the impossible task, but go to Him who sits upon the Throne of God and who says, “Behold, I make all things new.”  
III. The last point I am going to deal with is THE PROVISION THAT IS MADE TO MEET THIS HUMAN IMPOSSIBILITY.  
Let everyone who desires to be made pure in heart, and clean in the sight of God, remember, first, that we have to deal with an Omnipotent God. When you come to Him, trusting and resting in Christ, and ask Him to renew a right spirit within you, you are practically expressing your conviction that what you cannot do for yourself, He can do for you. There is not any lust within you which He cannot subdue! There is not any lack or deficiency of virtue which He cannot supply!  
This work is rightly called a creation—“If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation.” It is beautiful to think that as the Lord made the first creation, fashioning everything out of nothing, and then bringing order out of chaos, so will He come again and find nothing of good in you, and out of the chaos He will make a new order of things altogether. As when “darkness was upon the face of the deep,” He came and said, “Light be,” and light was, so He can come and say to you in all your darkness, “Light be,” and immediately there shall be light! He finds nothing in you that can help Him, as He found nothing that could help Him to make the world, and when He had made it out of nothing, it was all chaotic, and could not help itself. He had to breathe life and light into it—it all came from Himself. So it is with you—you are just a lump of helpless matter, a wretched, wicked, condemned one—yet the Lord can come and put away your sin and He can form and fashion you after His own pattern! He can give you repentance and give you faith, and give you every Grace—and He can go on to nurture and water all those Graces till they come to perfection!  
He can perfect you in likeness to Christ so that you shall be “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” If you believe in a God almighty to bless and save, you cannot doubt that He is able to do all that I have said. Look not to your own weakness, but by faith look to the Divine strength. Consider not so much, poor Soul, what you are as what God is, and think of the great new Creator, and commit your soul into His keeping, “as unto a faithful Creator,” as the Apostle Peter says. That is a blessed word—a faithful Creator who will begin to do His creating work anew in such a soul as yours.  
Notice, next, that there is a second provision to meet this human impossibility, namely, the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not possible for your uncleanness to be put away by anything that you can do. You must say, with Toplady—  
**“Not the labors of my hands  
Can fulfill Your Law’s demands!  
Could my zeal no respite**know,  
**Could my tears forever flow,  
All for sin could not atone—  
You must save, and You alone.”**  
It was God Himself that did hang on Calvary’s Cross! He had taken upon Himself human Nature, with all its infirmities and all its guilt, though He Himself was pure and spotless—and there He did hang in that Nature to bleed and die! No one—at least, no human tongue—can tell how great was the Atonement that Christ there made for the sin of His guilty creatures! None of us can calculate the price He paid for the redemption of His people, but we know that however great is the sin that is to be put away in order to make you clean, it can all be removed by “the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” I am not able to imagine any sin that the blood of Christ could not wash away. See how red is your guilt. Mark the scarlet stain. If you were to wash your soul in the Atlantic Ocean, you might use every wave that washes all its shores and yet the crimson spots of your transgression would still remain. But plunge into the—  
*“Fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins”—*  
and in an instant you are whiter than snow! Every speck, and spot, and stain of sin has gone, and gone forever—and God is thereby glorified.  
What a blessing it is that, to meet our inability to put away our sin, there is provided a Redemption, an Atonement amply sufficient to remove it all forever! Think, then, not only of your sin, but of your Savior! Think not so much of your guilt as of His sufferings by which that guilt is put away! Oh, how earnestly would I press this advice upon any who are now troubled about their sin! I would almost say—Do not look at your sin except you can see the Savior, too. Remember that the sin itself shall never condemn you if you trust in Jesus Christ, for He has taken it off all who believe in Him, and has cast it into the depths of the sea, to be remembered against them no more forever. You are saved, however guilty you may have been, as soon as you rely upon the infinite merit of Christ’s atoning Sacrifice—

*“Not all the blood of beasts On Jewish altars slain,  
Could give the guilty conscience peace, Or wash away the stain!  
But Christ, the heavenly Lamb, Takes all our sins away—  
A sacrifice of nobler name, And richer blood than they.”*

Then you shall be able to sing with Dr. Watts—

*“‘Twas He adorned my naked soul,  
And made salvation mine!  
Upon a poor polluted worm  
He makes His Graces shine.  
And lest the shadow of a spot  
Should on my soul be found,  
He took the robe the Savior worked,  
And cast it all around.”*

There is a third provision made to meet this great emergency. We have spoken of the Father and the Son, but we must not omit to mention the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, so often forgotten and slighted, is the great Worker in the cleansing and renewing of man’s nature. That blessed Spirit has the whole power of the Godhead and wherever He works effectually, He convinces of sin, making men see the guilt and evil of it. But He also convinces them of righteousness, so that they see that there is a righteousness to be had and they learn how they may righteously obtain it. The Holy Spirit spreads Christ near, reveals Him to the heart and then He enables the sinner to see the suitability of Christ to him. The Spirit also enables the man to see that he may trust Christ. No, He goes further and enables the poor guilty soul to actually trust Him who came to save Him! One of the first proofs of His working in the heart is the production of faith there—then, when He has worked that Grace in the soul, He helps the man to pray, to overcome temptation and to engage in holy service. The Spirit helps us all the way through. He creates all that is good within us. He works in us “both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” And wherever the Holy Spirit comes, He acts like the fire that consumes the dross and purifies the metal.

So, what do you think, poor unclean soul, if God the Holy Spirit were to take you in hand, could not He make you clean? Oh, if He were to come now, in all that wondrous power of His, could He not burn up the wood, and hay, and stubble of sin that is within you? There have been men who seemed to be lost to every noble thought who, nevertheless, have been lifted up to heroic effort by the power of the Spirit of God! There have been others who were sunken in vice, in ignorance, in drunkenness and every kind of crime, yet, they have been washed, cleansed, sanctified, made saints of God on earth and perfect spirits above by the power of the Holy Spirit when He has come upon them, and applied the blood of Christ to their heart and conscience! What He has done for others, He can do for you, and I do pray you not so much to look at your power to will as at the power of the Spirit of God to work in you to will! Not so much at your power to do, which is nothing, but at the power of the Spirit of God to work in you what He would have you do!

Remember what I have often told you, that the confidence of a man in himself can never be of any good to him—it is like the anchor while it is on board the ship. What is the good of it there? It only increases the weight of the vessel as long as it is lying on the deck, or hanging over the side of the ship. You may throw it where you like—throw it down the hold, but it won’t hold the vessel. Throw it into the captain’s cabin, hang it on the mast—what good is it? As long as it is in the ship, it is of no service. The thing to be done with the anchor is heave it overboard. Splash! Down it goes! Listen to the clatter of the chain! Now, when the anchor gets a good grip somewhere out of sight, then it holds the ship. So, throw your hope out of yourself—get it away from yourself, do not let it rest in yourself, it will help to sink you if you do—let it go down into the unseen, let it grasp Christ, let it get a firm hold of Him and of His finished work, and of God the Omnipotent, and of the ever-blessed Spirit of God. Now your vessel will outride the storm and all will be well!

Some people who ought to be better informed, are quite ignorant of the work of the Holy Spirit. I knew a man who attended a certain church and on one occasion he heard a good Gospel sermon. I do not know who was the author of it, but the parson who preached it certainly was not. This Gospel sermon had so cut into the hearer’s conscience that, when he went home, he could not rest. The next morning he went off to the clergyman and he said to him, “Sir, I am greatly troubled by what you said yesterday.” “My dear fellow,” replied the parson, “I never meant to say anything to give you a moment’s uneasiness, I am sure. And if I did so, I am truly sorry for it.” “Oh, Sir!” said the man, “but your sermon gave me dreadful uneasiness. You preached about our being born again. Tell me, Sir, what it is to be born again.” “Well,” said the minister, “I was educated at Cambridge, but I do not know what it is to be born again, and I do not think there is any need for you to trouble yourself at all about the matter. I wish I had never bought that sermon, or read it, for it has proved to be a troublesome sermon to two or three others beside yourself. But I will never preach it again, I will promise you that.”

Ah, but our poor awakened friend could not be quieted in that fashion, for that sermon had dragged off every coverlet from him, and the bed was too short for him to stretch himself—and he did not rest until he had found a true minister of Christ who was able to point out to him the way to obtain peace with God through believing in Jesus! Then how glad he was to think that the clergyman had, even unintentionally, made him uncomfortable! How glad he was that he, though in ignorance, had taken away his first false peace, that God might come in and establish the second—the peace that does not lie in ourselves, but in Christ—the peace that is not founded upon an assumption of our own personal righteousness, but upon the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

All that I have been saying shows the fitness of this Gospel for sinners. This Gospel encourages the man who had given up all hope, wakes him up to a wondrous consciousness of the possibilities of his purified manhood, and sets before him the glorious prospect of making something of his immortality! When he gets to Heaven, he will not throw up his cap, and cry, “Glory be to myself! Have I not done it well?” No, no! That is how Pharisees might act if they could get to Heaven by their own works, but when God is going to save a sinner, He first puts him down in the lowest class and reads him a very humbling lesson. He makes him feel that he is nothing but sin, and that he can do nothing but sin—and then He says to him, “Look unto Me. I will work the change that needs to be worked in you.” Then Christ comes in and says, “I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last; rest in Me.” and the Spirit of God says, “I will work in you a new creation, and make all things new in you.” And, all along, as the work of Grace is really worked in the man, he continues to bless and to magnify the name of the Lord. Thus, that spirit of gratitude and adoration, which is the very essence of virtue, becomes the underlying rock that supports a noble character—and all things that are of good report are created and nurtured by this glorious Gospel of the blessed God!

If there is anybody who prefers any other sort of Gospel, I am sure I do not want to rob him of it! If he can get any comfort out of it, let him keep it. But as for me, I am so weak, so sinful, so undone that I commit my soul to the God of Grace, and nothing but “Free Grace and dying love” will suffice for me! Many of us stand together upon this matter, as we have done for many a year, and I believe we shall continue to do so more and more as our age increases, and our hair gets gray, for we did not know so much about Grace when we were lads as we know now, and we keep on learning more and more of it every day that we live. What we need is Grace, Grace, GRACE, and may God grant it to every one of us! May there be in us nothing of self, but all of Grace, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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÷Job 15.11

CONCERNING THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD  
NO. 2099

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 11, 1889, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Are the consolations of God too small for you?  
Is there any secret thing with you?”  
Job 15:11.**

THESE are the words of Eliphaz, one of those three friends of Job who blundered dreadfully over his case. Their words are not to be despised. For they were men in the front rank of knowledge and experience. Eliphaz says, “With us are both the gray-headed and very aged men, much elder than your father.” Their errors were not the superficial mistakes of fools but the profound reasoning of men of light and leading. Their utterances are, at least, equal to anything our own learned men may have to say on the same problem.

However wrong Eliphaz may have been in reference to Job—and in reference to him his remarks were grossly unjust—yet many of them are correct in themselves and may usefully be applied to our own hearts. Inasmuch as Eliphaz, in this verse, teaches no doctrine but only asks two searching questions, he cannot mislead us. In fact, he may do us good service. May God the Holy Spirit enable us to consider these questions that we may be profited by them!

The text is in the form of a question, and its sense I shall endeavor to bring out by other questions, each of which will have a practical relation to ourselves. The passage in the original has proved hard to translate. But I think that in four questions I can set forth the essence of the meanings which has been found.

If we are, indeed, Believers in the Gospel and are living near to God, our consolation should be exceedingly great. Passing through a troubled world we have need of consolations. But these are abundantly provided by our God and their influence upon us should be exceedingly great. We ought not to be unhappy. For we have joy urged upon us by the precept, “Rejoice in the Lord always.” And that precept is in substance often repeated. It is both the duty and the privilege of Christians to be of good cheer. If we are not glad, even amid our trials, there is a reason for it, and we shall do well, at this time, to use the text as a candle by which to search out that reason. “Are the consolations of God too small for you? Is there any secret thing with you?”

I. Our first question follows the interpretation given by most authorities—“Do YOU REGARD THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD AS SMALL?” Do you judge that the comforts of faith are insignificant? “Are the consolations of God too small for you?”

I would ask you, first, Do you think religion makes men unhappy? Have you poisoned your mind with that invention of the Enemy? Have you made yourself believe that godliness consists in morbid self

condemnation, despondency, apprehension and dread? If so, permit me to warn you that there are many popular errors and that, in this case, “common fame is a common liar.” Do you find in the preacher and the members of his Church any confirmation of this silly assertion? We can personally assure you that the joys of religion are by no means meager in our case. We beseech you not to let a groundless prejudice blind your eyes to the Truth of God. I will hope that, like the Bereans, you are of a noble spirit and will examine that which is told you.

Is not your verdict different from that of those who have tried godliness for themselves? Do you not know that many, for the joy they have found in the love of Christ, have renounced all sinful pleasures and utterly despised them? They were once fascinated with the world but they tasted higher joys and shook off the spell. He that drinks of the river of the Water of Life will count the streams of sin to be foul and brackish and will no more drink thereof. Many a Believer, for the joy that is set before him, has, in the service of God, encountered much ridicule, endured severe losses and borne great hardships. And he has done so with delight.

Have you not also seen, in many afflicted Christians, a peace which you yourself do not know? Have you not observed their patience under adversity? They have been poor but perfectly content. They have been sick and yet cheerful—racked with pain and yet joyous. Under the apprehension of surgical operations, have you not seen them happily resigned? Have you ever seen one of them die? How often have we heard them singing in their death throes, which have been to them, death joys! Is it not a fact which cannot be disputed, that faith in our Lord Jesus has uplifted the sorrowful and has rendered others supremely happy?

This joy has sprung entirely from their hope in Christ, their communion with God, their delight in the Truth of God revealed in Holy Scripture. Have we not among us in Christian fellowship many notable proofs that—

*“It is religion which can give*

*Sweetest pleasure while we live”?*  
Therefore, my questioning Friend, it behooves you to look into this matter, and not to remain under the impression that the consolations of God are small. Those whose experience asserts that the joys of religion are great are not foolish or disreputable persons—give due weight to their witness and believe that the consolations of God are precious beyond expression. Amid many pains and afflictions, I can personally assure you that it is a blessed thing to trust in the Lord.

Will you follow me as I ask you, Upon consideration, will you not amend your judgment? What are these consolations of God? The more you know of them, the more ground will you see for believing that they must be great. They are the “consolations of God.” If God Himself deigns to comfort men, will He not greatly cheer them? Knowing human sorrow and stepping from the height of His Glory to comfort it, is it conceivable that He will labor in vain? Do you think that the All-Sufficient cannot provide consolation equal to the affliction?

The consolations we speak of are applied by the Spirit of God. And to prove how earnestly He performs His work, He has taken the name of “Comforter.” Will the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, do you think, come to any human heart with insufficient consolations? Will He trifle with our griefs? Can it be that He does not know how to give sunlight when our day is dark with sorrow? Think not so. Moreover, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, is the substance of those consolations. He is called, “The Consolation of Israel.” Can a man have Christ to be his portion and yet be poor? Can a man have Jesus for his joy and yet be weighed down with sadness? Might he not well ask, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul?” I cannot for a moment dream of a joyless Christ.

See again, my Friend, these consolations of God deal with the source of sorrow. From where came the curse but from the sin of man? Jesus has come to save His people from their sins. Those thorns and thistles which now rend our flesh are not the natural fruits of the earth as God created it. Sin sowed all these. The consolations of God deal with sin. As for the guilt which we have incurred, and the inevitable punishment, both are removed by pardon full and free. Jesus bore the guilt of sin and put it all away by His death upon the Cross. And, in consequence, sin can be blotted out.

Is not this the grandest of all consolations—the consolation of God? When we lay hold on Jesus and receive forgiveness, affliction may remain, but sin is gone forever. And therefore the affliction, itself, loses its bitterness. Sin reigning in the heart is the death of peace. But the dethronement of the usurper is provided for, and therefore, another Divine consolation. Until we get the mastery over evil, we must be uncomfortable. But the consolations of God assure us of a new heart and a right spirit—and of a power supreme and Divine—which enters the nature of the Believer and subdues, destroys and at last annihilates the propensity to sin.

Is not this a rich and rare consolation? Comfort which left us under the power of evil would be dangerous comfort. But comfort which takes away both the guilt and the power of sin is glorious, indeed. Dream not that it can be small! Remember, too, that the consolations of God reveal to us a reason for the sorrow when it is allowed to remain. There is a need that we are in heaviness. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

If suffering is a fire, the consolations of God assure us that it is a refining fire, which only consumes our dross. Do you not think that the comfortable fruits of righteousness, which are brought forth in those Believers who are exercised by trial, are the source of great comfort to the afflicted of the Lord?—

*“Since all that I meet shall work for my good, The bitter is sweet, the medicine is food.”*

Another reflection sweetly cheers the heart of the tried one during his tribulation, namely, that he has a Comrade in it. We are not passing through the waters alone. We have a Fellow-Sufferer, of whom we read, “In all their affliction He was afflicted.” Our Lord drank, long ago, of that cup we sip. He knows the sting of treachery, the stab of calumny, the spit of scorn. For He was “in all points tempted like as we are.” Many of us

have found this to be an eminent comfort. Do you not think it must be so? Has not many a man, at the sound of another’s voice, been cheered in the darkness of the night when pursuing a dangerous way? Has not the presence of a stronger and wiser one acting as guide been quite enough to remove all dread?

If the Son of God is with us, surely there is an end of every sort of fear. Does He not use this as His own note of cheer, saying, “Fear you not, for I am with you”? Besides, “the consolations of God” lie also in the direction of compensations. You hear the rod—yes, but this is the small drawback to heavenly sonship—if drawback, indeed, it is. You have become a son of God and, “what son is there whom his Father chastens not?” You are an heir of God, joint heir with Jesus Christ. And in accepting heirship will you not cheerfully take the Cross, too, seeing it is part of the entail?

It is true that you have special sorrow. But then you have the royal nature to which that sacred sorrow is a witness. God has given to you a nature that wars against evil—therefore these tears! Would you be of the seed of the serpent and have your meat as plentiful as dust? Would you not far rather be of the seed of the woman and have your heel bruised? What is the bruising of the heel compared with the eternal dominion to which that seed is predestined? Compensations abound in every case of trouble.

You have lost your child but you believe in the resurrection. You will die yourself, it may be. But you shall rise again from the dust. You have lost your property. But you are an heir of all things in Christ Jesus. You have been persecuted. But in this you rejoice as a partaker of the sufferings of Christ. The compensations of the Covenant of Grace are so overflowing that we call our troubles “light afflictions, which are but for a moment,” and they work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Besides, there is another consolation, with which I finish—not because I have completed my list but because time does not permit me to enlarge— there is the consolation that you are on your journey Home and that every moment you are coming closer to the eternal rest. When we once reach Heaven, we shall forget the trials of the way. An hour with our God will make up for a life of pain. You languish on that bed. But if you languish into immortality, you will no more remember your anguish. When your head wears the crown and your hand waves the palm, you will count it all joy that you were thought worthy to be persecuted for Christ’s sake.

O Sirs, we have the best of it! Whatever trouble may come to us as Christians, so much more of joy comes with it, that we have the best of the bargain! We give up drops of poisonous delight but we dive into rivers of ineffable joy. The Christian’s joy far excels the best that earth can afford. Grace is the dawn of Glory. Faith brings Heaven down to us, while love bears us up to Heaven. Celestial fruits are gathered upon earthly ground by those who look up for the manna. Let us begin the song which with sweeter voices we shall continue, world without end—“Unto Him that loved us and saved us in His own blood, be glory forever!”

Still I fear there are some to whom it appears as if the joys of religion and the consolations of God were small. Let them correct their mistake. For the Truth of God is far otherwise.

II. But now a second question comes up, which will come home to many Christian people. HAVE THESE CONSOLATIONS BEEN SMALL IN THEIR EFFECT UPON YOU? Have these consolations, though great in themselves, been small in their influence upon you?

I will begin my examination by putting to one disciple this question— Have you ever very much rejoiced in God? Have you always possessed a little, and but a very little, joy? Are you one of those who is only up to the ankles in the river of Divine Grace? Why is this? Dear Friend, you are believing upon a slender scale. You are living on a low plane. Why is it so? You hope you are saved but it is by the skin of your teeth. You hope you are a child of God but you are not very sure about it. And, consequently, you get very little joy out of it. This is mischievous. From where does it come? Is it ignorance?

Do you not know enough of the great doctrines of the Gospel and of the vast privileges of the redeemed? It may be so. We have heard of persons in Australia who walked habitually over nuggets of gold. We have heard of a bridge being built with what seemed common stones but it contained masses of golden ore. Men did not know their wealth. Is it not a pity that you should be poor in comfort and yet have all this gold of consolation at your feet? You have, lying within the leaves of your Bible, checks for millions and yet you have scarcely a penny to spend. What a pity!

Is it listlessness? Have you ever felt desirous to know the best of the Christian life? Have you ever had the sacred ambition to gain all the blessings which are provided in the Covenant of Grace? It is amazing how indifferent some people can be—they can fret when within reach of unutterable joy! I have heard of a person who walked some seven hundred miles to see Niagara Falls. When he was within seven miles, he thought he heard the roar of the cataract and he called to a man working in the fields and said, “Is that the roar of Niagara?” The man answered, “I don’t know but I guess it may be. What if it is?”

With surprise, the good man said, “Do you live here?” “Born and bred here,” the man answered. “And yet you don’t know whether that thundering noise is from the waterfall?” “No, Stranger,” said he, “I don’t care what it is. I have never seen those falls. I look after my farm.” No doubt there are many within hail of Heaven’s choicest joys who have never cared to know them. They hope they are saved but they don’t care for great joy. They use their spade and their hoe and dig their potatoes. But Niagara is nothing to them. Many look well to this life but do not arouse themselves to gain present spiritual joy.

Oh, how sad—that you should be so much a Christian that we should not wish to question that you are converted—and yet you are half-asleep and self-content! You labor under the notion that those good people who rejoice in the Lord are enthusiasts, or else you say to yourself, “It would be presumption on my part to aspire to have the same joy.” What nonsense! Go in for everything that God can give you. If you are His child, nothing in His house is denied you. He says to you, “Son, you are ever

with Me and all that I have is yours.” Do not you, like the elder brother, complain that you have served Him all these years and yet He never gave you enough to make you merry with your friends?

But it may be, dear Friend, that you once did joy and rejoice. Well, then, is it of late that you have lost these splendid consolations and come down to feel them small with you? I suggest to you that you observe what alteration you have made of late. Is it that you have more business and have grown more worldly? You cannot get out to Prayer Meetings now, nor to week night services. “No,” you say, “I cannot. And if you knew what I have to do, you would not blame me.” Just so, a little while ago you had not so much to do. But you chose to load yourself with an extra burden, knowing that you would not be able to get so much spiritual food as before.

Somewhere in that line you will find the reason why your joy has declined. If anybody said to me, “The days are darker now than they used to be,” I should remember that the sun is still the same. Perhaps my Friend has not lately cleaned his windows. Or he has not drawn up his blinds. And that is why he thinks there is less light. It is very possible to be much more in the dark than you need to be. The gloom may be in the eyes rather than in the heavens. May I suggest a little looking at home, that you may see why your former blessedness is gone?

Do you reply to me that you do use the means of Grace—but the outward means fail to bring you the consolation they once did? To what means do you refer? Are you as much in prayer as ever? And is prayer less refreshing than it used to be? Do you read the Scriptures as you formerly did, with the same regularity, attention and devotion? Do you no longer draw the waters of comfort from these wells of salvation? Do you really go on hearing the Word as you once did, with the same hunger for it, and love of it, and yet do you find it unsatisfactory to you? I must again remind you that these things have not altered in themselves. For the ministry is the same to other saints, the Scriptures must be the same, and the Mercy Seat is not removed.

The fault is not in these, but in yourself. Surely, dear Friend, some evil things within you have curdled the milk of blessing and stopped the flow of joy. Search yourselves, I pray, if the consolations of God are small with you. He has not forgotten to be gracious, neither has He ceased to hear prayer and to speak to His servants through His Sacred Word. You shut the door from within. He bars it not from without. I may come near to your experience if I ask—Do you revive occasionally, and then relapse? I think I hear you say, “Oh, yes, I sometimes can clap my hands—I feel delighted while hearing the Gospel. I could shout Hallelujah, I do so rejoice. I am for a time up in the stirrups.”

But you come down again just as readily. Why is this? Surely, you are in a very changeful frame and live by feeling rather than by principle. Are not the grounds of comfort always the same? If a promise is true this morning, it will be true this afternoon. And if it is a real source of comfort to you this afternoon, it ought to be a comfort to you on Monday, and all the other days of the week. If the feast does not alter, and yet it does not satisfy you as it once did, you must be ill—some fever or other disease is upon you. Haste away to the Great Physician of souls and say to Him, “Lord, search me and try me and see what evil thing there is in me and make me right, that I may again be satisfied with heavenly food.” It is childish to be so changeful. Grow in Divine Grace and be rooted in faith.

Does the cause of your greater grief lie in a trial to which you do not fully submit? I think I hear you admit that you faint under your load. “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.” But He gives more Grace. Get it. Are you impatient? Do you kick against the pricks? Do you feel that you can endure no longer? Since you are impatient, do you wonder that you are unhappy? Since you walk contrary to God, do you wonder that He walks contrary to you? Do not find fault with His consolations?—Find fault with your own rebellious heart. When a child rebels against his father, it is not likely that his father’s love will be a source of much comfort to him.

Dear Friend, the Lord help you to get rid of impatience and you will be rid of anguish. Take the cup and drink it and say, “Not as I will, but as You will.” And an angel will appear unto you strengthening you. As it was with your Lord in a similar case, so shall it be with you. Are you alarmed at what may yet come? Do you dread the future? Well, if you will import trouble from the future, blame not the consolations of God. For He has told you that, “the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” He has never taught you to pray, “Give me tomorrow my daily bread”—He has limited you and pegged you down to this,” Give us this day our daily bread.” Will you not be content to live by the day? Walking with Him who is the God of Eternity, you may leave days and years to Him. And let one day at a time be enough for you.

It may be that while you are thus without the enjoyment of Divine consolation, Satan is tempting you to look to other things for comfort. I pray you, touch not the wine cup, if this is placed before you as a means of consolation. A dark hour is often the crisis in the history of a man of God—if he can weather this storm he will have fair sailing.

Satan will now be very busy to get you to act hastily, or wickedly. It will be whispered to you, “Put your pen to that accommodation bill. Borrow, though you cannot pay. It may be wrong, but you can put it right afterwards.” I pray you, do not dream of any means of help which you cannot lay before God. How often have men in offices of trust been tempted to embezzle money for just a little while, and then to put it back again! I beseech you, shake this viper off your hand into the fire, for it is a viper. Better suffer anything than do wrong. Keep in the furnace till God bids you come out of it.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, when they found themselves walking safely in the midst of the flames and saw Nebuchadnezzar standing at the mouth of the furnace, did not leap out to assail the tyrant. Not they— they stayed till they came out with honor. Brothers and Sisters, seek not consolation in policy, in trickery, in falsehood. Do not even seek it in haste. Many a man who has run before the cloud has had to slink back again. Many a man who has taken a knife to carve for himself, has cut

his fingers.

Do not be tempted to think that you can find better comforts than God can give you. Look not to man—let your expectation be in God alone. If you have despised the consolations of God by setting them below your own efforts, you cannot expect that they should be sweet to your taste. Amend this and you will be happy. Your lack of comfort lies not in the consolations, themselves, but in your own heart. Pray God the Holy Spirit to revive the work of Divine Grace in your soul and that being done, either the trouble will grow lighter, or your back will be stronger to bear the burden.

III. Our third question is this—Since the consolations of God appear so small to you, HAVE YOU ANYTHING BETTER TO PUT IN THEIR PLACE?  
Perhaps this is what Eliphaz meant when he said, “Is there any secret thing with you?” He seemed to say to Job, “We cannot tell you anything. You will not hear us. Have you some wonderful discovery of your own? Have you some secret cordial, some mystic support, some unknown joy? Have you discovered a balm of greater efficacy than ours, a cure-all for your sorrow?” Let me ask you a similar question. If God’s Gospel fails you, what will you do?  
Have you found out a new religion with brighter hopes? I do not think you have, for the prognostications of modern thought are dreary enough! Moreover, I have been informed by those who know most about it, that the theology of the future has not yet crystallized itself sufficiently to be defined. As far as I can see, it will take a century or two before its lovers have licked it into shape. For they have not yet settled what its shape is to be. While the grass is growing, the steed is starving. The new bread is baking—the arsenic is well mixed within it. But the oven is not very hot and the dough is not turned into a loaf yet.  
I should advise you to keep to that bread of which your fathers ate, the bread which came down from Heaven. Personally I am not willing to make any change, even if the new bread were ready on the table. For new bread is not very digestible and the arsenic of doubt is not according to my desire. I shall keep to the old manna till I cross the Jordan and eat the old corn of the land of Canaan. Are you hopeful of finding comfort in new speculations? Is that the “secret thing”? Then you feed upon the wind.  
Are you hoping to find comfort in the world? Will you be happy if you manage to get that position? If you pass that examination? If you save so much money? I beseech you, do not play the fool—there is no consolation in all this. Did you ever read a little book called, “The Mirage of Life,” published by the Tract Society? It ought to convince anybody that there is no satisfaction to be found in the greatest worldly success. For it shows us millionaires, statesmen, and princes—all dissatisfied. But I need not refer to any book—observe for yourselves. The richest men have often been the most miserable, and those who have succeeded best in rising to places of honor have been worn out in the pursuit, and disgusted with the prize.  
Wealth brings care, honor earns envy, position entails toil, and rank has its annoyances. One of our richest men once said, “I suppose you fancy I am happy because I am rich. Why, a dozen times in a year and more often, some fellow threatens to shoot me if I do not send him what he wants. Do you suppose that this makes me a happy man?” Believe me, the world is as barren of joy as the Sahara. Vain is the hope of finding a spring of consolation in anything beneath the moon. Seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness.  
Or, do you conclude that you are strong-minded enough to bear all the difficulties and trials of life without consolation? Well, Friend, I will not discuss the point. I have found that persons who think themselves strong in mind are generally strong in the head. Yet I would remind you that the strongest are not too strong for life’s battle. There never was a wise man yet who thought he was wise. This world has enough of woe in it to test all the wisdom you are likely to possess. For my own part, I feel very diffident and would be glad of all the consolations Heaven can give me. I suspect that you are as I am and will not be able to play the man without help from God.  
Do you say that what can’t be cured must be endured and you will stay as you are? This is a poor resolve for a man to come to. If there is better to be had, why not seek it? Do you mean to abide in the sad state into which you have fallen? Are you content to be discontented? Have you had a child of your own? Have you seen it go wrong and get itself into trouble and then resolve not to confess it but to make itself appear a martyr and fret? You wished to put it right and cheer it into obedience. But it would not get out of the sulks. What did you do with it? I suppose, in the long run, you had to leave it to have its sulk out and you thought to yourself, “Silly child! How miserable you make yourself and all for nothing. You might be as happy as your brothers and sisters. But if you must sulk, you must.”  
Some Believers are of this sort. Because they had a serious loss, they must rob themselves of communion with God. Because they have endured terrible bereavement, they bereave themselves of their Lord. Because they are not well, they fret themselves into worse health. Some are only satisfied when they are in the depths of misery. I know some whose wretchedness is chronic—like polar bears they are only at home in the ice. You smile and well you may. But then you should also weep—if this is your case.  
You should cry, “O Lord, put me right with Yourself! I cannot be content to be always repining and lamenting! If there are consolations to be had in You, let me have them now. I know there is no consolation anywhere else. To whom should I go? You alone have the words of eternal life! There is no secret thing with me, my God, upon which I can rely. I must have Your consolation, or I shall have no comfort!”  
IV. Here comes the most practical question of all and with this I close. If it is so, that you have up to now found heavenly consolations to have small effect with you and yet have nothing better to put in their place, IS THERE NOT A CAUSE FOR YOUR FAILURE? Will you not endeavor to find it out?  
Dear Friends, you that seek to be right, you that desire to be full Christians and yet cannot rejoice in God, at least not often, nor greatly—is there not some sin indulged? A child of God may go on with a sin unwittingly and that for years. And all the while that sin may be causing a dreadful leakage in his joy. You cannot be wrong in life and thought and word, without a measure of joy oozing away. Take a good look at yourself and examine your life by the light of Scripture—and if you find that you have been doing something wrong unawares, or for which you have made an unworthy excuse—away with the evil! Away with it at once! When this Achan is stoned and the accursed thing is put away, you will be surprised to find what joy, what comfort, will immediately flow into your soul.  
Next, may there not have been some duty neglected? We are not saved by good works. But if any Christian omits a good work, he will find it injurious to his peace. Many Christian people never get into the clear light of full assurance because they do not obey their conscience upon every point. I pray you, never quarrel with conscience, for it will have the best of it with you—if you have a conscience. If you go contrary to conscience, there will be trouble inside the little kingdom of your soul, as sure as you are alive. “Oh but I have always been intending to do it.” That makes it the greater sin that you have not done it, for evidently you knew your Lord’s will.  
Have you considered that any willful omission of duty is not one sin, but many? It is your duty to do it now. It is a sin that you have not done it already. It will be your duty to do it tomorrow. It will be another sin if you omit it tomorrow. How often the omission creates a new sin, I cannot tell—but as surely as you rob God of obedience, sin will rob you of comfort. If you neglect obedience to the precept, you cannot have the comfort of the promise. Get that matter seen to at once. Omitted duty is like a little stone in the sole of your shoe. It is small, and some say it is a nonessential matter—but it is just because it is so small that it can do so much mischief.  
If I had a great pebble in my boot, I should be sure to get it out. But a tiny stone may remain and blister me and lame me. Get out the little stones, or they will hinder your traveling to Heaven. Again, may there not be some idol in your heart? That is a very searching suggestion. If the consolations of God are small with you, may you not have set up something in the place of God—a lover, a wife, a husband, a child, a friend— learning, honor, wealth? I need not mention the many forms taken by our idols. It is very easy to set up an image of jealousy.  
A thing in itself harmless and even lovely, may grievously provoke the Lord through our heart going after it. Brother, Sister, is it so? Do you love anything as you love God? I suggest that you should at once cry— *“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whatever that idol is,  
Help me to tear it from its throne,  
And worship only You.”*  
If you do not remove the idol from its throne, if God loves you, He will make your Dagon fall and be broken. If you want to lose that which is the object of your comfort and delight, love it too much. This is a sort of unwillful murder which good people can perform upon their children and their friends. Idolize and destroy. Love the creature more than the Creator, and it may be necessary that they should be taken from you altogether.  
But, Beloved, if you do not enjoy the consolations of God, do you not think it is because you do not think enough of God? I am ashamed of myself that I do not live more with my God. How little time do we spend with Him! We think about His work rather than Himself. Even in the Scriptures we look more to the Words than to God speaking by the Words. We criticize a phrase when we should be drinking in the spirit of the Revelation and so be getting near to God. If we are cold, is it not because we do not sit in the sun? If we are faint, is it not because we do not feed on Him whose flesh is meat, indeed? How would a fish fare if it left the water?  
How can we prosper if we leave our God, who is the element of our life? Say with David, in the Psalm we sang just now—  
*“Like as the hart for water brooks  
In thirst does pant and bray;  
So pants my longing soul, O God,  
That come to You I may.”*  
And then you will not long be disquieted, for you will go on to sing— *“For yet I know I shall Him praise,  
Who graciously to me,  
The health is of my countenance,  
Yes, my own God is He.”*  
If any of you have not the joy of the Lord which you once possessed, is it not possible that when you did have it, you grew proud? “Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked.” He will have to be starved a bit to bring him to his senses. Ah, I have known a child of God so happy in the Lord, so useful, and so blessed in every way, that he began to think he was something out of the ordinary. He grew very sublime. As to the poor Brethren around him, he could hardly put up with them—they were more dead than alive. They were weaklings, foolish men, mere babes and so on.  
He saw a poor tried Believer looking out of one of the windows of Doubting Castle and instead of helping him out, he bullied him so much for being there at all, that the poor prisoner was more shut up than ever. Look at him! He is a fine fellow! He never had sad doubts. He never felt anxious fears. Not he! You remind me, my dear Brother, of the fat cattle mentioned in Ezekiel, of whom the Prophet says that they thrust with side and with shoulder and pushed all the diseased with their horns till they had scattered them. “Therefore, thus says the Lord God unto them, Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.”  
The Lord will not have you condemn the weak and sneer at the feeble. You may yet be such yourselves. His consolations will be small with you if His people are small with you. If you do not care for the little ones who believe in Him, neither will He be quick to comfort you. Be humble. Take the lowest place. If you will lie low before the Lord, He will lift you up. But if you lift up yourself, God will throw you down.  
I will close by saying that one of the worst causes of disquietude is unbelief. Have you begun to distrust? Do you really doubt your God? Then I do not wonder that the consolations of God are small with you. Here is the rule of the kingdom—“According to your faith, so be it unto you.” If you doubt God, you will get but little from Him. He that wavers may not expect to receive anything of the Lord. Strong faith may have what it wills—but when your doubts master your faith, prayer cannot prevail. Few are the dainties from the King’s table which come to the dish of mistrust.  
What do you doubt? Do you question the Word of God? Has the Lord said more than the truth will warrant? Do you think so? Will you dare to throw such a handful of mud upon the veracity of God? His Truth is one of His crown jewels—would you take it away? Do you distrust His power? Do you think He cannot comfort you? Do you imagine that He cannot make you ride upon the high places of the earth? Do you think that He cannot put a new song into your mouth and make you rejoice in His name from morning to night? Why should you doubt His power to make you joyful in His House?  
Do you doubt the Lord’s wisdom? Do you think the Holy Spirit cannot meet your needs and provide comfort suitable for your distress? Surely you cannot have fallen into this base suspicion! Or, do you doubt the Lord’s Presence? Do you think that He is too far off to know you and help you? He is present everywhere and He knows the way that you take. Come and trust the Lord. Come, Beloved, whether you are a saint or sinner, come to the Lord Jesus and fall down at Jehovah’s feet and say, “Lord, my hope is in You. I have no comfort elsewhere. But I know Your comforts are not small. Comfort me, I pray You, in Christ Jesus.”  
If you would have that prayer answered, listen to these Words of the Lord Jesus—“Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” Though the tears are in your eyes, yet turn them to Christ Crucified. Put your trust simply, immediately, wholly, and alone in Him who died for you, and you shall go your way filled with consolation.  
God grant that it may be so, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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÷Job 15.4

RESTRAINING PRAYER  
NO. 2943

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 6, 1905.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, IN THE YEAR 1863.

**“You...restrain prayer before God.”  
Job 15:4.**

THIS is one of the charges brought by Eliphaz the Temanite against Job, “Yes, you cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God.” I shall not use this sentence as an accusation against those who never pray, though there may be some in this House of Prayer whose heads are unaccustomed to bow down and whose knees are unaccustomed to kneel before the Lord, their Maker. You have been fed by God’s bounty, you owe all the breath in your nostrils to Him, yet you have never done homage to His name! The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib, but you know not, neither do you consider the Most High. The cattle on a thousand hills low forth their gratitude and every sheep praises God in its bleating—but these beings, worse than natural brute beasts—still continue to receive from the lavish hand of Divine Benevolence, but they return no thanks whatever to their Benefactor! Let such remember that that ground which has long been rained upon, and plowed, and sown which yet brings forth no fruit, is near unto cursing—whose end is to be burned. Prayerless souls are Christless souls, Christless souls are Graceless souls and Graceless souls shall soon be damned souls! See your peril, you that neglect altogether the blessed privilege of prayer! You are in the bonds of iniquity, you are in the gall of bitterness. God deliver you, for His name’s sake!

Nor do I intend to use this text in an address to those who are in the habit of formal prayer, though there are many such. Taught from their childhood to utter certain sacred words, they have carried through youth and even up to manhood, the same practice! I will not discuss that question just now, whether the practice of teaching children a form of prayer is proper or not. I would not do it. Children should be instructed in the meaning of prayer, and their little minds should be taught to pray, but it should be rather the matter of prayer than the words of prayer that should be suggested. And I think they should be taught to use their own words and to speak to God in such phrases and terms as their own childlike capacities, assisted by a mother’s love, may be able to suggest. Full many there are who, from early education, grow up habituated to some form of words which either stands in lieu of the heart’s devotion, or cripples its free exercise. No doubt there may be true prayer linked with a form, and the soul of many a saint has gone up to Heaven in some holy collect, or in the words of some beautiful liturgy, but, for all that, we are absolutely certain that tens of thousands use the mere language without heart or soul, under the impression that they are “praying.”

I consider the form of prayer to be no more worthy of being called prayer than a coach may be called a horse. The horse will be better without the coach, travel much more rapidly and find himself much more at ease. He may drag the coach, it is true, and still travel well. Without the heart of prayer, the form is no prayer—it will not stir or move—it is simply a vehicle that may have wheels that might move, but it has no inner force or power within itself to propel it. Flatter not yourselves that your devotion has been acceptable to God, you that have been merely saluting the ears of the Most High with forms! They have been only mockeries when your heart has been absent. What though a parliament of bishops should have posed the words you use? What though they should be absolutely faultless, yes, what if they should even be inspired? Though you have used them a thousand times, yet you have never prayed if you consider that the repetition of the form is prayer. No! There is more than the chatter of the tongue in genuine supplication! More than the repetition of words in truly drawing near to God! Take care lest, with the form of godliness, you neglect the power and go down to Hell having a lie in your right hand, but not the Truth of God in your heart!

What I do intend, however, is to address this text to the true people of God who understand the sacred art of prayer and are prevalent therein, but who, to their own sorrow and shame, must confess that they have restrained prayer. If there is no other person in this Congregation to whom the preacher will speak personally, he feels shamefully conscious that he will have to speak very plainly to himself. We know that our prayers are heard. We are certain—it is not a question with us—that there is an efficacy in the Divine office of intercession. And yet (oh, how we should blush when we make the confession!) we must acknowledge that we do restrain or neglect prayer. Now, inasmuch as we speak to those who grieve and repent that they should have done so, we shall use but little sharpness. But we shall try to use much plainness of speech. Let us see how and in what respect we have neglected prayer.

I. Do you not think, dear Friends, that we often neglect prayer IN THE FEWNESS OF THE OCCASIONS THAT WE SET APART FOR SUPPLICATION?

From hoary tradition and modern precedents we have come to believe that the morning should be opened with the offering of prayer and that the day should be shut in with the nightly sacrifice. We do ill if we neglect those two sessions of prayer. Do you not think that often, in the morning, we rise so near to the time of labor, when duty calls us to our daily avocation, that we hurry through the familiar exercises with unseemly haste, instead of diligently seeking the Lord and earnestly calling upon His name? And even at night, when we are very weary and jaded, it is just possible that our prayer is uttered somewhere between sleeping and waking. Is not this restraining or neglecting prayer? And throughout the 365 days of the year, if we continue to pray thus, and this is all, how small an amount of true supplication will have gone up to Heaven!

I trust there are none here present who profess to be followers of Christ who do not also practice prayer in their families. We may have no positive commandment for it, but we believe that it is as much in accord with the genius and spirit of the Gospel, and that it is so commended by the example of the saints, that the neglect thereof is a strange inconsistency! Now, how often is this family worship conducted in a slovenly manner? An inconvenient hour is fixed and a knock at the door, a ring at the bell, the call of a customer may hurry the Believer from his knees to go and attend to his worldly concerns. Of course, many excuses might be offered, but the fact would still remain that in this way we often neglect prayer!

And then, when you come up to the House of God—I hope you do not come up to this Tabernacle without prayer—yet I fear we do not all pray as we should, even when in the place dedicated to God’s worship. There should always be a devout prayer lifted up to Heaven as soon as you enter the place where you would meet with God. What a preparation is often made to appear in the assembly! Some of you get here half an hour before the service commences—if there were no talking, if each one of you looked into the Bible, or if the time was spent in silent supplication— what a cloud of holy incense would go smoking up to Heaven!

I think it would be comely for you and profitable for us if as soon as the minister enters the pulpit, you engaged yourself to plead with God for him. For me, I may especially say it is desirable. I claim it at your hands above every other man. With this overwhelming congregation and with the terrible reliability of so numerous a church, and with the Word of God spoken here published within a few hours, and disseminated over the country, scattered throughout all Europe, no—to the very ends of the earth—I may well ask you to lift up your hearts in supplication that the words spoken may be those of truth and soberness, directed of the Holy Spirit and made mighty through God, like arrows shot from His own bow, to find a target in the hearts that He means to bless!

And in going home, with what earnestness should we ask the Master to let what we have heard live in our hearts! We lose very much of the effects of our Sabbaths through not pleading with God on the Saturday night for a blessing upon the day of rest, and through not also pleading at the end of the Sunday, beseeching Him to make that which we have heard abide in our memories and appear in our actions. We have restrained prayer, I fear, in the fewness of the occasions.

Indeed, Brothers and Sisters, every day of the week, and every part of the day should be an occasion for prayer. Cries such as these, “Oh, would that!” “Lord, save me!” “Help me!” “More light, Lord!” “Teach me!” “Guide me!” and a thousand such, should be constantly going up from our hearts to the Throne of God. You may enjoy a refreshing solitude, if you please, in the midst of crowded Cheapside, or contrariwise, you may have your head in the whirl of a busy crowd when you have retired to your closet. It is not so much where we are as in what state our heart is. Let the regular seasons for devotion be constantly attended to. These things ought you to have done, but let your heart be habitually in a state of prayer—you must not leave this undone. Oh, that we prayed more, that we set apart more time for it! Good Bishop Farrar had an idea in his head which he carried out. Being a man of some substance and having some 24 persons in his household, he divided the day and there was always some person engaged either in holy song or else in devout supplication through the whole of the 24 hours! There was never a moment when the censor ceased to smoke, or the altar was without its sacrifice. Happy shall it be for us when, day and night, we shall circle the Throne of God rejoicing, but till then, let us emulate the ceaseless praise of seraphs before the Throne of God, continually drawing near unto God and making supplication and thanksgiving.

II. But to proceed to a second remark, dear Friends, I think it will be very clear, upon a little reflection, that we constantly restrain or neglect prayer BY NOT HAVING OUR HEARTS IN A PROPER STATE WHEN WE COME TO ITS EXERCISE.

We rush into prayer too often. We would think it necessary, if we were to address the Queen, that our petition should be prepared. But often we dash before the Throne of God as though it were but some common house of call, without even having a thought in our minds of what we are going for. Now, just let me suggest some few things which I think should always be subjects of meditation before our season of prayer and I think if you confess that you have not thought of these things, you will also be obliged to acknowledge that you have restrained prayer.

We should, before prayer, meditate upon Him to whom it is to be addressed. Let our thoughts be directed to the living and true God. Let me remember that He is Omnipotent, then I shall ask large things. Let me remember that He is very tender and full of compassion, then I shall ask little things and be minute in my supplication. Let me remember the greatness of His Covenant, then I shall come very boldly. Let me remember, also, that His faithfulness is like the great mountains and that His promises are sure to all the seed, then I shall ask very confidently, for I shall be persuaded that He will do as He has said. Let me fill my soul with the reflection of the greatness of His majesty, then I shall be struck with awe, with the equal greatness of His love, then I shall be filled with delight! We would pray better than we do if we meditated more, before prayer, upon the God whom we address in our supplications!

Then, let me meditate also upon the way through which my prayer is offered. Let my soul behold the blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat before I venture to draw near to God. Let me go to Gethsemane and see the Savior as He prays. Let me stand in holy vision at the foot of Calvary and see His body torn, that the veil which parted my soul from all access to God might be torn, too, that I might come close to my Father, even to His feet. O dear Friends, I am sure if we thought about the way of access in prayer, we would be more mighty in it, but our neglect of so doing has led us to restrain prayer.

And yet, again, ought I not, before prayer, to be duly conscious of my many sins? Oh, when I hear men pray cold, careless prayers, surely they forget that they are sinners, or else, renouncing gaudy words and flowing periods, they would smite upon their breast with the cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” They would come to the point at once, with force and fervency—“I, black, unclean, defiled, condemned by the Law, make my appeal unto You, O God!” What prostration of spirit, what zeal, what fervor, what earnestness and then, consequently, what prevalence would there be if we were duly sensible of our sin!

If we can add to this a little meditation upon what our needs are, how much better we would pray! We often fail in prayer because we come without an errand, not having thought of what our necessities are. But if we have reckoned up that we need pardon, justification, sanctification, preservation—that, besides the blessings of this life, we need that our decaying Graces should be revived, that such-and-such a temptation should be removed, and that through such-and-such a trial we should be carried and prove more than conquerors—then, coming with an errand, we would prevail before the Most High! But we bring to the altars bowls that have no bottom—and if the treasure should be put in them, it would fall through! We do not know what we need and, therefore, we ask not for what we really need. We try to lay our necessities before the Lord without having duly considered how great our necessities are. See yourself as an abject bankrupt, weak, sick, dying—and this will make you plead. See your necessities to be deep as the ocean, broad as the expanse of Heaven—and this will make you cry. There will be no restraining of prayer, Beloved, when we have got a due sense of our soul’s poverty. But because we think we are rich, increased in goods and have need of nothing, therefore it is that we restrain prayer before God.

How well it would be for us if, before prayer, we would meditate upon the past with regard to all the mercies we have had during the day. What courage that would give us to ask for more! The deliverances we have experienced through our life, how boldly should we plead to be delivered yet again! He that has been with me in six troubles will not forsake me in the seventh! Do but remember how you passed through the fires and was not burnt, and you should be confident that the flame will not kindle upon you now. Christian, remember how before, when you passed through the rivers, God was with you, and surely you may plead with Him to deliver you from the flood that now threatens to inundate you. Think of the past ages too, of what He did of old, where He brought His people out of Egypt and of all the mighty deeds which He has done—are they not written in the Book of the Wars of the Lord? Plead all these and say unto Him in your supplications—“O You that are a God that hears prayer, hear me now and send me an answer of peace!” I think, without needing to point that arrow, you can see which way I would shoot. Because we do not come to the Throne of Grace in a proper state of supplication, therefore it is that too often we restrain prayer before God.

III. Now, thirdly, it is not to be denied by a man who is conscious of his own error, that IN THE DUTY OF PRAYER, ITSELF, WE ARE TOO OFTEN STRAITENED IN OUR OWN HEART, AND SO RESTRAIN PRAYER.

Prayer has been differently divided by different authors. We might roughly say that prayer consists, first, of invocation. “Our Father, which are in Heaven.” We begin by stating the title and our own apprehension of the Glory and majesty of the Person whom we address. Do you not think, dear Friends, that we fail here, and restrain prayer here? Oh, how we ought to sound forth His praises! I think, on the Sabbath, it is always the minister’s special duty to bring out the titles of THE ALMIGHTY ONE, such as “King of kings, and Lord of lords!” He is not to be addressed in common terms. We should endeavor, as we search the Scripture through, to find those mighty phrases which the ancient saints were known to apply to Jehovah! And we should make His Temple ring with His Glory and make our closet full of that holy adoration with which prayer must always be linked! I think the rebuking angel might often say, “You think that the Lord is such an one as yourself, and you talk not to Him as to the God of the whole earth but, as though He were a man you address Him in slighting and unseemly terms.” Let all our invocations come more deeply from our soul’s reverence to the Most High and let us address Him, not in high-sounding words of fleshly homage, but still in words which set forth our awe and our reverence while they express His majesty and the Glory of His holiness.

From invocation we usually go to confession, and how often do we fail here! In your closet are you in the habit of confessing your real sins to God? Do you not find, Brothers and Sisters, a tendency to acknowledge that sin which is common to all men, but not that which is certainly peculiar to you? We are all Sauls in our way—we want the best of the cattle and the sheep. Those favorite sins, those Agag sins—it is not so easy to hew them in pieces before the Lord. The right-eye sin—happy is that Christian who has learned to pluck it out by confession. The righthand sin—he is blessed and well taught who aims the axe at that sin and cuts it from him! But no, we say that we have sinned—we are willing to use the terms of any general confession that any church may publish! But to say, “Lord, You know that I love the world, and the things of the world! You know that I am covetous.” Or to say, “Lord, You know I was envious of So-and-So, because he shone brighter than I did at such andsuch a public meeting. Lord, I was jealous of such-and-such a member of the church because I evidently saw that he was preferred before me!” And for the husband to confess before God that he has been overbearing, that he has spoken rashly to a child. For a wife to acknowledge that she has been willful, that she has had a fault—this would be letting out prayer—but the hiding of these things is restraining prayer and we shall surely come under that charge of having restrained prayer unless we make our private confessions of sin very explicit, coming to the point.

I have thought, in teaching children in the Sunday school, we should not so much talk about sin in general as the sins in which children most commonly indulge, such as little thefts, naughty tempers, disobedience to parents. These are the things that children should confess. Men in the dawn of their manhood should confess those ripening evil imaginations, those lustful things that rise in the heart, while the man in business should always make this a point—to see most to the sins which attack businessmen. I have no doubt that I might be very easily led, in my confession, to look to all the offenses I may have committed against the laws of business because I should not need to deal very harshly with myself there, for I do not have the temptations of these men. And I should not wonder if some of you merchants will find it very easy to examine ourselves according to a code that is proper to me, but not to you! Let the workman pray to God as a workman and confess the sins common to his craft. Let the trader examine himself according to his standing and let each man make his confession like the confessions of old, when everyone confessed apart—the mother apart and the daughter apart, the father apart and the son apart. Let each one thus make a clean breast of the matter and I am sure there will not be so much need to say that we have restrained prayer before God.

As to the next part of prayer, which is petition, we all fail lamentably, indeed! We have not, because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. We are ready enough to ask for deliverance from trial, but how often we forget to ask that it may be sanctified to us! We are quite ready to say, “Give us this day our daily bread.” How often, however, do we fail to ask that He would give us the Bread which comes down from Heaven and enable us blessedly to feed upon His flesh and His blood? Brothers and Sisters, we come before God with little desires and the desires we get have so little fervency in them. And when we get the fervency, we so often fail to get the faith which grasps the promise and believes that God will give, that, in all these points, when we come to the matter of spreading our needs before God, we restrain prayer!

Oh, for the Luthers that can shake the gates of Heaven by supplication! Oh, for men that can lay hold upon the golden knocker of Heaven’s gate and make it ring and ring again as if they meant it to be heard! Cold prayers court a denial. God hears by fire and the God that answers by fire let Him be God! But first there must be prayer in Elijah’s heart—fire in Elijah’s heart—before the fire will come down in answer to the prayer! Our fervency goes up to Heaven and then God’s Grace, which gave us the fervency, comes down and gives us the answer.

But you know, too, that all true prayer has thanksgiving in it. “Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.” What prayer is complete without the doxology? And here, too, we restrain prayer. We do not praise, and bless, and magnify the Lord as we should. If our hearts were more full of gratitude, our expressions would be far more noble and comprehensive when we speak forth His praise. I wish I could put this so plainly that every Christian might mourn on account of his sin and mend his ways. But, indeed, it is only mine to speak—it is my Master’s to open your eyes, to let you see and to set you upon the solemnly important duty of self-examination! In this respect, I am sure even the prayers that you and I have offered today may well cry out against us, and say, “You have restrained prayer.”

IV. Yet, again, I fear we must all join in acknowledging A SERIOUS FAULT WITH REGARD TO THE AFTER-PART OF OUR PRAYERS. When prayer is done, do you not think we very much restrain it?

For, after prayer, we often go immediately into the world. That may be absolutely necessary, but we go there and leave behind us what we ought to carry with us. When we have got into a good frame in prayer, we should consider that this is like the meat which the angel gave to Elijah that he might go on his forty day’s journey in its strength. Have we felt Heavenly-minded? The moment we cross the threshold and get into the family or business, where is the Heavenly mind? Oh, to get real prayer, inwrought prayer—not the surface prayer, as though it were a sort of sacred masquerading, but to have it inside, in the warp and woof of our being—till prayer becomes a part of ourselves! Then, Brothers and Sisters, we have not restrained it! We get hot in our closets—when I say, “we,” oh, how few can say as much as that!—but, still, we get hot in our closets and go out into the world, into the draughts of its temptations, without wrapping ourselves about with promises—and we catch wellnear our death of cold! Oh, to carry that heat and fervor with us!

You know that as you carry a bar of hot iron along, how soon it begins to return to its common ordinary appearance and the heat is gone. How hot, then, we ought to make ourselves in prayer, that we may burn the longer and how, all day long, we ought to keep thrusting the iron into the fire so that, when it ceases to glow, it may go into the hot embers once more and the flame may glow upon it and we may once again be brought into a vehement heat. But we are not careful enough to keep up the Grace and seek to nurture and to cherish the young child which God seems to give in the morning into our hands that we may nurse it for Him.

Old Master Dyer speaks of locking up his heart by prayer in the morning and giving Christ the key. I am afraid we do the opposite—we lock up our hearts in the morning and give the devil the key—and think that he will be honest enough not to rob us! Ah, it is in bad hands when it is trusted with him. He keeps stealing all day long the precious things that were in the safe until, at night it is quite empty and needs to be filled all over again! Would God that we put the key in Christ’s hands, by looking up to Him all day!

I think, too, that after prayer, we often fail in unbelief. We do not expect God to hear us. If God were to hear some of you, you would be more surprised than with the greatest novelty that could occur! We ask blessings, but do not think of having them. When you and I were children and had a little piece of garden, we sowed some seeds one day and the next morning, before breakfast, we went to see if they were up. And the next day, seeing that no appearance of the green blade could be discovered, we began to move the dirt to look for our seeds. Ah, we were children then! I wish we were children now with regard to our prayers. We would go out, the next morning, to see if they had begun to sprout and disturb the ground a bit to look after our prayers, for fear they should have miscarried. Do you believe God hears prayer?

I saw, the other day, in a newspaper, a little sketch concerning myself in which the author, who is evidently very friendly, gives a much better description of me than I deserve. But he offers me one rather pointed rebuke. I was preaching at the time in a tent and only part of the people were covered. It began to rain just before prayer, and one petition was, “O Lord, be pleased to grant us favorable weather for this service and command the clouds that they rain not upon this assembly!” Now he thought this very preposterous. To say the least, it was rash, if not blasphemous! He admits that it did not rain a drop after the prayer, still, of course, he did not infer that God heard and answered the prayer. If I had asked for a rain of Grace, it would have been quite credible that God would send that, but when I ask Him not to send a temporal rain, that is fanaticism! To think that God meddles with the clouds at the wish of a man, or that He may answer us in temporal things is pronounced absurd! I bless God, however, that I fully believe the absurdity, preposterous as it may appear! I know that God hears prayer in temporal things! I know it by as clear a demonstration as ever any proposition in Euclid was solved. I know it by abundant facts and incidents which my own life has revealed. God does hear prayer! The majority of people do not think that He does. At least, if He does, they suppose that it is in some high, clerical, mysterious, unknown sense. As to ordinary things ever happening as the result of prayer, they account it a delusion! “The Bank of Faith!” How many have said it is a bank of nonsense and yet there are many who have been able to say, “We could write as good a book as Huntington’s ‘Bank of Faith,’ that would be no more believed than Huntington’s was, though it might be even more true.”

We restrain prayer, I am sure, by not believing our God. We ask a favor, which, if granted, we attribute to “accident” rather than ascribe it to Grace, and we do not receive it. Then the next time we come, of course we cannot pray, because unbelief has cut the sinews of prayer and left us powerless before the Throne of God.

You are a professor of religion. After you have been to a party of ungodly people, can you pray? You are a merchant, and profess to be a follower of Christ. When you engage in a hazardous speculation and you know you ought not to, can you pray? Or, when you have had a heavy loss in business and repine against God and will not say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord”—can you pray? Pity the man who can sin and pray, too! In a certain sense, Brooks was right when he said, “Praying will make you leave off sinning, or else sin will make you leave off praying.” Of course, that is not meant in the absolute sense of the term, but as to certain sins, especially gross sins— and some of the sins to which God’s people are liable, are gross sins—I am certain they cannot come before their Father’s face with the confidence they had before, after having been rolling in the mire, or wandering in By-Path Meadow.

Look at your own child—he meets you in the morning with a smiling face, so pleased. He asks what he likes of you and you give it to him. Now he has been doing wrong. He knows he has and you have frowned upon him, you have chastened him. How does he come now? He may come because he is a child and with tears in his eyes because he is a penitent—but he cannot come with the power he once had. Look at a king’s favorite—as long as he feels that he is in the king’s favor, he will take up your suit and plead for you. Ask him tomorrow whether he will do you a good turn and he says, “No, I am out of favor. I don’t feel as if I could speak now.” A Christian is not out of Covenant favor, but he may be experimentally under a cloud—he loses the Light of God’s Countenance and then he feels he cannot plead—his prayers become weak and feeble.

Take heed unto yourselves and consider your ways. The path of declension is very abrupt in some parts. We may go on gradually declining in prayer till faith grows weak, love cold and patience is exhausted. We may go on for years and maintain a consistent profession, but, all of a sudden, the road which had long been descending at a gradual incline may come to a precipice and we may fall, and that when we little think of it. We may have ruined our reputation, blasted our comfort, destroyed our usefulness and we may have to go to our graves with a sword in our bones because of sin. Stop while you may, Believer! Stop and guard against the temptation. I charge you, by the trials you must meet with, by the temptations that surround you, by the corruptions that are within, by the assaults that come from Hell and by the trials that come from Heaven, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.”

I speak especially to the members of this church. Think of what has God worked for us! When we were a few people, what intense agony of prayer we had! We have had Prayer Meetings in Park Street that have moved our souls. Every man seemed like a crusader besieging Jerusalem, each man determined to storm the Celestial City by the might of intercession and the blessings came upon us, so that we had not room to receive them! The hallowed cloud still rests over us! The holy drops still fall! Will you now cease from intercession? At the borders of the promised land, will you turn back to the wilderness, when God is with us and the standard of a King is in the midst of our armies? Will you now fail in the day of trial? Who knows but you have come to the Kingdom for such a time as this? Who knows but that He will preserve in the land a small company of poor people who fear God intensely, hold the faith earnestly and love God vehemently—that infidelity may be driven from the high places of the earth—that Naphtali again may be a people made triumphant in the high places of the field?

God of Heaven, grant this! Oh, let us restrain prayer no longer! You that have never prayed, may you be taught to pray, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” uttered from your heart, with your eyes upon the Cross! You will receive a gracious answer and you shall go on your way rejoicing, for—

**“When God inclines the heart to pray, He has an ear to hear!  
To Him there’s music in a groan, And beauty in a tear.”**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 JOHN 2.**

1 John 2:1-4. My little children, these things I write unto you, that you sin not. And if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. Holy living is the sure fruit and proof of anyone being in Christ. Where it is not manifest, the profession of being in Christ is a lie.

5. But whoever keeps His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. Note the gradation—we know Him, we are in Him—we know that we are in Him.

6. He that says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked. Abiding in Christ helps us to live as Christ lived, not, as one well observes, that we can walk on the water as Christ walked upon it, but that we can walk in our daily life even as He did because we abide in Him.

7. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you have heard from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which we have heard from the beginning, yet it is always fresh and new.

8-10. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shines. He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. Love is the great and sure way of abiding in the light, abiding in Christ.

11-14. But he that hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and knows not where he goes, because that darkness has blinded his eyes. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. I write unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the Wicked One. I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the Wicked One. Having overcome him, at the first by your faith in Christ, you still go on to conquer him by abiding in Christ.

15-17. Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever.

Everything else is transient, fleeting and soon passes away. But he that does the will of God has entered into the eternal regions and he has become one of those who abide forever. Do not be carried away, therefore, from your old firm foundation and from your eternal union to Christ.

18-20. Little children, it is the last hour and as you have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But you have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things. You are taught of God, so you know all that is necessary for the attainment of true godliness, and the accomplishment of the Divine purposes.

21-25. I have not written unto you because you know not the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father: [but] he that acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us, even eternal life. Not transient life, but eternal life is the great promise of the Covenant of Grace, and abiding in Christ we possess it.

26, 27. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which you have received of Him abides in you, What a wonderful declaration this is—not only that we have this holy anointing, but that we have it always!

27, 28. And you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in Him. And now little children, abide in Him. See how the Apostle rings out this note again and again? Our Savior repeated the word, “abide,” or, “remain,” many times in the short parable of the Vine, and now John strikes this same silver bell over and over again—“And now, little children, abide in Him”—

28, 29. That when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone that does righteousness is born of Him.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3373 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 16.20

MAN’S SCORN AND GOD’S SUCCOR  
NO. 3373

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1913.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S DAY EVENING, MAY 12, 1867.

**“My friends scorn me; but my eyes pour out tears unto God.” Job 16:20.**

WE know that Job’s sorrows were recorded, not for his honor, but for our profit. We are told to consider the patience of Job and truly we might often be sustained, cheered and comforted if we would but look upon that Patriarch in the depths of his grief. We are “born to sorrow” and if our cup is not embittered with it tonight, we must not expect to be long without a taste of the gall in our mouths.

There is one particular sorrow, however, which appertains to the early days of our spiritual life, concerning which I intend to speak tonight. It is the sorrow caused by the scorning of us by our friends. This becomes a very little sorrow to us in later days, but at the first it is a “trial of cruel mocking,” and a very severe one. I suppose the advanced Christian at last can even come to “rejoice in tribulations” of this sort—he counts it to be an honor—he rejoices and is exceedingly glad when men say all manner of evil against him falsely for Christ’s name’s sake. But at the first there is nothing, perhaps, more staggering to the young Christian than to find that his “worst foes” are they of his own household and that they who should have cherished and nurtured in him the piety which is so excellent a flower, do their cruel worst to nip it in the bud!

Without further preface, therefore, we shall try, as the Holy Spirit shall teach and help us, to speak to you upon a very common trial, “My friends scorn me.” And then, yet again, meditate on a remarkable resort and exercise, “But my eyes pour out tears unto God.” First, then, let us think upon—

I. A VERY COMMON TRIAL.  
“My friends scorn me.” What is it they do? They scorn me. I shall apply the text tonight to scorn on account of religion. It is lately, my dear young friends—I address myself particularly to you—it is lately that you have been impressed. It is lately that you have considered your ways. There has been an evident alteration in you. You have become of a serious cast of mind. You are now a seeker—you desire salvation. For this reason your friends scorn you. Perhaps they say that you are so miserable that they cannot bear your company. Probably the remark is correct and you feel it to be so, but they do not know that this misery of yours will end in perfect joy. They do not comprehend this rough plowing of your soul, which is preparatory to the joyful harvest. They do not understand that the good Physician often uses the lancet and opens wide the wound before He comes with His downy fingers to close it and to heal it. You are miserable and you might expect them, therefore, to be the more gentle with you and to help your faith as much as possible, but instead of that, they continually tell you that your company is altogether unbearable—and so they scorn you. Meanwhile, they also insinuate that the attention which you are now paying to religious matters is with a sinister motive and design. They say that you are a hypocrite! They cannot understand that there can be such a thing as religious sincerity. To them it is all hypocrisy. They suppose that all those who seek to live godly lives in Christ Jesus are merely making a pretense with a view to some personal advantage. Do not be surprised if they insinuate that you “cant,” if they mimic any tone that may be peculiar to you—if in any and every way possible they throw in your face the insinuation that you are false and hypocritical. And, perhaps, they also twit you with your faults, which are, alas, too many—and are near the surface—and so very easily visible to them.  
The old proverb says, “It is easy enough to find a stick with which to beat a dog,” and it is very easy for our friends with whom we live to rake up some fault of ours, to exaggerate it, and then to strike us as hard as they can with it! Very difficult, indeed, would it be for us to live so as to give them no such opportunity. Even when most careful, our very carefulness is sneered at as sanctimoniousness! And if we are particular, then we are severe, rigid, and, worst of all, “Puritanical.”  
So that, do what we will, we must expect to have faults laid at our door. This is hard to bear. Your friends, in this respect, scorn you. And all the while they also tell you that, make what pretences you may, it is not at all likely that any good will come out of your religion. It is, they say, an old wives’ fable and a cunning story. They have never proved the power of it in their own souls—they know no better and, therefore, they tell you to eat, drink, and be merry—fools as they are to think that this poor flesh and blood ought to have the first care before the soul that is born for better things! Fools, I say, as they are, to think that it ever can be wisdom to live for this little span of time and to forget eternity, which knows no end! Yet they will tell you to live while you live, that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, to snatch the present joy. They say, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die and leave the spirit-world and the land that is to be revealed to those speculative minds who may care for such things!” And so, with a hoarse laugh, they would dismiss religion from you, or persuade you, if possible, to forget it. But, my dear Friends, you cannot forget it, for if God is dealing with you! His arrows stick fast in the soul. When the Spirit of God comes to deal with a man, if all the devils in Hell and all the sinners on earth should laugh around him all day long, it would only drive the shafts deeper into his soul! He who has never felt the power of the world to come is easily driven out of his profession, but he who has once been plowed and harrowed by the mighty Plowman of Conviction can never forget it! I recollect when my sins lay heavy upon me. I would not have been ashamed to have stood up before a parliament of kings and said that I knew sin to be exceedingly sinful, and that I thought that the sentence of my condemnation had gone forth from God. Yet, as to having any Scriptural thoughts, they were squeezed out of me by the rough hand of my conscience. I knew that sin was evil before God and that sin would destroy my soul. How could I doubt it when the hot sweat of horror stood on my brow at the thought of my past life? Doubts then soon fled to the winds! Ah, if God is so dealing with you, sore as the trial is, of being mocked by unbelieving friends, you will bear it and will come out of the ordeal none the worse! But still, meanwhile, I remind you that Job himself had to say, “My friends scorn me.”  
Who are these people who scorn you? They are your friends and that makes it the harder to bear. Caesar said, “Et tu Brute?”—“And you, Brutus? Do you stab?” So, too, one of our Lord’s sharpest griefs was, “He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.” It is hard for a young Christian to be persecuted by the father to whose judgment he has always looked up with respect. Harder still is it for a Christian woman to find the partner of her bosom steeled against her for the Truth of God’s sake. Oh, how they can get at our hearts, these husbands and these wives of ours—and if they happen to be enemies of Christ, what wounds they can make! “My friends scorn me.” You would not mind if it were merely the workpeople in the shop. You could escape from them, but you cannot escape from your own family. You would not mind it if the ribald herds around you mocked and taunted you, but some of your friends are people of excellent character in all points but one! One thing they lack, but the other things they have in such a degree that you almost blush to think that they excel you—and then it is very difficult to have a jeer from such. You had hoped that they would sympathize with you, instruct you and encourage you—but the very people to whom you looked for assistance have turned against you! One thing let me say—if those who have thus scorned you are merely “friends,” and are not related to you, they prove that they are not true friends—part from their company, I pray you!  
But if they are those with whom Providence has united you with such bonds, that you must look upon it as being a part of the cross which you have to carry, well, then, you must take up that cross daily, even though it is a heavy and painful one, that you may follow your Lord and Master, Jesus Christ! When the three holy children were cast into the furnace, it was at least out of doors and away from their dwelling. And but for God’s rescue it would have destroyed them. But to have a furnace indoors and to have it always blazing—to go home every night into that furnace and to feel each day that the coals are heaped upon you, and still to hold on and refuse to bow the knee to evil, but still remain the true servant of Jesus Christ—oh, the ordeal is terribly severe! Job said that his enemies scorned him and why should you be allowed to escape, or expect to come off better than Job? I do trust that this will be in the nature of a good thing for you. It will make you feel less dependent upon an arm of flesh. It will drive you to God and I am sure that those make the strongest Christians who have to come out most distinctly and separately from their fellows. It is the very best enjoyment. The Covenanters tell us in their lives that the happiest seasons they ever had were among the bogs, swamps, mountains and the brown heath of Scotland when Claverhouse’s dragoons were after them! Then Christ seemed doubly precious to them, when the world had cast them out on the heath. Oh, there is no talk with Christ so sweet as that which He gives His people when they walk up the bleak side of the hill with Him, with the snow blowing in their teeth! Then He covers them with the mantle of His love and lets His soul out in springs of love, comfort and delight to them! Some of you who do not have persecution might almost wish to have it that you might know those dear delights, those intimate communing which Christ gives to His people in the day of battle and in the time of torment! Your friends may scorn you, but “there is a Friend that sticks closer than a brother.” Come to Him and He will not scorn you, but will be your great Comforter!  
Your friends scorn you, but why do they do so? They do it you know not why. If it is on account of religion, I think I know the philosophy of it. They scorn you because you are different from them. I saw a canary light on the roof of a house opposite to a window where I was standing—and in almost a second afterwards some 30 or 40 sparrows surrounded it and began pecking away at it—and the reason was very obvious. It was of a different color from themselves. If it had been a sparrow, of their own dark, smoky, dusty hue, they would have let it alone. But here was a golden-winged stranger from the sunny isles and they must persecute it! And so, if you are a bird of paradise, you will find that word of the Prophet to be true, “My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird—the birds round about are against her.” So you will find the birds round about you—the ravens, hawks and vultures—against you. You are not understood, you know. If you are a true Christian, you cannot be understood! The greatest puzzle to a worldly man is a Christian! He is moved by motives which the worldling cannot understand. He is influenced by fears and hopes to which the worldling is a total stranger. They did not know your Lord—why should they know you? They crucified the Lord of Glory, not understanding that He was God, and so “it does not yet appear” what you are, nor does the world value you at your proper worth. Do not be astonished at it—it is partly malice and partly ignorance that leads men to scorn you! If, my dear Friend, you are a thorough-going Christian, you must not expect to escape scorn! Your life is a standing protest against the lives of others! You fear God, and they do not. You cannot live as they live. You cannot talk as they talk and when they note even your silence, it becomes provoking to them! If the world could have its way, it would not have a Christian living in it. “No,” the worldlings would say, “That man is a living provocation to our conscience—he thrusts thorns into our pillows and will not let us rest.” I am thankful if this is the case with you. And if so, it accounts for very much of the scorning which your friends pour upon you. I will not dwell upon the subject, however. You will have to find out the reason probably in your later experience.  
But now, what is the best thing for you to do if your friends scorn you? Well, do not defend yourself! Do not get bad-tempered about it. Do not answer them. The best reply is, in most cases, complete silence. Only speak when you are quite sure that it is better to speak than to hold your tongue. Never give scorn for scorning. Remember that a worldly man may resist evil if he will, but Christ says to his friends, “I say unto you, resist not evil, and when you are smitten on one check, turn the other also.” I know that many of those good old non-resistance texts are looked upon as being quite out-of-date—as part of the Bible that is not to be preached. Well, when I get information from the skies that the text is to be covered over or silenced, I will say nothing about it—but as long as I find it there, I must say to you that that which men of the world call “pluck” and “fine spirit” very often comes only from the devil! Why are there fights and wars? They come from your own lusts. The Christian’s only answer to the persecutor is the answer of the anvil to the blows of the hammer. He bears them, bears, bears them and breaks the hammer by bearing them! This is how the Christian Church triumphs. She has never made a good hand at carnal weapons. It was an ill-day for our Puritan sires when they took up arms. It did religion no good in this land, but I believe, threw it back for a long time. It is for the Christian Church to suffer and to suffer on in confidence and in faith, and to make the world see that the anvil will outlast a thousand sets of hammers and will triumph when they are all broken to dust! You, dear Friends, especially will find it to be your wisest, as well as the most Christian course, to bear everything that is put upon you and to make no return except by being more kind and more generous than ever towards those who are most unkind to you!  
Let me say, however, take care that you do not give any cause of offense. It is very easy for a man to make a martyr of himself when it is not his religion, but his particular way of holding it that

brings on the martyrdom. Some people, really, are so ferocious in their convictions, so grim in their conscientiousness and so continually obtrusive that if they are persecuted, it is their manner that is persecuted and not the Gospel which they profess to hold! Do not give people an opportunity of opening their mouths against you, but pray God to make you very wise, so that, as in Daniel’s case, they may find nothing against you, save only touching the Lord God whom you worship. And then, that being done, if you are still scorned by your friends, look upon it as coming from God’s hands and that will very much soften it. Ask the Lord what is His purpose in it, what lessons He has to teach you. It may be it is to keep your pride down, or to strengthen you for some future conflicts or labors in His cause. And when you have waited upon Him for direction, rejoice and be exceedingly glad that you are permitted to suffer at all for Christ’s sake and so in patience you shall possess your souls. Walk uprightly before God, live as Christ lived and, my dear Friend, the day will come when you shall have outlived all this enmity and when those who now mock you will respect you. “When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” At such a time, it may be some will be won by your gentleness and your holy conversation to become Christians, too, and what a joy that will be to you!  
Now, I know that what I have been saying does not belong to a great many of you. But still, I must sometimes take texts which will apply to these special cases, especially as just now there are many who have been saved at the Agricultural Hall, and here, and elsewhere, and to whom the struggle for conscience’ sake is quite a new thing. And a word or two by way of comfort to them I am sure you will not grudge. And now we shall turn to the second part of the sermon, and we find the Patriarch engaged in—  
II. A REMARKABLE RESORT AND EXERCISE.  
His friends were scorning him, but he did not answer them. He had a sharp word or two, certainly, but still, the direction of his mind and the bent of his spirit went another way. He thought of God and forgot them. Herein is wisdom. When you are perplexed with a trouble, when you are mortified by some wicked person, do not let that thing always fret you. Have you ever noticed how you may torment yourselves with some little thing if you like? There is a fly in the room and that fly may be almost as much a trouble to you as though it were an eagle if you let its buzz be always in your ears. And if you keep on thinking about that buzzing fly, you can magnify it into a big dragon with wings. But if you forget it, and go on with your writing or your needlework, the fly may buzz away 50 times as much, but it will not trouble you! It is a very blessed thing, when, having a care which you cannot get over, you take it to God in prayer and so get over it. I will tell you what I have sometimes done with some of my difficulties. I have turned them over—I have looked at them in all shapes and ways—I have considered every way of getting over them. I have been vexed, troubled and distressed for the time, and at last I have come to feel, “Well now, I cannot do anything with this. It is a hard shell—I cannot crack it. But I have frequently been enabled by Grace to deliberately take that matter and put it upon the shelf and say, “By God’s Grace I will never think about that again as long as I live—I have done the best I could with it, Lord, and if it does not get right, that is now Your business and not mine—I will be done with it forever.” Sometimes you will find that the trouble will get right as soon as you leave it alone. It is just your meddling with it that makes the difficulty. You do not see that at the time, but as soon as you just get out of the way, the whole thing becomes right at once! God’s wheels of Providence grind much more accurately than any of the wheels of our mental calculations. And when we are altogether out of joint, then it is that God comes in and shows us what His wisdom and power can do. Leave, then, the scorning friends, and betake yourselves to your God!  
It is a very great mercy, let me say, that we may go to God when we are cast out by our friends—that if there are no other ears that will listen, God’s ears will always listen—and that if in all the earth there should not remain a sympathizing heart, there is the heart of the Man, Christ Jesus, still to be appealed to! And we shall never appeal to the sympathies of the Son of God in vain. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, when every other door is shut, the door of God’s Grace is always open! Let all other ports be blocked, your vessel can always run into that one harbor which all the devils in Hell cannot close—the harbor of infinite love and unfailing care. “Trust you in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” In your darkest seasons, your very worst times—fly to your God and He will deliver you!  
It seems from the text, however, that all Job could do was to pour out from his eyes a flood of tears. The word, “tears,” is not in the original Hebrew, but it is put into the translation, as it is supposed to give simpler sense to our ears. His “eyes poured out,” however, by which he meant that he did not so much pour out tears as his very heart, itself. As that grand old expositor, Joseph Caryl, says, “Job’s heart was hot within him and the steam of his fierce trouble distilled itself in drops of tears which fell upon the ground.” It was Job’s inmost soul that he poured out before God. Now, there are many kinds of tears, but the best kind are those described in the text, “Tears unto God.” What a capital sermon somebody might make out of that! “Tears unto God”! Tears not poured out to men, nor unto the earth, nor unto myself, but unto God! Tears put into His bottle. Libations poured at the foot of His altar. Tears wept for God—for God to see, for God to hear, for God to think upon—for God to accept. Not tears for tears’ sake, but tears like those of the penitent, tears in the privacy of one’s loneliness, tears only unto God! I hope, dear Friends, there are some among us who know the meaning of these tears. Some of you, I trust, are even now pouring forth the tears of repentance. Oh, those are blessed tears, tears of repentance that are tears unto God! It sometimes falls to my lot to have to talk to people about their sins. Sometimes they wish that I should do so and when I have tried to set their sins in their true light, tears have come. There have been tears because the offense has damaged the young man’s character. Tears because it injured the young man’s friends. Tears because a mother was grieved. Well now, when I have seen all these tears, I have been glad of them, such as they were, but they are not all the tears that we need. If you can only get one tear because the sin grieved God, it is worth a whole bottleful of the other tears! To see sin in the light of God’s Countenance is to truly see it. David hit the nail on the head when he said, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.” My dear Hearer, you may be very sorry that you did wrong because it brought you into trouble. You may be very sorry, indeed, because you cannot take the position in life which you once occupied—but that is not a repentance that can serve you before God! But if you are sorry to think that you have grieved God. If, like the prodigal, you say, “Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in Your sight”—these are tears unto God and are such as He receives!  
The next kind of tears unto God are the tears of desire. I wish these were more frequent. Those are the prayers that prevail with God which are well salted with tears. I am afraid that the most of us do not pray as we should, but if we want to prevail, like Jacob, we must remember that Jacob wrestled with the Angel and then he prevailed. Weeping, which reveals the soul’s wrestling, will often do what nothing else can in bringing us great benedictions.  
We have all felt the power of tears over our own feelings and affections, but the power of tears over God, who shall describe it? The blood of Jesus secures all He wills, and when our tears look towards and plead the blood of Jesus, then those tears cannot be refused.  
My dear Hearer, if you cannot get peace, do not cease praying until you have obtained it. If you long for your sins to be pardoned and have been praying a long time for this—it may be for weeks or months—pray again tonight and do not give up praying until you know you have prevailed with God. Can you bear to perish? Can you endure to be cast away? If you cannot, then be importunate! Lay hold upon the horns of the altar and let this be your vow, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” Then, when it comes to tears, you will get it. When it comes to your very soul being poured out before God, then shall God say unto you, “Your sins are forgiven you. Go in peace.”  
Once more. These tears may be tears shed on behalf of others. We would prevail for the salvation of others if we thought more of their cases when on our knees, and worked our souls more thoroughly into tempests of sacred and holy passion on their behalf. We cannot expect to see our children saved unless we can weep over them. We must not expect to see our congregations blessed unless our soul bleeds for that congregation. And when I say, “tears,” I do not mean those drops from only the eyes, for some of us could not cry if our souls depended on it, and yet we may, though we let fall no watery tears, shed some of the best tears—tears dropping like sweet-smelling myrrh upon the altar of the all-seeing God! Oh, we must get to feel that we cannot let men die! We must get to feel as if we should die ourselves if they were lost! We must feel so desperately in earnest about it that we cannot sleep, nor go our way in peace unless such-and-such persons be turned unto God and find peace in Jesus! If this is our spirit, we shall have our desire and we shall see our beloved ones saved.  
Thus, then, it seems that Job, instead of dealing with his enemies, spent his time in dealing with his God, and as words failed him, he took himself to the more potent rhetoric of tears and so melted his way into God’s heart, resting by faith upon the merits of the Redeemer who was yet to come! Do the same, my dear Friends, and God will give you the blessing you need!  
But some of you say, “I would never think of weeping before God! I have no dealings with God.” No, but He will have dealings with you. If you should not now repent of your sins, you shall repent some day, but that shall be when repentance is too late! Tears of repentance here on earth are signs of Divine Grace, but tears of sorrow in Hell are only signs of bitter and destroying remorse! “There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” Oh, may God the Holy Spirit convict us of sin here and now, while there is a hope of mercy, that we may fly to Jesus’ wounds, be washed in His blood and be saved—for if not, rest assured that we shall be convicted of sin one day when sin can never be pardoned, but the undying worm of self-accusing shall gnaw at our consciences forever, and forever and forever! Ah, my dear Hearer, do not boast because you cannot repent! Do not play the fool after that fashion, but rather ask God to break your heart of sin and so help you to repent! A tender conscience is such a blessing that you may well bemoan yourselves until God bestows it. Remember, however, that Jesus Christ can give a tender heart. It is one of the blessings of the Covenant of which He is the Surety. “A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them. I will take away the stony heart and give them a heart of flesh.” Plead that Covenant promise! And if you plead it now, believing in Jesus and trusting in Him, you shall get that new heart! You shall get a heart that can weep before God and so you shall be accepted through the righteousness of Jesus and your tears and your supplications shall prevail!  
I may never speak to some of you again, but oh, I should like to leave that thought with you that to suffer for Christ is honor and that to weep before the Lord is the truest pleasure! But if you have despised in your heart those that are persecuted, remember that day when Christ shall come, and all His holy angels with Him! If you laugh at Christians now, you will no longer laugh, but lament then! Your song then—or rather wail—shall be very different from the one you sing now. Oh, may you now, while yet life lasts, and the day of mercy is not over, seek Jesus, cast in your lot with His people, take up His Cross, that by-and-by you may wear His crown, suffering now—if necessary—in sharing His reproach and shame, that then you may be delighted with His Glory!  
The Lord Himself grant it to everyone of you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 22:1-22; SONG OF SOLOMON 1:1-7, 2:1-7. PSALM 22.**

Stand and look up at Christ upon the Cross and look upon these words as His. He Himself is the best exposition of this wondrous Psalm.  
Verses 1, 2. My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent. Gethsemane!—there is the key—a prayer unanswered at that time—“If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” It was not possible. He must drink it. “In the night season I am not silent.”  
3. But You are holy, O You that inhabit the praises of Israel. No hard thoughts of God, even when He was forsaken. A forsaken Christ still clings to the Father and ascribes perfect holiness to Him.  
4-6. Our fathers trusted in You: they trusted, and You did deliver them. They cried unto You, and were delivered: they trusted in You, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and not a man: a reproach of men, and despised of the people. How low did Christ descend for our sakes not only as low as man, but still lower! Never was godly man forsaken of God, and yet Jesus was—so He is lower than we are while He hangs upon the tree “a reproach of men, and despised of the people.”  
7, 8. All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that He would deliver Him, let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him. Was not this just what they said at the Cross? Ah, little did they know that He saved others—Himself He could not save, because a matchless love held His hands there, as with diamond rivets.  
9, 10. But You are He that took Me out of the womb: You did make Me hope when I was upon My mother’s breasts. I was cast upon You from the womb: You are My God from My mother’s belly. He remembers His wonderful birth. He was God’s, indeed, from the very first.  
11. Be not far from Me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. They have all gone. Peter and all the rest have fled. There is none to help. And there stand the Scribes and Pharisees and the great men of the nation.  
12-14. Many bulls have compassed Me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round. They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water. All dissolved—nothing could hold together—quite spent and gone.  
14. And all My bones are out of joint: My heart is like wax. He felt the inward sinking fever brought on Him by the wounds He had upon the Cross. “My heart is like wax.”  
14-16. It is melted in the midst of My body. My strength is dried up like a potsherd: and My tongue cleaves to My jaws: and You have brought Me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed Me. There they are—the cruel multitude—thrusting out the tongue and hooting at Him. “For dogs have compassed Me.”

16. The assembly of the wicked has enclosed Me. The hind of the morning is now surrounded by the dogs. He cannot escape.  
16, 17. They pierced My hands and My feet. I may count all My bones: they look and stare upon Me. Horrible, to the tender, modest soul of Jesus, were those vile stares of the ribald multitude as they gazed upon Him.  
18-22. They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture. But be not You far from Me, O LORD: O My Strength, hasten You to help Me. Deliver My soul from the sword; My darling from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion’s mouth: for You have heard Me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare Your name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise You. The sun that was darkened, now shines again. The Savior’s griefs are over. A calm is spread over His mind. He is about to say, “It is finished!” and His heart is comforted. We leave that passage there.

*SONG OF SOLOMON 1.*  
Now, concerning our love to Him, let us read a few verses of the Song of Solomon, first Chapter. You have been introduced to the Beloved, red with His own blood, but never so lovely as in His passion.

Verses 1, 2. The song of songs, which is Solomon’s. Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth. No name. Is any name needed? What name is good enough for Him, our best Beloved? He plunges into the subject through excess of love! He forgets the name. “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.”

2, 3. For Your love is better than wine. Because of the savor of Your good ointments Your name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love You. There is such a sweetness in the name. It is not like a box of ointment shut up, but like a sweet perfume that fills the room. For the merits of Jesus are so sweet that they perfume Heaven itself! It was not on Calvary alone that that sweet ointment was known—it was known in the Seventh Heaven!

4. Draw me, we will run after You. We want to get near to Christ, but we cannot. “Draw me,” we cry, “we will run after You.”  
4. The king has brought me into His chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine: the upright love You. The wine shall help us to remember Him tonight when we come to His Table, but we will remember Him more than wine.  
5. I am black, but comely, O you daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. A strange contrast is a Believer. He is black in himself, but he is comely in Christ. In himself he is foul as the smoke-dried tents of Kedar—but in his Lord he is as comely and rich as the curtains of Solomon!  
6, 7. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother’s children were angry with me: they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept. Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions? A few verses of the next Chapter.

CHAPTER 2  
Song of Solomon 2:1. I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. So He is, and much more than that—

*“Nature, to make His beauties known,  
Must mingle colors quite unknown.”*

So rich is He—rose and lily both in one—  
*“White is His soul, from blemish free,  
Red with the blood He shed for Me.”*

2. As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters. His Church stands out like a fair lily in a thorn-brake—separate and distinct—often suffering, standing where she does not wish to be, but all the lovelier by contrast. But if Christ praises His Church, she praises Him again.

3, 4. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love. So full of joy is she that she can bear it no longer. She seems ready to faint with bliss!

5-7. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am love sick. His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me. I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem—By every lovely, timid, tender, chaste thing—

7. By the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, till He please. If I have fellowship with Him—if I am near His Cross—if I am drinking in His love, oh, do not hinder me! Do not call me away! Do not break the spell, but let me go on with this blessed daydream, which is truer than reality, itself, till I see Him face to face, when the day breaks and the shadows flee away!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1373 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 16.22

OUR LAST JOURNEY  
NO. 1373

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 9, 1877, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“When a few years are come, then I shall go the way from where I shall not return.”  
Job 16:22.**

THE season of the year may well remind us of our mortality. The corn, which a few weeks ago was green and vigorous, has now, for the most part, yielded to the sickle. Many flowers which adorned our gardens have exchanged their bloom for ripening seed. The year has commenced to die—its glory and prime have gone. The dews of evening are heavy and the mists linger in the morning, for the summer heat is declining. The leaves are just upon the turn and the fall of the year is close at hand. These are Creation’s warnings, reminding us that the Lord has set a harvest for us and that we all fade as a leaf.

Nature has her prophets as well as Revelation and Autumn in his rugged garb is one of them. He has now come to us with this solemn message, “The harvest is passed and the summer is ended; prepare to meet your God!” In addition to the warnings of Nature, we have lately been saluted by voices from Divine Providence. Loud calls have come to us, of late, from almost every part of our Church work. Death is come up into our windows and is entered into our palaces. Death, who seldom comes into the Orphanage, has forced his cruel hand into our nest of young ones and has taken from there the widow’s child.

A funeral has left our gates and little boys have gathered around a grave to see one like themselves laid in the silent earth. Death has set his axe, also, against the College and has cut down one of our growing trees, upon which there were abundant tokens of future fruitfulness. Our brother Winter had sharpened his sword for the conflict and was just about to leave us for actual service, when, in a few days his strength departed and he was not. Death has come, also, among the ministers who were once our students and were our crown of rejoicing as laborers for the Lord.

One of the ablest and best of them has put a whole town in mourning, for he has been taken Home at an early age, when he had already become foremost for usefulness. Middlesborough mourns our brother Priter with no common sorrow. Beyond all this, almost every day we have reports of this one and that one in the membership and in the congregation going home. These dying ones are God’s voices to us and I should be unworthy of addressing you if I did not, first, hear them in the silence of my own soul and then endeavor to interpret them for you.

All these things bring to my mind the language of our text, “When a few years are come, then I shall go the way from where I shall not return.” Will they not have the same effect upon you? He that has ears to hear let him

hear! My subject is one upon which it would be quite impossible to say anything new, since death is neither novel nor uncommon, for from the days of Abel until now it has honeycombed the earth with graves. Nor need I seek out elegancies of speech, for these would be incongruous with such a theme.

When we speak of eternal things, the less attempt we make at fluent language the better—such solemn topics are most powerful when suffered to have their own natural voice and speak for themselves. Begone all trifling thoughts! Let the mind put off all joyous apparel and wear, awhile, the shroud. Instead of rising with gaiety, let the imagination bow with solemnity, for now we have to do with the dying chamber, the grave and the Judgment Throne. The blast of the archangel’s trumpet is ringing in our ears and we are to anticipate the day in which we shall receive our final sentence from the Judge of all the earth!

Solemnity, therefore, should possess our minds. Let us shut out the present world and become familiar with the world to come. Very simple and self-evident will be the considerations which I shall set before you. But if you are already moved to a solemn frame of mind, you will be prepared to derive profit from them. May God the Holy Spirit bless the Word and by its means prepare us for our last day of which the text speaks so plainly.

First, then, let us realize our inevitable journey—“I shall go the way from where I shall not return.” Secondly, let us contemplate its nearness—“When a few years are come.” Thirdly, let us consider our nonreturn from the journey—“From where I shall not return.” And then we shall close, in the fourth place, by enquiring where we are going. We are going from where we shall not return, but to what place are we bound? Is it endless bliss or ceaseless woe?

I. First, then, let us REALIZE OUR INEVITABLE JOURNEY. I desire that these words may be earnestly taken up in a personal manner by each of us. The language is in the singular number. “I shall go the way from where I shall not return.” Let us apply it, each one, to himself. The fact that all men are mortal has little power over our minds, for we always make a tacit exception and put off the evil day for ourselves. We acknowledge ourselves to be mortal, but do not expect to die just now. Even the aged look forward to a continuance of life and the consumptive dream of possible recovery.

I will not, therefore, remind you so much of the general truth, but place before you the individual, pointed, personal declaration of the text. “I.” The preacher. You, each one of you looking upon the preacher now—“I shall go the way from where I shall not return.” As surely as you live, you will die! It may help you to realize this fact if I ask you to accompany me, first of all, into the chamber of a dying man. As you look upon him I entreat you to remember that you, yourself, will lie there in the same condition before long.

It is sometimes my duty—and a very hard and painful task it is—to communicate to sick and dying persons the fact that it is not possible that they should recover. One beats about the bush a little, but at last you come with tenderness to the sad point and say, “Friend, do you know that there is very little hope, if any, that you can recover? In fact, it is as nearly certain as a thing can be that you must die. Your physicians are compelled to believe that your end is near.” The news is taken in different ways—sometimes it is not believed. At other times it occasions a thrill of pain which wounds your heart and cuts your soul to the quick.

In many cases it is received with calm, patient resignation, but frequently I have the tidings accepted with joy and the man of God has said, “It is a thing I have longed for! Now shall I be rid of this weary pain and see the face of Him whom my soul loves.” Yet it is a solemn business. Take it how you may—solemn to those who tell the news and more solemn, still, to those who hear it. Look, then, at the poor dying man wasting away before your eyes. He must now go to his long home. He must go. No one can delay his departure. The chariot is at the door. If he could offer all the gold of the Indies he could not bribe inexorable Death. No, he may be master of a mint of treasure, but it cannot buy him an hour’s life. His time is come and he must go.

His beloved wife would gladly detain him, but he must be torn from her embrace. His children weep, but he must not stay to dry their tears. A kind friend would almost make an exchange and die in his place, but there can be no proxies here. There is no discharge in this war. It is appointed unto all men once to die and die he must. The hour is come! His pulse is slow! His eyes are glazing! Look at him! Do you not feel for a man in such solemn circumstances? There must you, also, lie—and thus must you, also, depart. I ask you to place yourself in his place and try, this morning, to feel as he must feel, seeing it is absolutely certain that to such a condition you, also, must come, unless, indeed, the Lord should descend from Heaven with a shout, of which we know so little as to when it may be.

How the individuality of a man comes out in his dying hour! What an important being he becomes! You think more of that one man, while dying, than of all the thousands of the living who parade our streets. No matter who he is, he is dying and we tread softly. Poor man, he must now die and die alone. And now how important his character becomes! His life, his own life, is now being put into the balance and he is looking back upon it. It is the most important thing in the universe to him. His outward circumstances are now a small matter—his life is the main consideration. Was he righteous or wicked? Did he fear God or despise Him?

Whether he was rich or poor, his rank and station are subjects of indifference. The hangings of the bed are of very small account—the man who lies there is the only concern. Whether he is now waited upon by the best physician, hired by the costliest fee, or whether he lies in the hospital tended by gentle charity, it is the man, himself, the man’s soul, the man’s personal character that is now seen in all its grandeur, demanding his whole thought. Whether he is a peer or peasant, king or serf, it is much the same to each man to die. Differences on the dying bed arise out of character and not out of rank.

Now he has to face, for himself, the great things of eternity and cannot leave them to another. He used to hear about eternity as one of the mass, but now he has to experience it alone—by himself. Into the cold river his own feet must descend, the cool waves must chill his blood, death must close his eyes and into the unknown future he must plunge! No brother’s hand can grasp his when he has quit the body. No fellow mortal can fly side by side with him through the unknown tracks. How vividly the individuality of the man comes out and the need of a personal interest in the great salvation!

How much it is to be desired that it could be made quite as plain under happier circumstances. And yet how clear it is that each one of us must believe in the Savior for himself. We must each serve God personally and each have a good hope through Divine Grace worked in his own soul. Will men never think of this till they come to die? And now that candle burning in the sick man’s chamber sheds a strange light upon his past life. Some said he was fortunate, but if he was sinful, where is his good fortune? Men said he was a poor unsuccessful muddler. But he will be worth as much, in a short time, as if he had been the most prudent and had prospered in the world—for here all men are the same—“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb and naked must I return there.”

So must it be. In death the financial element looks contemptible and the moral and the spiritual come to be most esteemed. How did he live? What were his thoughts? What was his heart towards God? Did he repent of sin? Does he still repent? Does he believe in Jesus? Is he resting upon the finished work of Christ, or not? He, perhaps, failed to ask himself some of those questions a little while ago, but now, if he is in his sober senses, he is compelled to put his soul through its paces. How does his heart answer when cross-examined? Now he must reach down the accounts, the memoranda and the day-book of his life—and he must look to what he did and what he was—and what he is.

Ah me! How will the reckoning end? What will the sum total be? It matters little what he was before his fellow men, whose judgments are fallible. The question is, what was he before the all-searching eyes of the Most High God? Such an account you will have to render. The individuality of the man is clear—and the man’s character before God. And now it is also evident that death tests all things. If you look upon this poor dying man you see that he is past the time for pretences and shams. You yourself, if you knew but little of him before, feel very concerned to know whether the religion he professed was truthful or not—whether he was really regenerate or merely dreamed that he was. If you wish to answer that question, how much more does that poor dying man want to know for himself?

Here let me tell you that very much of the comfort with which we wrap ourselves up in days of health proves to be very sorry stuff when we come to die. While you are in good health and strength, you often derive a measure of peace of mind from things which will not stand the fiery ordeal of an approaching eternity. Some of the best men that ever lived have found this out. You may know the name of Mr. Durham, the author of a famous book on Solomon’s Song, one of the most earnest of Scotland’s ancient preachers.

Some days before he died, he seemed to be in some perplexity about his future well-being, and said to his friend, Mr. Carstairs, “Dear Brother, for all that I have written or preached, there is but one Scripture which I can now remember or dare grip unto, now that I am hastening to the grave. It is this—‘Whoever comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.’ Pray tell me if I dare lay the weight of my salvation upon it.” Mr. Carstairs justly replied, “Brother, you may depend upon it though you had a thousand salvations at hazard.”

You see, it was a plain,, sinner’s text that he rested on. Just as Dr. Guthrie wanted them to sing a bairn’s hymn, so do dying saints need the plain elementary doctrines of the Gospel to rest upon. Those fine ideas and dainty notions of our nearing perfection and becoming completely sanctified, dissolve like the hoar frost in the sun when we come face to face with eternity! Those grand excitements, those high enjoyments and those deep experiences which lead us to think ourselves to be somebodies in the Church of God are of small account in dying moments! Men cannot die on stilts! Death finds out the truth of our condition and blows away, with his cold breath, a heap of chaff which we thought to be good wheat!

Then a man has to look to the mercy of God, to the blood of the Covenant and to the promises of the Gospel—and to cling as a poor needy, guilty sinner to free, rich, Sovereign Grace, or else his spirit will utterly sink. When life is ebbing, nothing will do but the faithful saying, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” I have heard children of God speak in their last moments just as seeking souls speak. They come to God, again, just as they came at first—and they find in Jesus all their hope! Dying men need realities! They need a sinner’s Savior! They need atonement for guilt, for only then can they pass out of the world with hope! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, follow after that which is solid and real, for nothing else will serve your turn when you come to die.

Keep your eyes on that dying man whom I have tried to picture—he is vividly before me now. He must go. There is no alternative. He cannot resist the power which now summons him to depart. Willing or unwilling, it matters not—he must go. The sheriff’s officer has him in his grip and he must go. Is he prepared? Pray God he may be! But whether he is or not, it makes no difference. He must leave all and take his journey. Has he children dependent upon him and a wife who needs his support? Their necessities cannot detain him, he must go. Has he made his will, or has he left all his business affairs in a tangle? Whichever it is, he must go.

The tide which bears all before it has seized his boat and even now it drifts down the stream. That man who must go is yourself—projected only a little way further into time! Can you not realize what will certainly be the fact? Can you not already hear the ticking of the watch at your bed in the silence of your last night? Can you not anticipate that mysterious consultation of physicians, when each one admits to his colleagues his incompetence to suggest a remedy? It is clear that the hour is come—you must go.

This must happen to every mortal man and woman sitting or standing in this house this morning. Will you not lay it to heart?

Now survey another scene to help you realize your departure. Look no longer on the dying, but bend over the dead. It is all over. He has breathed his last and he now lies upstairs in a darkened chamber. A loving one has stolen in and tremblingly lifted the coffin lid to gaze once more upon the dear face and say another adieu—but there can be no more of this. The friends have gathered and the mourners must go through the streets and bear him to the tomb. That funeral is yours! The corpse is borne to the grave and on the road it silently preaches to all passersby. Archbishop Leighton one morning was asked by a friend, “Have you heard a sermon?” He said, “No, but I met a sermon, for I met a dead man carried out to be buried.”

Let every funeral be a discourse to you. Within a short time it will happen to each one of us that we must lie within the narrow limits of the coffin. And then will come, for us, the opened grave, the lowering of our corpse and the gathering of mourners around it. Upon your coffin lid and mine the mold shall fall—“Earth to earth, dust to dust and ashes to ashes.” A green mound, a daisy or two amid the grass, a friend to bring a few fading flowers to scatter on our graves. Perhaps a head-stone, perhaps not—to this we must all come. “Here he lies” is the universal epitaph. On the lap of earth you will lie. There shall I, also, lie. Realize it—it is so near, so sure! When a few years shall come we shall be with the unnumbered throng!

Now let your realization go a little further. Can you picture the spirit of a man as it leaves the body? I confess my imagination does not enable me to picture it, myself, and certainly my words are not competent to convey to you what little I can realize in my mind. The soul finds itself rid of materialism—how will it feel when it has shaken itself loose of its shell of clay? I cannot tell. We all love this earthly house of our tabernacle and leave it with reluctance—

*“For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,  
This pleasing anxious being ever resigned, Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day, Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?”*

But it does not matter what lingering looks we cast, our soul will have done with the body in its present fashion and it must, for a while, dwell apart from all materialism.

At once it must come before God! Its state will immediately, after death, be known to it beyond a question. In a moment it will know beyond all doubt whether it is accepted before God! And beyond all hope it will know whether it is reprobate and condemned! That knowledge will at once commence its happiness, a happiness which will be increased as ages roll on—or that knowledge will at once commence its misery, which will deepen evermore! The soul will abide in the disembodied state for a while. And then will come the clarion note of the Resurrection trumpet and the body shall rise again to be again inhabited by the soul.

What will the meeting be? What will be the sensation of the remarriage of mind with matter, of soul with body? We know not. The Resurrection is the blessed hope of the Christian, but it is a terrible dread to the ungodly. The soul shall never more return to the world’s cares, nor to the world at all as the world now is, but it shall again inhabit the body and stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive the verdict from the lips of Him who is appointed Judge of all mankind! The Divine verdict is given and the soul must continue its journey. Still onward must it go—whether accepted or condemned—onward it must go.

Onward, exulting in a bliss unspeakable like to the Divine, if Christ pronounces it blessed! Onward, in a misery unutterable if Christ pronounces it “cursed.” I do not know whether you are able, in imagination, to place yourself in such a condition, but in such a condition you will certainly be found before long. You will be stripped of this house of clay and so you will die, but you will live again, yes, live forever! You will live to be judged, to be justified or to be condemned! And then you will live forever in happiness or torment—and all this you will know in a short time to come. Thus I have helped you as best I could and, I fear, but poorly, to realize the inevitable journey.

II. Now, let us very briefly CONTEMPLATE ITS MEANING. Very soon we shall have to start upon our solemn and mysterious pilgrimage. If we should fulfill the entire tale of our years, the allotted period of human life is but short. The text in the Hebrew speaks of “years of number.” They are so few that a child may count them. At the commencement of life, the view before us looks like an endless avenue, but as we advance along the path, the end seems very near and we perceive how short our time really is.

Middle life has but a short view, either backwards or forwards. As for some of you, upon whom age is descending, you should be well enough aware how short, for certain, your time for lingering here must be. Your lease has almost run out! Do you doubt it? What are 70 or 80 years, if we live so long? But we are further warned by the consideration that we cannot safely reckon upon the whole of that brief period, for children are carried away and young men are cut down by the scythe—and we frequently see the maiden, before she reaches the full bloom of her years, carried off with Death as her bridegroom.

Does not the text say, “a few years”? Read it months, read it days, read it hours, read it minutes, for we cannot tell how soon we must set sail for the far-off land! In a short time we must join the great caravan and cross the desert to a land from where we shall not return. Life is so short that we have scarcely begun to live before we are called to die! Therefore, dear Brothers and Sisters, if there is anything grievous to be borne, we may well bear it cheerfully, for it cannot last long. When a few years are come we shall be gone from the thorn and the briar which now prick and wound!

Therefore, if there is any work to be done for Jesus, let us do it at once—or else we shall never do it—for when a few years are come we shall have gone from where we shall not return! Therefore, if there is salvation to be sought, let us seek it, for soon we shall be where salvation is no more proclaimed! And if worldly goods are possessed by us, let us hold them very loosely, for in a short time we must leave them! Let us lay them out for God’s Glory, for our stewardship will not last long and we shall

soon have to give an account! And therefore, above all things, we must realize the need of being always prepared to die. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, he who is to die next had need be ready. Who is he?

An old man who used to sell goods from house to house had an eccentric cry of his own which he was known to utter whenever he sold goods at the door. He would cry out aloud, “Who’ll be the next? Who’ll be the next?” One day a funeral passed just as he had given out his usual cry and, strange enough, sounded the question—“Who’ll be the next?” I may ask with solemn emphasis whenever the cemetery’s gates are opened and the funeral passes through, “Who will be the next? Who will be the next?”

Your hymn says, “Who will be the next to follow Jesus?” But I must ask, this morning, “Who will be the next among us to be carried to the silent tomb?” To be ready to depart is wisdom. It is the mark of the beast that it looks not beyond the present mouthful of grass which it crops from the ground—it never thinks of the butcher’s knife and the shambles. Be not as the brutes which perish, but, being gifted with minds, use them to look before you! It is the mark of the fool that he never looks before he leaps but is content with present enjoyments though they leave him penniless! Be not as the fool, but be prudent and look before you and consider your latter end!

It is the mark of the worldling that he confines his thoughts within the narrow range of time. The Christian looks into the everlasting future as an immortal being should do. Be not worldlings, lest you perish with them! May God make you wise unto salvation! To be prepared to die is an immediate duty—will you neglect it? Some imagine that to be prepared to die would involve a life of perpetual gloom. If it did so, it were well to face it! When a man comes to die and finds himself prepared, even if he had endured 50 years of perpetual anguish of heart and had denied himself every worldly comfort, he would think himself well repaid to have the prospect of a blessed future!

Heaven at any price is well secured. A good hope through Grace is worth a thousand worlds. But it is a mistake to suppose that melancholy attends upon fitness to die. Why should it? To be unprepared for death and to know that it may come at any moment is a fair reason for sadness—but to have that great matter secure must surely be a source of joy! To be prepared to die is to be prepared to live! To be ready for eternity is, in the best sense, to be ready for time. Who so fit to live on earth as the man who is fit to live in Heaven? Who has brightness of the eyes? Is it not the man who has looked within the gate of pearl and seen his place prepared among the blessed?

Who has lightness of heart? Is it not the man who is unloaded of his sin and has found mercy through the blood of Christ? Who can go to his bed and sleep in peace and wake with joy—who but the man that is reconciled to God by the death of His Son? Who has the best of this world as well as the world to come? Is it not he to whom death has now become a changed thing, a cherub that has lost its way—no longer destruction, but rather development and admission into a higher and nobler life? Since readiness for death is peace and happiness and is, above measure, necessary in prospect of the eternal state, let us see to it at once!

We are to be gone so soon—let us gird up our loins for our solemn journey. There is no time to spare! The end is drawing near. Every flying moment is hastening on our last hour. It is high time to awake out of sleep and in earnest make ready to meet the Bridegroom who is already on His way!

III. Now, thirdly, I want you to CONSIDER THE FACT THAT WE SHALL NOT RETURN—“When a few years are come, then I shall go the way from where I shall not return.” To the occupations of life—to sow, reap, and mow. To the abodes of life—to the store and to the country house. To the pleasures of life—the festival and the family—we shall not return. To the engagements of the sanctuary, the communion table, the pulpit, or the pew—we shall not return. To the chamber of love, to the hearth of affection, to the walk of friendship—we shall not return. To hopes, fears, joys and pains—we shall not return. To summer’s flowers and winter’s snows we shall not return.

To our brothers, children, husband, or wife, we shall not return. To nothing that is done under the sun shall we return! Soul, unsaved Soul, to the land of the Gospel and the Mercy Seat you shall not return! If you die unsaved you will not be able to come back to the House of God to hear the ministry of reconciliation! You will hear no more invitations and expostulations, neither will Jesus be set before you as your hope! You will not be able to come back to the Prayer Meeting and to the earnest entreaties of a godly mother and other loving friends—nor even back to your Bible and to the opportunity of searching it that you may find eternal life!

You will not return to find space for repentance, nor a second opportunity for prayer, nor another season for believing in Jesus. It shall be said concerning you, “He which is filthy, let him be filthy still.” Where the tree falls there must it lie. Once pass the barriers of life unsaved and you cannot return to a new probation. The die is cast. Beloved Christian Friends, we need not wish to return! What is there here that should either tempt us to stay in this world or induce us to return to it if we could? Still, I could suppose, in a future state, some reasons for wishing to return. I can suppose we might have it in our hearts, for instance, to wish to undo the mischief which we did in life.

If a dying man should receive mercy in his last moments, one might imagine him as desiring to return to earth to tell the glad tidings and beseech his family and friends to seek salvation. Who would not wish, for once, to plead with his children if he felt that he had neglected his duty to them? A man might wish, even if he were in the unquenchable flames, to come back to earth or to send a messenger, as the rich man did, to tell his brothers and sisters lest they should come into the place of torment. Selfishness might wish to be spared the reproaches of those we helped to ruin. But you cannot come back or send back to undo your ill deeds!

Therefore seek to mend matters now. Avoid the doing of evil and, as for that which is already done, confess it before God and seek to administer the antidote by an earnest and godly life. You cannot come back to carry out those good resolutions which, as yet, are as unripe fruit. Young man,

you mean to do good some day, do you not? You have it in your heart to lead a grand life. Well, you must do it now, for you cannot come hack to revise your conduct. It will not be possible to correct and amend it, for death stereotypes all. After death you cannot return to develop your promises into performances! Therefore resolve to do them now.

We shall not be able to come back to finish the work we have began. The half-built house will never be completed by our labor. We have many projects which are but half-developed—we had better proceed with them or they will never be completed. If we leave our ships on the stocks, we shall not be able to return to launch them. When our lives below are at an end we have reached the finis of our earthly career. Neither can we come back to rectify any mistake we have made in our lifework, or even return to look after it, in order to preserve that which was good in it.

I sometimes think if I were in Heaven I could almost wish to visit my work at the Tabernacle, to see whether it will abide the test of time and prosper when I am gone. Will you keep to the Truth of God? Will you hold to the grand old doctrines of the Gospel? Or will this Church, like so many others, go astray from the simplicity of its faith and set up gaudy services amid false doctrine? I think I should turn over in my grave if such a thing could be. God forbid it! But there will be no coming back and, therefore, we must build well, rejecting all wood, hay and stubble, using nothing but gold, silver and precious stones!

We must build quickly to get the work done, but fast as we labor we must do it surely and honestly and thoroughly, for the fire will try it when we are gone. It will be a pity that our work should suffer loss, even though we, ourselves, should be saved. We cannot return to save the burning mass, nor to rebuild the ruin, but we shall, doubtless, see and know what comes of it. “Establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, the work of our hands establish it.” Therefore, dear Brother, if your hands find anything to do, do it at once with all your might. If your heart suggests anything that should be done, let it be done at once!

See to the bringing up of your children, the conversion of your neighbors, the laying out of your talents for Christ, the consecration of your substance, the propagation of the precious Truths of God which have been revealed to you. If a good work is to be done, do it! Do it, do it at once. The curfew of time is sounding. Your own vesper bell is ringing out and these are the words which I set to its music—“What you do, do quickly, for when a few years are come, you must go where you will not return.” Again I say, “He that has ears to hear, let him hear!”

IV. And now, lastly, let us ENQUIRE TO WHERE WE SHALL GO? In some respects it happens alike to all, for all go upon the long journey. All go to the grave, which is the place of all living. It matters very little where our grave shall be—whether beneath a weeping willow or in the solemn deeps. The best of all, I think, that can happen to any of us is to be laid where we shall quickly mold into the common earth, that none may afterwards profane our bones. But if they do, what does it matter? We shall know nothing of it and precious in the sight of the Lord will our dust be, though it is trod under foot or blown by the winds! We shall all die and then we shall all pass into the disembodied state.

But of what character shall my death be and where shall I spend the time of waiting? May I urge upon you to ask yourselves this question? May I press a second enquiry upon you? If at this very instant you were to leave your body, where would your soul be? You may know very readily. Where does it delight to be now? I once visited an aged Christian woman who said to me when she was near death, “Sir, I do not think that God will appoint me my portion with the ungodly, for I could never bear their company. I hope I shall be among His people, though I am very unworthy, for I never was so happy as when I was with them.”

Yes, you will keep the same company forever! The sheep shall be with the sheep and the goats with the goats. Your delight prophesies your destiny. What you have chosen here shall be your portion hereafter. The scoffer, the drunk, the liar, the unchaste—they shall be your comrades in Hell if you were so here. If you love sin, you shall be steeped up to the throat in it—and it shall burn around you like liquid fire! If you have loved the wages of unrighteousness, you shall receive them in full tale, for the wages of sin is death—and Death shall rage about you and gnaw you with his undying worm. But if your delights have been with your God, you shall dwell with Him! If you have rejoiced in Christ Jesus, you shall reign with Him! And if you have loved His people, you shall abide with them forever!

Your disembodied state shall be spent either with Christ and His people or with sin and sinners. If not in Paradise with Jesus, you know where you must lie. Did not our Lord, Himself, tell us of the great gulf which cannot be passed and of the torment of those upon the other side? You may know it all before yon clock strikes again! Think of it and tremble! Then, as I have already stated, we shall all go forward in our journey towards Resurrection. We shall, every one of us, stand in the latter day upon the earth. To the righteous this is the greatest joy. “And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” Oh, blessed hope! It were worthwhile to die with this in prospect! A child of God who died not long ago said to one who stood by, “I have enjoyed more, in the two hours I have been dying, than in the 50 years that I was living. It is so blessed a thing to die, for I have a clear prospect of the Resurrection!”

But, oh, to have no blessed Resurrection before you! Instead, to have the certainty of rising to shame and to everlasting contempt! To have nothing but the rising so that both body and soul may be cast into Hell till the tongue that now dares to curse will ask in vain for a drop of water to cool its burning! To know that your every limb shall be made to suffer because it yielded itself up to be an instrument of unrighteousness and of rebellion against God! Which shall your resurrection be—a blessing or a horror? God help you to decide!

Yes, may the Holy Spirit so work upon your heart and will that you may lay hold on Jesus at once and find eternal life in Him! Speedily shall come the great and terrible scene of the Judgment, when all that are on the earth and in the sea shall stand before the Great White Throne. What an

assembly! These mighty gatherings in the Tabernacle and the crowds we hear of on great festival days, are but as a drop in a bucket compared with the innumerable hordes of men that shall spring up from their graves when the last trumpet sounds!

If you can think of anything, then, besides your Judge, you will cast your eyes as far as you can see, and over hill and dale you will see myriads of our race. Men have been so numerous a host that they will cover every speck of earth! Yes, and the sea, itself, shall yield, for once, a solid basis for them to stand upon—and all shall teem like a hive when the bees swarm around it—the world shall appear black with the multitude of men! And what a sight when the Assessor shall sit upon His Throne and He shall begin to divide them as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. To the right! To the left! Blessed! Cursed! Come! Depart!

Oh, the terror of that voice which shall pronounce a separate sentence upon each of the two great classes into which the population of earth shall then be divided! On which side would you be if, now, instead of this poor voice saluting your ears, there should suddenly be a transformation scene and Christ should sit upon His Throne—and you and I are there to be judged before Him? And then, after the judgment comes the end, but what then? Do not flatter yourselves with the idea, you ungodly, that you shall be annihilated! You have chosen sin. You have deliberately rejected Christ and if you continue to do so you have settled your own destiny— and settled it forever! Look the danger in the face like honest men—and then escape from the wrath to come!

But if you believe in Jesus now, look your future in the face and rejoice, for your redemption draws near! See body and soul together—and both perfect—and Christ the Judge acquitting you, saying, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.” Can you conceive your overflowing joy, your ecstatic delight? The presence of angels! The fellowship of perfect saints! The sight of your Savior! Communion with your God! And all this forever and forever! Why, I think it makes me willing to use my solemn text no longer as a dirge, but as a sonnet and say right joyously, “When a few years are come, I shall go from where I shall not return, nor ever wish to return, but shall be forever with the Lord.” Amen, so let it be!

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÷Job 17.1

“READY, YES, READY!”  
NO. 2868

A SERMON  
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON A THURSDAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1861-2.

**“Ready to perish.” “Ready to forgive.” “The graves are ready for me.” Isaiah 27:13. Psalm 86:5. Job 17:1.**

WHEN attempting to prepare for this service, I found it impossible to fix my mind upon any one subject. This afternoon I had to take rather a long journey to visit a friend who is sick unto death. And at his bedside I trust I have learned some lessons of encouragement and have been animated by witnessing the joy and peace which God grants to His children in their declining hours. Finding that I could not fix upon any one subject, I thought that I would have three. It may be that out of the three, there will be one intended by Divine Grace for a third of the audience, the second for another third and the other for the rest, so that there will be a portion of meat in due season for all. You know, dear Friends, that the motto of our navy is, “Ready, yes, ready!” That is something like my present subject, for I have three texts in which the word, “Ready,” occurs, each time in a different connection.

I. The first text will be especially addressed to those who are under concern of soul, having been led, by the enlightening influence of the Divine Spirit, to see their state by nature and to tremble in the prospect of their deserved doom. The text which will suit their case is in Isaiah 27:13—“READY TO PERISH.” “They shall come which were ready to perish.”

By nature, all men, whether they know it or not, are ready to perish. Human nature is, like a blind man, always in danger. No, worse than that, it is like a blind man upon the verge of a tremendous cliff, ready to take the fatal step which will lead to his destruction. The most callous and proud, the most careless and profane cannot, by their indifference or their boasting, altogether evade the apprehension that their state, by nature, is alarming and defenseless. They may try to laugh it away from their minds, but they cannot laugh away the fact. They may shut their eyes to it, but they shall no more escape, by shutting their eyes, than does the silly ostrich escape from the hunter by thrusting its head into the sand. Whether you will have it so, or not, fast young man in the dawn of your days—whether you will have it so, or not, blustering merchant in the prime of your age—whether you will have it so, or not, hardened old man in the petrified state of your moral conscience—it is so— you are ready to perish!

Your jeers cannot deliver you. Your sarcasms about eternal wrath cannot quench it. And all your contemptuous scorn and your arrogant pride cannot evade your doom—they do but hasten it. There are some persons, however, who are aware of their danger—to them I speak. They are fitly described by the Spirit of God in these words of the Prophet— “The great trumpet shall be blown and they shall come which were ready to perish.” Having passed through this anguish, myself, I think I can describe, from experience, what some of you are now suffering.

You are ready to perish, in the first place, because you feel sure that you will perish. You did not think so once, but you do now. Once you could afford to put away the thought, with a laugh, as a matter which might, or might not, be true, but, anyway, it did not much concern you. But now you feel that you will be lost as surely as if it could be demonstrated to you by logic. In fact, the Divine logic of the Law of God has thundered it into your soul and you know it. You feel it to be certain that you shall, before long, be driven from the Presence of God with that terrible sentence, “Depart, you cursed.” If any unbeliever should tell you that there is no wrath to come, you would reply, “There is, for I feel it is due me. My conscience tells me that I am already condemned and before long I am quite certain to drink of the wormwood and the gall of the wrath of God.”

You have signed your own death warrant, you have put on the black cap and condemned yourself. Or, rather, you have pleaded guilty before your Judge—you have said, “Guilty, my Lord,” and now you think you see before your eyes the scaffold and yourself ready to be executed. You feel it to be so sure that you even anticipate the Judgment Day—you dreamed of it, the other night, and you thought you heard the trumpet of the archangel opening all the graves and wakening all the dead. You have already, in imagination, stood before the bar of God! You feel your sentence to be so certain that conscience has read it over in your hearing and anticipated its terrors. You are among those who are ready to perish, so permit me to say that I am glad you have come here, for this is the very spot where God delights to display His pardoning Grace! He is ready to save those who are thus ready to perish. Those who write themselves down as lost are the special objects of our Savior’s mission of mercy, for, “the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

You are ready to perish, in another sense, for you feel as if your perishing was very near. You are like the dying man who gasps for breath and thinks that each gasp will be his last—his pulse is feeble, his tongue is dry with feverish heat, the clammy sweat is on his brow. The Valley of the Shadow of Death casts its gloomy shade on his pale cheeks and he feels that he will soon die. Is it not thus that some of you feel just now? You feel that you are coming near to the wrath of God. I have known the day when, as I lay down to rest, I dreaded the thought that, perhaps, I should never awake in this world, or, at mid-day I have walked in the fields and wondered that the earth did not open and swallow me up! A terrible noise was in my ears—my soul was tossed to and fro—I longed to find a refuge, but there seemed to be none, while always ringing in my ears were the words, “The wrath to come!” “The wrath to come!” “The wrath to come!”

Oh, how vividly is the wrath to come pictured before the eyes of the awakened sinner! He does not look upon it as a thing that is to come in ten, twelve, or 20 years, but as a thing that may be before long, yes, even today! He looks upon himself as ready to perish because his final overthrow appears to be so close. I am glad if any of you are in this plight, for God does not thus alarm men unless He has purposes of mercy concerning them and designs for their good! He has made you fear you are perishing that you may have no perishing to fear! He has brought it home to you in this life that He may remove it forever from you in the life that is to come! He has made you tremble now, that you may not tremble then. He has put before you these dreadful things that, as with a fiery finger, they may point you to Christ, the only Refuge and, as with a thundering voice, they may cry to you, as the angels cried to Lot, “Escape for your life, look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain! Escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed!”

It may be that I am also addressing some who not only realize the sureness and the nearness of their destruction, but they have begun to feel it. “Begun to feel it,” asks someone, “is that possible?” Yes, that it is. When day and night God’s hand is heavy upon us and our moisture is turned into the drought of summer, we begin to know something of what a sinner feels when Justice and the Law are let loose upon him. Did you ever read John Bunyan’s, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners? There was a man who had, even here, foretastes of the miseries of the lost. And there are some of us who can, even now, hardly look back to the time of our conviction without a shudder. I hope there is not a creature alive who has had deeper convictions than I had, or five years of more intolerable agony than those which crushed the very life out of my youthful spirit. But this I can say—that terror of conscience, that alarm about the wrath of God, that intense hatred of past sin and yet consciousness of my inability to avoid it in the future were such combinations of thought that I can only describe them in George Herbert’s words—

*“My thoughts are all a case of knives  
Breaking my poor heart.”*

Oh, the tortures of the man who feels his guilt, but does not know the remedy for it! To look leprosy in the face, but not to know that it may be healed! To walk the hospital and hear that there is no physician there! To see the flame, but not to know that it can be quenched! To be in the dungeon, but never to know the rescue and deliverance! O you that are ready to perish, I sympathize with you in your present sufferings, but I do not lament them! This is the way in which God begins with those whom He intends to bless—not to the same degree in all, but yet after the same kind. He destroys our confidence in our own works and then gives us confidence in Christ’s work. You know how Bunyan describes Christian as being much tumbled up and down in his mind. And when his wife and children came round about him, he could only tell them that the city in which they lived was to be destroyed—and though his easygoing neighbors told him not to believe it and not to make such a fuss about it, the truth had come home to him with too much power to be put away. Atheist might say it was all a lie and Pliable might give slight heed to it and pretend to believe it for a season, but Christian knew it to be true, so he ran to the wicket gate, and the Cross, that he might escape from the wrath to come. To the careless, these words, “Ready to perish,” should sound an alarm. May God the Holy Spirit, while I preach upon the second text, enable me to blow the great trumpet of the jubilee! May the gladsome sound reach the heart of him that is ready to perish! May he know that Divine Mercy brought him here that he might find a God ready to pardon!

II. My second text is in Psalm 86:5—“READY TO FORGIVE.” Does not that ring like a silver bell? The other was a doleful note, like that of St. Sepulcher’s bell when it tolls the knell of a criminal about to be executed—“Ready to perish.” But this rings like a marriage peal—“Ready to forgive. Ready to forgive.” What does it mean when it says that God is ready to forgive?

“Ready” means, as you all know, prepared. A man is not ready to go by railway until his trunk is packed and he is about to start. A man cannot be said to be ready to emigrate till he has the means to pay his passage and the different things needed for his transit, and for his settling down when he gets to his destination. No road is ready till it is cleared. Nothing is ready, in fact, till it is prepared. Sinner, God is ready to forgive—that is, everything is prepared by which you may be forgiven! The road used to be blocked up but Jesus Christ has, with His Cross, tunneled every mountain, filled every valley and bridged every chasm so that the way of pardon is now fully prepared. There is no need for God to say, “I would pardon this sinner, but how shall My justice be honored?” Sinner, God’s justice has been satisfied, the sin of all who believe, or who ever will believe, was laid upon Christ when He died upon the tree! If you believes in Him, your sin was punished upon Him and it was forever put away by the great Atonement which He offered, so that, now, the righteous God can come out of the ivory palace of His mercy, stretch out His hands of love and say, “Sinner, I am reconciled to you. Be you reconciled to Me.”—

*“Sprinkled now with blood, the Throne,  
Why beneath your burdens groan?  
All the wrath on Him was laid  
Justice owns the ransom paid.”*

In the case of the ancient Israelites, it was necessary that the sacrifice should be slain and be burned upon the altar. So, the Divine Victim has been slain upon Calvary. Once and for all, the Sacrifice for sin has been offered by Jesus, accepted by the Father and witnessed by the Holy Spirit. God is ready—that is to say, He is prepared—to forgive all who will believe in Jesus Christ! You think that much preparation is needed on your part, but you are greatly mistaken. All things are ready! The oxen and the fatlings are killed, the feast is spread, the servants are sent with the invitations to the banquet—all you have to do, poor Penitent, is to come and sit down and eat with thankfulness to the great Giver of the feast! The bath is filled, O black Sinner, so come and wash! The garment is woven from the top throughout, O you naked, so come and put it on! The price is paid, O you ransomed ones, so take your blood-bought liberty! All is done. “It is finished,” rings from Calvary’s summit! God is ready to forgive!

But the word, “ready,” means something more than prepared. We sometimes use the term to indicate that a thing can be easily done. We ask, “Can you do such-and-such a thing?” “Oh, yes!” you reply, “readily.” Or perhaps we remind you of a promise you have given and ask if you can carry it out. And you say, “Oh, yes! I am quite ready to fulfill my engagement.” Sinner, it is an easy thing for God to forgive you! “Indeed,” you say, “but you don’t know where I was last night.” No, and I don’t want to know. But it is easy for God to pardon anybody who is not in Hell. But you ask, “How can He do it? “He speaks and it is done! He has but to say to you, “Your sins which are many, are all forgiven,” and it is done! Pardon is an instantaneous work! Justification is rapid as a lightning flash. You may be black one moment and as white as alabaster the next! Guilty—absolved! Condemned—Acquitted! Lost—found! Dead— made alive! It takes the Lord no time to do this—He does it easily.

O Brothers and Sisters, if He could make a world with a word. If He could say, “Let there be light,” and there was light—surely, now that Christ has offered up Himself as a bleeding Sacrifice for sin, God has but to speak and the pardon is given! As soon as He says, “I will. Be you clean,” the most leprous sinner is perfectly cleansed! O Sinner, will you not offer the prayer, “Save, Lord, or I perish?” Will you not ask the Lord to forgive you? Since He can so readily forgive, will you not cry, “Jesus, save me, or I die”? Stretch forth your hand, poor trembling woman up yonder, and touch the hem of His garment and you shall be made whole, for He is ready to forgive—that is, He can do it with ease!

Again, the word, “ready,” frequently means promptly or quickly. In this sense, also, God is ready to forgive. I know that some of you imagine that you must endure months of sorrow before you can be forgiven. There is no necessity that you should wait even another hour for this great blessing! After what I have been saying concerning the experience through which others have passed, some of you may fancy that you must be for four or five years floundering about in the Slough of Despond, but there is no need for you to do that. The plan of salvation is this—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Let me give you a picture. Paul and Silas have been thrust into the inner prison at Philippi and their feet made fast in the stocks. Though they have been brutally beaten, they are singing at midnight—singing of pardon bought with blood, singing of the dying and risen Lamb of God and, as they sing— suddenly there is an earthquake. The foundations of the prison shake, the doors fly open and the jailer, fearing that his prisoners have escaped, leaps out, draws his sword and is about to kill himself! But he hears a voice crying, “Do yourself no harm! We are all here.”

He calls for a light, springs in and falls tremblingly at his prisoners’ feet and says, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” What would some of you have said in reply to that question? “Well, you must first believe the guilt of your sin more than you do at present—you had better go home and pray about the matter.” That was not Paul’s answer. He said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.” And, to prove that he was saved, the Apostle baptized him and all his, straightway, and we are expressly told that they all believed. What do you say to that, you old deacons who say, as many country deacons still do, that the young converts ought to be “summered and wintered” before they are baptized? I have known scores of good old souls in the country who have said, “We must not take Mrs. So-and-So into the church. We have not had time to prove her enough.” But the Apostle knew that as they had believed, they were fit to be baptized because they were pardoned—

*“The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in His crucified God,  
His pardon at once He receives,  
Redemption in full through His blood.”*

If the Lord wills, you may be pardoned this very moment. Jehovah needs not months and years in which to write out the charter of your forgiveness and put the great seal of Heaven to it. He can speak the word and swifter than the lightning flash, the message shall come to you, “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven.” And you shall say, “I’m forgiven—

*“‘A monument of Grace  
A sinner saved by blood!  
The streams of love I trace  
Up to the Fountain, God  
And in His sacred bosom see  
Eternal thoughts of love to me.’”*

The word, “ready,” is also frequently used to signify cheerfulness. When a person says to you, “Will you give me your help?” you say, “Oh, certainly, with readiness!” That means with cheerfulness. The Lord loves a cheerful giver and I am sure that He is, Himself, a cheerful Giver. You do not know, poor Soul, how glad God is when He forgives a soul. The angels sang when God made the world, but we do not read that He sang. Yet, in the last chapter of the prophecy of Zephaniah, we read, “The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” Only think of it—the Triune God singing! What a thought—the Deity bursting out into song! And what is this about? It is over His pardoned people, His blood-bought chosen ones! O Soul, you think, perhaps, that God will be hard to be entreated and that He will give His mercy grudgingly! But the mercy of the Lord is as free as the air we breathe. When the sun shines, it shines freely, otherwise it were not the sun. And when God forgives, He forgives freely, else He were not God! Never did water leap from the crystal fountain with half such freeness and generous liberality as Grace flows from the heart of God! He gives forth love, joy, peace and pardon—and He gives them as a king gives to a king! You cannot empty His treasury, for it is inexhaustible. He is not enriched by withholding, nor is He impoverished by bestowing!

Soul, you do libel Him when you think that He is unwilling to forgive you. I once had, as you now have, that hard thought of my loving Lord, that He would not forgive me. I thought He might, perhaps, do so one day, yet I could hardly think so well of Him as to believe that He would. I came to His feet very timidly and said, “Surely, He will spurn me.” I supposed that He would say to me, “Get you gone, you dog of a sinner, for you have doubted My love.” But it was not so. Ah, you should see with what a smile He received the prodigal, with what fond tenderness He clasped him to His breast, with what glad eyes He led him to His house and with what a radiant Countenance He set him by His side, at the head of the table, and said, “Let us eat, and be merry: for this My son was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found.”

I would that I could write upon every heart here and engrave upon every memory those sweet words, “Ready to forgive.” Are there any of you who do not want to be forgiven? The day will come when you will want this blessing. Sailor, are you in this building? Within a little while you may be out upon the lonely sea, the waves may have swallowed up your vessel and you may be clinging to just an oar. When the waters surge around you, how gladly you will remember that God is ready to forgive— but how much better it would be to trust your soul to Him now! Some, whom I am now addressing, will probably die this week. I am not making a rash assertion—my statement is based upon the statistics of mortality. O Soul, you say that it is nothing to you now, but when you are in the article of death—and that may be before another Sabbath’s sun shall rise—how might this note ring like music in your dying ears, “Ready to forgive”!

Am I speaking to some abandoned woman who thinks that she will destroy herself? See you do it not, for God is ready to forgive! Am I addressing some man who is cast out of society as a reprobate for whom nobody cares? Soul, give not up hope, for God is ready to forgive! Though your father has shut the door against you and your mother and sister shun you because of your vices and sins, yet God is ready to forgive you if you will repent and turn from your iniquity! Turn you, turn you—‘tis a brother’s voice that entreats you to turn! By the love with which He pardoned me. By the mercy which made Him pass by my innumerable transgressions, I beg you to turn, no, more, linking my arm in yours, I say to you, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord and let us say unto Him, ‘Receive us graciously, and love us freely, so will we render unto You the calves of our lips.’” Ready to perish are you, but ready to forgive is He! Blessed be His holy name!

III. My third text is intended as a hammer to drive home the last nail. This sentence, in Job 17:1, is most solemnly true of each one of us—THE GRAVES ARE READY FOR ME.

About three years ago I gazed into the eternal world. It then pleased God to stretch me upon a bed of the most agonizing pain and my life hung in jeopardy, not merely every hour, but every moment. Eternal realities were vivid enough before my eyes, but it pleased God, for some purpose which is known to Him, to spare my life and I went to spend a little season, that I might fully recover, with a beloved friend who seemed, then, far more likely to live than I was. This day, it is his turn to lie upon the borders of the grave and mine to stand by his bedside. The grave then seemed ready for me—it now seems ready for him. As I stood talking to him this afternoon, he said with greater force than Addison, “See how a Christian can die.” When I asked him about his worldly goods and possessions, he said that he had been content to leave them all, some time ago. “And what about your wife and your little ones?” I asked. And he replied, “I have left them all with God.” “And how about eternal things?” I enquired. “Oh,” said he, “you know that God’s love is everlasting and His Grace is unchanging, so why should we fear?”

He had no doubt about his acceptance in the Beloved, or about the power of Christ to carry him through his dying moments. When I said, “The battle’s fought, the victory’s won forever,” I saw his eyes sparkle as though he heard the melodious voice of the great Captain of our salvation saying to him, “Well done! Enter into your rest.” I never saw a bride at her marriage look more happy than this man upon the eve of death. I never saw a saint more peaceful, when retiring at eventide, than he was when about to undress himself that he might stand before his God. “Ah,” he exclaimed, “remember what you said to me, ‘Sudden death, sudden glory!’” and his eyes sparkled again at the prospect of soon beholding his Lord—

*“One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks”—*  
and you are gone, O earth, and my soul is in Heaven! One gasp and you have melted, O shadowy Time, and I have come to you, you welcome substance of Eternity! Blessed be God that the graves are ready for us! Christian, does the idea of a long life charm you? Do you want to remain long in this prison? Would you cling to these rags of mortality, to this vile body, whose breath is corrupt, whose face is so often marred with weeping and upon whose eyelids hangs the shadow of death? Would you long to creep up and down this dunghill world, like some poor worm that always leaves a slimy track behind it? Or would you not rather—

*“Stretch your wings, O Soul, and fly  
Straight to yonder world of joy”?*

Were we wise, we would—  
*“Long for evening, to undress,  
That we might rest with God.”*

“The graves are ready for me.” Young men and young women, and all of you who are here, can you look upon the grave which is ready for you with as much complacency as my friend did this afternoon? O Death, you do not need to furbish up your darts, or whet your scythe! You are always ready to slaughter the sons of men. O Eternity, your gates need not to be unlocked and thrown back on their hinges with long and tedious toil, for they are always open! O world to come, you do not need long intervals to make yourself ready to receive the pilgrims who have finished their journey! You are an inn whose doors are always open—you are whose gates are never closed! Our grave is ready for us. The tree is grown that shall make our coffin—perhaps the fabric that shall make our winding sheet is already woven and they, who will carry us to our last home, are ready and waiting for us!

“The graves are ready for us.” Are we ready for the graves? Are we prepared to die—prepared to rise again—prepared to be judged—prepared to plead the blood and righteousness of Christ as our ground of acceptance before the eternal Throne of God? What is your answer, my Hearer? Do you reply, in the words I quoted at the beginning of my discourse, “Ready, yes, ready!”? Did you say Death, that I was wanted? Here I am, for you did call me! Did you say, O Heaven, that you need to receive another blood-bought one? “Ready, yes, ready!” O Christian, always keep your houses in such good order that you will always be “Ready, yes, ready!” Always keep your heart in such a state, your soul so near to Christ and your faith so fully fixed on Him, that, if you should drop dead in the street, or some Providence should take away your life, you would be able to cheerfully say, “Ready, yes, ready! Ready for you, O Death! Ready to triumph over you and to pluck away your sting! Ready for you, O Grave, for where is now your victory? Ready for you, O Heaven, for, with your wedding garment on, we are ready, yes, ready!” The Lord make us ready, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **MATTHEW 8:1-27.**

Verse 1, 2. When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper. You see that particular mention is made of this one special case and, in any congregation, while it may be recorded that so many people came together, the special case that will be noted by the recording angel will be that of anyone who comes to Christ with his own personal distresses and who thereby obtains relief from them—“Behold, there came a leper.”

2, 3. And worshipped Him, saying, Lord if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will; be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. His faith was not as strong as it might have been. There was an, “if,” in it, but still, it was genuine faith and our loving Lord fixed His eye upon the faith rather than upon the flaw that was in it. And if He sees in you, dear Friend, even a trembling faith, He will rejoice in it and bless you because of it. He will not withhold His blessing because you are not as strong in faith as you should be. Probably you would have a greater blessing if you had greater faith, but even little faith gets great blessings from Christ! The leper said to Him, “If you will, you can make me clean.” So Christ answered to the faith that he did possess, “and touched him, saying, I will; be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”

4-7. And Jesus said unto him, See you tell no man; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him. He had not asked Christ to “come and heal him.” He wished his servant to be healed, but he considered that it was too great an honor for Christ to come to him. I am not sure, but I think that this man’s judgment is correct—that for Christ to come to a man is better than for healing to come to him. Indeed, Brothers and Sisters, all the gifts of Christ fall far short of Himself! If He will but come and abide with us, that means more than all else that He can bestow upon us.

8, 9. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof: but only speak the word and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it. From his own power over his soldiers and servants, he argued that Christ must have at least equal power over all the forces of Nature and, as a centurion did not need to go and do everything himself, but gave his orders to his servant and he did it, so, surely, there could be no need for the great Commander, to whom he was speaking, to honor the sick man with His own personal Presence. He had simply to utter the command and it would be obeyed, and the centurion’s servant would be healed. Do you think this is an ingenious argument? It is so, certainly, but it is also a very plain and very forcible one. I have read or heard many ingenious arguments for unbelief and I have often wished that half the ingenuity thus vainly spent could be exercised in discovering reasons for believing—so I am pleased to notice that this commander of a hundred Roman soldiers did but argue from his own position—and so worked in his mind still greater confidence in Christ’s power to heal his sick servant. Is there not something about yourself, from which, if you would look at it in the right light, you might gather arguments concerning the power of the Lord Jesus Christ?

10. When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. “Not in Israel”—where the Light of God and the knowledge were, there was not such faith as this centurion possessed! This Roman soldier, rough by training and experience, who was more familiar with stern fighting men than with those who could instruct him concerning Christ—had more faith than Jesus had so far found “in Israel.”

11, 12. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is a strange thing, yet it is continually happening, despite its strangeness, that the persons who are placed in such positions of privilege, that you naturally expect that they would become Believers, remain unbelievers, while others, who are placed at a terrible disadvantage, nevertheless often come right out from sin and right away from ignorance and become believers in Christ! Oh, that none of us who sit under the sound of the Gospel from Sabbath to Sabbath, might be sad illustrations of this Truth of God, while others, unaccustomed to listen to the Word, may be happy instances of the way in which the Lord still takes strangers and adopts them into His family!

13. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go your way; and as you have believed, so be it done unto you. And his servant was healed in the same hour. Jesus will treat all alike according to this rule—“As you have believed, so be it done unto you.” If you can believe great things of Him, you shall receive great things from Him. If you think Him good, great and mighty, you shall find Him to be so. If you can conceive greater things of Him than anyone else has ever done, you shall find Him equal to all your conceptions and your greatest faith shall be surpassed! It is a Law of His Kingdom, from which Christ never swerves—“According to your faith, be it unto you.”

14, 15. And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick of a fever, and He touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose and ministered unto them. That was, perhaps, the most remarkable thing of all, for, when a fever is cured, it usually leaves great weakness behind it. Persons recovered of fever cannot immediately leave their bed and begin at once to attend to household matters! But Peter’s wife’s mother did this. Learn, therefore, that the Lord Jesus can not only take away from us the disease of sin, but all the effects of it as well! He can make the man who has been worn out in the service of Satan, to become young again in the service of the Lord. And when it seems as if we never, even if converted, could be of any use to Him, He can take away the consequences of evil habits and make us into bright and sanctified Believers. What is there that is impossible to Him? In the olden time, kings claimed to have the power of healing with a touch. That was a superstition. But this King can do it—all glory to His blessed name! May He lay His gracious hand upon many of you, for, if it could heal before it was pierced, much more can it now heal every sin-stricken soul it touches!

16-18. When the evening was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side. For He neither loved nor courted popularity, but did His utmost to shun it. It followed Him like His shadow but He always went before it. He never followed it, or sought after it—“When Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side.”

19. And a certain scribe came and said unto Him, Master, I will follow You wherever You go. How bold he is with his boasting! But Jesus knows that the fastest professors are often just as fast deserters, so He tests him before He takes him into the band of His followers.

20. And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head. Christ means—“Can you follow the Son of Man when there is no reward except Himself—not even a place for your head to rest upon, or a home wherein you may find comfort? Can you cleave to Him when the lone mountainside shall be the place where He spends whole nights in prayer while the dews falls heavily upon Him? Can you follow Him then?” This is a test of love which makes many to be “found wanting.”

21, 22. And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead. It must be Christ, first, and father afterwards. We pay no disrespect to our dearest relatives and friends when we put them after Christ—that is their proper place. To put them before Christ— to prefer the creature to the Creator—is to be traitors to the King of kings. Whoever may come next, Christ must be first.

23-26. And when He was entered into a boat, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He said unto them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds; and the sea; and there was a great calm. Probably no calm is so profound as that which follows the tempest of the soul which Jesus stills by His peace-speaking word. The calm of Nature, the calm of long-continued prosperity, the calm of an easy temper—these are all deceitful and are apt to be broken by sudden and furious tempests. But, after the soul has been rent to its foundations—after the awful groundswell and the Atlantic billows of deep temptation—when Jesus gives peace, there is “a great calm.”

27. And the men marvelled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him? We have often marvelled in the same way, but we know that it is not any “manner of Man” alone, but it was He who was truly Man, who was also “very God of very God,” the God-Man, the Man Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and men!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS  
NO. 1361

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 24, 1877, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The righteous, also, shall hold on his way.”  
Job 17:9.**

THE man who is righteous before God has a way of his own. It is not the way of the flesh, nor the way of the world. It is a way marked out for him by the Divine command in which he walks by faith. It is the King’s highway of holiness—the unclean shall not pass over it—only the ransomed of the Lord shall walk there and these shall find it a path of separation from the world. Once entered upon the way of life, the pilgrim must persevere in it or perish, for thus says the Lord, “If any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.” Perseverance in the path of faith and holiness is a necessity of the Christian, for only, “He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved.” It is in vain to spring up quickly like the seed that was sown upon the rock and then, by-and-by, to wither when the sun is up. That would but prove that such a plant has no root in itself.

But “the trees of the Lord are full of sap” and they abide and continue and bring forth fruit, even in old age, to show that the Lord is upright. There is a great difference between nominal Christianity and real Christianity and this is generally seen in the failure of the one and the continuance of the other. Now, the declaration of the text is that the truly righteous man shall hold on his way—he shall not go back, he shall not leap the hedges and wander to the right hand or the left—he shall not lie down in idleness, neither shall he faint and cease to go upon his journey. He “shall hold on his way.” It will frequently be very difficult for him to do so, but he will have such resolution, such power of inward Grace given him, that he will “hold on his way” with stern determination, as though he held on by his teeth, resolving never to let go.

Perhaps he may not always travel with equal speed. It is not said that he shall hold on his pace, but he shall hold on his way. There are times when we run and are not weary and at other times, when we walk, we are thankful that we do not faint. Yes, and there are periods when we are glad to go on all fours and creep upward with pain. But still we prove that “the righteous shall hold on his way.” Under all difficulties the face of the man whom God has justified is steadfastly set towards Jerusalem—nor will he turn aside till his eyes shall see the King in His beauty. This is a great wonder! It is a marvel that any man should be a Christian at all, and a greater wonder that he should continue so!

Consider the weakness of the flesh, the strength of inward corruption, the fury of Satanic temptations, the seductions of wealth and the pride of life, the world and the fashions thereof—all these things are against us

and yet behold, “greater is He that is for us than all they that are against us!” Defying sin, Satan, death and Hell, the righteous holds on his way. I take our text as accurately setting forth the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints. “The righteous shall hold on his way.”

Years ago, when there was an earnest and even bitter controversy between Calvinists and Arminians, it was the habit of each side to caricature the other. Very much of the argument was not directed against the real sentiment of the opposite party, but against what had been imputed to them. They made a man of straw and then they burned him, which is a pretty easy thing to do! But I trust we have left these things behind. The glorious Truth of the Final Perseverance of the Saints has survived controversy and, in some form or other, is the cherished belief of the children of God. Take care, however, to be clear as to what it is. The Scripture does not teach that a man will reach his journey’s end without continuing to travel along the road. It is not true that one act of faith is all—that nothing is needed of daily faith, prayer and watchfulness. Our doctrine is the very opposite, namely, that the righteous shall hold on his way! Or, in other words, shall continue in faith, in repentance, in prayer and under the influence of the Grace of God.

We do not believe in salvation by a physical force which treats a man as a dead log and carries him, whether he wills it or not, towards Heaven. No, “He holds on.” He is personally active about the matter and plods on up hill and down dale till he reaches his journey’s end. We never thought, nor even dreamed, that merely because a man supposes that he once entered on this way he may, therefore, conclude that he is certain of salvation, even if he leaves the way immediately. No, but we say that he who truly receives the Holy Spirit, so that he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall not go back, but persevere in the way of faith.

It is written, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” and this he cannot be if he were left to go back and delight in sin as he did before! And, therefore, he shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Though the Believer, to his grief, will commit many a sin, still, the tenor of his life will be holiness to the Lord and he will hold on in the way of obedience. We detest the doctrine that a man who has once believed in Jesus will be saved even if he altogether forsakes the path of obedience. We deny that such a turning aside is possible to the true Believer and, therefore, the idea imputed to us is clearly an invention of the adversary. No, Beloved, a man, if he is, indeed, a Believer in Christ, will not live after the will of the flesh!

When he does fall into sin, it will be his grief and misery—and he will never rest till he is cleansed from guilt. But I will say this of the Believer, that if he could live as he would like to live, he would live a perfect life. If you ask him if, after believing, he may live as he wishes, he will reply, “Would God I could live as I wish, for I desire to live altogether without sin! I would be perfect, even as my Father in Heaven is perfect.” The doctrine is not the licentious idea that a Believer may live in sin, but that he cannot and will not do so! This is the doctrine and we, first, will prove it. Secondly, in the Puritanical sense of the word, we will briefly improve it by drawing two spiritual lessons from it.

I. LET US PROVE THE DOCTRINE. Please follow me with your Bibles open. You, dear Friends, have, most of you, received as a matter of faith the Doctrines of Grace and, therefore, to you the doctrine of Final Perseverance cannot require any proving, because it follows from all the other doctrines. We believe that God has an elect people whom He has chosen unto eternal life and that Truth of God necessarily involves the perseverance in Grace. We believe in special redemption and this secures the salvation and consequent perseverance of the redeemed.

We believe in effectual calling, which is bound up with justification—a justification which ensures glorification. The Doctrines of Grace are like a chain—if you believe in one of them you must believe the next, for each one involves the rest—therefore I say that you who accept any of the doctrines of Grace must receive this, also, as involved in them. But I am about to try to prove this to those who do not believe the Doctrines of Grace. I would not argue in a circle and prove one thing which you doubt by another thing which you doubt, but, “to the Law and to the Testimony,” to the actual Words of Scripture we shall refer the matter.

Before we advance to the argument, it will be well to remark that those who reject the doctrine frequently tell us that there are many cautions in the Word of God against apostatizing and that those cautions can have no meaning if it is true that the righteous shall hold on his way. But what if those cautions are the means, in the hand of God, of keeping His people from wandering? What if they are used to excite a holy fear in the minds of His children and so become the means of preventing the evil which they denounce? I would also remind you that in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which contains the most solemn warnings against apostasy, the Apostle always takes care to add words which show that he did not believe that those whom he warned would actually apostatize.

Turn to Hebrews 6:9. He has been telling these Hebrews that if those who had been once enlightened should fall away, it would be impossible to renew them again into repentance and he adds, “But, Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” In the 10th chapter he gives an equally earnest warning, declaring that those who should do despite to the Spirit of Grace are worthy of worse punishment than those who despised Moses’ Law, but he closes the chapter with these words, “Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” Thus he shows what the consequences of apostasy would be, but he is convinced that they will not choose to incur such a fearful doom.

Again, objectors sometimes mention instances of apostasy which are mentioned in the Word of God, but on looking into them it will be discovered that these are cases of persons who did but profess to know Christ, but were not really possessors of the Divine Life. John, in His first Epistle, 2:19, fully describes these apostates—“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that

they were not all of us.” The same is true of that memorable passage in John, where our Savior speaks of branches of the vine which are cut off and cast into the fire—these are described as branches in Christ that bear no fruit! Are those real Christians? How can they be so if they bear no fruit? “By their fruits you shall know them.” The branch which bears fruit is purged, but it is never cut off! Those which bear no fruit are not figures of true Christians, but they fitly represent mere professors. Our Lord, in Matthew 7:22, tells us concerning many who will say in that day “Lord, Lord,” that He will reply, “I never knew you.” Not, “I have forgotten you,” but, “I never knew you”—they were never really His disciples.

But now to the argument itself. First, we argue the Perseverance of the Saints most distinctly from the nature of the life which is imparted at regeneration. What does Peter say concerning this life? In 1 Peter 1:23 he speaks of the people of God as “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.” The new life which is planted in us, when we are born again, is not like the fruit of our first birth, for that is subject to mortality. No, it is a Divine principle which cannot die nor be corrupt and, if it is so, then he who possesses it must live forever! He must, indeed, be evermore with the Spirit of God—regeneration has made him so!

In 1 John 3:9 we have the same thought in another form. “Whoever is born of God does not commit sin, for His seed remains in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God.” That is to say, the bent of the Christian’s life is not towards sin. It would not be a fair description of his life that he lives in sin—on the contrary, he fights and contends against sin because he has an inner principle which cannot sin. The new life sins not—it is born of God and cannot transgress—and though the old nature wars against it, yet does the new life so prevail in the Christian that he is kept from living in sin. Our Savior, in His simple teaching of the Gospel to the Samaritan woman, said to her (John 4:13), “Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Now, if our Savior taught this to a sinful and ignorant woman at His first interview with her, I take it that this doctrine is not to be reserved for the inner circle of full-grown saints, but to be preached among the common people and to be held up as a most blessed privilege! If you receive the Grace which Jesus imparts to your souls, it shall be like the good part which Mary chose—it shall not be taken away from you! It shall abide in you, not as the water in a cistern, but as a living fountain springing up unto everlasting life.

We all know that the life given in the new birth is intimately connected with faith. Now, faith is, in itself, a conquering principle. In the First Epistle of John, which is a great treasury of argument (1 John 5:4) we are told, “Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world—our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” See, then, that which is born of God in us, namely, the new life, is a conquering principle—there is no hint given that it can ever be defeated! And faith, which is its outward sign, is, also, in itself, triumphant forevermore! Therefore, because God has implanted such a wondrous life in us in bringing us out of darkness into His marvelous light, He has begotten us, again, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And because the eternal and ever-blessed Spirit has come to dwell in us, we conclude that the Divine Life within us shall never die. “The righteous shall hold on his way.”

The second argument to which I shall call your attention shall be drawn from our Lord’s own express declarations. Here we shall look to the Gospel of John, again, and in that blessed third of John, where our Lord was explaining the Gospel in the simplest possible style to Nicodemus, we find Him laying great stress upon the fact that the life received by faith in Himself is eternal. Look at that precious verse, the fourteenth—“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Do men, therefore, believe in Him and yet perish? Do they believe in Him and receive a spiritual life which comes to an end? It cannot be, for, “God gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish.” But he would perish if he did not persevere to the end and, therefore, he must persevere to the end!

The Believer has eternal life—how then can he die so as to cease to be a Believer? If he does not abide in Christ, he evidently does not have eternal life—therefore he shall abide in Christ, even to the end. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” To this, some reply that a man may have everlasting life and lose it. To which we answer, the words cannot mean that! Such a statement is a self-evident contradiction! If the life is lost, the man is dead! How, then, did he have everlasting life? It is clear that he had a life which lasted only for a while—he certainly did not have everlasting life, for if he had it, he must live forever! “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life” (John 3:36).

The saints in Heaven have eternal life and no one expects them to perish! Their life is eternal—and eternal life is eternal life—whether the person possessing it dwells on earth or in Heaven! I need not read all the passages in which the same Truth of God is taught but further on, in John 6:47, our Lord told the Jews, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life.” Not temporary life, but, “everlasting life.” And in the 51st verse He said, “I am the living bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever.” Then comes that famous declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ, which, if there were no other at all, would be quite sufficient to prove our point— John 10:28—“And I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone” (the word, “man,” is not in the original) “pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.”

What can He mean but this, that He has grasped His people and that He means to hold them securely in His mighty hand?—  
*“Where is the power can reach us there,  
Or what can pluck us from there?”*

Over and above the hand of Jesus which was pierced comes the hand of the Omnipotent Father as a sort of second grasp. “My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” Surely this must show that the saints are secure from anything and everything which would destroy them and, consequently, safe from total apostasy. Another passage speaks to the same effect—it is to be found in Matthew 24:24, where the Lord Jesus has been speaking of the false prophets that should deceive many. “There shall arise false christs and false prophets, and they shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, to deceive the very elect.”

This shows that it is impossible for the elect to be deceived by them. Of Christ’s sheep it is said, “A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers,” but by Divine instinct they know the voice of the Good Shepherd and they follow Him. Thus has our Savior declared, as plainly as words possibly can express, that those who are His people possess eternal life within themselves and shall not perish but shall enter into everlasting happiness. “The righteous shall hold on his way.”

A very blessed argument for the safety of the Believer is found in our Lord’s intercession. You need not turn to the passage, for you know it well, which shows the connection between the living intercession of Christ and the perseverance of His people—“Therefore, also, He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25). Our Lord Jesus is not dead! He has risen! He has gone up into Glory and now, before the eternal Throne, He pleads the merit of His perfect work! And as He pleads there for all His people whose names are written on His heart—as the names of Israel were written on the jeweled breastplate of the high priest—His intercession saves His people even to the uttermost!

If you would like an illustration of it you must turn to the case of Peter which is recorded in Luke 22:31 where our Lord said, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not; and when you are restored, strengthen your brethren.” The intercession of Christ does not save His people from being tried, or tempted, or tossed up and down like wheat in a sieve. It does not save them, even, from a measure of sin and sorrow. But it does save them from total apostasy. Peter was kept and though he denied his Master, yet it was an exception to the great rule of his life. By Grace he did hold on his way, because not only then, but many a time beside, though he sinned, he had an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the Righteous!

If you desire to know how Jesus pleads, read at your leisure at home that wonderful 17th of John—the Lord’s prayer. What a prayer it is! “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name; those that You gave Me I have kept and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” Judas was lost, but he was only given to Christ as an Apostle and not as one of His sheep. He had a temporary faith and maintained a temporary profession—he never had eternal life or he would have lived on. Those groans and cries of the Savior which accompanied His pleas in Gethsemane were heard in Heaven and answered. “Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me.” The Lord keeps them by His Word and Spirit—and will keep them!

If the prayer of Christ in Gethsemane were answered, how much more that which now goes up from the eternal Throne itself!—  
*“With cries and tears He offered up  
His humble suit below.  
But with authority He asks,  
Enthroned in Glory, now.  
For all that come to God by Him,*

*Salvation He demands.  
Points to their names upon His breast,  
And spreads His wounded hands.”*

Ah, if my Lord Jesus pleads for me, I cannot be afraid of earth or Hell! That living, intercessory Voice has power to keep the saints and so has the living Lord Himself, for He has said—“Because I live you shall live also” (John 14:19).

Now for a fourth argument. We gather sure confidence of the perseverance of the saints from the Character and work of Christ. I will say little about that, for I trust my Lord is so well known to you that He needs no word of commendation from me to you. But if you know Him, you will say what the Apostle does in 2 Timothy 1:12— “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” He did not say, “I know in whom I have believed,” as most people quote it, but, “I know whom I have believed.” He knew Jesus! He knew His heart and His faithfulness! He knew His Atonement and its power! He knew His intercession and its might and he committed his soul to Jesus by an act of faith—and he felt secure.

My Lord is so excellent in all things that I need give you but one glimpse of His Character and you will see what He was when He dwelt here among men. At the commencement of John 13 we read, “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” If He had not loved His disciples to the end when here, we might conclude that He was changeable now as then—but if He loved His chosen to the end while yet in His humiliation below—it brings us the sweet and blessed confidence that now that He is in Heaven He will love to the end all those who confide in Him. Fifthly, we infer the perseverance of the saints from the tenor of the Covenant of Grace.

Would you like to read it for yourselves? If so, turn to the Old Testament, Jeremiah 32, and there you will find the Covenant of Grace set forth at some length. We shall only be able to read the 40th verse: “And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” He will not depart from them and they shall not depart from Him—what can be a greater assurance of their perseverance even to the end?

Now that this is the Covenant of Grace under which we live is clear from the Epistle to the Hebrews, for the Apostle, in the 8th chapter, quotes that passage to this very end. The question runs thus—“Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead

them out of the land of Egypt because they continued not in My Covenant, and I regarded them not, says the Lord. For this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put My Laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people.”

The old Covenant had an “if” in it, and so it suffered shipwreck. It was—“If you will be obedient, then you shall be blessed” and, therefore, there came a failure on man’s part and the whole Covenant ended in disaster. It was the Covenant of Works and under it we were in bondage until we were delivered from it and introduced to the Covenant of Grace, which has no “if” in it, but runs upon the strain of promise. It is, “I will,” and, “you shall,” all the way through. “I will be your God and you shall be My people.” Glory be to God, this Covenant will never pass away, for see how the Lord declares its enduring character in the book of Isaiah (54:10)— “For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you.”

And again in Isaiah 55:3: “I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” The idea of falling utterly away from Grace is a relic of the old legal spirit. It is a going away from Grace to come under Law, again, and I charge you who have once been emancipated slaves and have had the fetters of legal bondage struck from off your hands, never consent to wear those bonds again! Christ has saved you, if, indeed, you are believers in Him. He has not saved you for a week, or a month, or a quarter, or a year, or 20 years, but He has given you eternal life and you shall never perish—neither shall any pluck you out of His hands. Rejoice in this blessed Covenant of Grace!

The sixth most forcible argument is drawn from the faithfulness of God. Look at Romans 11:29. What does the Apostle say there, speaking by the Holy Spirit? “For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable,” which means that He does not give life and pardon to a man and call him by Grace and afterwards repent of what He has done and withdraw the good things which He has bestowed. “God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent.” When He puts forth His hands to save, He does not withdraw them till the work is accomplished. His Word is, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal. 3:6). “The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent” (1 Sam. 15:29).

The Apostle would have us ground our confidence of perseverance upon the confirmation which Divine faithfulness is sure to bestow upon us. He says in 1 Corinthians 1:8, “Who shall, also, confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” And again he speaks to the same effect in 1 Thessalonians 5:24, “Faithful is He that calls you, who, also, will do it.” It was of old the will of God to save the people whom He gave to Jesus and from this He has never turned, for our Lord said, “And this is the Father’s will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (John 6:39). Thus you see from these passages, and there are numbers of others, that God’s faithfulness secures the preservation of His people and, “the righteous shall hold on his way.”

The seventh and last argument shall be drawn from what has already been done in us. I shall do little more than quote the Scriptures and leave them to sink into your minds. A blessed passage is that in Jeremiah 31:3—“The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” If He did not mean that His love should be everlasting, He would never have drawn us at all! But because that love is everlasting, therefore with loving kindness has He drawn us. The Apostle argues this in a very elaborate manner in Romans 5:9, 10—“Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

I cannot stop to show how every word of this passage is emphatic, but it is—if God reconciled us when we were enemies, He certainly will save us, now we are His friends. And if our Lord Jesus has reconciled us by His death, much more will He save us by His life, so that we may be certain He will not leave nor forsake those whom He has called. Do you need me to bring to your minds that golden chapter, the 8th of Romans, the noblest of all language that was ever written by human pen? “Whom He did foreknow, He, also, did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He, also, called; and whom He called, them He, also, justified; and whom He justified, them He, also, glorified.”

There is no break in the chain between Justification and Glory! And no supposable breakage can occur, for the Apostle puts that out of all possibility, by saying, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who, also, makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Then he heaps on all the things that might be supposed to separate, and says, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In the same manner the Apostle writes in Philippians 1:6—“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” I cannot stay to mention the many other Scriptures in which what has been done is made an argument that the work shall be completed, but it is after the manner of the Lord to go through with whatever He undertakes. “He will give Grace and glory,” and perfect that which concerns us. One marvelous privilege which has been bestowed upon us is of peculiar significance—we are one with Christ by close, vital, spiritual union. We are taught of the Spirit that we enjoy a marriage union with Christ Jesus our Lord—shall that union be dissolved?

We are married to Him! Has He ever given a bill of divorce? There has never been a case where the heavenly Bridegroom divorced from His heart a chosen soul to whom He has been united in the bonds of Grace! Listen to these words from the prophecy of Hosea 2:19, 20—“And I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord.” This marvelous union is set forth by the figure of the head and the body—we are members of the body of Christ. Do the members of His body rot away? Is Christ amputated? Is He fitted with new limbs as old ones are lost?

No, being members of this body, we shall not be divided from Him. “He that is joined unto the Lord,” says the Apostle, “is one spirit,” and if we are made one spirit with Christ, that mysterious union does not allow for the supposition, even, of a separation! The Lord has worked another great work upon us, for He has sealed us by the Holy Spirit. The possession of the Holy Spirit is the Divine seal which sooner or later is set upon all the chosen. There are many passages in which that seal is spoken of and is described as being an earnest, an earnest of the inheritance. But how can it be an earnest if after receiving it, we do not attain the purchased possession? Think over the words of the Apostle in 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22— “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”

To the same effect the Holy Spirit speaks in Ephesians 1:13, 14—“In whom you, also, trusted, after that you heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation, in whom, also, after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.” Beloved, we feel certain that if the Spirit of God dwells in us, He that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead will keep our souls and will, also, quicken our mortal bodies and present us complete before the Glory of His face at the last.

Therefore we sum up the argument with the confident expression of the Apostle when he said (2 Tim. 4:18), “The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

II. Now, how shall we IMPROVE THE DOCTRINE OF THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS PRACTICALLY? The first improvement is for encouragement to the man who is on the road to Heaven. “The righteous shall hold on his way.” If I had to take a very long journey, say from London to John o’ Groats, with my poor tottering limbs to carry me, and such a weight to carry, too, I might begin to despair and, indeed, the very first day’s walking would knock me out. But if I had a Divine assurance unmistakably saying, “You will hold on your way and you will get to your journey’s end,” I feel that I would brace myself up to achieve the task.

One might hardly undertake a difficult journey if he did not believe that he would finish it. But the sweet assurance that we shall reach our home makes us pluck up courage. The weather is wet, rainy, blusterous—but we must keep on, for the end is sure. The road is very rough and runs up hill and down dale. We pant for breath and our limbs are aching—but as we shall get to our journey’s end, we push on. We are ready to creep into some cottage and lie down to die of weariness, saying, “I shall never accomplish my task.” But the confidence which we have received sets us on our feet and off we go again! To the right-hearted man the assurance of success is the best stimulus for labor.

If it is so, that I shall overcome the world, that I shall conquer sin, that I shall not be an apostate, that I shall not give up my faith, that I shall not fling away my shield, that I shall come home a conqueror—then will I play the man and fight like hero! This is one of the reasons why British troops have so often won the fight, because the drummer boys did not know how to beat a retreat and the rank and file did not believe in the possibility of defeat! They were beaten oftentimes by the French, so the French tell us, but they would not believe it and, therefore, would not run away! They felt like winning and so they stood like solid rocks amidst the dread artillery of the foe till victory was declared on their side.

Brothers and Sisters, we shall do the same if we realize that we are preserved in Christ Jesus—kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation! Every true Believer shall be a conqueror and, therefore, the reason for warring a good warfare. There is laid up for us in Heaven a crown of life that fades not. The crown is laid up for us and not for chance comers. The crown reserved for me is such that no one else can wear it! And if it is so, then will I battle and strive to the end, till the last enemy is overcome and death, itself, is dead.

Another improvement is this—what an encouragement this is to sinners who desire salvation. It should lead them to come and receive it with grateful delight. Those who deny this doctrine offer sinners a poor two penny-halfpenny salvation not worth having—and it is no marvel that they turn away from it. As the Pope gave England to the Spanish king—if he could get it—so do they proffer Christ’s salvation if a man will deserve it by his own faithfulness. According to some, eternal life is given to you, but then it may not be eternal! You may fall from it. It may last only for a time.

When I was but a child I used to trouble myself because I saw some of my young companions who were a little older than myself, when they became apprentices and came to London, become vicious. I have heard their mother’s laments and seen their tears. I have heard their fathers expressing bitterest sorrow over the boys whom I knew in my class to be quite as good as ever I had been—and it used to strike me with horror that perhaps I might sin as they had done! They became Sabbath-breakers—in one case there was a theft from the till to go into Sunday pleasuring. I dreaded the very thought!

I desired to maintain an unsullied character and when I heard that if I gave my heart to Christ, He would keep me, that was the very thing which won me! It seemed to be a celestial life assurance for my character, that if I would really trust Christ with myself, He would save me from the errors of youth, preserve me amid the temptations of manhood and keep me to the end. I was charmed with the thought that if I was made righteous by believing in Christ Jesus I should hold on my way by the power of the

Holy Spirit.

That which charmed me in my boyhood is even more attractive to me in middle life! I am happy to preach to you a sure and everlasting salvation! I feel that I have something to bring before you, this morning, which is worthy of every sinner’s eager acceptance. I have neither an, “if,” nor a, “but,” with which to dilute the pure Gospel of my message! Here it is—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” I dropped a piece of ice upon the floor yesterday and I said to one who was in the room, “Is not that a diamond?” “Ah,” he said, “you would not leave it on the floor, I guarantee you, if it were a diamond of that size.”

Now I have a diamond here—eternal life, everlasting life! I pray you will be in haste to take it up at once, to be saved now, to be saved in living, to be saved in dying, to be saved in rising again, forever and ever, by the eternal power and infinite love of God! Is not this worth having? Grasp at it, poor Soul! You may have it if you but believe in Jesus Christ, or, in other words, trust your soul with Him. Deposit your eternal destiny in this Divine bank—then you can say—“I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.” The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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Sermon #749 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 17.9

THE RIGHTEOUS HOLDING ON HIS WAY

NO. 749

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 12, 1867, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The righteous also shall hold on his way.”  
Job 17:9.**

WE are thrice happy in having a goodly number of young beginners in our midst. Our springtide is cheered and beautified with many blossoms of hopeful converts. They have just begun to go on pilgrimage and would be as happy as the birds of the air were it not that some of them are grievously afflicted with the fear that they shall not hold out to the end. This is one of their daily torments, that, after all, they shall be false to Christ— that the Grace of God will fail them, or that they will fail to depend upon it—that having begun well they shall by-and-by be hindered and shall not obey the truth.

Now, perhaps a little plain conversation upon that subject may help to relieve them of their fears. Ignorance about Divine Truth is not bliss and is not the friend to bliss—“the soul without knowledge is not good.” The more we know concerning the doctrines of the Gospel the better for our comfort if by faith we are able to receive them. Many and many a doubt and fear now oppressing the people of God might be driven like chaff before the wind if they were but better established in the Truths of God relating to the points under their consideration. If they did but know more fully what God has revealed they would tremble less at what Satan suggests.

It is, therefore, with the view of very simply talking about this matter of holding on the way of the heavenly pilgrimage that I have taken this text this morning. May God the Holy Spirit bless it to us. First, we intend to say, this morning, that the Believer must hold on his way—it is necessary that he should do so. Secondly, it is exceedingly difficult for him to do so—the perseverance of the saints is surrounded with enormous perils. Yet, thirdly, this perseverance is guaranteed by Divine promise. But, fourthly, it is only guaranteed to certain persons whose character is described in the text as being “the righteous.” These shall hold on their way.

I. First, then, it is absolutely essential to final salvation that we should be PARTICIPATORS IN FINAL PERSEVERANCE. It has been said by some that he who once believes is therefore saved. I shall not deny the truth of that statement—but it is an unguarded mode of speech—and does not place the truth in the most Scriptural form. I would infinitely prefer to assert, that, “He who truly believes, shall by Divine Grace continue to do so, and therefore shall be saved.”

It is not true that, supposing a man did once believe and then became altogether an unbeliever, he should be saved. If that were possible, that the Believer should altogether fall from the Grace of God and become in all respects changed into an unbeliever, he would be damned. On this point the Word of God is very clear and decided—read the 24th verse of the 18th chapter of Ezekiel: “But when the righteous turns away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All his righteousness that he has done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he has trespassed, and in his sin that he has sinned, in them shall he die.”

If it were possible for one who had entered upon the way of righteousness—truly entered upon it—to turn from it, utterly and totally, the consequences must be his final destruction, for Paul tells us, “It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame” (Heb. 6:4-6). That is not the point we raise at all in the discussion of final perseverance. We do not admit the possibility of total apostasy in the case of the real Believer in Jesus, but believe that he will hold on his way and so be saved, but only saved by being enabled to hold on his way.

We hold that in order to ultimate salvation it is absolutely indispensable that everyone who is a Believer should continue to be a Believer—that he who is made by Grace to be holy, should continue to be holy—that he in whom the Divine life is placed, should never lose that Divine life. It is the keeping of that life which we believe ultimately ends in perfection and everlasting bliss.

1. The necessity of final perseverance is very clear if you look at the representation of the Believer in the Word of God. He is frequently compared to a traveler. And no traveler reaches his journey’s end merely by starting upon the road. If it should be a journey of seven weeks’ length, if he shall sit down after journeying six weeks, he certainly will not reach the goal of his desires. It is necessary, if I would reach a certain city, that I should go every mile of the road. One mile would not take me there, nor if the city were a 100 miles distant, would 99 miles bring me to its streets. I must journey all the length if I would reach the desired place.

Frequently, in the New Testament, the Christian is compared to a runner—he runs in a race for a great prize. But it is not by merely starting. It is not by making a great spurt. It is not by distancing your rival for a little time and then pulling up to take a breath, or sauntering to either side of the road, that you will win the race! We must never stop till we have passed the finish line. There must be no loitering throughout the whole of the Christian career, but onward, like the Roman charioteer, with glowing wheels, we must fly more and more rapidly till we actually obtain the crown.

The Christian is, sometimes, compared by the Apostle Paul, who somewhat delights to quote from the ancient games, to the Grecian wrestler or boxer. But it is of little use for the champion to give the foe one blow or one fall—he must continue in the combat until his adversary is beaten. Our spiritual foes will not be vanquished until we enter where the conquerors receive their crowns, and therefore we must continue in a fighting attitude. It is in vain for us to talk of what we have done or are doing just now—he that continues to the end, the same shall be saved—and none but he.

The Believer is commonly compared to a warrior. He is engaged in a great battle, a holy war. Like Joshua, he has to drive out the Canaanites that have chariots of iron, before be can fully take possession of his inheritance. But it is not the winning of one battle that makes a man a conqueror! No, though he should devastate one province of his enemy’s territories, yet, if he should be driven out by-and-by, he is beaten in the campaign and it will yield him but small consolation to win a single battle, or even a dozen battles, if the campaign, as a whole, should end in his defeat.

It is not commencing as though the whole world were to be cleared by one display of fire and sword, but continuing, going from strength to strength, from victory to victory, that makes the man the conqueror of his foe. The Christian is also called a disciple or scholar. And who does not know that the boy, by going to school for a day or two does not, therefore, become wise? If the lad should give himself most diligently to his grammar for six months, yet he will never become a linguist unless he shall continue perseveringly in his classic studies.

The great mathematicians of our times did not acquire their science in a single year—they pressed forward with aching brow. They burnt the midnight oil and tortured their brains. They were not satisfied to rest, for they could never have become masters of their art if they had lingered on the road. The Believer is also called a builder, and you know of whom it was said, “This man began to build, but was not able to finish!” The digging out of the foundation is most important, and the building up of stone upon stone is to be carried on with diligence—but though the man should half finish the walls, or even complete them—yet if he does not roof in the structure, he becomes a laughing stock to every passer-by.

A good beginning, it is said, is more than half. But a good ending is more than the whole. Better is the end of a thing than the beginning. In every aspect of the Christian, continuance in faith and well-doing is essential to his safety—without a perpetual perseverance his profession is of no value. We will look at one more illustration and see this most clearly. Take that simple metaphor of wheat—of what value is the corn in the blade or even in the ear? What man can live upon the green blade or the half-formed ear?

The joyous shout of the reaper is only evoked by the full corn in the ear, and you, young Believer, you, growing Christian, must press forward and ripen into the perfection of your Christian manhood, for it is only then that the shout of “Hallelujah,” and “Glory to God,” shall be fully heard. Take the Christian in any way in which God describes him, and he is one in whose ear is whispered the words, “Forward! Onward!” He is not one who can say, “I have attained.” In a certain sense it is true he is saved, but as to his ultimate salvation—his perfection before the Throne of God can only be worked in him by the continual, sustained, and abiding work of the Holy Spirit.

2. But the fact that final perseverance is absolutely necessary is also clear if you, for a moment, take into consideration the nature of the case and suppose that the man did not persevere. Imagine a man who started with sincere simple faith in Christ, and with a new heart, and a right spirit. Imagine him to have gone back to the world—can you suppose that he will enter Heaven? He has deserted good for evil. He has shut his eyes to the light and gone back to the darkness from which he professed to have escaped. He has, not ignorantly, but knowingly and deliberately quenched within his soul the spark of heavenly flame.

He knew that the road led to Hell, and he turned from it. He knew that the other path led to Heaven, and he ran in it—but after awhile he tired, he fainted, and he deliberately set his face Hell-ward and gave up eternal life, pawning and throwing it away like Esau for a mess of pottage! Do you think it could be said otherwise of him than it was of that selfsame profane Esau, that he found no place for repentance, though he sought, sought it diligently and with tears? For this man, you see, has denied the Lord that bought him! He said he rested on Christ and depended on His precious blood. But he deliberately denies the faith, deliberately returns either to the beggarly elements of his own self-righteousness to rest under the Law, or else to plunge again into open sin, and follow the devices of his flesh.

What shall be said of this man, but that his last end shall be worse than the first? Enter Heaven? How can it be? It is the place of the perfect, and this man, so far from being perfect, does not even press towards it! He has turned aside from perfection, he has given up everything which constituted him a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light! He has, after being illuminated, gone back to darkness—after being quickened, has gone back to the tomb! What remains for him? Take the case into consideration, and you will see at once the impossibility of a non-persevering Christian entering into Heaven.

3. Thirdly, I must strengthen that consideration by reminding you that we have very express declarations in Scripture about professors, and about Believers, too, if such could be, who do not persevere. Do you not recollect the Savior’s words, “No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God”? (Luke 9:62). Do you not remember that terrible sentence about the salt, “Salt is good: but if the salt has lost his savor, with what shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out”? To the same effect is that fearful warning, “Remember Lot’s wife!” She came out of the city of destruction, but she looked back, and became a pillar of salt as an everlasting warning to us against so much as the thought and look of apostasy.

Then comes in that warning where we are told concerning some, that it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, and that word of Paul, “For the earth which drinks in the rain that comes oft upon it, and brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God: but that which bears thorns and briars is rejected, and is near unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.”

And that of Peter, in his second Epistle, and second chapter: “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

Supposing a man, then, to have been washed in the blood of Jesus, to be quickened of the Spirit of God—supposing him to have gone back and to have entirely and totally lost all Divine Grace. He would be the hopeless man, beyond the reach of mercy, damned while yet living, a living Hell even in the midst of this world! O Beloved, how necessary, then, is it that the Christian should persevere and hold on even to the end!

4. I would have you observe the form of many of the promises, and as we have little time this morning, I ask you to read the second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation. There are some very choice promises made to the seven Churches, and they are all put in this shape, “To him that overcomes will I give,” and so on. Not to him that begins the fight. Not to him that buckles on his harness. Not to him that proclaims war, but “to him that overcomes will I give.” The promises are reserved for such, and you know how, in contradistinction to such promises, it is written, “If any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

Brethren, before I leave this subject this morning, there is something which I wish to press upon your minds. It is not very pleasant, but it is necessary for us to hear it. Let me remind you of some whom you yourselves have known who did appear to be among the most gracious and excellent of the earth. Those who are at this moment so far cast off as to have become entirely forgetful even of the outward forms of religion, and have gone aside, by fearful sins, we fear, into perdition!

That, mark you, has happened in some cases after many years of profession—the vessel has been wrecked at the harbor’s mouth! The fire of religious excitement burned all day, at least, so they said (we do not search hearts), and it went out at night, just when it was most required, when the chamber, the chill, cold chamber, most needed the genial flame. Doubtless John was right when he said, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.”

What a dreadful thing, not to persevere, and yet to have had the name of a Christian! When a man goes up a ladder, if he shall fall at the first step, that is bad. But if he shall fall when he has nearly reached the top, what a falling is there! God save us from it! If ever I prayed in my life, I think I did this morning when we were singing those words, “Let us not fall! Let us not fall!” Oh, to fall backward into perdition is the worst way of falling into Hell! Christian, it is not with you that you may persevere or not—it is not an optional blessing—you must persevere or else all you have ever known and felt will be good for nothing. You must hold on your way if you are ultimately to be saved.

Let me here say, and I leave the point, that I do not assert that a Christian must daily make progress in Divine Grace. He ought to do so. He should do so—but even if he should not do so, he will not be cast away for that. Neither do I assert that a Christian should always be conscious that he is in the way, for many of the best of God’s saints are tormented with many doubts and fears. Nor do I say that every departure from the way of God is inevitably fatal—far from it, for many have departed for a season— and have been brought back and restored as penitent backsliders.

Christian went down By-path meadow, and yet returned to the right road. That is a very different case from Demas, who forsook the way to dig in the silver mine and perished in it. The general current of the soul, however, must be onward—the general current and tendency of the Believer must be in the way of Truth—both as to his heart and his life. And if it is not so, whatever boasts he may make about his faith—whatever experiences he may think he has had—if he does not hold out to the end, there is no salvation, no Heaven, no bliss for him.

II. Secondly, it is possible that I may plunge thoughtful minds into deeper gloom, still, while I remind you that while final perseverance is necessary, IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. The way itself renders it so. The way to Heaven is no smooth-shaven lawn, no well-rolled gravel path—it is a rough road, up-hill, down dale, across rivers and over mountains. He that would get to Heaven must have the spirit of Hannibal, who, when he led his troops over the Alps, said, “I will either find a way, or I will make one.” You will need all the fortitude that Divine Grace, itself, can give you in order to reach, along such a road, the city of your desire.

Moreover, the road is long. It is a life-long road. To keep near to God by the space of a week is not the easiest thing conceivable. To deny one’s passions, to overcome one’s evil desires for the space of a month might be difficult, but this is for life—we shall not be able to lay down this charge till we lay down our bodies! Here we stand upon our watchtower, not by day alone, though the hot noontide might make us faint, but until the evening star arises, and onward through the dark night till the gleams of morning come! And so, day after day, from the first childhood of our spiritual existence until we have matured into a ripe old age, it is watching, watching continually, and laboring and pressing forward.

My Brothers and Sisters, I do not know how it is with some of you, but I feel this and must confess it, that in the early part of our Christian career there is a freshness and a novelty about everything which enables us to travel readily. But after awhile—there is no monotony, it is true, except in ourselves—but it begins to be heavy work to hold on in the ways of the Lord. It ought not to be so, but, alas, it is so! And we have to cry to the Strong for strength that we may be renewed, or else the length of the way would wear us out.

Besides that, the road is so contrary to fallen nature! It is a way of faith. If it were a way of sight, one might walk in it easily, but it is a way of faith from the beginning to the end! “The just live by faith”—not a way of sensible comforts, not always a way of joyful experiences—but frequently a path of deep tribulation, solemn heart-searching, bitterness, and of gall. It is a way outside the camp where none can sympathize with you. It is a way of scourging and of flagellation even from the hand of the great Father Himself who hides Himself from us for a season. It is a way so contrary to flesh and blood that he who holds out in it has received power from on High, and has the Holy Spirit within him!

God Himself must dwell in a persevering Christian’s heart! The Hebrew word for hold on in the text is very expressive. It signifies to hold with strength, to hold toughly, to hold as with the teeth, resolving never to let go, but ever to go on. Beloved, we must hold on with tooth and nail! If we cannot run, we must walk. If we cannot walk, we must clamber on hands and knees up the hill. And if we cannot even do this, we must stand fast! All Christians who have had any experience of Divine life will say that from the way itself it is no easy thing to continue in it.

Then, take into consideration, in the next place, as to our difficulties, our flesh—that heavy load which we have to take along this weary way. We have constitutional sins, any one of which, if left unwatched for a little season, would cause us to make shipwreck of our faith! Some of us are constitutionally idle, we would scarcely do anything unless the solemn obligation of duty compelled us. Others are constitutionally angry—quick tempered—and for them to become like little children (which they must do if they would be saved) is no easy task.

Some, I know, are naturally desponding. Their eyes have always a blue tinge, everything looks blue as they look abroad, and it is not so easy for them to trust in the Lord and do good, waiting patiently for the Lord’s appearing. These natural infirmities and weaknesses of ours render it hard to drag our flesh along the road to Heaven. Besides this, who does not know that he bears a cage of unclean birds within himself? If my passions were all naturally on God’s side, and would, without Grace, run towards Heaven, then there might be no difficulty in holding on the way. But, alas, the whole of our nature, when let alone, strains and tugs to go back to the land of Egypt!

And sometimes it seems as if our baser passions would get the victory and compel us to wear, once more, the galling yoke, and to fret under the fierce bondage of the Pharaoh of Hell. It must not be, it shall not be! But, O God, save me from that evil man, myself. “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Paul said so, and we have often had to say it. And when living nearest to God, we have had to groan most over indwelling sin! Besides our flesh, however, my Brothers and Sisters, we are all conscious of other foes in our way to Heaven. For instance, there is the world. Can you mix with it and obtain from it any quickening in the spiritual life?

You are compelled to mix in it. Your business calls you. Common society demands of you that you should, in some measure, mix with the world, for if you are not to speak to sinners, you must go out of the world altogether. But is it not hard work, after a week, perhaps, of toil with ungodly, blaspheming workmen, to come up to the House of God with the mind quite calm? To be in business with its worries, and its cares, and in the world with its customs, and its maxims, and still to be a child of God is not easy!

Ah, you must be a child of God, indeed, to remain true in such a world as this! Sometimes the world persecutes the Christian. And it is not always the easiest thing to fight with old Giant Grim and keep the middle of the way and overcome him. Then there is that Vanity Fair, and he is a man, indeed, who can turn a deaf ear to all that crying, “Buy, buy, buy!” Worst of all there is Madam Bubble with her sweet speech, and her words softer than butter, while inwardly they are drawn swords. You know how Mr. Standfast had to take to his knees before he could get rid of that old witch when she offered him all sorts of delights, having caught him just in the frame for it, when he said he was as poor as an owlet, and weary and faint. Then it was she offered him all that is fleshly and pleasant—only tears and prayers got him out of that difficulty. “The righteous shall hold on his way.” O God, You have said it, but if You had not said so, we should have declared that in such a world as this it would be impossible for a Christian, through a life of trial, to maintain his integrity!

Then there is the devil. We put him last, for he is the most terrible foe. When he stretches his feet across the middle of the way and swears that he will spill our souls and we shall go no farther. When he brings the past up and tells us of our unfaithfulness. When he insinuates that there is no hereafter, that there is no Heaven, and that our faith is all a foolish invention, and an old wives’ fable. And then when he holds out present enjoyment and present gain and tells us that if we do not get these we shall have nothing—and hisses out the accusation that we are hypocrites, and I know not what—ah, then, unless we carry the true Jerusalem blade of the Word of God, and have the Grace of God to nerve our arm while we wield that sword of the Spirit, we shall not be “more than conquerors,” but die on the road!

It is difficult for us to persevere for awhile, but it is difficult in the extreme to do so to the end. To get to Heaven is no child’s work. He that gets there will have to fight for every inch of the road. And when he gets there, oh, how he will clap his hands as he looks back upon the danger! How he will shout with them that triumph when he once finds himself emancipated from 10,000 dangers, and “with God eternally shut in.”

III. Thirdly, and, I trust, most comforting to our souls, the PERSEVERANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN IS GUARANTEED. Would you prefer to hear one or two of the passages of Scripture read which guarantee the perseverance of Believers? I have little time this morning, but here is one, the 32nd chapter of Jeremiah, 40th verse: “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.”

There is a double blessing—God will not depart from His people—His people shall not depart from Him. Thus doubly are they kept by Divine Grace. Our Savior’s words in the sixth chapter of John, at the 39th and 40th verses, are sweetly to the same import: “This is the Father’s which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

You know that memorable passage a little farther on—the 10th chapter of John, 28th and 29th verses: “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” If more were needed, you might turn to that inexpressibly precious passage in the eighth chapter of Romans, where, towards the close, the Apostle, having challenged Heaven, and earth, and Hell, to condemn the Believer, says, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The beloved Apostle John, to quote from him once more, has told us in the 19th verse of the second chapter of his first Epistle, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But you have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things.”

These are just a handful of texts, and a mere handful from a vast mass. So clear is the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints that I venture to assert boldly that if the Bible does not teach it, it does not teach anything at all! If that is not a clear doctrine of Revelation, then neither is the doctrine of the Deity of Christ, nor, indeed, any doctrine, and the Bible must be a mere wax nose, to be molded according to our will.

But, Beloved, there are these considerations which make the perseverance of the Christian certain to us. Unless the Christian shall persevere, the eternal purpose of God will be defeated! For from the beginning God has chosen His people unto holiness, to be set apart for His service, to be purified by His Grace that they may be presented at last without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. If Believers do not persevere, we have shown that they must perish as other apostates do! Therefore, since the purpose of God for the sanctification and safety of His chosen cannot be frustrated, and the design of the Most High stands fast, we believe that the righteous shall hold on his way.

In addition to this, the work of Jesus Christ would be of no use unless the blood-washed held on their way. The Lord Jesus has redeemed His people from among men! But, if, though they have been redeemed, they should not persevere unto the end they would perish—then it would follow that Christ shed His blood in vain! Then He bought those whom He will never have! He suffered for the sins of men who afterwards have to suffer for their own sins—which always seems to us to be a supposition filled with blasphemous impossibility—that Christ should be a Surety for men’s sins, and be punished in their place, and yet those men should be punished for the sins which were laid upon their Scapegoat!

Such must be emphatically the case, Brethren, unless those who are redeemed by blood persevere to the end. Jesus has evidently taken their sins, and taken them in vain and suffered for them in vain. He has been their Substitute, and yet these men perish! Moreover, through the righteousness of Christ, Believers are justified—they are declared to be no longer under the Law. But if they do not persevere in holiness, they perish! How can he perish who is justified? How shall he be condemned who is not under the Law, and consequently has no Law which can condemn him? The thing becomes impossible! We are involved in a mesh of difficulties, a labyrinth from which we cannot escape if we suppose it to be possible for a saint to finally fall from Grace.

Moreover, all true Believers are one with Christ. They are married to Him. Shall Christ lose His spouse? They are members of His body—they are declared to be parts of Himself! And shall Christ be dismembered? Shall He be a dislocated, disjointed, broken-up humanity? No! The Church is His fullness—the fullness of Him that fills all in all. If Jesus saves not His Church, He is not a perfect Christ—He is a maimed and wounded Savior! My Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus Christ has gone to Heaven as our Representative—He represents every Believer. Does He represent those who shall ultimately be cast into Hell? Has He gone to prepare a place for Believers? Yes! Then they shall have the place prepared for them, for otherwise the places will be prepared, but the people will not come.

Has he not said that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him? How, then, shall it be possible for those who have come to God by Him to perish, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them? Paul uses an overwhelming argument which I cannot this morning open up in full, but it has a triple power about it. “If,” said he, “when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” If when we were enemies, without a thought towards God, He reconciled us, much more will He save us now that we are His children!

If we were reconciled, much more shall we be saved, which is by far the least difficult work of the two! And if the death of Christ sufficed to reconcile us, what shall not the life of the Glorious, Immortal Savior do? Surely if the death has done so much, the life shall do yet more, and it shall be true as it is written, “Because I live, you shall live also.” Further, my Brethren, as we have spoken of the Father and of the Son, there is the Holy Spirit’s work to be taken into consideration. He dwells in us! Shall He be expelled? It is written that we are the temples of the Holy Spirit— shall the temples of the Holy Spirit become like the temples of Jove or of Saturn? Shall they be given up to the moles and the bats, degraded and defiled? God forbid!

He that dwells there will drive out the foe and maintain a shrine for Himself in purity. The Holy Spirit has begun to sanctify us. Will He begin and not conclude? Shall the Holy Spirit be defeated by the devil and the flesh? Shall the banner of the devil be hung in Satan’s hall because he has overcome the elect? Beloved, God gave the victory to Satan for a moment in the garden of Eden, but with the determination to win it from him. And He has bound captivity captive, and there shall be none of the spoils of the elect left in the hands of the enemy. God shall be conqueror all through the campaign—and at the last the Spirit shall not be defeated in a single heart where He came to dwell!

Let us rejoice, then, that when we consider the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it does seem impossible that the righteous should be lost. They must, therefore, hold on their way. Beloved, let us fall back upon this Truth of God in our times of worst discouragement. And if any say, “This is not a practical truth, but calculated to lull us into slumber,” let us prove, by our activity, that they err, not knowing the Truth of God. I can never conceive that it dispirits the soldier, when he is fighting, to tell him that he must win the victory!

This is what Cromwell’s ironsides said when they saw the great general riding along the ranks, “‘Tis he!” they said, “‘tis he!” They felt the victory was sure where Cromwell was, and like thunderbolts they dashed upon their enemies until, as thin clouds before the tempest, the foemen flew apace. The certainty of victory gives strength to the arm that wields the sword. To say to the Christian you shall persevere till you get to the journey’s end—will that make him sit down on the next mile-stone? No! He will climb the mountain, wiping the sweat from his brow! And as he looks upon the plain he will descend with surer and more cautious footsteps, because he knows he shall reach the journey’s end.

God will speed the ship over the waves into the desired haven—will the conviction of that on the part of the captain make him neglect the vessel? Yes, if he is a fool! But if he is a man in his wits, the very certainty that he shall cross the deep will only strengthen him in time of storm to do what he would not have dreamt of doing if he had been afraid the vessel would be cast away. Brothers and Sisters, let this doctrine impel us to a holy ardency of watchfulness, and may the Lord bless us and enable us to persevere to the end.

IV. Lastly, PERSEVERANCE IS GUARANTEED, BUT NOT TO EVERYBODY. There are some here who are not believers in Christ. A text rose up last night out of the Bible and struck me very painfully. I was afraid, as I read it, that some of you would persevere to the end and would go to Hell, for I read these words, “He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.” I wondered whether Christ would say that of some of you. I am afraid for you. You have been warned. You have heard the Gospel. You have been entreated to wash in the Fountain but you will not come. You have put off many and many a stroke of conscience, and said, “Go your way. When I have a more convenient season I will send for you.”

Now, mind, mind lest Christ should say, “Let him alone. He is unjust, let him be unjust still. He is prayerless, let him be prayerless still. He never feels the Word, let him be unfeeling still. He is a tearless, Christless soul—he shall be so forever.” God forbid it! Do not any of you who are in that case go home and talk about the comfortable doctrine I have preached! If it is nothing to you, you are like the poor shivering outcast in the street who sees Christmas festivities through the window in which he has no share.

Go home, and God break your heart over this! May God cause you to mourn that there is no gracious perseverance for you, because you have no Grace to persevere in! And that if you persevere in the road you are now in, it will only be to keep to the road of destruction that will at last end in the dreadful terminus of Hell-fire. There are, on the other hand, some of you who have made a profession of faith. It may be these hands baptized you in the name of the Lord Jesus, in this pool beneath. Ah, well, Christ has not said that you shall all persevere. Perhaps you made a profession merely to please parents, or friends, or to do what seemed to be a custom with others.

Perhaps you never had a deep sense of sin. Perhaps you never did rest in Christ. I pray God that you may not persevere, but may repent and begin anew! Do not say, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace. Come as a poor sinner to Christ and you will never be cast away! But it you merely make a profession of a notional religion that you have in your head, and not in your heart, it will be all ill with you at the last. You will be like the plant which had not much earth—when the sun arose, the root was scorched and the plant withered away.

May God give you Grace—may you be deeply rooted with Divine Grace in your heart. But it is to you who have faith in God—it is to you that this final perseverance is promised! And I ask you to come this morning and take it. “How,” you say, “shall I take it?” Why, come to Jesus just as you did when you first came! That is the true final perseverance—to come always to Christ, having nothing in self, but having all in Him! I hope you and I feel, this morning, that the sweet verse of Toplady still fits our case*—*

*“Nothing in my hand I bring—  
Simply to Your Cross I cling.  
Naked, come to You for dress.  
Helpless, look to You for Grace.  
Foul, I to the Fountain fly—  
Wash me, Savior, or I die.”*

Keep to that, never get an inch beyond that. Stand at the foot of the Cross and view the sin-atoning blood! Rest there living! Rest there dying! And then when your spirit mounts to Heaven, may your last song be of being washed in blood. And in Heaven may it be said of you as of your fellow sinners, “They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” The Lord bless you and keep you, and cause His face to shine upon you, and give you peace. Amen and Amen!

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÷Job 18.12

THE HUNGER-BITE NO. 1510

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“His strength shall be starved.”  
Job 18:12.

Bildad was declaring the history of the hypocritical, presumptuous and wicked man. And he intended, no doubt, to insinuate that Job was just such a person—that he had been a deceiver and that, therefore, God’s Providence had at last revealed him and was visiting him for his sins. In this, Bildad was guilty of great injustice to his friend. All the three miserable comforters of Job were mistaken in the special aim of their discourses and yet, concerning the speeches of each one, it may be said that their general statements were, for the most part, true. They uttered truths, but they drew mistaken inferences and they were ungenerous in the imputations which they cast upon Job. It is true that, sooner or later, either in this world or the next, all conceivable curses fall upon the hypocrite and the ungodly man, but it is not true that when a Christian is in trouble, we are to judge that he is suffering for his sin! It would be both cruel and wicked for us to think so.

Nevertheless, because what Bildad said was, in the most part, true, though unkindly and wrongly applied, we feel ourselves quite at liberty to take a text out of his mouth. It is true of many persons that their strength shall be starved—and I shall speak concerning these words in three ways, noticing, first, that this is a curse which will surely be fulfilled upon the ungodly. Secondly, this is a discipline which God often exercises upon the self-righteous when He means to save them. And, thirdly—and it is grievous work to have to say it—this is a form of chastisement upon Believers who are not living near to God as they ought to be—their strength becomes starved or weak.

I. First we shall view our text as A CURSE WHICH WILL BE FULFILLED UPON THE UNGODLY. “His strength shall be starved.” It is not said that they are starved merely, but that their strength is. And if their strength is starved, what must their weakness be? When a man’s strength is bitten with hunger, what a hunger must be raging throughout the whole of his nature! Now, a large proportion of men make their gold to be their strength, their castle and their high tower and, for a while they rejoice in their wealth and find great satisfaction in gathering it, in seeing it multiplied and in hoping, by-and-by, that it shall come to great store.

But every ungodly man ought to know that riches are not forever and often they take to themselves wings and fly away! Men of colossal fortunes have dwindled down to beggars—they made great ventures and realized great failures. None are secure. As long as a man is in this world, he is like a ship at sea, he is still liable to be shipwrecked. O you that are boasting in your gold and calling your treasure your chief good, the day may come when your strength will be starved and, like the victims of famine, you will find yourselves helpless—you whose money answered all things and made you feel omnipotent!

But it will be said, of course, that it is not in every case that the ungodly man’s strength of wealth is starved and I willingly concede it. But it comes to pass in another fashion. How many there are who keep their wealth and yet, for all that, are very poor? It is not that the gold goes, but it stays by them and does not comfort them! I do not know which would be the worse of the two—to be hungry for lack of bread, or to have abundance of bread and yet remain hungry, eat whatever you might. Thousands in this world are precisely in that condition! They have all that heart could wish, if their heart were right, but it seems nothing to them because they have envy in their spirits.

Remember Haman. He is invited to the banquet of wine. He is a chief noble of the empire. He has his monarch’s favor. But all that avails him nothing because Mordecai sits in the gate. Envy has cankered his soul and if he were able to mount to the throne of Ahasuerus, himself, it would make no difference to him—he would be unhappy there—and all because one poor Jew will not bow to him! There are persons going up and down Cheapside every day who are intolerably wretched about a something which they would hardly like to mention to reasonable men. A wretched trifle frets them like a moth in a garment and all the glory of their position is eaten away—their strength is starved.

Where the canker does not happen to be envy, it may come to be a passion akin to it, namely, revenge. Alas, that we should have to talk of revenge as still existing upon this earth after Christ has been here and taught us to pray, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” Yet there are ungodly men who even think it right to foster resentments. A word uncourteously spoken; a deed unkindly done will be laid up and an opportunity sought for retaliation. Or, if not, a hope will be cherished that some blight, or blow from God may fall upon the offender. And if that offender still bears himself aloft, lives right merrily and makes no recompense for the wrong done, the aggrieved one has eaten out his own heart with chagrin and the strength of his wealth has been starved!

Where this has not been the case, it has, perhaps, more frequently happened that persons have been afflicted by avarice. Nothing more tends to impoverish a man than being rich. It is a hard thing to find a rich man who enjoys riches! A rich man is a man who has all he wants and many a man is rich on a few shillings a week. A poor man is a man who does not get what he wants and people with thousands a year are on that list. In fact, where shall you find such poverty as among those poor rich men? The miser is often pictured as afraid to sleep because thieves may break in—he rises at midnight to look over his hoarded treasure! He is afraid lest bonds, securities, mortgages and the like may, after all, turn out to be mere waste paper! He frets and stews and mars his life because he has too great a means of living—such a man may not be very common, but it is an easy thing to find people who have very much and yet are just as careful, just as grasping, just as fretful after more as if they had but newly started in business and were almost penniless—their strength is starved.

If somebody had told them, “You will one day reach to so many thousand pounds,” they would have said, “Ah, if ever I get that amount I shall be perfectly satisfied.” They have saved that sum long ago and 10 times as much! And now they say, “Ah, you don’t know what it is to want money till you have a good portion of it. Now we have so much we must have more. We are up to our necks in the golden stream and we must swim where the bottom cannot be touched.” Poor fools! They have enough water to float them, but they must have enough to drown in! One stick is a capital thing for a lame man, as I know right well, but a thousand sticks would make a terrible load for a man to carry! When anyone has a sufficiency, let him be thankful for so convenient a staff, but if he will not use what he has until he has accumulated much more, the comfort of his substance is gone and his strength is starved.

There are cases in which the hunger-bite does not take a shape which I could well describe. Instances are met with of persons who have made their gold their strength who are altogether unrestful. Some have thought that their brain was diseased, but it is likely that the disease was lower down in their hearts. We have known wealthy men who believed themselves to be poor and were haunted with the idea that they should die in the poor house, even when they were worth a million! And others who have quarreled about the division of a farthing, when the loss of 10,000 pounds would have been a flea bite to them! In great substance they have found no substantial rest.

They have often wished they could be as cheerful as their own menial servants. As they have lolled in their carriage and looked at the rosy cheeks of the urchins in the village, they have coveted their health and felt willing to wear their rags if they could possess their appetites. As they have looked upon poor persons with family loves and domestic joys—and

felt that their own joys were few in that direction—they have greatly envied them. It is a great mercy when the worldling is made uneasy in this world—it is a ground for hope that God means to wean him from his idols! And, alas, there are some who do not rest here and will not rest hereafter. They have no rest in all that God has given them under the sun and yet they will not fly to Him who is the soul’s sure repose. I need not dwell for another moment upon the failure of the strength which is found in riches. It is the same with all sorts of men who try to find comfort out of Christ and away from God—“their strength shall be starved.”

What a melancholy instance of this is Solomon. He had an opportunity to try everything in his quest for the chief good and, in fact, he did test everything—so that we need not repeat the experiment. He was the great alchemist who tried to turn all manner of metals into gold, but failed with them all. At one time he was building great palaces and when the building fit was on him, he seemed happy. But when once the gorgeous piles were finished, he said, “Vanity of vanities: all is vanity.” Then he would take to gardening and to the planting of rare plants and trees and to the digging of fountains. But when he had done enough of this he looked upon his orchards and vineyards and again muttered, “Vanity of vanities: all is vanity.”

Then he thought he would try laughter and madness— he would test the comic side of human life, as well as the useful. So he plunged into all manner of pleasures and gathered to himself singing men and singing women and all delights of the flesh. But after he had drank deep of that cup, he said, again, “Vanity of vanities: all is vanity.” Poor Solomon! He had great strength, but his strength was starved! He looked here and there, up and down, on the right hand and on the left and found no bread for his soul. He snatched at shadows and tried to feed himself with bubbles! He was devoured with hunger in the midst of plenty! And where the humble people of Israel were blessing the God who satisfied their mouth with good things and renewed their youth like the eagles, poor Solomon was complaining that there was nothing new under the sun and that it was better for a man not to be born than to have lived at all!

Now remark that if this hunger does not come upon the ungodly man during the former part of his life, it will come to him at the close of it. While we have much to do and our minds are occupied, we may be able to put off thought, but when, at last, God sends us that messenger with the bony hand, whose oratory is soul piercing—the dullness of whose eyeless eyes darts fire into the soul—then will all human strength be starved! When death is left alone with the man, then he perceives that his money bags contain nothing precious because he must leave them. How now with his broad acres? How now with his large estates? How now with his palatial residence? How now with all that he called dear? How now with his doctor’s degree and his learning? How now with his fame and his honor? How now, even, with his domestic comforts and the joys of life? They are all hunger-bitten!

When he comes to die they cannot help him. The soul that is within him, which he would not allow to speak, now opens its hungry mouth and cries, “You have denied me bread! God, and God alone, could fill me and you have denied me God! And now you feel the hunger which has come upon me and you must feel it and feel it, too, forever.” Alas, alas, alas, for a man to have spent all his life in earning a disappointment, laboring hard to lose his soul, sweating and straining to lose the race, tugging and toiling to be damned! But that is the case of many a man and that is where the tide drifts with all mankind who seek for lasting good apart from God and apart from the blood and righteousness of God’s dear Son. Of each one of them it shall be said, “His strength shall be starved.”

I have said these things mournfully to my own heart. But I would say to any of you who may not be rich, but who are looking for your good in your own little home and the comforts of it—any of you young men who are seeking the great object of life in learning or the like—if you are not living for God, your strength will be starved! If you do not “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” whatever you gain and however satisfied you may be for a little while, an awful hunger must ultimately come upon you and you will then lament that you spent your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not!

II. Briefly, in the second place, we shall speak of our text as indicating A KIND OF DISCIPLINE THROUGH WHICH GOD PUTS THE SELFRIGHTEOUS WHEN HE MEANS TO SAVE THEM. Many people are very religious and yet are not saved. They are unsaved because they go about to establish their own righteousness and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness which is of God in Jesus Christ. Now, these persons may, for a while, be very well satisfied with their own righteousness and if they are not the children of God they will be satisfied with it for life. Some of them talk in this way—“I don’t know that I ever wronged anybody. I have always been honest and honorable in my transactions and I have brought up my children respectably. I have had a hard fight of it and, for all that, nobody could say that I ever disgraced my character.”

It is not very long ago that I was driven by a cabman, an aged man, and when I got out of his cab I referred to his age and he remarked upon it himself. I said, “Well, I trust when this life is over you will have a portion in a better world.” “Yes, I think so, Sir,” he said. “I was never drunk, that I know of, in my life. I was always reckoned a civil man. I never used bad language and I go to Church sometimes.” He seemed to be perfectly satisfied and was quite astonished that I did not express my assurance of his safety. His confidence is the common reliance of all classes of Englishmen and though they may not always put it in that shape, yet that is the notion—that by a sort of goodness, a very poor and mangled goodness—men may, after all, enter Heaven.

Now, when God means to save a man, the hunger of the heart comes in and devours all his boasted excellence. Why, a spiritually hungry soul would take 50 years of self-righteousness and swallow them up like a morsel and cry for more! Our goodness is nothing compared with the demands of the Law and the necessities of the case. Our fine righteousnesses, how they shrivel up like autumn leaves when the Spirit of God acts as a frost to them! Our virtues are as a meadow in the spring bedecked with golden kingcups, but when the Spirit of God blows upon it, the grass withers and the flowers fade, for all flesh is grass and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of grass. It is a part of the operation of the Holy Spirit to wither all the goodliness of human nature and to destroy all those lovely flowers of natural virtue in which we put such store, cutting them down as with a mower’s scythe. In truth, there is none good, no, not one! We are all shut up in unbelief and sin by nature. In the best of natures, sin affects the whole body, “the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint”—and it is a great blessing when the Holy Spirit makes us feel this! Painful is the feeling, but blessed is the result when, once and for all, our strength is starved.

Yes, and there are some who are very satisfied because, in addition to a commendable life, they have performed certain ceremonies to which they impute great sanctity. There is a theory abroad, nowadays, which some persons who are not in either the lunatic or the idiot asylum believe, namely, the theory that sacramental performances convey Grace! It is wonderful how a rational being can ever think so, but there are persons who are, apparently rational in other things, who believe that the sprinkling of drops of water upon an infant’s brow regenerates it! They believe, also, the absurdity that the eating of bread and the drinking of wine really convey Christ to the soul, and so on! They insist that aqueous applications and materialistic festivities can bring spiritual good to the heart—a monstrous doctrine worthy of the priests of Baal—but so foolish as to make one doubt his ears when he hears it stated!

Because they have gone through these operations and have been confirmed and I do not know what besides, many are content! Others, who happen to belong to a dissenting community, have passed through the ordeal of joining the Church or have attended class meetings and have subscribed to the various societies and so, they think, they are saved! Heirs of Hell will rest content with such outward things, but heirs of Heaven never can! Their strength, if they make external religion their strength, will, byand-by, be starved and they will cry out,” My God, my soul pants for You as the hart pants for the water-brooks. I cannot be satisfied with outward forms, I need inward Grace and I cannot be content with being told that the Grace went with the form! I need to know the Grace of God in truth! I long to feel it! I pine to exhibit it in my own life.”

To be told I was born again when I was a babe will not satisfy me! I need to feel the inner life, the new life of God within my spirit! To be told that I did eat Christ when I ate the bread will not content me! My heart longs to know that Christ is really the hope of Glory in me and that I am living upon Him! If I cannot have communion with God and with His dear Son for myself in my very soul, I turn with loathing from every substitute—ritualistic, priestly, or otherwise! Beloved, I would have you flee from every sacrament to the Savior! I would have you flee away from ceremonies to the Cross of Christ! There is your only hope! Look to Him by faith—for all the rest without this is but outward and carnal—and can minister no good to your spirit. May your strength be starved if you are resting in anything which is external and unspiritual!

Many a person has known what it is to have this hunger-bite go right through everything he rested in. I once knew what it was to get a little comfort from my prayers before I found the Savior. But when the Spirit of God dealt with me, I saw that my prayers needed praying over again. I thought I had some sort of repentance and I began to be content with it. But when the Spirit of God came, I found that my repentance needed to be repented of! I had felt some confidence in my Bible readings and hoped that my regular attendance at public worship would bring me salvation, but I found that I was only reading the Word of God—not believing it! I was hearing it, but not accepting it! I was increasing my knowledge and my responsibility and yet was not rendering obedience to God!

Dear Soul, if you are resting anywhere short of Christ, may your strength be starved! You are at your strongest when you are utter weakness apart from Him. When you rest in Him completely and only in Him, then is salvation accomplished in you, but not till then! May God, in His infinite mercy, grant that all your strength apart from Christ may be starved and that speedily!

III. Lastly, and very earnestly—and perhaps this last part may have more reference to most of you than anything I have said—I believe THERE ARE MANY OF GOD’S SERVANTS WHOSE STRENGTH IS LAMENTABLY HUNGER-BITTEN. In this age we are all busy and through being busy we are apt to neglect the soul-feeding ordinances. I mean the reading of Scripture, the hearing of the Word, meditation upon it, prayer and communion with God. Some of you do not rise as soon as you might in the

morning and prayer is hurried over. And too often at eventide you are half-asleep with the many cares of the day and prayer is offered in a slovenly way.

Nor is this all, for during the day when, if you were as you should be, you would be praying without ceasing, there is this to think of and that and the other—and such a pressure of business that prayers are few. How can you pray? You did at one time! You used to get a text of Scripture in the morning and chew it all day—and you used to get much sweetness out of it and your soul grew. But now, instead of a text of Scripture, you have pressing engagements as soon as you are out of bed! You would, now and then, steal into a mid-day Prayer Meeting, perhaps, or get two or three minutes alone. But you have gradually dropped that habit and you have felt justified in doing so for, “really, time is so precious and there is so much to do in this age of competition.”

Dear Friend, I am not your judge, but let me suggest that you are becoming starved through not feeding upon the Word of God. Souls cannot be strong without spiritual meat any more than bodies can be well when meals are neglected. There is a good rule I have heard mothers say about children and chickens—“little and often”—and I think it is true with Christians. They need little and often during the day—not a long passage of Scripture, perhaps memory would fail—but a short passage now and a short passage then and a little prayer here and a little prayer there. It is wonderful how souls grow in that way. Alas, I fear all this is neglected and spiritual strength is starved! Let us begin, from this time forward, to give attention to the sustenance of our souls! Let us daily feed upon the Word of God that we may grow—and so shall our strength no more be starved.

END OF VOLUME 25  
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÷Job 19.25

JOB’S SURE KNOWLEDGE  
NO. 2909

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1904.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 10, 1876,

**“For I know that my Redeemer lives.”  
Job 19:25.**

I DARESAY you know that there are a great many difficulties about the translation of this passage. It is a very complicated piece of Hebrew, partly, I suppose, owing to its great antiquity, being found in what is, probably, one of the oldest Books of the Bible. Besides that, different persons have tried to translate it according to their own varying views. The Jews stiffly fight against the notion of the Messiah and His Resurrection being found in this verve, while many Christian commentators see here everything that we can find in the New Testament and translate the passage as though Job were as well instructed in this matter as we are now that Christ “has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.” Others say that while there is, no doubt, a reference to the Person and the Resurrection of Christ, yet it is not so vivid as some seem to think.

Personally, I am quite satisfied with the translation given in our Authorized Version, yet it has occurred to me that possibly, Job, himself, may not have known the full meaning of all that he said. Imagine the Patriarch driven into a corner, badgered by his so-called friends, charged by them with all manner of evils until he is quite boiling over with indignation and, at the same time, smarting under terrible bodily diseases and the dreadful losses which he has sustained—and, at last, he bursts out with this exclamation, “I shall be vindicated one day. I am sure I shall. I know that my Vindicator lives. I am sure that there is One who will vindicate me and if He never clears my name and reputation as long as I live, it will be done afterwards. There must be a just God in Heaven who will see me righted and even though worms devour my body until the last relic of it has passed away, I do verily believe that, somehow, in the faroff ages, I shall be vindicated.”

He throws his faith forward to some tremendous era which he anticipates and he declares that there will be found then, as he believes there is alive even now, a Goel, a Kinsman, an Avenger who will stand up for him and set right all this wrong. He cannot conceive that God will permit such gross injustice to be done to a man who has walked as he has walked, to be brought so low and then to be stung with such unfounded accusations. He is positive that there must be a Vindicator for him somewhere and he appeals to that Last Dread Tribunal which he dimly sees in the far-off future and he believes that someone will be found to stand up successfully for him there.

If that is the case, you will see that Job was driven, perhaps beyond his former knowledge, by his very pains and trials. He may but dimly have perceived a future state, but his condition revealed to him the necessity for such a state. He felt that if the righteous suffer so much in this life, often apparently without any just cause—and if the wicked prosper—then there must be another state in which God will set right the wrongs of this and rectify the apparent inequalities of His Providence here. Job realized that and, possibly, his deep griefs may have been the channel of another Revelation to him, namely, that there was a mysterious Divine Being concerning whom that dark prophecy had been handed down from the Garden of Eden, itself, “The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” He felt sure that for those who were wronged as he had been, there must be an Advocate provided. He had before complained that there was no Umpire—no “Daysman”—to stand between them both, but now he asks for an Advocate and he feels that there must be one, yes, he knows that there is and he declares that somewhere or other, there is an Advocate who will, some day or other, set right all that concerns him, let things go now as they may! So possibly Job was seeing more than he had ever seen before of that mysterious One who pleads the cause of those who are oppressed and shows Himself strong on their behalf at the right hand of God!

I am not going to enter into any discussion of the matter, but shall use the passage in the full Evangelical sense. Job may have known all that we now know concerning Christ, for he may have had special Revelations and manifestations. We do not find all that we know in his Book, yet he may have meant all that I shall say in this discourse. If he did not mean it, I trust that we shall, under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit!

I. I shall speak first upon this point—JOB HAD A TRUE FRIEND AMID HIS MISTAKEN FRIENDS.  
These men were miserable comforters, but Job had a real Comforter. They were estranged from him, but he had a true Friend left, so he said, “I know that my Goel lives.” That is the Hebrew word. I suppose you all know that it means the person nearest akin to him who, because he was nearest akin, was bound to take up his cause. If a man was slain by misadventure, the goel pursued the one who had slain him and endeavored to avenge his death. If a person fell into debt and was sold into slavery because of the debt, his goel, if he was able, had to redeem him—and hence we get the word, “redeemer.” Or if estates became mortgaged through poverty, it was the duty of the next of kin to redeem them, if possible, and so, again, we get the idea of redeemer. But the word, “goel,” is more comprehensive than the word, “redeemer,” so we will begin with its first meaning.  
Job, in the midst of his false friends, had One whom he called his Kinsman. “I know,” he said, “that my Kinsman lives.” We interpret that word, “Kinsman,” as meaning our Lord Jesus Christ and we sing— *“Jesus, our Kinsman and our God,  
Arrayed in majesty and blood,  
You are our life, our souls in Thee  
Possess a full felicity.”*  
I want you, just now, to think of Jesus Christ as your Kinsman if you are really in Him, for He is, indeed, the nearest akin to you of any—bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also, Himself, likewise took part of the same.” Now, your own flesh and blood, as you call them, are not so near to you in real kinship as Jesus is, for, often you will find flesh and blood near akin by birth but not by sympathy. Two brothers may be, spiritually, very different from one another and may not be able to enter into each other’s trials at all. But this Kinsman participates in every pang that rends your heart. He knows your constitution, your weakness, your sensitiveness, the particular trial that cuts you to the quick—for in all your afflictions He was afflicted. Thus He is nearer to you than the nearest of earthly kin can possibly be, for He enters more fully into the whole of your life! He seems to have gone through it all and He still goes through it all in His constant sympathy with you.  
Christ’s kinship with His people is to be thought of with great comfort because it is voluntary. We have some, perhaps, who are akin to us, yet who wish they were not. Many a time, when a rich man has poor relations, he is half ashamed of the kinship between them and wishes that it did not exist. Shame upon him for thinking so! But our Lord Jesus Christ’s relationship to us is no accident of birth—it was voluntarily assumed by him! He would be one with us because He loved us. Nothing could satisfy Him till He had come to this earth and been made one flesh with His Church. “For this cause,” it is said concerning marriage, “shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery,” said Paul, “but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” And, verily, so it was with Christ, as the poet sings—  
*“‘Yes,’ says the Lord, ‘with her I’ll go  
Through all the depths of care and woe  
And on the Cross will even dare  
The bitter pangs of death to bear.’”*  
This He did because He would be one flesh with His people and that is a very near kinship which comes as close as that, and which willingly does so—not by force, but by voluntary choice.  
And further, this is a kinship of which Jesus is never ashamed. We have known or heard of the prosperous man who has been ashamed of his poor old mother and of the educated young man who has looked down with scorn upon the very father who has toiled and slaved in order to give him the advantages of such an education. It is disgraceful that there should ever be such ingrates, but it is written concerning our great Kinsman, “He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” He declares to the whole universe, concerning those persecuted ones—those who are ridiculed as being fools, “They are My brethren.” The Prince of Glory, whose fingers are adorned with stars of light like rings of priceless value, calls the poor bedridden woman who is a child of God, His sister! And He calls the humble, toiling, laboring man who walks with Him, His brother! And He is not ashamed to do so. Think, Beloved, with most intense gratitude, of this great Kinsman of yours who is so near of kin to you— voluntarily near of kin and not ashamed to acknowledge the kinship!  
Remember, too, that your Kinsman lives in this respect—that He will always be your Kinsman! The closest ties of earthly relationship must, to a great extent, end in death, for there are no husbands and wives, as such, in Heaven. There cannot be, “for in the Resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in Heaven.” There are other ties, of a spiritual kind, that will far outshine the best of bonds that linked us together here, but, when all other ties are broken, Jesus will always be our Kinsman, our Brother! We shall find the fraternal relationship better understood, more fully enjoyed and more clearly manifested up there than it can ever be down here. When all other relationships are growing dim, this blessed eternal kinship will shine out the more brightly! So I want all of you who truly love the Lord Jesus Christ to interpret my text in this way—“I know that my Kinsman lives”— and to feel how honored you are to have such a Kinsman as Christ is! Ruth was highly privileged in having such a kinsman as Boaz who was not content for her to glean in his fields, but who took her as his wife. And your great Kinsman intends that you should be betrothed to Him forever and He will bring you to His heavenly home at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb!  
There was a second meaning to the word, “goel,” arising out of the first—Job’s Kinsman would become his Vindicator. It was the kinsman’s duty to defend the rights of his needy relative, so Job intended here to say, “I know that my Vindicator lives.” And the Lord Jesus Christ is the Vindicator of His people from all false charges. It is not easy for Christians to live in this world without being slandered and misrepresented. Certainly, those of us who live in the full blaze of public life can hardly utter a word without having it twisted, tortured and misconstrued. We are often represented as saying what we loathe even to think—yet we must not be surprised at that. The world loves lying—it always has done so and it always will. Even in private life you may meet with similar cruel treatment—there are some of God’s best children who lie under reproach by the year together. The very things which they would not tolerate for a moment are laid to their charge and they are thought to be guilty of them—and even good people hold up their hands in pious horror at them though they are perfectly innocent all the while!  
Well, Beloved, always remember that your Vindicator lives! Do not be too much concerned to clear your own character. Above all, do not attempt to vindicate yours in a court of law, but say to yourself, “I know that my Vindicator lives.” When He comes, “then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.” His people may now be under a cloud, but, when He appears, the cloud shall break and their true glory shall be seen! The greater the censure under which any of us have unjustly lived on earth, the greater will be the joy and the honor which will be vouchsafed to us in the day when Christ shall clear our character from all the shameful aspersions that have been brought against us! All will be cleared up in that day, so leave the accusations alone, knowing that your Vindicator lives.  
There is another most comforting thought—that our Vindicator will clear us from true charges as well as false ones. As for the false charges, what do they matter? It is the true ones that really concern us—can Christ clear us from them? Yes, that He can! Remember how the Apostle John writes, “If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” You see, it is not merely if we have been said to sin when we did not, but if we really sin, “we have an Advocate with the Father.” O blessed Advocate, how do You clear Your people of the sin which they have actually committed? Why, in this way—He took it up Himself—the awful load of their guilt—and suffered the full penalty for it! So there He stands before the Eternal Throne to plead their cause and, as He does so, He says, “Those sins committed by My people—I have taken them upon Myself and suffered in the place of all who will believe in Me.” O blessed Kinsman, how glorious are You in Your Grace, in that You have so completely undertaken our cause that You have been made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in You!  
Yes, Beloved, Jesus will plead the merit of His precious blood and His spotless righteousness and, before that powerful pleading, our sins and our transgressions shall sink beneath the flood and shall not be remembered against us any more forever!  
In that day, too, our Vindicator will defend us against all the accusations of Satan. Our great adversary often assails and attacks us here— and the Lord says to him, as He did concerning Joshua the high priest, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan; even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!” We may tell the devil, when we stand foot to foot with him and are sore beset, that our Vindicator lives and we may quote to him that grand promise, “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly,” because our Vindicator, who is to bruise the serpent’s head, still lives! The old serpent may nibble at your heel for a while, as he did at your Master’s, but you, in the strength of your Lord, shall bruise his head! And whatever other adversary of your soul there may be at any time, you can rest in quiet confidence. Even if that adversary is permitted to prevail over you for a while, say to him, “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.”  
So you have two meanings of the word goel—my Kinsman, my Vindicator—lives. I hope you who are greatly tempted and tried and you who are persecuted and oppressed will catch that second meaning and commit your cause unto God. “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord.” Be slow to anger! Fret not yourselves because of the wicked man that prospers in his evil way and think not of being revenged upon your oppressors! In patience and quietness possess your souls knowing that your time of vindication will surely come, for your Vindicator lives!  
Then the third meaning of the word goel certainly is, “Redeemer,” so Job could say, “I know that my Redeemer lives.” As I have already said, the next of kin in the process of vindicating his poor kinsman was accustomed to redeem him from bondage, or to redeem any part of his estate that might be under mortgage. So, let us next think of how the Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed us from bondage. Having broken the Law of God, we were in bondage to that Law. We had received the spirit of bondage again to fear. But we who have believed in Jesus, our Kinsman, can say that He has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us, and that we are no longer in bondage. We were also in bondage under sin, as Paul wrote, “I am carnal, sold under sin,” but Christ has come and broken

he power of sin in us so that its reigning power is subdued—and though it still strives to get the mastery and often makes us to groan within ourselves, even as Paul did, yet do we, with him, thank God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord!  
There are two redemptions—redemption by price and redemption by power, and both of these Christ has worked for us—by price, by His Sacrifice upon the Cross of Calvary—and by power, by His Divine Spirit coming into our heart and renewing our soul. Ought we not unceasingly to bless the Lord who has redeemed us from under the Law, having paid the penalty for the commands which we had broken and who has also redeemed us from the power of sin? “I know that my Redeemer lives,” then I know that I am a free man, for if the Son makes us free, then are we free, indeed! I know that He paid the price for my soul’s eternal redemption—then may my soul continually exult in Him and rejoice in the liberty with which He has made me free!  
But, as I have already reminded you, the redeemer was also accustomed to redeem the estate as well as the person of his kinsman. We had lost everything. Father Adam had put everything under a heavy mortgage and we could not even meet the interest on it—but the whole estate is free from a mortgage now, even to Paradise itself! Does someone ask, “Is there not any mortgage even upon Paradise?” I answer—No, for Christ said to the dying thief, “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” So it is clear that He has entered Paradise and claimed it on His people’s behalf. Jesus Christ has said, in the words of the Psalmist, “I restored that which I took not away.” Bankrupt debtors, through the Lord’s Sovereign Grace you are no longer under any liabilities because of your sin if Christ is accepted by you as your Goel and Redeemer! He has restored the estates to you which your first father, Adam, had lost. And He has made you heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ through the wondrous redemption which He worked for you on the Cross of Calvary!  
Suck the honey, if you can, out of these three glorious Truths of God and you will be able to do so in proportion as you can personally use the words of the text, “‘I know that my Redeemer lives.’ I know that He lives who will vindicate my character and rectify my wrongs. I know, too, that He lives who has redeemed me from sin and Hell—and even though I die, I know that He will redeem me from the power of the grave and that He will enable me to say, ‘O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?’”  
Dwell on the remembrance that you have such a Divine Helper and then let us pass on to another thought at which I will only briefly hint as I proceed to another part of my theme.  
II. The second point is this—JOB HAD REAL PROPERTY AMID ABSOLUTE POVERTY.  
Job had lost everything—every stick and stone that he possessed. He had lost his children and he had lost his wife, too, for all practical purposes, for she had not acted like a wife to him in his time of trial. Poor Job—he had lost everything else, but he had not lost his Redeemer! Notice, he does not say, “I know that my wife and my children live,” but he said, “I know that my Redeemer lives.” Ah, “my Redeemer”—he has not lost Him, so he has the best of all possessions still left! Looking up to Him by faith, with the tears of joy standing in his eyes, he says, “Yes, He is my Redeemer and He still lives. I accept Him as mine and I will cling to Him forever.” Can you, beloved Friends, not merely rejoice in Christ as the Redeemer, but also as your Redeemer? Have you personally accepted Him as your Redeemer? Have you personally trusted Him with your soul, wholly and really? And do you already feel in your own heart a kinship to this great Kinsman, a trust in this great Vindicator, a reliance upon His great Redemption? Another man’s redemption is of no value to my soul— the sweetness lies in the little word, “my”—“my Redeemer.” Luther used to say that the marrow of the Gospel is found in the pronouns and I believe it is—“My Redeemer.” Say, with me, each one of you for himself or herself—  
*“My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of Yours,  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess my sin.  
My soul looks back to see  
The burdens You did bear,  
When hanging on the cursed tree  
And hopes her guilt was there.”*  
If you really do rely upon Christ’s atoning Sacrifice and so take Him as your Redeemer, you may not only hope your guilt was there, but you may know that it was! There, poor man, you may not have a penny in your pocket, but if you can truly say, “my Redeemer,” you are infinitely better off than a millionaire who cannot say that! You who know not where you will have a lodging tonight, if you can truly say, “my Redeemer,” you need not envy the very angels of God, for in this respect, you are ahead even of them, for they can call Him, “Lord,” but not “Redeemer”! He is not so near akin to them as He is to you, “for verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.” He took your Nature and mine, Beloved, for Christ became a Man!  
So Job had something real and valuable left even when he had lost all his property.  
III. Thirdly, Job seems to lay stress upon the word, “lives”—“I know that my Redeemer lives.” This teaches us that JOB HAD A LIVING KINSMAN AMID A DYING FAMILY.  
All his children were dead. We cannot easily estimate the full force of that blow upon the Patriarch’s heart. The loss of one child is a very painful event, even when the child is a very little one and the parents have many others left. But it is a far worse bereavement when the children who are taken away are grown up, as Job’s were. They were evidently a very united family who used to meet in each other’s houses for mutual fellowship. They seem to have been a very happy family and they were certainly a family under very gracious influences, for Job was accustomed, after their days of festival, to offer sacrifices for them lest they should have sinned against the Lord. Altogether, it was a fine family— seven sons and three daughters—and now they were all gone at once! To lose all one’s family at once like that is a heavy stroke that none can measure but those who have felt it. All were gone!—The whole ten at once! That was sad for poor Job, but it was most blessed that he was able to say, “Though my children are all dead, ‘I know that my Redeemer lives.’ He is not dead and in Him I find more than all that I have lost.”  
Look at your Lord, dear Friend, if you are mourning, just now, the sons of loved ones and see whether He is not better to you than ten sons and daughters! See whether there is not in His heart room enough for that affection which has been so rudely snapped, to grow again. The tendrils of your soul need something to cling to and to twist around—then let them wrap around Him! Rejoice that He lives in a dying world. If you walk through the cemetery, or stand by the open grave, how blessedly these words seem to fall upon your spirit—like the music of angels— “These are dead, but ‘I know that my Redeemer lives’—lives on, lives in power, lives in happiness, lives with a life which He communicates to all who trust Him. He lives and therefore I shall live with Him! He lives and therefore the dead who are in Him shall live forever.” O blessed Truth of God!  
You will yourself die soon, dear Friend. No, I must correct myself—you will not die, for it is not death for one who knows the Savior to die. You will fall asleep in Him one of these days at the very hour that God has appointed—and when you open your eyes, it will not be in the narrow death chamber—you will not be on the bed of sickness. I think you will be startled to find yourself amid such new surroundings! “What is this I hear?” you will say. “Such music as this has never charmed me before! And what is that I see?” But you will not need to enquire, for you will know that face at once! You knew, while on earth, that Jesus still lived, but you will know it better then—when you lay aside these heavy optics that do but dim our sight and get into the pure spirit state and then see HIM! Oh, the bliss of that first sight of Christ! It seems to me as if that would gather up an eternity of delight into a single moment! That first glimpse of Him will be enough to make us swoon away with excessive rapture! I do verily think that some saints whom I have known have done just that—swooned away with the excess of joy that they have felt in their departing moments. I have, sounding in my ears just now, the voice of a dear Brother by whose bedside I sat for a little while before I came to this service. He said to me, “I shall be Home tonight, Pastor. I wanted to see your face once more before I went, but I shall be Home tonight and see the face of Jesus!” I hope you will all be prepared to die after that fashion. The godly old Negro said, “Our minister is dying full of life.” That is the way to die—full of life! Because Jesus lives, we shall also live and we may well die full of life because of our union to Him!  
IV. The last thought I want to leave with you is this—JOB HAD ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY AMID UNCERTAIN AFFAIRS.  
He said, “I know that my Redeemer lives.” Why, Job, I should have thought you would not have known anything for certain now! I should not have liked to insure Job’s farm animals, or the houses in which his children met together to feast. Nothing seemed to be certain with Job but uncertainty—yet there was one thing concerning which he felt that he could put his foot down firmly and say, “‘I know.’ The winds may rage and the tempests roar, but they cannot shake this rock. ‘I know.’ ‘I know.’ ‘I know!’” Beloved, is everything uncertain with you in this world? Of course it is, for it is so with everybody! But does it appear to be more uncertain with you than it does with anybody else? Does your business seem to be slipping away and every earthly comfort is threatening to disappear? Even if it is so, there is, nevertheless, something that is certain—something that is stable—Jesus your Redeemer lives! Rest on Him and you will never fail. Let your faith in Him be firm and confident—you cannot be too fully established in the belief that Jesus, who once died, has left the grave to die no more and that you, in Him, must also live eternally! Something may be wrong with you for the next few days or weeks, but all is right with you forever and “all’s well that ends well.”  
There may be some rough water to be crossed between here and the fair havens of eternal happiness, but all is right there forever and ever! There may be losses and crosses, there may be tumult and shipwrecks, but all is right forever with all who are in Christ Jesus! “Some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship”—but all who are in Christ Jesus shall escape “safe to land.” There are innumerable uncertainties, but there is this one certainty—“Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: you shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.” Spring on this Rock, man! If you are struggling in the sea, just now, and waves of sin and doubt beat over you, leap onto this Rock—Jesus lives! Trust the living Christ and, because He lives, you shall also live! I could cheerfully take my place with Job if I might be able to say as confidently as he did, “I know that my Redeemer lives.”  
And if you, as a poor sinner, are trusting wholly and only in Christ, then He is your Redeemer and you are saved forever! If He is the only hope that you have and you cling to Him as the limpet clings to the rock, then all is right with you forever, and you may know that He is your Redeemer as surely as Job knew that He was his! The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOB 19.**

Verses 1, 2. Then, Job answered and said, how long will you vex my soul and break me in pieces with words? They struck at him with their hard words as if they were breaking stones on the roadside! We ought to be very careful what we say to those who are suffering affliction and trial, for a word, though it seems to be a very little thing, will often cut far more deeply and wound far more terribly than a razor. So Job says, “How long will you vex my soul and break me in pieces with words?”

3. These ten times have you reproached me: you are not ashamed that you make yourselves strange to me. He means that they had reproached him several times over—and hints that they ought to have been ashamed to act so strangely, so coldly, so harshly towards him.

4. And be it indeed that I have erred, my error remains with myself. “I have done you no harm. The error, if error there is, is within my own bosom, for you cannot find anything in my life to lay to my charge.” Happy is the man who can say as much as that!

5, 6. If indeed you will magnify yourselves against me, and plead against me my reproach: know now that God has overthrown me, and has compassed me with His net. Job seems to say, “I did not bring this trouble upon myself—it is God who has laid it upon me. Take heed lest in reproaching me because of my trouble, you should also reproach God.” I suppose that we cannot, all of us, see into the inner meaning of these words, but if we are in very sore trouble and those who ought to comfort us are bringing cruel accusations against us, we shall read the language of Job with no small sympathy and satisfaction.

7. Behold, if I cry out concerning wrong, I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment. Poor Job! When our prayer is not heard, or we think it is not, then the clouds above us are indeed dark. You who are passing through a season of unanswered prayer—do not imagine that you are the first to travel that dreary way! You can see the footprints of others on that desolate sandy shore. Job knew what that experience meant. So did David and so did our blessed Lord. Read the 2nd verse of the 22nd Psalm, and hear Jesus say, “O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent.”

8. He has fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and He has set darkness in my paths. God had done this and done it to Job whom He called “a perfect and an upright man.” Then how can you and I expect to escape trial and difficulty when such a man as the Patriarch of Uz found his road blocked up and darkness all around him?

9, 10. He has stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He has destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and my hope has He removed like a tree. That is, torn up by the roots and carried down the stream to be forgotten by the people who once knew it and rejoiced in its welcome shade.

11. He has also kindled His wrath against me, and He counts me unto Him as one of His enemies. Does God ever act like that towards His own children? Yes, there are times when, without any anger in His heart, but with designs of love toward them, He treats His children, outwardly, as if He were an enemy to them. See the gardener going up to that beautiful tree. He takes out a sharp knife, feels its edge to be sure that it is sharp and then he begins pruning it here, gashing it there and making it to bleed in another place as if he were going to cut it all to pieces! Yet all that is not because he has any anger against the tree, but, on the contrary, because he greatly values it and wishes it to bring forth more fruit than it has ever done. Do not think that God’s sharpest knife means death to His loved ones—it means more life and a richer, fuller life.

12. His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle. Troops of trouble, troops of Chaldeans and Sabeans, troops in which Job counted the stormy winds as terrible allies of the Most High—all these had come up against Job and he seemed to be like a country that is beaten down and devoured by powerful invaders.

13. He has put my brethren far from me, and my acquaintance are verily estranged from me. He looks on those so-called “friends” of his and, remembering the bitter things they had said, he tells them that they are estranged from him.

14, 15. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in my house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. What a long way a child of God may be permitted to go in trouble! Ah, Brothers and Sisters! We do not know how those who are most dear to God’s heart may suffer all the more for that very reason—“for whom the Lord loves He chastens.”

16, 17. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I entreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I entreated for the children’s sake of my own body. He mentioned to his wife those whom death had taken away and asked her to speak kindly to him, but even she had hard words to throw in his teeth!

18-20. Yes, young children despised me; I arose, and they spoke against me. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me. My bone cleaves to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth. There is no skin upon the teeth, or scarcely any, and, therefore, Job means that there was next to nothing of him left, like the skin of his teeth.

21. Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O you my friends; for the hand of God has touched me. How full of pity it is that he has thus to beg for sympathy! This strong man—this most patient man—this perfect and upright man before God has to ask for sympathy! Do you wonder that it was so? HE, who was far greater than Job, ran back thrice to His sleeping disciples as if He needed some help from them, yet He found it not, for He had to say to them, “What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?” Let this be a lesson to us to try and possess hearts of compassion towards those who are in sorrow and distress.

22. Why do you persecute me as God does, and are not satisfied with my flesh? “If God smites me, why do you, who are round about me, do the same? Is it not enough that God seems to be turned against me? Why should you also be my enemies?”

23, 24. Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were engraved with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever! Inscriptions have been found, engraved in the rocks, that may have been done in the time of Job and it was common, in ancient days, to write on tablets of lead or brass. So Job desired that what he was saying might be recorded for future reference, for he was persuaded that he was being harshly dealt with and unjustly judged.

25. For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. “For I know.” What a splendid burst of confidence this is, right out of the depth of his sorrow, like some wondrous star that suddenly blazes upon the brow of the blackest night, or like the sudden rising of the morning sun!

26-28. And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins are consumed within me. But you should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me? Job seems to say, speaking about himself, though in the third person, “He is a devout man, can you not see that? He has faith in God, my Friends, can you not perceive that? Why, then, do you persecute him so?”

29. Be you afraid of the sword: for wrath brings the punishments of the sword, that you may know there is a judgment. Now Job carries the war into the enemy’s camp and he says, “You charge me with all sorts of sin and yet you cannot deny that the root of the matter is in me. Would it not be much wiser for you to be yourselves afraid lest God should cut you off for falsely accusing me and slandering me in the time of my sorrow?” There we may confidently leave Job, for the man who can truly say what he has said about his Redeemer will come out all right at the last.

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I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES  
NO. 504

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 12, 1863, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”  
Job 19:25-27.**

THE hand of God has been upon us heavily this week. An aged Deacon, who has been for more than fifty years a member of this Church, has been removed from our midst. And a Sister, the beloved wife of another of our Church officers, a member for nearly the same term of years, has fallen asleep. It is not often that a Church is called to sorrow over the departure of two such venerable members—let not our ears be deaf to such a double admonition to prepare to meet our God. That they were preserved so long, and upheld so mercifully for so many years, was not only a reason of gratitude to them, but to us also. I am, however, so against the preaching of what are called funeral sermons, that I forbear, lest I appear to eulogize the creature, when my only aim should be to magnify the Divine Grace of God.

Our text deserves our profound attention. Its preface would hardly have been written had not the matter been of the utmost importance in the judgment of the Patriarch who uttered it. Listen to Job’s remarkable desire—“Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever!” Perhaps, hardly aware of the full meaning of the words he was uttering, yet his holy soul was impressed with a sense of some weighty revelation concealed within his words. He therefore desired that it might be recorded in a book! His desire, by God’s Grace, was granted.

The Book of books embalms the words of Job. He wished to have them graven on a rock—cut deep into it with an iron pen—and then the lines inlaid with lead. Or he would have them engraved, according to the custom of the ancients, upon a sheet of metal, so that time might not be able to eat out the inscription. He has not had his desire in that respect, except that upon many and many a sepulcher those words of Job stand recorded, “I know that my Redeemer lives.”

It is the opinion of some commentators that Job, in speaking of the rock here, intended his own rock-hewn sepulcher, and desired that this might be his epitaph. That it might be cut deep, so that ages should not wear it out—that when any asked, “Where does Job sleep?” as soon as they saw the sepulcher of the Patriarch of Uz, they might learn that he

died in hope of resurrection, resting upon a living Redeemer. Whether such a sentence adorned the portals of Job’s last sleeping place, we know not, but certainly no words could have been more fitly chosen. Should not the man of patience, the mirror of endurance, the pattern of trust, bear as his memorial this golden line—which is as full of all the patience of hope and hope of patience—as mortal language can be?

Who among us could select a more glorious motto for his last escutcheon? I am sorry to say that a few of those who have written upon this passage cannot see Christ or the resurrection in it at all. Albert Barnes, among the rest, expresses his intense sorrow that he cannot find the resurrection here, and for my part, I am sorry for him. If it had been Job’s desire to foretell the advent of Christ, and his own sure resurrection, I cannot see what better words he could have used. And if those truths are not taught here, then language must have lost its original object, and must have been employed to mystify and not to explain. To conceal and not to reveal.

What I ask, does the Patriarch mean, if not that he shall rise again when the Redeemer stands upon the earth? Brethren, no unsophisticated mind can fail to find here what almost all Believers have here discovered. I feel safe in keeping to the old sense, and we shall, this morning, seek no new interpretation. We shall adhere to the common one, with or without the consent of our critics.

In discoursing upon them I shall speak upon three things. First, let us, with the Patriarch, descend into the grave and behold the ravages of death. Then, with him, let us look up on High for present consolation. And, still in his admirable company, let us, in the third place, anticipate future delights.

I. First of all then, with the Patriarch of Uz, LET US DESCEND INTO THE SEPULCHER.  
The body has just been divorced from the soul. Friends who loved most tenderly have said—“Bury my dead out of my sight.” The body is borne upon the bier and consigned to the silent earth. It is surrounded by the earthworks of death. Death has a host of troops. If the locusts and the caterpillars are God’s army, the worms are the army of Death. These hungry warriors begin to attack the city of man. They commence with the outworks. They storm the defenses and overturn the walls. The skin, the city wall of manhood, is utterly broken down and the towers of its glory covered with confusion.  
How speedily the cruel invaders deface all beauty. The face gathers blackness. The countenance is defiled with corruption. Those cheeks, once fair with youth, and ruddy with health, have fallen in, even as a bowing wall, and a tottering fence. Those eyes, the windows of the mind where joy and sorrow looked forth by turns, are now filled up with the dust of death. Those lips, the doors of the soul, the gates of Mansoul, are carried away, and its bars are broken. Alas, you windows of agates, and gates of carbuncle, where are you now? How shall I mourn for you, O you captive city, for the mighty men have utterly spoiled you?  
Your neck, once like a tower of ivory, has become as a fallen column. Your nose, so lately comparable to, “the tower of Lebanon, which looks toward Damascus,” is as a ruined hovel. And your head, which towered like Carmel, lies low as the clods of the valley. Where is beauty now? The most lovely cannot be known from the most deformed. The vessel so daintily worked upon the potter’s wheel is cast away upon the dunghill with the vilest potsherds. Cruel have you been, you warriors of Death, for though you wield no axes, and bear no hammers, yet have you broken down the carved work. And though you speak not with tongues, yet have you said in your hearts, “We have swallowed her up, certainly this is the day that we have looked for—we have found, we have seen it.”  
The skin is gone. The troops have entered into the town of Mansoul. And now they pursue their work of devastation. The pitiless marauders fall upon the body itself. There are those noble aqueducts, the veins through which the streams of life were custom to flow. These, instead of being rivers of life, have become blocked up with the soil and wastes of death, and now they must be pulled to pieces. Not a single relic of them shall be spared. Mark the muscles and sinews—like great highways that penetrating the metropolis, carry the strength and wealth of manhood along—their curious pavement must be pulled up and they that do traffic there must be consumed. Each tunneled bone, and curious arch, and knotted bond must be snapped and broken.  
Fair fabrics, glorious storehouses, costly engines, wonderful machines—all, all must be pulled down and not one stone left upon another. Those nerves, which like telegraphic wires connected all parts of the city together to carry thought and feeling and intelligence—these are cut. No matter how artistic the work might be—and certainly we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and the anatomist stands still and marvels to see the skill which the eternal God has manifested in the formation of the body. But these ruthless worms pull everything to pieces, till, like a city sacked and spoiled, that has been given up for days to pillage and to flame, everything lies in a heap of ruin—ashes to ashes, dust to dust.  
But these invaders stop not here. Job says that next they consume his reins. We are accustomed to speak of the heart as the great citadel of life, the inner keep and tower, where the captain of the guard holds out to the last. The Hebrews do not regard the heart, but the lower viscera, the reins, as the seat of the passions, and of mental power. The worms spare not. They enter the secret places of the tabernacle of life—and the standard is plucked from the tower. Having died, the heart cannot preserve itself, and falls like the rest of the frame—a prey to worms.  
It is gone, it is all gone! The skin, the body, the vitals, all, all has departed. There is nothing left. In a few years you shall burn up the sod and say, “Here slept So-and-So and where is he now?” And you may search and hunt and dig, but you shall find no relic. Mother Earth has devoured her own offspring.  
Dear Friends, why should we wish to have it otherwise? Why should we desire to preserve the body when the soul has gone? What vain attempts men have made with coffins of lead and wrappings of myrrh and frankincense! The embalming of the Egyptians, those master robbers of the worm, what has it done? It has served to keep some poor shriveled lumps of mortality above ground to be sold for curiosities, to be dragged away to foreign climes and stared upon by thoughtless eyes.  
No, let the dust go, the sooner it dissolves, the better. And what matters it how it goes! What if it is devoured of beasts, if it is swallowed up in the sea, and become food for fishes! What if plants with their roots suck up the particles? What if the fabric passes into the animal, and from the animal into the earth, and from the earth into the plants, and from the plant into the animal again? What if the winds blow it along the highway? What if the rivers carry it to the ocean waves? It is ordained that somehow or other it must be all separated—“dust to dust, ashes to ashes.” It is part of the decree that it should all perish. The worms, or some other agents of destruction must destroy this body.  
Do not seek to avoid what God has purposed. Do not look upon it as a gloomy thing. Regard it as a necessity—no, more—view it as the platform of a miracle! View it as the lofty stage of resurrection, since Jesus shall surely raise again the dead particles of this body, however divided from one another. We have heard of miracles, but what a miracle is the resurrection! All the miracles of Scripture, yes, even those worked by Christ, are small compared with this. The philosopher says, “How is it possible that God shall hunt out every particle of the human frame?” He can do it!  
He has but to speak the word, and every single atom, though it may have traveled thousands of leagues, though it may have been blown as dust across the desert, and later have fallen upon the bosom of the sea, and then have descended into its depths to later be cast up on a desolate shore, sucked up by plants, fed on again by beasts, or passed into the fabric of another man—I say that individual atom shall find its fellow— and the whole company of particles at the trump of the archangel shall travel to their appointed place, and the body, the very body which was laid in the ground, shall rise again.  
I am afraid I have been somewhat uninteresting while tarrying upon the exposition of the words of Job, but I think very much of the essence of Job’s faith lay in this, that he had a clear view that the worms would, after his skin, destroy his body—and yet that in his flesh he should see God. You know we might regard it as a small miracle if we could preserve the bodies of the departed. If, by some process, with spices and gums, we could preserve the particles. For the Lord to make those dry bones live, and to quicken that skin and flesh were certainly a miracle. But not palpably and plainly so great a marvel as when the worms have destroyed the body.  
When the fabric has been absolutely broken up, the tenement all pulled down, ground to pieces and flung in handfuls to the wind so that no relic of it is left—and yet when Christ stands in the latter days upon the earth, all the structure shall be brought together, bone to bone—then shall the might of Omnipotence be seen! This, then, is the doctrine of the resurrection. Happy is he who finds no difficulty here—who looks at it as being an impossibility with man, but a possibility with God—and lays hold upon the Omnipotence of the Most High and says, “You say it, and it shall be done!”  
I comprehend You not, great God. I marvel at Your purpose to raise my moldering bones. But I know that You do great wonders, and I am not surprised that You should conclude the great drama of Your creating works here on earth by recreating the human frame by the same power by which You did bring from the dead the body of Your Son Jesus Christ, and by that same Divine energy which has regenerated human souls in Your own image.  
II. Now, having thus descended into the grave and seen nothing there but what is loathsome, LET US LOOK UP WITH THE PATRIARCH AND BEHOLD A SUN SHINING WITH PRESENT COMFORT.  
“I know,” said he, “that my Redeemer lives.” The word “Redeemer” here used, is in the original, “goel”—kinsman. The duty of the king, man, or goel, was this—suppose an Israelite had alienated his estate, as in the case of Naomi and Ruth. Suppose a patrimony which had belonged to a family had passed away through poverty. It was the goel’s business, the redeemer’s business, to pay the price as the next of kin, and to buy back the heritage. Boaz stood in that relation to Ruth. Now, the body may be looked upon as the heritage of the soul—the soul’s small farm—that little plot of earth in which the soul has been accustomed to walk and delight, as a man walks in his garden or dwells in his house.  
Now it becomes alienated. Death, like Ahab, takes away the vineyard from us who are as Naboth. We lose our patrimonial estate. Death sends his troops to take our vineyard, and to spoil its vines, and ruin it. But we turn round to Death and say, “I know that my Goel lives, and He will redeem this heritage. I have lost it. You take it from me lawfully, O Death, because my sin has forfeited my right. I have lost my heritage through my own offenses, and through that of my first parent, Adam. But there lives One who will buy this back.” Brethren, Job could say this of Christ long before He had descended upon earth!  
“I know that He lives,” and now that He has ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, surely we may, with double emphasis, say, “I know that my Goel, my Kinsman lives, and that He has paid the price so that I should have back my patrimony, so that in my flesh I shall see God.” Yes, my Hands, you are redeemed with blood—bought not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold—but with the precious blood of Christ. Yes, heaving Lungs and palpitating Heart, you have been redeemed! He that redeemed the soul to be His altar, has also redeemed the body, that it may be a temple for the Holy Spirit. Not even the bones of Joseph can remain in the house of bondage. No smell of the fire of death may pass upon the garments which His holy children have worn in the furnace.  
Remember, too, that it was always considered to be the duty of the goel, not merely to redeem by price, but where that failed, to redeem by power. Hence, when Lot was carried away captive by the four kings, Abraham summoned his own hired servants, and the servants of all his friends, and went out against the kings of the East and brought back Lot and the captives of Sodom. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, who once has played the kinsman’s part by paying the price for us, lives—and He will redeem us by power. O Death, you tremble at this name! You know the might of our Kinsman! Against His arm you cannot stand!  
You did once meet Him foot to foot in stern battle, and O Death, you did, indeed, tread upon His heel. He voluntarily submitted to this, or else, O Death, you had no power against Him. But He slew you, Death! He slew you! He rifled all your caskets, took from you the key of your castle, burst open the door of your dungeon! And now, you know, Death, you have no power to hold my body. You may set your slaves to devour it, but you shall give it up, and all their spoil must be restored. Insatiable Death, from your greedy mouth shall return the multitudes whom you have devoured. You shall be compelled by the Savior to restore your captives to the light of day.  
I think I see Jesus coming with His Father’s servants. The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. Blow the trumpet! Blow the trumpet! Immanuel rides to battle! The Most Mighty in majesty girds on His sword. He comes! He comes to snatch by power His people’s lands from those who have invaded their portion. Oh, how glorious the victory! There shall be no battle. He comes, He sees, He conquers. The sound of the trumpet shall be enough! Death shall fly in fear! And at once from beds of dust and silent clay to realms of everlasting day, the righteous shall arise!  
To linger here a moment. There was yet, very conspicuously, in the Old Testament, we are informed, a third duty of the goel, which was to avenge the death of his friend. If a person had been slain, the goel was the avenger of blood. Snatching up his sword, he at once pursued the person who had been guilty of bloodshed. So now let us picture ourselves as being smitten by Death. His arrow has just pierced us to the heart, but in the act of expiring, our lips are able to boast of vengeance. In the face of the monster we cry, “I know that my Goel lives.” You may fly, O Death, as rapidly as you will, but no City of Refuge can hide you from Him. He will overtake you. He will lay hold upon you, O you skeleton monarch, and He will avenge my blood on you.”  
I would that I had powers of eloquence to work out this magnificent thought. Chrysostom, or Christmas Evans could picture the flight of the King of Terrors, the pursuit by the Redeemer, the overtaking of the foe, and the slaying of the Destroyer. Christ shall certainly avenge Himself on Death for all the injury which Death has done to His beloved kinsmen. Comfort yourself then, O Christian! You have ever living, even when you die, One who avenges you. One who has paid the price for you, and One whose strong arms shall yet set you free.  
Passing on in our text to notice the next word, it seems that Job found consolation not only in the fact that he had a Goel, a Redeemer, but that this Redeemer lives. He does not say, “I know that my Goel shall live, but that He lives”—having a clear view of the self-existence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever. And you and I, looking back, do not say, “I know that He did live,” but, “He lives today.” This very day. You that mourn and sorrow for venerated friends, your prop and pillar in years gone by—you may go to Christ with confidence, because He not only lives—He is the source of life. And you can, therefore, believe that He can give forth out of Himself, life to those whom you have committed to the tomb.  
He is the Lord and Giver of life originally, and He shall be especially declared to be the resurrection and the life when the legions of His redeemed shall be glorified with Him. If I saw no fountain from which life could stream to the dead, I would yet believe the promise when God said that the dead shall live. But when I see the Fountain provided, and know that it is full to the brim and runs over, I can rejoice without trembling. Since there is One who can say, “I am the resurrection and the life,” it is a blessed thing to see the means already before us in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us look up to our Goel, then, who lives at this very time.  
Still, the marrow of Job’s comfort, it seems to me, lays in that little word, “My.” “I know that MY Redeemer lives.” Oh, to get hold of Christ! I know that in His offices He is precious. But, dear Friends, we must have a part in Him before we can really enjoy Him. What is honey in the woods to me, if like the fainting

Israelites, I dare not eat? It is honey in my hands, honey on my lips, which enlightens my eyes like those of Jonathan. What is gold in the mine to me? Men are beggars in Peru, and beg for their bread in California. It is gold in my purse which will satisfy my necessities, purchasing the bread I need. So, what is a kinsman if he is not a kinsman to me?  
A Redeemer that does not redeem me. An avenger who will never stand up for my blood—of what worth are such? But Job’s faith was strong and firm in the conviction that the Redeemer was his. Dear Friends, dear Friends, can all of you say, “I know that my Redeemer lives”? The question is simple and simply put, but oh, what solemn things hang upon your answer, “Is it MY Redeemer?” I charge you, rest not, be not content until by faith you can say, “Yes, I cast myself upon Him. I am His, and therefore He is mine.” I know that full many of you, while you look upon all else that you have as not being yours, yet can say, “My Redeemer is mine.”  
He is the only piece of property which is really ours. We borrow all else—the house, the children. No, much more—our very body we must return to the Great Lender. But Jesus, we can never leave, for even when we are absent from the body we are present with the Lord. And I know that even death cannot separate us from Him! The body and soul are truly with Jesus even in the dark hours of death, in the long night of the sepulcher, and in the separate state of spiritual existence. Beloved, have you Christ? It may be that you hold Him with a feeble hand, you half think it is presumption to say, “He is my Redeemer.” Yet remember, if you have but faith as a grain of mustard seed, that little faith entitles you to say and say now, “I know that MY Redeemer lives.”  
There is another word in this consoling sentence which, no doubt, served to give a zest to the comfort of Job. It was that he could say, “I KNOW”—“I KNOW that my Redeemer lives.” To say, “I hope so, I trust so,” is comfortable. And there are thousands in the fold of Jesus who hardly ever get much further. But to reach the marrow of consolation you must say, “I KNOW.” Ifs, buts and perhaps, are sure murderers of peace and comfort. Doubts are dreary things in times of sorrow. Like wasps they sting the soul! If I have any suspicion that Christ is not mine, then there is vinegar mingled with the gall of death. But if I know that Jesus is mine, then darkness is not dark. Even the night is light about me. Out of the lion comes honey. Out of the eater comes forth sweetness. “I know that my Redeemer lives.”  
This is a brightly-burning lamp cheering the damps of the sepulchral vault, but a feeble hope is like a flickering smoking flax, just making darkness visible, but nothing more. I would not like to die with a mere hope mingled with suspicion. I might be safe with this, but hardly happy. But oh, to go down into the river knowing that all is well, confident that as a guilty, weak, and helpless worm, I have fallen into the arms of Jesus— and believing that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him! I would have you, dear Christian Friends, never look upon the full assurance of faith as a thing impossible to you. Say not, “It is too high. I cannot attain unto it.” I have known one or two saints of God who have rarely doubted their interest at all.  
There are many of us who do not often enjoy any ravishing ecstasies, but on the other hand, we generally maintain the even tenor of our way, simply hanging upon Christ, feeling that His promise is true, that His merits are sufficient, and that we are safe. Assurance is a jewel for worth but not for rarity. It is the common privilege of all the saints if they have but the Divine Grace to attain unto it. And this Grace, the Holy Spirit gives freely. Surely if Job in Arabia, in those dark misty ages when there was only the morning star, and not the sun—when they saw but little, when life and immortality had not been brought to light—if Job, before the coming and advent, still could say, “I know,” you and I should not speak less positively!  
God forbid that our positiveness should be presumption. Let us try ourselves, and see that our marks and evidences are right, lest we form an ungrounded hope. For nothing can be more destructive than to say, “Peace, peace, where there is no peace.” But oh, let us build for eternity, and build solidly. Let us not be satisfied with the mere foundation, for it is from the upper rooms that we get the widest prospect. Let us pray the Lord to help us to pile stone on stone, until we are able to say as we look at it, “Yes, I know, I KNOW that my Redeemer lives.” This, then, for present comfort today in the prospect of departure.  
III. And now, in the third and last place—THE ANTICIPATION OF FUTURE DELIGHT. Let me call to your remembrance the other part of the text. Job not only knew that the Redeemer lived, but he anticipated the time when He should stand in the latter day upon the earth. No doubt Job referred here to our Savior’s first advent, to the time when Jesus Christ, “the Goel,” the Kinsman, should stand upon the earth to pay in the blood of His veins the ransom price, which had, indeed, in bond and stipulation, been paid before the foundation of the world in promise. But I cannot think that Job’s vision stayed there. He was looking forward to the second advent of Christ as being the period of the resurrection.  
We cannot endorse the theory that Job rose from the dead when our Lord died, although certain Jewish believers held this idea very firmly at one time. We are persuaded that, “the latter day,” refers to the advent of Glory rather than to that of shame. Our hope is that the Lord shall come to reign in Glory where He once died in agony. The bright and hallowed doctrine of the second advent has been greatly revived in our Churches in these latter days, and I look for the best results in consequence. There is always a danger lest it be perverted, and turned by fanatical minds, by prophetic speculations, into an abuse.  
But the doctrine in itself is one of the most consoling and, at the same time, one of the most practical, tending to keep the Christian awake— because the Bridegroom comes at such an hour as we think not. Beloved, we believe that the same Jesus who ascended from Olivet shall so come in like manner as He ascended up into Heaven. We believe in His personal advent and reign. We believe and expect that when both wise and foolish virgins shall slumber—in the night when sleep is heavy upon the saints, and when men shall be eating and drinking as in the days of Noah—we believe then, that, suddenly as the lightning flashes from Heaven, so Christ shall descend with a shout, and the dead in Christ shall rise and reign with Him. We are looking forward to the literal, Personal and actual standing of Christ upon earth as the time when creation’s groans shall be silenced forever—and the earnest expectation of the creature shall be fulfilled.  
Mark that Job describes Christ as standing. Some interpreters have read the passage, “He shall stand in the latter days against the earth.” That as the earth has covered up the slain, as the earth has become the charnel house of the dead, Jesus shall arise to the contest and say, “Earth, I am against you, give up your dead! You clods of the valley cease to be custodians of My people’s bodies! Silent deeps and you, you caverns of the earth, deliver, once and for all, those whom you have imprisoned!” Machpelah shall give up its precious treasure, cemeteries and graveyards shall release their captives, and all the deep places of the earth shall resign the bodies of the faithful.  
Well, whether that is so or not, the posture of Christ, in standing upon the earth, is significant. It shows His triumph. He has triumphed over sin, which once, like a serpent in its coils, had bound the earth. He has defeated Satan—on the very spot where Satan gained his power—Christ has gained the victory. Earth, which was a scene of defeated goodness, where mercy once was all but driven out, where virtue died, where everything heavenly and pure, like flowers, blasted by pestilential winds, hung down their heads, withered and blighted—on this very earth—everything that is glorious shall grow and blossom in perfection. And Christ Himself, once despised and rejected of men, fairest of all the sons of men, shall come in the midst of a crowd of courtiers, while kings and princes shall do Him homage and all the nations shall call Him blessed. “He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth.”  
Then, at that auspicious hour, says Job, “In my flesh I shall see God.” Oh, blessed anticipation—“I shall see God.” He does not say, “I shall see the saints”—doubtless we shall see them all in Heaven—but, “I shall see God.” Note he does not say, “I shall see the pearly gates, I shall see the walls of jasper, I shall see the crowns of gold, and the harps of harmony,” but, “I shall see God.” As if that were the sum and substance of Heaven. “In my flesh shall I see God.” The pure in heart shall see God. It was their delight to see in the ordinances by faith. They delighted to behold Him in communion and in prayer.  
There in Heaven they shall have a vision of another sort. We shall see God in Heaven, and be made completely like He is. The Divine Character shall be stamped upon us. And being made like He is, we shall be perfectly satisfied and content. Likeness to God—what can we wish for more? And a sight of God—what can we desire better? We shall see God, and so there shall be perfect contentment to the soul, and a satisfaction of all the faculties. Some read the passage, “Yet, I shall see God in my flesh,” and therefore think that there is here an allusion to Christ, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Word made flesh. Well, be it so, or be it not so, it is certain that we shall see Christ—and He, as the Divine Redeemer—shall be the subject of our eternal vision.  
Nor shall we ever want any joy beyond simply that of seeing Him. Think not, dear Friend, that this will be a narrow sphere for your mind to dwell in. It is but one source of delight, “I shall see God,” but that source is infinite. His wisdom, His love, His power, all His attributes shall be subjects for your eternal contemplation. And as He is infinite under each aspect, there is no fear of exhaustion. His works, His purposes, His gifts, His love to you, and His Glory in all His purposes, and in all His deeds of love— why, these shall make a theme that never can be exhausted. You may, with Divine delight, anticipate the time when in your flesh you shall see God!  
But I must have you observe how Job has expressly made us note that it is in the same body. “Yet, in my flesh shall I see God.” And then he says again, “whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold, and not another.” Yes, it is true that I, the very man standing here, though I must go down to die, yet I shall as the same man most certainly arise, and shall behold my God. Not part of myself, though the soul, alone, shall have some view of God, but the whole of myself—my flesh, my soul, my body, my spirit shall gaze on God. We shall not enter Heaven, dear Friends, as a dismasted vessel is tugged into harbor. We shall not get to Glory, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship—but the whole ship shall be floated safely into the haven—body and soul both being safe.  
Christ shall be able to say, “All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me.” Not only all the persons, but all of the persons—each man in his perfection. There shall not be found in Heaven one imperfect saint. There shall not be a saint without an eye, much less a saint without a body. No member of the body shall have perished. Nor shall the body have lost any of its natural beauty. All the saints shall be all there and all of all. The same persons precisely, only that they shall have risen from a state of Grace to a state of Glory. They shall be ripened. They shall be no more the green blades, but the full corn in the ear—no more buds but flowers—not babes but men.  
Please notice, and then I shall conclude, how the Patriarch puts it as being a real personal enjoyment. “Whom my eye shall behold, and not another.” They shall not bring me a report as they did the Queen of Sheba, but I shall see Solomon, the King, for myself. I shall be able to say, as they did who spoke to the woman of Samaria, “Now I believe, not because of your word who did bring me a report, but I have seen Him for myself.” There shall be personal discussion with God. Not through the Book, which is but as a glass. Not through the ordinances. But directly—in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ—we shall be able to commune with the Deity as a man talks with his friend. “Not another.”  
If I could be a changeling, and could be altered, that would mar my comfort. Or if my Heaven must be enjoyed by proxy, if draughts of bliss must be drunk for me, where is the hope? Oh, no! For myself, and not through another, shall I see God! Have we not told you a hundred times that nothing but personal religion will do, and is not this another argument for it, because resurrection and glory are personal things? “Not another.” If you could have sponsors to repent for you, then, depend upon it, you would have sponsors to be glorified for you. But as there is not another to see God for you, so you must, yourself, see—and yourself find an interest—in the Lord Jesus Christ.  
In closing, let me observe how foolish have you and I been when we have looked forward to death with shudders, with doubts, with loathing. After all, what is it? Worms! Do you tremble at those base crawling things? Scattered particles! Shall we be alarmed at these? To meet the worms we have the angels. And to gather the scattered particles we have the voice of God. I am sure the gloom of death is altogether gone now, that the lamp of resurrection burns. Disrobing is nothing now, that better garments await us. We may long for evening to undress, we may rise with God. I am sure my venerable friends now present, in coming so near, as they do now to the time of the departure, must have some visions of the Glory on the other side of the stream.  
Bunyan was not wrong, my dear Brothers and Sisters, when he put the land Beulah at the close of the pilgrimage. Is not my text a telescope which will enable you to see across the Jordan? May it not be as hands of angels to bring you bundles of myrrh and frankincense? You can say, “I know that my Redeemer lives.” You cannot want more. You were not satisfied with less in your youth, you will not be content with less now. Those of us who are young are comforted by the thought that we may soon depart. I say comforted, not alarmed by it. And we almost envy those whose race is nearly run, because we fear—and yet we must not speak thus, for the Lord’s will be done—I was about to say, we fear that our battle may last long, and that perhaps our feet may slip.  
Only He that keeps Israel does not slumber nor sleep. So since we know that our Redeemer lives, this shall be our comfort in life—that though we fall, we shall not be utterly cast down. And since our Redeemer lives, this shall be our comfort in death—that though worms destroy this body, yet in our flesh we shall see God!  
May the Lord add His blessing on the feeble words of this morning, and to Him be glory forever. Amen.  
*“Grave, the guardian of our dust!  
Grave, the treasury of the skies!  
Every atom of your trust  
Rests in hope again to rise.  
Hark! The judgment trumpet calls!  
Soul, rebuild your house of clay,  
Immortality your walls,  
And Eternity your day.”*

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÷Job 19.28

THE SUBSTANCE OF TRUE RELIGION  
NO. 1598

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 15, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“But you should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?”  
Job 19:28.**

You will always understand a passage of Scripture better if you carefully attend to its connection. The habit of picking out portions from the Bible and separating them from their context may be carried a great deal too far and in the process the reader may miss the mind of the Spirit and force upon the words a meaning of his own. If we were to treat men’s books as we do God’s Book we would, probably, be judged to be insane! It is, indeed, a wonderful Book to bear such mangling! Every sensible person will see that it must always be wise to study the context, for it is likely enough to cast a light upon the passage in hand.

Job, in the verse before us, is answering Bildad the Shuhite. Now, this Bildad on two occasions had described Job as a hypocrite and accounted for his dire distress by the fact that, though hypocrites may flourish for a time, they will ultimately be destroyed. In the two bitter speeches which he made, he described the hypocrite under the figure of a tree which is torn up by the roots, or dim even down to the root. In his first address, in the 8th chapter and the 16th verse, he says of the hypocrite, “He is green before the sun and his branch shoots forth in his garden. His roots are wrapped about the heap and sees the place of stones. If he destroys him from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, I have not seen you.” Even the very root of the hypocrite was to be pulled up, so that the garden in which he once flourished should not remember that he had ever been there!

Being much pleased with his metaphor, Bildad, in the 18th chapter, uses it again. He says, in the 14th verse of the chapter, “His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors. His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off.” This, then, was his mode of attacking Job—he set forth, by the emblem of a tree, the state and fate of the false-hearted—they might flourish for a time, but they would wither at last, even down to the very root, dried up and blasted by the justice of God. The inference he meant to draw was this—“You, Job, are utterly dried up, for all your prosperity is gone and, therefore, you must be a hypocrite.” The assault was very cruel, but the sufferer successfully parried it.

“No,” says Job, “I am no hypocrite. I will prove it by your own words, for the root of the matter is still in me and, therefore, I am no hypocrite. Though I admit that I have lost branches, leaves, fruit and flowers, yet I have not lost the root of the matter, for I hold the essential faith as firmly as ever and, therefore, by your own argument, I am no hypocrite. You should say, ‘Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?’” There is, then, dear Friends, a something in true religion which is its essential root. It has fundamental matters which cannot be dispensed with under any circumstances. Some things pertain to godliness, are useful as ornaments, pleasant and desirable, yet these may be absent and still there may be the truth of religion in the soul!

But there is a something which cannot be absent in any case without its being certain that the man is not a true child of God. There is a something which is vital, without which there is no spiritual life. Of this essential thing we are going to speak, this morning, as we are enabled by the Holy Spirit. Job derived comfort from the fact that the root of the matter was in him, whatever his accusers might say, and I trust that others will be encouraged as they, too, shall find that the root of the matter is in them. It will be pleasant to my heart to cheer the fainting and equally so if I can lead my stronger Brethren to deal tenderly with such.

I. Our first thought will be that THIS ROOT OF THE MATTER MAY BE CLEARLY DEFINED. We are not left in the dark as to what the essential point of true religion is—it can be laid down with absolute certainty. True, there has been considerable disputing over the phrase before us and questions have been raised as to what Job meant by, “the root of the matter,” but I conceive that if we read the verse in its own connection, apart from any extraneous suggestion, there will be no doubt about its meaning. Commence at the 25th verse and read on as Job spoke—he tells us plainly what is “the root of the matter.” Here it is—“I know that my Redeemer lives and He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins are consumed within me.”

This knowledge of the Redeemer is evidently the root of the matter. Come, then, let us look more closely into this choice confession of faith! I shall not attempt to expound this golden utterance, but I shall glance at it with the one objective of showing what Job considered to be the essence of true religion. And, first, it is clear that “the root of the matter” is firm faith in the Redeemer! It is to be able to say from the inmost heart, “I know that my Redeemer lives.” Not, “I think so,” but, “I know”—for saving faith is certain and the true Believer is a positive. Faith abhors conjectures! It will not put its foot down upon fictions, but rests upon matters of fact! Faith never deals in the fancy goods of opinion, theory, speculation or probability—she searches for the priceless pearl of certainty—she must know!

Such was the faith of Job and he expresses it in firm, decided, clear language, saying—“I know that my Redeemer lives.” This faith was an appropriating one, so that Job took to himself the Redeemer. “I know that my Redeemer lives,” laying hold upon the lord to be unto him all that He was meant to be, namely, a Redeemer who would set him at liberty from his misery! He embraced the Redeemer as his own and believed that he would be raised by Him from the pit of corruption. Come, Brothers and Sisters, have we such a faith as this? Have we a faith which knows that there is a Savior able to redeem and sure to accomplish the work?

And do we take Him for our own, saying—“ my Redeemer”? This is the point—Do we accept Him in His ordained office and cast our soul entirely upon Him? Are we content to sink or swim with God’s appointed Savior? If saved, it shall be by Him! And at the foot of the Cross are we content to lie and wait the issue? Whatever other redeemers there may be, is the Lord Jesus our Redeemer in whom we trust as able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him? This is the “root of the matter”—a recognition of the redeeming Lord and a simple dependence upon Him for sure salvation! Look steadily at the passage and especially gaze into its original meaning and you will see that in this “root of the matter” there is a recognition of the blessed Christ of God in the peculiar relationship which He has taken up to man.

It is, “I know that my goel, or kinsman, lives.” You know what the next of kin was among the Jews—it was he who must redeem the inheritance if it had been alienated from the family. He was the guardian of those to whom he was next of kin. If there had been manslaughter committed, it was the goel, the near kinsman, who must take vengeance on behalf of the murdered man. The goel was the patron of the weak ones of the family and the defender of the whole clan. Boaz was the redeemer of Ruth’s patrimony because he was her next of kin after one other had refused to fulfill the office. Beloved, this is a cardinal point of saving faith, that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is next of kin to us poor, guilty men!

His name is Emmanuel, God With Us—not only God from before all worlds, but God with us in our nature! The Word was made flesh! Jesus was born at Bethlehem and there He was nursed at the breast of a woman. He lived among our race, bearing our infirmities and tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin. It is most sweet for faith to say He is nearest of kin to me—my Goel, my Redeemer; bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh—

*“In ties of blood with sinners one.”*  
He is the Head, the Second Adam of our race, a Brother born for adversity, yes, and more than a Brother! Because He has deigned to enter into the closest of all relationships with us by taking upon Himself our nature, the Lord Jesus has now become our Redeemer, bound to restore to those who are in Him the inheritance which was forfeited by the Fall. Glory be to His name! He has restored that which He took not away! He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy that which sin and Satan snatched from us by our first parents’ fault!

Nor is this all. The goel was bound, also, to avenge the quarrel of his client. Our Lord is now our Advocate with the Father, pleading our cause both by the words of His mouth and by the power of His arm. “You have pleaded the causes of my soul,” O Jesus! You are my Defender, my Patron, my Shield and my exceeding great Reward! Brethren, this is the root of the matter, to believe in the Incarnate God, to accept His headship, to claim His kinship and to rely upon His Redemption! This is the root of the matter, to call Jesus ours, our Kinsman and Redeemer and then to leave everything in His hands—to commit to Him our cause, our hopes, our fears, our past, our present and our future—and now and throughout life to fix our entire confidence upon Him because it is His office and prerogative to be the Redeemer of all that are akin to Him. This is plain enough and there is no mist about it! Say, is the Son of God all this to you?

Look at the text, farther, and you perceive that the root of the matter is to believe that this Kinsman, this Redeemer lives! We could never find comfort or salvation in one who had ceased to be! We have no lively hope unless we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead! Job knew that the Redeemer lived in that capacity before He died and we know that He always lives, though He once died and was buried. If it were possible for us to believe in the merit of Christ’s death and to deny His Resurrection, our faith would have a fatal flaw in it. “He was delivered for our offenses, but He was raised, again, for our justification,” and, therefore, we must believe in the Resurrection or we are not justified! It is because He always lives to make intercession for us that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him!

In the Romish Church her images are the image of her faith. What Christ is that which we see portrayed in places of worship of the papal order? We see there, times without number, Jesus as a child in His mother’s arms—feeble, dependent, insignificant—well setting forth how the worship of Christ is overshadowed by that of the Virgin and how His blood and righteousness are forgotten amid the imaginary glories of Mary! How else do you see the Savior in papal churches? Why, everywhere He is represented as dead, as nailed to a cross, or wrapped in winding-sheets. So far, so good, for we, also, believe in Christ who died, though we set not up His image or picture! But Jesus is not now dead, neither is He here among the tombs, for He has risen! It is testified of Jesus that He lives! But in the Church of Rome it is the priest that lives and sets and does all things, while the Christ of God is virtually excluded and made of no use apart from sacraments and ceremonies.

Our Savior is still living and active in the midst of His people and this is one of the vital points of our holy faith. We address ourselves at once to the living Redeemer and His present power to save is the groundwork of our expectation of eternal life and resurrection! Oh, if it were not for this, we might all despair! We would be the ministers of a dead Christ and you would be Believers in a lifeless Savior! The Cross would be a powerless doctrine and the Gospel a lifeless message—and under it men would still lie dead in their trespasses and sins! Our Redeemer lives in fullness of power to bless us by His everlasting Priesthood! Say, then, dear Souls, do you believe in Jesus Christ, your Kinsman? Do you believe that He has redeemed both your persons and your inheritance? And do you believe that He lives, having gone up into Glory to prepare a place for you? This is the “root of the matter”—a living faith in a living Redeemer who, by His death, has ransomed His people!

There was still more than this. Job believed in this next of kin of his who still lived, that He would surely save him, seeing he trusted in Him. He expected that He would right all things, however wrong they might be, and clear the character of His servant. Job felt that though his accusers might condemn him and his appeal to God might not win him a vindication so that he might go down to his grave under a cloud of reproach and lie there and rot with a dishonored memory, yet he would, be one day, cleared. Though the worms might devour his body till no rag or relic of him remained, yet his living Kinsman would never rest till He had cleared him and enabled Job to see God without fear!

This is the grandeur of faith, to feel that whatever God may do with me, if I am in Christ and behave myself as His faithful servant, He will preserve me from all harm! My cause may seem so utterly dead that it is only fit for worms’ meat, but the Christ of God will bring forth judgment unto victory! This is the work of faith, to cast my soul on Christ, my next of kin whose business it is to redeem me—and though I cannot see the way by which I am to be saved—yet to be sure that I shall be! If my hopes perish and my soul sinks down into the dust of death, yet to the uttermost, Christ can save me and He will—and I am sure of it!

And when at last the death frost strikes cold at my heart and I can help myself no more and human helpers fail me, I will commit my spirit into the dear hands of Him who is nearest and dearest—and I shall feel, in that last fainting hour, that His presence is my stay. Yes, and I shall see my God, again, and even my poor failing body, full of aches and pains and weakness, after resting in the grave a little while, shall rise again in beauty and power! The grave is a refining pot where the bodies of the saints are purified and made fit to dwell with the pure and holy God forever! Faith has no question about the Resurrection—she has not a mere hope, but a firmly assured belief so that she cries—“I know that in my flesh, through Christ my Redeemer, I shall see my God without fear.”

Every man, in a certain sense, will see God, for every eye shall behold the King upon the Throne of Judgment. But that expectation could not be a ground of comfort and, therefore, more is here meant by seeing God. Job evidently expected to see God with acceptance and with delight! And this he felt quite sure about, though the corruption of his body looked like an effectual barrier to the realization of such a hope. All his friends may condemn him and treat him as an alien and a stranger, but he so trusts himself with his Redeemer that he is quite sure of justification before God and men! Those who have a Divine Advocate must be cleared on the Judgment Day.

Now, Soul, answer this question—Do you commit yourself wholly and entirely to the Mediator, the Incarnate God, the Kinsman of humanity? Say, do you look only to your living Advocate in life, in death and in eternity? Is Christ your All in All, your only and solid hope? Oh, then, rest assured that “the root of the matter” is found in you! It is clear that the essence of true religion can be clearly defined—Job has defined it and there it is! Judge yourselves as to whether you possess it or not.

II. Secondly, let us spend a few minutes in remarking that in our text THIS FUNDAMENTAL MATTER IS MOST INSTRUCTIVELY DESCRIBED by the words which I have so constantly repeated—“the root of the matter.” What does this mean? First, does it not mean that which is essential? “The root of the matter.” To a tree, a root is absolutely essential—it is a mere pole or piece of timber if there is no root. It can be a tree of a certain sort without branches and, at certain seasons, without leaves, but not without a root. Look at the trees in the winter. Their substance is in them when they lose their leaves. The foliage has all fallen, but the bare branches and trunk still make a tree because a root is there.

You may call it a tree even though only the trunk remains rooted to the soil. But it is not a tree if you have taken the root away and set it up in the hedge—it is mere dead timber for the scaffold or the fire. So, if a man has faith in the Redeemer, though he may be destitute of a thousand other most necessary things, yet the essential point is settled—he that believes in Christ Jesus has everlasting life! If he has faith, he has the substance of things hoped for and hope will turn to experience as he grows in Divine Grace. But if he has no faith in the Redeemer, he may make a towering profession; he may possess vast knowledge; he may speak with the tongues of men and of angels and he may outstrip all his companions in zeal, but he is not a plant of the Lord’s right hand planting, for he has no root in himself and will, before long, wither away.

The root, again, is not only that which is vital to the tree, it is from the root that the life-force proceeds by which the trunk and the branches are nourished and sustained. There is hope for a tree, after it is cut down, that it shall sprout again at the scent of water. As long as there is a root, there is more or less of vitality and power to grow and so faith in Christ is the vital point of religion—he that believes lives. If you do not know the living Redeemer, you do not know life. Without trust in the work of Jesus, a man may attempt to follow the moral teachings of Jesus, but he will miss salvation since no morals which do not begin with faith in God can be acceptable to the Most High. The practical teaching of our holy religion is admirable and we must obey it or be lost—and the root of holy living is faith in Christ—and it cannot be produced otherwise.

I would not say a word against the right exercise of the emotions, or the education of the understanding, or the regulation of the passions—for all these are good as branches of the tree. But the root, the living part of godliness, is our union to Christ by faith, our laying hold upon the Incarnate Son of God as dying and rising, again, on our behalf. Again, it is called the, “root of the matter,” because it comprehends all the rest, for everything is in the root. You walked your garden in the winter and many plants were entirely invisible—there was not the slightest token of their presence in the soil. Now they are above ground, they are flowering, they are proceeding to fruit. Where was the plant? It was all in the root. Leaf, branch, fruit, seed—all were there.

Even so, all the elements of a perfect character lie hidden in faith in Christ. The holiness of Heaven is packed away in the faith of a penitent sinner. Look at the crocus bulb. It is a poor, mean, unpromising sort of thing and yet wrapped up within that brown package lies a golden cup which, in the early Spring, will be filled with sunshine! You cannot see that wondrous chalice within the bulb, but He who put it there knows where He has concealed His treasure! The showers and the sun shall unwrap the folds and that dainty cup shall come forth to be set upon God’s great table of Nature as an intimation that the feast of summer is soon to come!

The highest saintship on earth is hidden within the simplicity of a sinner’s faith like a flower within a seed. Yes, the perfect character of those that are without fault before the Throne of God is all in embryo within that first look of faith which links the soul with the atoning merits of the great Redeemer! My Brothers and Sisters, a young Heaven sleeps within your childlike confidence in Christ! It will only need the culture of the Holy Spirit to develop your new life into the perfect image of Christ Jesus your Lord. Faith is the essence, the vitality, the sum of true godliness and, therefore, it is called, “the root of the matter.”

III. So I come, thirdly, to dwell upon a further remark—THIS ROOT OF THE MATTER MAY BE PERSONALLY DISCERNED AS BEING IN A MAN’S OWN POSSESSION. Job says to his teasing friends, “You should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?” Notice the curious change of pronouns! “You should say, why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in him?” That is how the words would naturally run. But Job is so earnest to clear himself from Bildad’s insinuation that he is a hypocrite that he will not speak of himself in the third person, but plainly declares, “The root of the matter is found in me.”

Job seems to say, “The vital part of the matter may or may not be in you, but I know it is in me. You may not believe me, but I know it is so and I tell you, to your faces, that no argument of yours can rob me of this confidence; for as I know that my Redeemer lives, I know that the root of the matter is found in me.” Many Christian people are afraid to speak in that fashion. They say, “I humbly hope it is so and I trust it is so.” That sounds pretty, but is it right? Is that the way in which men speak about their houses and lands? Do you possess a little freehold? Did I hear you answer, “I humbly hope that my house and garden are my own”?

What? Then are your title-deeds so questionable that you do not know? Is this the way in which you speak of your wages at the end of the week? “I sometimes have a hope that these shillings are mine.” Is that the way you talk about your wife? Is that the manner in which you speak of your own life? Are you afraid, even, to call your soul your own? No, no! We demand certainties in reference to things of value and so it ought to be with regard to Christ and eternity! We cannot put up with mere hopes and surmises in reference to them. Believers should aim at certainty about eternal things and learn to say, like Job, “I know that my Redeemer lives,” and, “The root of the matter is found in me.” Note well that sometimes this root needs to be searched for.

Job says “the root of the matter is found in me,” as if he had looked for it and made a discovery of what else had been hidden. Roots generally lie underground and out of sight and so may our faith in the Redeemer. His interest in the Redeemer may have been a question for self-examination with Job when first his griefs came thick and heavy. It may be a matter of search with us, too—

*“He that never doubted of his state,*

*He may—perhaps he may, too late.”*  
I can understand a Christian doubting whether he is saved or not, but I cannot understand his being happy while he continues to doubt about it, nor happy at all till he is sure of it! Job had made his personal condition the subject of investigation. He had dug beneath the surface and had seen within his heart. You cannot always find roots in winter time unless you use a spade and turn over the soil—there are winter times with us when we cannot tell whether we have real faith in Christ or not till we examine whether we are in the faith.

After searching, Job found the treasure and said, “the root of the matter is found in me.” And note again, the root of the matter in Job was an inward thing. “The root of the matter is found in me.” He did not say, “I wear the outward garb of a religious man.” No, but, “the root of the matter is found in me.” If you, my Hearers, are in the possession of the essence of true Christianity, it does not lie in your outward profession, your baptism, your Church membership, or your reception of the Lord’s Supper! It lies within your heart and mind. Faith, which is the evidence of the inner life, is altogether spiritual and inward. Its abode is within the vitals of the spiritual being—in the very core of the renewed heart. True godliness is not separable from the godly man—it is woven into him just as a thread enters into the essence and substance of the fabric.

When Grace is found in us and we really believe in our Redeemer, we ought to proclaim it, for Job says, “The root of the matter is found in me. I know that my Redeemer lives.” Are there not some among you who have never said as much as that? Some of you who are Believers have never yet acknowledged our Lord! What did I call some of you the other day? I think I compared cowardly Believers to rats behind the wainscot that come out at night to eat a crumb or two and then run in again. The rat is a poor creature to be compared with—it is a domestic animal, I suppose, for it lives in the house—but it is not a beautiful object to be likened to and so I will not compare you to it, although there might be more untruthful comparisons.

I pray you try and change before I am driven to the simile. Never be ashamed of Christ, but if you ever are, be more ashamed of yourselves! There ought to be an open declaration of our faith whenever it is necessary, for it is written, “Be you always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” The fact of our having the root of the matter in us will be a great comfort to us. “Alas,” says Job, “my servant will not come when I call him. My wife is strange to me, my kinsfolk fail me—but I know that my Redeemer lives! Bildad and Zophar and others of them all condemn me, but my conscience acquits me, for I know that the root of the matter is in me.”

It is a blessed thing to be able to hear the harsh speeches of men as though we heard them not. What does it matter how others judge me if I know what I know and am sure in my own soul that I am right with God? What if men find fault with our eyes—does it matter, if we can say, “One thing I know, whereas I was once blind now I see”? Critics may find fault with our experience and they may call our earnest utterances, cant, but this will not affect the truth of our conversion or the acceptableness of our testimony for Jesus! If the little bird within our bosom sings sweetly, it is of small consequence if all the owls in the world hoot at us!

There is more real comfort in the possession of simple faith than in the fond persuasion that you are in a high state of Divine Grace. When we proudly think, “Oh, I need not look at the root of the matter, for my flowers and fruits are more than sufficient evidence,” we are getting dangerously elevated. That man is in a perilous plight who glories in himself, saying, “How useful I am! How gifted! How influential! How highly my brethren think of me!” All this will turn out to be unsubstantial comfort in the hour of trial. But the root of the matter yields the sweetest and surest consolation at all times. If your Redeemer lives, you shall have a candle lighted for you in the darkest night! This fact will also be your defense against opposers. Thus may you answer them in Job’s fashion, “You ought not to condemn me, for, though I am not what I ought to be, or what I want to be, or what I shall be, yet still the root of the matter is found in me. Be kind to me, therefore.”

Carefully observe this, my dear young Friends. You have been lately converted and if you fall in with those who are very stern and censorious, you must not be surprised. Some venerable professors have not so much grown ripe as sour and they show their sourness by censuring their younger Brothers and Sisters. It does not occur to them to say, “Why do we persecute him, seeing the root of the matter is in him?” But you may defend yourself against their hard speeches by declaring that you believe in the Savior even as they do! Say to them, “I do not know as much about the Lord Jesus as you do, but I most heartily trust Him. He is as much my Redeemer as He is yours. Do not, therefore, drive me from your company, but deal gently with me, as with a lamb of the flock.”

I hope that you who are now young and timid will become strong in the Lord before long and be no longer in danger from severe judgments. And when that comes about I hope that you will, by experience, be very gentle with those who are weak in the faith. If our friends are sincere in their attachment to the Redeemer, let us treat them as our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Thus much on our third point.

IV. Now we come to the fourth subject of discourse, which is a practical lesson from the text for those Believers in Christ who have passed beyond the root stage into a further development. Notice, then, that THIS ROOT OF THE MATTER IS TO BE TENDERLY RESPECTED BY ALL WHO SEE IT. “You should say, why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?” What a rebuke this is to the persecutions which have been carried on by nominal Christians against each other, sect against sect! Romanists have fiercely persecuted Protestants and Protestants have persecuted one another. If they had but listened to their gracious Lord and Savior, they would have heard Him whisper, “You should say, why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in Me?”

How can those who trust in the same Savior rend and devour each other? In many of the islands of the South Seas our missionaries have been the means of converting the people to the faith. In one of these the shaven crowns of Rome began to put in their appearance with the view of turning away the people from the faith to the errors of Rome. Among their cunning instruments of conversion was a picture representing the tree of the Church. Certain twigs were represented as rotten—they were out off and were falling into the fire—these were such persons as Luther, Calvin and other famous teachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Protestant missionaries, too, were dead twigs and were all to be removed from the tree. The natives were not quite sure about this and made more enquiries. Certain other branches were green and vigorous— these were the priests of the Catholic Church and the larger branches were bishops and cardinals of the same community. The natives were not quite clear about that and passed on to examine the trunk. This, of course, consisted of an array of popes, of whom the islanders had never heard. They passed on, hoping to come to something they knew and so they did, for at the bottom was the name of our Lord Jesus. The enquiring islanders said, “And what is this at the bottom, marked with the name of Jesus?” “That is the root,” said the priest. “Well, then,” shouted the natives, “we have the root! The new teachers say we have the root and so we are all right—our missionaries have told us the truth.”

There was philosophy in that. Let us see to it that “we have the root.” Friend, do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God? If so, you have the root! I shall be very sorry if you belong to the Church of Rome, for she teaches much error. But if you rest only in Christ Jesus you will be saved. Do you believe in the once crucified but now living Christ? Well, my Brother, I am sorry you should be a high-churchman, or anything else which is not according to Scripture, but your faith has saved you! I pray you think the same of me, if I, too, am a Believer in the one Redeemer. If I believe and rest my soul on the one salvation which God has provided in Christ Jesus, have charity towards me, for this Rock will bear both you and me. This should end all religious persecutions.

But next it ought to be the end of all ungenerous denunciations. If I know that a man is really believing in Jesus Christ, I may not treat him as an enemy. If I perceive that he holds a great many wrong notions, I am to be grieved at his mistakes and to labor for his instruction, but I ought not to feel hatred towards him. It is my duty, especially if I am a public instructor, to expose and refute his errors, but as for the man, himself, if he trusts in the atoning blood, I am not to treat him as a reprobate. Does he believe in only Jesus Christ? Does he hold to the vital, fundamental Truths of God? Then I am not to make him an offender for a word and twist his language into a meaning what he never intended by it. I am too near akin to every Believer in Jesus to take down bell, book and candle and excommunicate him for not being so well-instructed as he might be!

If the Redeemer is next of kin to me and next of kin to him, why, then, we are near of kin to one another and it is unseemly for us to strive together being Brothers in Christ! For the faith and against all errors we are bound to contend, but anything like personal animosity must be far from us. O for more Christian love! If the root of the matter is in any man, do not let us persecute him, but encourage him. “Well, but I could not enter into any Christian work with him, nor enjoy fellowship with him, for he does not agree with me.” Is it, indeed, so? The Lord have pity upon you! I should not wonder but what you are the worse man of the two—he may be wrong in head, but you are certainly wrong in heart.

Very frequently it happens that the man who has most of the spirit of love is also the man who is nearest to the Truth of God and I generally assume that he who is the least sour is the most sound. The party who most needs to be questioned as to whether the root of the matter is in him is the Brother who has no love. He whose spirit is perfumed with love to others not only has the root, but something of the branch, too, for love is the fair outgrowth of faith. Death to error, death to sin, but salvation to the sinner and life to the Believer, notwithstanding all his mistakes! Let denunciations and exclusiveness be ended forever and let us admit our kinship with all who are in Christ!

Further than this, the question is, “Why persecute we him?” We can do that by a cold mistrust. I have seen chill suspicion exercised by good solid substantial Christians who have had a chronic fear and trembling lest new converts should not be true converts. The young man seems to be very earnest. He is evidently much impressed. He forsakes his sin and there is a great change in him. He boldly declares his faith in Jesus Christ, but the jealous guardian of the purity of the Church objects, for the young man was converted in an irregular way—he did not go among the Presbyterians or Baptists, or Congregationalists, or Evangelical Church people and get saved in a respectable manner! No, he went out in the street and he heard a mere ranter, or a Salvation Army captain and, therefore, it is feared that it cannot be a genuine work of Grace!

The cautious Brother does not say much, but he draws himself into himself and retires from the person whom he suspects, just as a snail draws in his horns and hides himself in his shell. The elder Brother is angry and will not go in and in that way he persecutes the returning prodigal! Why, some of these icy critics will cause the very marrow of a poor fellow’s bones to freeze while he looks at him! Do not let us stand off in holy isolation from any who have the root of the matter in them! Why should we persecute such? Let us encourage them and give them information upon the points in which they are deficient. Some people appear to think that every convert ought to be born a fully developed man in Christ Jesus, even as, according to mythology, Minerva sprang from the brain of Jove a full length woman, fully armed, shield and spear and all!

I do not see people born again in this fashion. I believe that some of God’s men who are to be leaders are born with beards and very early exhibit a knowledge far beyond their years which sets them in the front from the first—but for the most part, God’s children are little when they are born, even as ours are. When my sons first came to my house they were by no means the young men they are now. I should think it likely that the same may be said of your children! What wonder, then, that it is so in God’s house! Little children cannot run alone and cannot even speak plainly. Besides, they make strange noises and by their cries they become a nuisance to those who have no sympathy with babies. And so it is with new-born Christians—they cannot run as we wish them to and they cannot spit out the Doctrines of Grace as we desire, or pray as we should like them to pray. Well, but they are little children. And they are alive! Let us not bury them, but let us nurse them!

It is one of the duties of mature Christians to take these children and nurse them for God, for He will give us our wages. Dear Brothers and Sisters, I beg you to be on the lookout in this congregation for those who have just received the root of the matter—those that have just had the Seed of God dropped into their soul! It has hardly begun to sprout, but you can see it is there. They can just say—

*“We are poor sinners, and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is our All in All.”*  
Do not frighten them, do not distress them, do not chill them like a sharp frost! Cheer and encourage them and say, “I, too, was once as you are—

Yes, and I, too, often am as you are. Yes, and I, too, sometimes wish I were still as you are, for I would still be on my knees, keeping humbly dependent upon Christ. Come, if elder Brothers and Sisters will not receive you, I will and I will cheer you and encourage you for Jesus’ sake.”

Well, try and do that this morning, if you can, before you leave the Tabernacle. There may be somebody sitting next to you who just needs a word. Try it. I know some will be quite frightened at your venturing to speak to them. Very well, frighten them a little, it will not hurt them! Try the power of courteous personal appeal. It may be if you frighten one or two you will be the means of blessing so many more that if those who are frightened do not forgive you, they will not break your heart. God Himself will not, because there will be nothing to forgive. He will commend you for what you have done and I pray you, therefore, do it for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE ROOT OF THE MATTER  
NO. 505

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 12, 1863, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The root of the matter is found in me.”  
Job 19:28.**

FOR the last three or four Lord’s Day evenings I have been trying to fish with a net of small meshes. It has been my anxious desire to gather in and draw to shore the Much-Afraids, the Fearings, the Despondencies, and those of Little-Faith who seem to think it scarcely possible that they could belong to the people of God at all. I hope those sermons which have taken the lowest evidences of Christian life, and have been adapted rather to babes in Divine Grace than to those who are strong men in our Israel, will furnish comfort to many who beforetime had been bowed down with distress.

In pursuance of the same purpose this evening, I take up the expressive figure of our text to address myself to those who evidently have the Grace of God embedded in their hearts, though they put forth little blossom and bear little fruit. I pray that they may be consoled, if there is clear evidence that at least the root of the matter is found in them incidentally. However, the same truth may be profitable, not only to the saplings in the garden of the Lord, but to the most goodly trees. For there are times and seasons when their branches do not put out much luxuriant foliage, and the hidden life furnishes the only true argument of their vitality.

I. Our first aim, then, will be TO SPEAK OF THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO TRUE GODLINESS IN CONTRAST, OR, I might better say, IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER THINGS WHICH ARE TO BE REGARDED AS SHOOTS RATHER THAN AS ROOT AND GROUNDWORK.

The tree can do without some of its branches, though the loss of them might be an injury. But it cannot live at all without its roots—the roots are essential—take those away, and the plant must wither. And thus, my dear Friends, there are things essential in the Christian religion. There are essential doctrines, essential experiences, and there is essential practice. With regard to essential doctrines, it is very desirable for us to be established in the faith. A very happy thing it is to have been taught from one’s youth up the sound and solid doctrines which comforted the Puritans— which made blessed the heart of Luther and of Calvin, fired the zeal of Chrysostom and Augustine—and flashed like lightning from the lips of Paul.

By such judicious training we are, no doubt, delivered from many doubts and difficulties which an evil system of theology would be sure to encourage. The man who is sound in the faith, and who understands the higher and more sublime doctrines of Divine Revelation, will have wells of

consolation which the less instructed cannot know. But we always believe, and are ever ready to confess, that there are many doctrines which, though exceedingly precious, are not so essential. We believe a person may be in a state of Divine Grace, and yet not receive them.

For instance—God forbid that we should regard a belief in the doctrine of election as an absolute test of a man’s salvation—for no doubt there are many precious sons of God who have not been able to receive that precious Truth of God. Of course the doctrine is essential to the great scheme of Grace, as the foundation of God’s eternal purpose—but it is not, therefore, necessarily the root of faith in the sinner’s reception of the Gospel. And, perhaps, too, I may put the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints in the same list. There are many who, no doubt, will persevere to the end, but who cannot accept the possibility of being assured of the fact.

They are so occupied with the thoughts of their probation that they come not to the mature knowledge of their full salvation. They are securely kept while they credit not their security, just as there are thousands of the elect who cannot believe in election. Though Calvinistic doctrine is so dear to us—we feel ready to die in its defense—yet we would by no means set it up as being a test of a man’s spiritual state. We wish all our Brothers and Sisters agreed with us, but a man may be almost blind, and yet he may live. A man with weak eyesight and imperfect vision may be able to enter into the kingdom of Heaven—indeed, it is better to enter there having but one eye, than, having two eyes and being orthodox in doctrine—to be cast into Hell fire.

But there are some distinct truths of Revelation that are essential in such a sense that those who have not accepted them cannot be called Christians. And those who willfully reject them are exposed to the fearful anathemas which are hurled against apostasy. I shall not go into a detailed list. Let it suffice that I give you a few striking illustrations. The doctrine of the Trinity we must ever look upon as being one of the roots of the matter. When men go unsound here, we suspect that, before long, they will be wrong everywhere. The moment you get any suspicion of a man’s wavering about the Divinity of Christ, you have not long to wait before you discover that on all other points he has gone wrong. Well did John Newton express it—

*“What think you of Christ is the test  
To try both your state and your scheme.  
You cannot be right in the rest,  
Unless you think rightly of Him.”*

Almost all the forms of error that have sprung up since the days of Dr. Doddridge, when sundry gentlemen began to talk against the proper Deity of the Son of God—all the forms of error, I say, whatever department of the Christian system they may have been supposed to attack—have really stabbed at the Deity of our Redeemer. That is the one thing that they are angry at, as if their mother-wit taught them it was the true line of demarcation between natural and revealed religion. They cannot bear that the glorious Lord should be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, and so they fly to do without Him.

But their tackling is loosed, they cannot well strengthen their mast, they cannot spread the sail. A Gospel without belief in the living and true God—Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity—is a rope of sand. As well hope to make a pyramid stand upon its apex as to make a substantial Gospel when the real and Personal Deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is left as a moot or disputed point. But I ought to mention the strange incoherency of that discourse which sets forth the influences of the Spirit without a due regard to His Personal agency. Oh, how little is the Holy Spirit known! We get beyond the mere exercise of opinions when we believe in Christ, know the Father, and receive the Holy Spirit. This is to have a knowledge of the true God and eternal life.

Likewise essential is the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Any bell that does not ring sound on that point had better be melted down at once. I do not think we have many in our denomination— we do have some who are not very clear—still, I think we have but few that are unsound in the doctrine of the real Substitution of Christ. But there are plenty elsewhere. Perhaps I need not indicate the locality, for in the denomination where they seem to be tolerably prolific, they have one earnest tongue, and one ready pen that is always willing at all times to expose the miscreants who thus do damage to the cause of Christ by giving up the precious blood of Jesus as the sole cause of the remission of sins, and the only means of access to God.

Why, my Brothers and Sisters, we have nothing else left after we have given up this choice seal of the Everlasting Covenant, on which all our hopes depend! Renounce the doctrine of Jesus dying in our place? Better for us all to be offered as one great slaughter, one mighty sacrifice to God on one fire, than to tolerate for a moment any doubts about that which is the world’s hope, Heaven’s joy, Hell’s terror, and eternity’s song! I marvel how men are permitted to stand in the pulpit and preach at all, who dare to say anything against the atonement of Christ! I find in the Dutch Church, in the French Church, and in the German Churches, that men are accepted as Christian ministers who will yet speak hard things against the Atonement, itself, and even against the Deity of Him by whom the Atonement was made!

There is no other religion in the world that has been false to its own doctrines in the way that Christianity has been. Imagine a Mohammedan allowed to come forward in the pulpit and preach against Mohammed! Would it be tolerated for a single moment? Suppose a Brahmin, fed and paid to stand up in a temple, and speak against Brahma! Would it be allowed? Surely not! Nor is there an Infidel lecturer in this country but would find his pay stopped at once, if, while pretending to be in the service of Atheism, he declaimed the sentiments he was sworn to advocate. How is it? Why is it? In the name of everything that is reasonable and instinctively consistent, where can it be that men can be called Christian ministers after the last vestige of Christianity has been treacherously repudiated by them?

How is it that they can be tolerated to minister in holy things to people who profess and call themselves sincere followers of Jesus, when they tread under foot the precious blood of Christ, and, “reduce the mystery of godliness to a system of ethics”? To use the words of a Divine of the last century: “Degrade the Christian Church into a school of philosophy. Deny the expiation made by our Redeemer’s Sacrifice. Obscure the brightest manifestation of Divine mercy, and undermine the principal pillar of practical religion. And to make a desperate shipwreck of our everlasting interests, they dash themselves to death on the very rock of salvation.”

No. We must have the Atonement, and that not tacitly acknowledged, but openly set forth. Charity can go a good way, but charity cannot remove the altar from the door of the Tabernacle, or admit the worshipper into the most Holy Place without the blood of propitiation. So, again, the doctrine of justification by faith is one of the roots of the matter. You know Luther’s saying. I need not repeat it. It is the article of a standing, or falling Church, “By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast.” Do you preach that doctrine? My hand and my heart are stretched out to you!

Do you deny it? Do you stutter over it? Are you half-afraid of it? My back must be turned against you. I know nothing of you. You are none of the Lord’s! What says the Apostle Paul to you? Would he have communed with you? He lifts his hand to Heaven and he says—“If any man preach any other Gospel than that you have received, let him be accursed!” That is Paul’s saintly greeting. That is Paul’s Apostolic malediction—an “Anathema Maranatha” upon the man that preaches not the Lord Jesus, and who does not vindicate the great doctrine of salvation by Grace and not by works.

Well now, Friend, you may have come in here to listen to our doctrine, and to judge whether you can hold fellowship with us. We have been talking about the root of the matter. Permit me to say that if you are sound on these three points, the One God in Trinity, the glorious doctrine of the Substitution of Christ in the place of sinners, and the plan of salvation by simple faith in Jesus, then inasmuch as these roots of the matter are in you, God forbid that we should exclude you as heretical. If you are in other points unenlightened and groping about in uncertainty, doubtless the Lord will teach you—but we believe the root of the matter is in you so far as doctrine is concerned.

Turning to another department of my subject. The re are certain root matters in reference to experience. It is a very happy thing to have a deep experience of one’s own depravity. It may seem strange, but so it is. A man will scarcely ever have high views of the preciousness of the Savior who has not also had deep views of the evil of his own heart. High houses, you know, need deep foundations. And when God digs deep, and throws out the mire of self-sufficiency. Then He puts in the great stone of Christ’s all-sufficiency, and builds us up high in union and fellowship with Him.

To read the guilt of sin in the lurid glare of Mount Sinai, to hear the thunder, and shrink back in wild dismay at the utter hopelessness of approach to God by the Law is a most profitable lesson. Yes, and to see the guilt of sin in the mellow light of Mount Calvary, and to feel that contrition, which a view of Christ Crucified alone can produce—this is to prepare the heart for such an ecstasy of joy in God, through whom we have now received the Atonement—as surpasses, I verily believe, the common experience of Christians. Still I dare not make a criterion of the profound depths of anguish with which some of us have had the sentence of death in ourselves.

But it is absolutely essential that you should be brought to the end of all perfection in the flesh—that all your hopes of legal righteousness should expire—that you should be dead to the Law, in order that you may live unto God. This death may be with painful struggles, or it may be tranquil as a sleep. You may be smitten suddenly, as though an arrow from the Almighty were transfixed in your heart. Or you may pine away by a slow and tedious consumption. Yet die you must, before you can be made partaker of resurrection.

This much, however, I will venture to say—you may be really a child of God and yet the plague of your own heart may be but very little understood. You must know something of it, for no man ever did or ever will come to Christ unless he has first learned to loathe himself and to see that in him, that is in his flesh, there dwells no good thing. You may not be able to talk, as some do, of conflicts within, and of the fountain of the great deep of your natural sin—and yet you may be, for all that—a true child of God.

It is a happy thing, too, to have an experience which keeps close to Christ Jesus. To know what the word, “communion,” means, without needing to take down another man’s biography—to understand Solomon’s Song without a commentary. To read it through and through, and say, “Precious Book! You did express just what I have felt, but what I never could have expressed.” But, dear Friends, though all this is well, remember, it is not essential. It is not a sign that you are not converted because you cannot understand what it is to sit under His shadow with great delight. You may have been converted, and yet hardly have come so far as that. Always distinguish between the branches of the matter and the root of the matter. It is well to have branches like the cedars and to send up your shoots towards Heaven—but it is the root that is the all-important thing—the root of the matter.

Now what is the root of the matter experimentally? Well, I think the real root of it is what Job has been talking about in the verses preceding the text—“I know,” he says, “that my Redeemer lives.” We talked of that this morning. The root of the matter in Christian experience is to know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. And to know this by a personal appropriation of His power to save by a simple act of faith. In other words, dear Friend, you have the root of the matter in you if your soul can say—

*“My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.  
On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
All other ground is sinking sand.”*

There must be in connection with this the repentance of sin, but this repentance may be far from perfect, and your faith in Christ may be far from strong. But, oh, if you hate sin, if you desire to be rid of it, if it is your plague, your burden, your grief. If Christ Jesus is your only comfort, your help, your hope, your trust—then understand—this is the root of the matter. I wish there were more than the root, but inasmuch as that is there, it is enough—you are accepted before God—for the root of the matter is in you. A living faith in a living Savior, and a real death to all creature merit and to all hope in creature strength—this, I take it, is that which is the root of the matter in spiritual experience.

Did I not say that there was a root of the matter practically? Yes, and I would to God that we all practically had the branches and the fruits. These will come in their season, and they must come, if we are Christ’s disciples. But nobody expects to see fruit on a tree a week after it has been planted. You know there are some trees that do not bring forth any great fruit till they have been in the ground some two or three years. And then at last, when the favorable season comes, they are white with blossoms and by-and-by are bowed to the earth with luscious fruit.

It is very desirable that all Christians should be full of zeal, should be vehemently earnest, should go about doing good, should minister to the poor, should teach the ignorant, and comfort the distressed. Yet these things cannot be called the real root of the matter. The real root of the matter practically is this—“One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see. The things I once loved I now hate, the things I once hated I love. Now it is no more the world, but God. No more the flesh, but Christ, no more pleasure, but obedience. No more what I will, but what Jesus wills.” If any of you can, from your souls, say that you desire the tenor of your life to be, “Lord, not as I will, but as You will,” you have got the root of the matter practically.

Let me guard this part of my subject with one further remark. There are those who do certain duties with a conscientious motive, in order to make themselves Christians—such as observing the Sabbath, holding daily worship of God with their families, and attending the public services of the Lord’s House with regularity. But they do not distinguish between these external acts—which may be but the ornaments that clothe a graceless life, and those fruits of good living that grow out of a holy constitution, which is the root of genuine obedience. Some habits and practices of godly men may be easily counterfeited.

Yet I think that there are certain virtues of God’s children which defy imitation. “To bear reproach for Christ, and to suffer wrong patiently,” is, to my mind, very much like the root in practical godliness. Perhaps there is a timid girl now present who has braved for many a month the persecution of her father and mother to serve that Savior whom her parents never knew. Nobody knows what rough words and harsh treatment she has had to encounter—all because she will come to Chapel. And she will steal away into her own room, sometimes, always with her Bible in her hand when she goes in. And she generally looks as if she had been crying when she comes out. Ah, poor Soul! I doubt not the root of the matter is in you!

Or, see there a young man who has risked losing his employment because he will not conceal his attachment to Christ. Such as these, are sometimes brought into great straits. They do not see any precept that plainly says “You shall do this,” or, “You shall not do that.” But they find they must be one thing or the other. They make their choice, and it is against their worldly interests—it is done for the love they bear to the Savior’s name. Their gentle courage I admire. Their little faith takes a strong grip. Oh, I cannot doubt the root of the matter is found in them! There is practical evidence of it.

Let me pause here for a moment before leaving this first point to notice that you may generally ascertain whether you have got the root of the matter by its characteristic properties. You know a root is a fixing thing. Plants without roots may be thrown over the wall. They may be passed from hand to hand. But a root is a fixed thing. How firmly the oaks are rooted in the ground! You may think of those old oaks in the earth—ever so far off you have seen the roots coming out of the ground and then they go in again and you have said—“Why, what do these thick fibers belong to?”

Surely they belong to one of those old oaks ever so far away. They had sent that root there to act a good hold, so that when the March winds comes through the forest and other trees are torn up—fir trees, perhaps— trees that have outgrown their strength at the top, while they have too little hold at bottom—the old oaks bow to the tempest, curtsey to the storm, and later they lift up their branches again in calm dignity. They cannot be blown down. Well now., if you have got the root of the matter, you are fixed. You are fixed to God, fixed to Christ, fixed to things Divine. If you are tempted, you are not soon carried away. Oh, how many professors there are that have no roots! Get them into godly company and they are such saints.

But get them with other company and what if I say that they are devils? There you have them. Their mother is come up from the country, and she asked them to come tonight to hear Spurgeon. Here they are. Mother does not know but what John is one of the best lads anywhere while she is in town. Ah, but if it happens to be uncle William that comes up to London in a month’s time, and he should ask John to go to a theater! O yes, he will go there, too! And you would never know that John had any religion, for he will put that by until mother comes back again.

He has no roots. Give me the man that is bound hard and fast to

Christ—lashed to the Cross by cords that even the knives of Hell cannot sever—lashed to the Cross forever! You have no roots unless you can say, “O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed! By stern resolve and by firm

covenant Yours I am! Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.” Again, a root is not only a fixing thing, but a quickening thing. What is it that first sets the sap flowing in the spring? Why, it is the root. Down below, beneath the earth, it begins to feel the genial influence of the coming spring, and it talks to the trunk and says, “It is time to set the sap flowing.” So the sap begins to flow and the buds begin to burst.

Ah, and you must have a vital principle. You must have a living principle. Some Christians are like those toys they import from France, which have sand in them. The sand runs down, and some little invention turns and works them as long as the sand is running. But when the sand is all out it stops. So on Sunday morning these people are just turned right, and the sand runs and they work all the Sunday. But the sand runs down by Sunday night and then they stand still, or else go on with the world’s work just as they did before. Oh, this will never do! There must be a living principle—something that shall be a mainspring within—a wheel that cannot help running on, and that does not depend upon external resources.

A root, too, is a receiving thing. The botanists tell us a great many things about the ends of the roots. They can penetrate into the soil hunting after the particular food upon which the tree is fed. Ah, and if you have got the root of the matter in you, when you come to hear a sermon you will be sending out your root to look after the particular food which your soul wants. You will send those roots into the pages of Scripture— sometimes into a hymn book—often into the sermon. Even into a Brother’s experience, and into God’s Providence—seeking that something upon which your soul can feed.

Therefore it follows that the root becomes a supplying thing, because it is a receiving thing. We must have a religion that lives upon God, and that supplies us with strength to live for God. Oh, how divinely blessed are those men in whom the root of the matter is found!

II. Let me briefly notice, in the second place, that WHEREVER THERE IS THE ROOT OF THE MATTER, THERE IS VERY MUCH GROUND FOR COMFORT.

Sounds there in my ears the sigh, the groan, the sad complaint?—“I do not grow as I could wish. I am not so holy as I want to be. I cannot praise and bless the Lord as I could desire. I am afraid I am not a fruitful bough whose branches run over the wall”? Yes, but is the root of the matter in you? If so, cheer up, you have cause for gratitude. Remember that in some things you are equal to the greatest and most full-grown Christian. You are as much bought with blood, O little Saints, as are the holy Brotherhood. He that bought the sheep, bought the lambs, too. You are as much an adopted child of God as any other Christian.

A babe of a span long is as true a child of its parents as is the fullgrown man. You are as truly justified, for your justification is not a thing of degrees. Your little faith has made you clean every whit. It could have done no more had it been the strongest faith in the world. You have as much right to the precious things of the Covenant as the most advanced Believers, for your right to Covenant mercies lies not in your growth, but in the Covenant itself. And your faith in Jesus may not assay to measure the extent of your inheritance in Him. So then, you are as rich as the richest, if not in enjoyment, yet in real possession.

You are as dear to your Father’s heart as the greatest among us. If there is a weakling in a family, the father often loves it the most, or at least indulges it with the most caresses. And when there is a child that has lost one of its senses, be it sight or hearing, you will notice with what assiduous care the parents watch over that one! You are possibly such a tender one, and Christ is very tender over you. You are like the smoking flax—anybody else would say, “Put out that smoking flax. What a smell! How it fills the room with a foul and offensive odor!” “But the smoking flax He will not quench.”

You are just like a bruised reed. There used to be some music in you, but now the reed is broken, and there is no tuneful note at all to be brought out from the poor, bruised, crooked and broken reed. Anyone else but the Chief Musician would pull you out and throw you away. You might think He would be sure to say, “I do not want a bruised reed. It is of no use at all among the pipes.” But He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Instead of being downcast by reason of what you are, you should begin to triumph in Christ.

Am I but little in Israel? Yet in Christ I am made to sit in heavenly places! Am I poor in faith? Still in Christ I am heir of all things! Do I sometimes wander? Yet Jesus Christ comes after me, and brings me back. Though, “less than nothing, I can boast and vanity confess.” If the root of the matter is in me, I will rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the God of my salvation!

III. This brings me to the third and closing part—WHEREVER THE ROOT OF THE MATTER IS, THERE WE SHOULD TAKE CARE THAT WE WATCH IT WITH TENDERNESS AND WITH LOVE.

Some of you may have the notion that you are advanced in knowledge, that you have much skill in interpreting the Word of God, and that you understand the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven. It is highly possible that your notion is correct. You go out into the world, and you meet with people who do not know quite as much as you do, and who have not yet learned all the doctrines of Grace as they are threaded together in the Divine plan of salvation. May I persuade you not to get into controversy, not to be continually fighting and quarrelling with people who do not hold to just your sentiments?

If you discover the root of the matter in any man, say at once—“Why should I persecute you? Why should we fall to quarrelling with each other, seeing that the root of the matter is in us both?” Save your swords for Christ’s real enemies. The way to make men learn the Truth of God is not to abuse them. We shall never make a Brother see a doctrine by smiting him in the eye. Hold your lantern up and let him see. I remember, when in my boyhood, I sometimes held a candle at night for a man sawing who

was a worldling. He used to say to me—“Now, my lad, hold the candle so that you can see yourself, and you may depend upon it that I can see, too.”

And I have generally found that if you hold up the doctrines in such a way that you can see them yourselves, and just tell to others the way in which you have been led, by His Grace, to see them—and how you see them now—you will often give a light to other men, if they have the root of the matter in them. Quarrel not—fight not with them—but be friends and especially show yourself friendly.

Then, again, if you meet with young professors who have the root of the matter in them, do not begin condemning them for lack of knowledge. I have heard of some old Believers, yes, and of some not very old, too, who had read a great deal and had, perhaps, more in the head than in the heart. And when young enquirers came to see them, they began to ask them—“Which theory do you hold, sublapsarian or supralapsarian?” I do not mean that they exactly said those very words, but they suggested some knotty points or something of that sort. And the young people have said—“I am sure I do not know, Sir.”

It has sometimes been the case that these young enquirers have been dealt very harshly with. I remember one case where a certain Brother—a good man, too, in his way, said—“Well, now, I am sorry to tell you that you are no child of God. If you die as you are, you will be lost”—only because the poor child did not exactly know the difference between two things that are amazingly alike after all. I do not think we ought to do this. It is not for us to go about killing all the lambs. For if we do this, where will the sheep come from? If we are always condemning those who have only begun as yet to learn their letters, we shall never have any readers.

People must begin to say, “Two times two are four,” before they can ever come to be very learned in mathematics. Should we stop them at once, and say—“You are no child of God, because you do not know how to compute the logarithms of Divine”? Why, then at once we have put out of the synagogue those who might have been its best ornaments! Remember, my dear Friends, that wherever we see the root of the matter, Christ has accepted the person, and therefore we ought to accept him. This is why I love to think that when we break bread at this table we always receive among us, as far as we know, all those who have got the root of the matter in them.

I have heard a story of the late good Dr. Stedman, when he was tutor of Bradford College. It appears he was a very strict-communion Baptist, and carried it out conscientiously. One day he preached for some Independents, and in the afternoon, after the service, there was to be Communion. Now Mr. Stedman prayed most earnestly that the Lord would be pleased graciously to vouchsafe His Presence to the dear Brothers and Sisters when they met around His Table. After the service was over he was going to the vestry to put on his great coat, intending to go home.

One of the deacons said—“Doctor, you will stop with us, will you not, to Communion?” “Well, my dear Brother,” he said, “it is no want of love, but, you see, it would compromise my principles. I am a strictcommunion Baptist, and I could not well stop and commune with you who have not been baptized. Do not think it is any want of love, now, but it is only out of respect to my principles.” “Oh,” said the deacon, “but it is not your principles, because what did you pray for, Doctor? You prayed your Master, the Lord Jesus, to come to His Table. And if according to your principles it is wrong for you to go there, you should not ask your Master to come where you must not go yourself. But if you believe that your Lord and Master will come to the table, surely where the Master is, it cannot be wrong for the servant to be.”

The deacon’s reasoning appears to me very sound. And it is in the same spirit I say of any, or to any whose sincere faith I have no reason to doubt—if they have got the root of the matter in them, “Come and welcome!” We are sorry that when our friends ought to keep the feast of tabernacles with great branches of trees they only pull small twigs, and so do not get the benefit of the broader shadow. We are sorry that when Christ tells them to be immersed they go and sprinkle—but that is their own business and not ours. To their own Master they must stand or fall. But if the root of the matter is there, why persecute them? Seeing that the root of the matter is found in them, let them come. God has received them, and let us do the same.

That matter about encouraging young Believers and not putting stumbling blocks in their path may seem to some of you decidedly unimportant. But I am persuaded that there are many young Christians who have been made to suffer for years through the roughness of some more advanced Believers. Christian! You that are strong—be very tender towards the weak—for the day may come when you will be weaker than they. Never did bullock push with side and shoulder the lean cattle of the herd when they came to drink. The Lord took away the glory from the fat bull of Bashan, and made him willing to associate with the very least of the herd.

You cannot intimidate a child of God without making his Father angry. And though you are a child of God yourself—if you deal harshly with one of your Brothers and Sisters—you shall smart for it. The Master’s rod is always ready, even for His own beloved children, when they are not tender with the sons and daughters of Zion, who are kept as the apple of God’s eye. Remember, too, Brothers and Sisters, that the day may come when you will want consolation from the very friend whom you have treated so roughly. I have known some great people—some very great people—that have at last been made to sit at the feet of those whom before they called all sorts of ill names.

God has His ways of taking the wind out of men’s sails. While their sails were full, and the wind blew, they said, “No, no. We do not care about that little port over yonder. We do not care to put in there. It is only a miserable little fishing village.” But when the wind came howling on, and the deep rolled heavily, and it seemed as if the dread artillery of God were all mustering for the battle, ah, how with the reef sail they have

tried to fly, as best they could, into the little harbor! Do not speak ill of the little harbor. Do not be ashamed of little Christians. Stand up for the weaklings of the flock, and let this be your motto, you strong Christians—

*“There’s not a lamb amidst the flock  
I would disdain to feed.  
There’s not a foe before whose face  
I’d fear Your cause to plead.”*

Now I ask you, by way of solemn searching investigation: Have you the root of the matter in you? I have spoken for your encouragement, in case you have the root of the matter in you. If you have not, there awaits you nothing but destruction—but, by His Grace, you are not hopelessly lost! The root of the matter is still to be had. The Holy Spirit can yet give you a new heart and a right spirit. Jesus Christ is still able and willing to save.

Oh, look there! I see His five wounds. They flow with rivers of blood! Look there, Sinner! And as you look, by His Grace, you shall live! Whoever you may be, though you are the worst sinner out of Hell, yet—

*“While the lamp holds out to burn,*

*The vilest sinner may return.”*  
Look there, Sinner, look, look and live! I think I have closed my sermon each night lately with those words, and I will do so again tonight. There is life in a look at a crucified Savior. There is life at this moment for you. Oh, look to Him, and you shall find that life for yourself. God bless you, for Jesus’ sake.

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God our Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all who love Jesus, now and eternally. Amen. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #410 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 21.29

NOT NOW, BUT HEREAFTER!  
NO. 410

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 22, 1861, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Have you not asked them that go by the way? And do you not know their tokens, that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? They shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall  
repay him what he has done?”  
Job 21:29-31.**

THE sermon which I preached two Lord’s days ago upon the accidents has caused considerable consternation among pious people with weak heads. Their idea that all calamities are judgments is so inveterate a prejudice and so favorite a dogma that our exposure of its absurdity is, in their opinion, eminently calculated to encourage sin and quiet the consciences of offenders. Now I feel quite at ease in this matter and am confident that I have done service to our great cause—even though the timid should be alarmed and the superstitious should be annoyed.

Our gracious God and Father has seen fit to give us a whole book of the Bible upon the subject. The main drift of the Book of Job is to prove that temporal afflictions are not evidences of the Lord’s displeasure. And I beg the modern Bildads and Zophars to reconsider their position—lest they, too, should be found to be “speaking wickedly for God and talking deceitfully for Him” (Job 13:7). In my very soul I feel that if evil days shall come upon me, if poverty, desertion and disease should place me upon Job’s dunghill, I shall point to that sermon with pleasure.

And I will say to those who will tell me that God is angry with me and has judged me to be unworthy, “No, you know not what you say for the judgment is not passed already, nor is this the field of execution; neither disease, nor bereavements, nor poverty, can prove a man to be wicked, nor do they even hint that the chosen are divided from the hearts of Christ.” O my beloved Friends, settle it in your hearts that men are not to be judged according to their present circumstances! Learn like David to understand their end. It will save you from writing bitter things against yourselves in the time of trouble and prevent your scanning the works of Providence and measuring the infinite by line and plummet.

It is mainly my business, today, to deal with those who may wickedly continue in sin because their judgment tarries. If the Lord does not in this world visit the ungodly with stripes, this is but the surer evidence that in the world to come there is a solemn retribution for the impenitent. If the affliction which is here accorded to men is not the punishment of sin, we turn to Scripture and discover what that punishment will be. And we are soon informed that it is something far heavier than any calamities which

occur in this life—something infinitely more tremendous than the most disastrous accident, the most shocking mutilation, or the most painful death.

I know that there are some in these days who are like those in the time of the royal Preacher, of whom He said, “because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Should I be addressing some this morning who have found a stupid quiet for their consciences in the fact that God does not here usually visit men’s sins upon their heads, let me put it to them whether such peace is reasonable.

There is a city which has revolted. A great king has threatened them with entire destruction for the revolt. He does not, in hurried passion, send against them a handful of soldiers to inflict instant and petty chastisement—he waits awhile and marshals all his hosts till every battalion has been put in array, till every mighty man has girded on his armor. Fools! Will you draw consolation from the delay of your destroyer? Will you say, because he has not ridden forth against you on the very day of your rebellion that therefore this is a time of revelry and mirth? No, inasmuch as he is gathering his hosts for the battle, let it cause you to tremble—for he shall break down your walls and give your whole company to the sword.

Imagine yourselves voyagers, far out upon the sea. A black cloud darkens the sky. You say you fear not the cloud because it is not at present pouring forth the flood. But that is the reason why you should fear it—for the cloud is waiting until it grows and spreads—till under the wing of darkness the egg of cloud has been hatched into the black screaming eagle of the storm. The clouds are hurrying from east and west, mustering for the strife! Mark you not the sea heaving heavily in sympathy with Heaven’s convulsions? Behold how all the dread artillery of Heaven is gathering up for one tremendous shock. Fools! Do you say you will not fear because the thundercloud has not yet burst, because as yet the breath of wind has not transformed itself into the blast of hurricane?

It is gathering, Sirs, congregating its forces and accumulating its fury and the longer that it gathers the more terrible shall be the moment when it bursts upon your devoted heads. And so today, God’s clouds that float in the sky—the calamities of Providence—are not pouring on you the tempest of wrath. But is this a reason why you should be at peace? No! The clouds are gathering, every sin is adding to the mass, every day of God’s long-suffering is covering Heaven in blacker sable. Every moment that He spares He does but prepare to punish in more tremendous force. And dread and direful shall be the day when at last Omnipotence itself shall come to the assistance of outraged Justice and you shall feel that God is God as much in punishing sin as in the making of the worlds.

It was a fable of the old Jewish rabbis that when the angel Gabriel flew he used both wings because he always came with good tidings. But that when Michael flew, bearing God’s sword to smite through the loins of king, he always flew with one wing. But Michael arrives as surely at his destined goal as Gabriel himself. The feet of the avenging deities may seem to be shod with lead for tardiness and their tread may be as noiseless as wool—but they are as sure as the feet of mercy. I know when God comes to bless, the axles of His chariot are hot with speed and His steeds are white with foam. And when He comes to curse He travels slowly, with many a sigh, for He wills not the death of any but had rather “that he should turn unto Him and live.”

But remember in judgment He comes in all His might and He shall be discovered to be not less a God when He smites than when He gives the kisses of His lips and lifts the pardoned sinner into acceptance and favor.

We shall now deal with the sorrowful topic of the punishment of sin in the world to come. I have preached less upon this subject than almost upon any other—and yet always is it thrown in our teeth that we delight to dwell upon these horrors. I never come to this subject without the deepest distress of heart and God alone shall know how many tears it costs these eyes when I have to deal out as God’s faithful ambassador the thunders of His Law. I delight to preach of Calvary and of divine love and of grace unsearchable. But this theme is to me the burden of the Lord. We must not. We dare not keep it back. Fidelity to conscience, truthfulness to God, love to the souls of men constrain us to make this a part of our ministry—not keeping back any part of the price.

I will divide the discourse this morning into three parts. First, I shall speak of the punishment of sin, by way of affirmation—or prove that it must be so. Secondly, by way of explanation—of what kind and nature this punishment must be. And then, thirdly, by way of expostulation— pleading with those who are yet in the land of mercy that they would hasten to the voice of wisdom and that God’s grace may turn them from the error of their ways.

I. First, then, by way of affirmation—THERE MUST BE A PUNISHMENT FOR SIN.  
Job says that this is a Truth so written upon the very nature of man that even those who go by the way, the ignorant traveler and wayfarer, dares not for a moment deny that such is the case. “Have you not asked them that go by the way? And do you not know their tokens?” And truly it is so. If there is one intuitive Truth which man perceives without need of argument, it is that sin deserves to be punished. And since sin in not punished here, it follows that the punishment must be endured in the world to come.  
Let us, however, very briefly review the argument. Sin must be punished from the very nature of God. God is. If God is God, He must be just. You can no more separate the idea of justice from the idea of God than you can omniscience, or omnipresence, or omnipotence. To suppose of a God who was not omnipotent is to make a supposition which is contradictory in its terms. For the term “God” includes that thought. And to suppose an unjust God is to imagine an absurdity—you have used, I repeat it, contradictory terms—justice is included in the very thought of God.  
See how the oppressed always recognize this. The slave who has long been trampled under the feet of a tyrannical master—with his back fresh from the gory lash—lifts up his eye to God the Avenger, for he feels instinctively that God must be just. Nationalities who have made appeals to arms but have been subdued again to serfdom—at last in their despair cry out to God—for this is the bottom of man’s thoughts. This is the one which is sure to come forth when pain has emptied out his lighter notions—that God does execute righteousness and judgment “for all that are oppressed.” So, too, when man would affirm a thing to be true he calls upon God to be his witness because in his innermost nature he feels that God will be a just and impartial witness.  
If he thought not so it would be ridiculous to call upon God to witness to his statement. Note how the tearful eye, the groaning mind, the bursting heart all turn instinctively to the Judge of all the earth. Man feels that God must be just. But how just? How just, if crowned heads that do injustice shall go unpunished? How just, if the adulterer, the thief, the liar and the hypocrite unpunished here, should go unpunished in the world to come? Where is your justice, God, if this world is all? We say, “Alas for love if you were an end nothing beyond, O earth!” And we may add, alas, for justice, too. For where could it live, where could it dwell, unless there were a world to come in which God will right the wrongs and avenge Himself upon all who have trampled on His laws?  
Not only does His very nature show this but those acts of God which are recorded in Revelation prove incontestably that He will by no means spare the guilty. There have been judgments. I am not now appealing to the crotchets and opinions of ill-judging man, but to the inspired chronicles, for I will quote those judgments alone which the Word of God calls such. Adam sinned. ‘Twas but the touching of an apple—Eden was blasted, Adam was exiled. The world sinned. They ate, they drank, they married and were given in marriage. They forgot the Most High. The fountains of the great deep gave forth their floods. The cisterns of Heaven emptied out their cataracts. All the world was drowned. And the last shriek of the strong swimmer yielding at last to universal death told us that God is just.  
Look across to the allies of the plain. When they had wholly given themselves up to unnatural lusts God rained fire and brimstone out of Heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And when He did so, what did He but write in letters of fire this word—“God is just, He furiously avenges and terribly punishes sin.” Behold, too, Pharaoh and all his hosts drowned in the Red Sea. For what purpose was Pharaoh but that God might show forth His power in him—might prove to the world that there were vessels of wrath and that God knew how to fill them to the brim and break them as with a rod of iron? Look to Palestine and behold its kings put to death by the sword of the Lord and His servant Joshua.  
What means a land stained in blood? It means this—that the race had offended much against Heaven. And God, that man might have some glimpses of His terrible justice, declared that He would root out the races of Canaan and would have war with Amalek from generation to generation. It is impossible to reconcile Old Testament history with the effeminate notion of Neological divinity—that God is only a universal Father and not a Governor and a Judge. If these gentlemen will quietly read some of those awful passages in the Old Testament, they cannot—unless they should deny the inspiration of the passage, or attempt to tone down its meaning—they cannot but confess that they see there far less a loving parent than a God dressed in arms.  
A God of whom we may say, “The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is His name. Your right hand, O Lord, Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces Your enemies.” A God without justice is what this modern church is seeking after. These new doctrines would fashion a deity destitute of those sublime attributes which keep the world in awe and command for Him the reverence of His creatures.  
This brings me to my third argument. Not only do the nature and the acts of God prove that He will punish sin but the very necessities of the world demand it. Imagine the contrary. Put in all our Christian pulpits men who should teach sinners that there is no punishment for sin. Let them say to them, “What you suffer here is to be looked upon as God’s judgment on your offense. But there is no world to come in which your sins will be visited upon your heads.” Friends, you may at once advise the government to multiply the number of our jails tenfold. If there is no punishment for sin in another world, if it be so light and trifling an offense that the little sufferings of this life are sufficient atonement for it, then you have thrown up the floodgates which have up to now dammed up the overflowing floods.  
You will soon see society swept from its moorings. There will be no possibility that men will seek to be honest when they find that honesty or dishonesty are terms which have but a trifling difference between them. If sin is so slight a thing men will think virtue to be a slight thing, too. And if there is so little punishment for crime they will soon think that there can be but little reason for virtue. And then where will be our commonwealths and our social compacts? The best lawgivers, however amiably disposed they may be, find that they must back up their laws with penalties.  
A State which should be founded upon laws without penalties could not last a week—or if it lasted—you would find that while the laws would be disregarded there would be more death and more suffering than there had been before. When was the guillotine most at work but when there was loudest boast of liberty and men’s living without law? When would there be the most of murder but when there should no more be heard the threat of condemnation and when they who were assassins might be permitted to go abroad untouched? There must be punishment for the world’s own good, to say nothing of the nature of God, which for its dignity and holiness necessarily demands that every offense and transgression should receive its just recompense of reward.  
But further—I affirm the punishment of sin from the atonement of Christ. Friends, if there is no necessity that sin should be punished, why did Jesus die? Why, Father, did you send Your only begotten and wellbeloved Son and lay upon Him the iniquities of us all? Was He needed for an example? He might have been our example without dying—in fact if this were all—virtue, crowned and glorified might have been quite as noble an incentive to goodness as virtue mocked and crucified. He was needed that He might take our sins and having taken our sins it became absolutely necessary that Jesus Christ should die.  
In the death of Christ, if sin must not necessarily be punished, I see nothing but the death of a martyr like James, or Peter, or Polycarp—the death of a man murdered for being better than his fellows. And why do we make this fuss and noise about salvation by the death of Christ if that is all? Why has the Christian church existed to be a false witness, to testify to a fiction? Why has her blood been shed these many centuries to maintain that the blood of Jesus Christ takes away the sin of the world—if the sin could be taken away without punishment? The wounds of Christ have no meaning, His precious blood has no value, His thorn-crowned head is not worthy of worship, nor is His death worthy of daily ministry unless it be that He suffered, “the Just for the unjust to bring us to God.”  
God in Christ punished the sins of His people. And if He did it in Christ, unpardoned Sinner, rest assured He will do it in you. If the imputed sins of Christ brought Him the agonies of Gethsemane, what will your sins bring you? If guilt that was not His own brought Him an exceeding heaviness, “even unto death,” what will your sins bring you—sins, remember—which are your own? “He that spared not His own Son” will never spare rebels. He who did not spare His Son a single lash or a single stroke will certainly make no exemption in your favor if you live and die impenitent and reject the Gospel of Christ.  
Besides, my dear Friends, permit me to say that those who think that sin is not to be punished are generally the worst of men. Men hate Hell for the reason that murderers hate the gallows. The miscreant Youngman who was executed on the top of yonder jail, informed the chaplain that he objected on principle to all capital punishment—an objection natural enough when it was his own inevitable doom. They who dissent from the doctrine of divine justice are interested in forming that opinion. The wish is father to the thought—they would have their sin unpunished—they hope it may be and then they say it will be.  
You will not listen to a thief’s objection to a policeman. You do not imagine that a criminal’s objection to a judge is very valid and the sinner’s objection to Hell lies only here—that he will not repent—and he therefore fears the dread certainty that he shall be punished. Besides, even these worst of men who pretend not to believe, do believe. Their fears betray the secret conviction of their consciences and on their dying beds, or in a storm—whenever they have thought they were about to see with their own eyes the stern realities of eternity—their fears have proved them to be as strong believers as those who profess the faith.  
Infidelity is not honest. It may profess to be but it is not. I think that our judges are right in not accepting the oath of an infidel. It is not possible that he should be honest in the notion that there is no God when God is around him in every leaf, in every tree and in every star in the sky. It is not possible that a man should be honest when he calls himself an atheist. Nor do we believe that any man can speak the dictates of his inmost heart when he says that sin will never be punished and that he may sin with impunity. His conscience gives him the lie—he knows it must be so— and that God will visit his offenses upon his head.  
I shall not enlarge further except to say in gathering up my thoughts. Impenitent Sinner, be you sure of this—there shall not a sin of yours fall to the ground unremembered, “For every idle word that you shall speak God will bring you into judgment.” How much more for every blasphemous word and for every rebellious act? Do not wrap yourself up in the delusive thought that sin will escape unpunished. Even if it should be so, then the Christian is as well off as you are. But since righteousness will be laid to the line and judgment to the plummet, what will become of you? Be wise before it is too late. Believe today what you will find out to be a fact before long.  
God has revealed it to you, His revelation has tokens and signs which prove its Divine Origin. Believe what He has revealed—do not say in your heart, “I never will believe there is a Hell unless one should come from it.” Do you not see that if one should come from it then you would not believe at all? You would say, “If one person came from Hell, then another may and I may myself.” It would take away all your dread of future punishment if any spirit should come back from it. Yet methinks the shrieks of dying sinners, the cries which some of you have heard coming up from the death beds of blasphemers, ought to be enough evidence that there is a world to come whereof we speak.  
And that there are terrors of the Law which are happily concealed today from your eyes and from your ears but which you may soon know—and know far better than the best words can teach you. By your own feelings, by your own everlasting despair and banishment from God will you know them if you repent not.  
II. I turn now to the second portion of the discourse—THE NATURE OF THIS PUNISHMENT by way of explanation.  
How will God punish sin? The text says, “The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.” The old Puritan preachers, such men as Alleine, who wrote the “Alarm,” and others of his class always gave a very gross picture of the world to come. They could never represent it except by brimstone flames and dancing fiends and such like horrors. They were conscientious in the drawing of the picture and to them the terrors of the

ord were gross, corporeal, unscriptural ideas of Hell. But rather let us feel that it is a great mystery concerning which we must rather follow Scripture than imagination.  
The first punishment which will be executed upon man for his sins will be punishment to his soul. The soul leaves the body—the body is here enclosed in the coffin—rotting in the tomb. The disembodied spirit will appear before its God. It will then know at once what its future destination shall be. The great assize will not then have been held. The Judge will not have officially pronounced the sentence but the soul, anticipating the sentence, will antidote its execution. Memory will begin to reflect upon past sins, past mercies unimproved, past opportunities neglected and past offenses which have long been forgotten.  
Then the conscience will begin to thunder. “You did this wantonly,” says Conscience. “You did it against light and knowledge. You did despise Christ. You did neglect the day of mercy. You have been a suicide. You have destroyed yourself.” Then the fears will come in—the fears of the Day of Judgment—when the body shall be reunited with the soul. And those fears will sting the man with thoughts like these. “What will you say when He comes to judge you? How will you bear the eyes of Him that shall read you through and through? Now you know that what was preached to you on earth is true.  
“You are no infidel now. Now the Truth is not kept out of your soul by the dullness of your fleshly body. You see you know it. What will become of you when earth shall pass away and Heaven shall shake and Hell shall gape to receive its prey?” So the spirit shall be virtually in Hell before the body goes there. This shall be the first punishment of sin. Then, when the day predestined shall have come, the trump of the archangel shall ring through the air—the trump this time of the Second Resurrection—for the dead in Christ shall have already risen and have reigned with Christ upon the earth.  
Then rings the elation note that wakes the dead. They start up and the soul returns to its old house, the body. Then it receives its sentence. It is brought forth as the text says, “to the day of wrath”—it had been reserved in chains before, in blackness and darkness. It is now brought forth to receive the sentence, that the body may begin its Hell. Then, mark you beyond a doubt—for we cannot understand Scripture and especially the words of Christ without it—the body shall have pains meet for its offenses.  
Your members were servants of your lusts. They shall now be partakers of the wage of your soul. The feet that carried you in the paths of sin shall tread the fiery road. The eyes which gazed with lustful glance shall now be made to weep the scalding tear. The teeth which ministered to your gluttony shall now gnash for pain. The tongue which talked so exceeding proudly against God, shall be “tormented in this flame.” There shall be certainly a punishment for the body as well as for the soul—for what else did Christ mean when He said—“Fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in Hell.”  
I shall not enlarge upon what sort of punishment this will be. Suffice it to say that whatever it is, it will be just. The sinner in Hell shall not endure one iota more than he deserves. He shall have the due reward of his deeds—no more. God is not unjust to punish men arbitrarily—I know of no arbitrary condemnation. There is no such thing as sovereign damnation. It will be justice—inflexible, I grant you—but yet not such as shall pass the bounds of due and right desert. God will give to man only the harvest of his own deeds. He sowed the wind and he shall reap the whirlwind.  
You shall not have the consolation in Hell of saying that you did not deserve it—for in Hell you will be made to feel, “I brought this on myself. I destroyed myself. It is true I am in pain, but I am the father of my own pains. I planted the tree which yields the bitter fruit. I dug about it and I watered it. I did the work. I labored and these are my wages.” And you will have to feel there and then that in every pang that rends the heart God is infinitely just. And then, whatever the pain may be, we know that while it is just, it will be terrible.  
Whose are those awful words, “He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”! Is this the language of Moses? No, of Christ! It is a remarkable fact that the most frightful descriptions of punishment of another world are from the lips of the Savior. Had Peter spoken them you would have said Peter was harsh in spirit. It was the Master spoke them. He who wept over Jerusalem said, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” He spoke of “burning up the chaff.” He spoke of “binding hand and foot and giving them up to the tormentors.” In the compass of Revelation there are no words so grim and terrible in their awful suggestiveness as the words of Him, “who went about doing good.” He who wept and cried, “Come unto Me, you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”  
And we know, again, that this punishment will be eternal. This is the very essence of it. There were no Hell if it were not eternal—for the hope of an end would be the end of fear. If there could be an end to Hell at any time, there would be an end to it at once. No man would feel that desperate despair if there were a hope that it should come to a close. But it is eternity, eternity, eternity that makes punishment bad. This is the bell which tolls the funeral of every hope—eternity, eternity, eternity. To sail across a sea of fire forever, never reaching a haven. To sink, but never reach the bottom, or to rise to heights of greater agony and never reach the summit.  
Oh, Brethren—Brothers and Sisters—it is not the wrath of God in this world that you have so much to fear. The wrath’s to come, the wrath’s to come. And it is not the wrath that the soul shall be filled with when it has been there a thousand years—it is the wrath to come. They will go on sinning and God will go on avenging. They will go on blaspheming and they shall go on gnawing their tongues. They shall go on hating God and they shall go on feeling His anger. They shall go from bad to worse in character and doubtless from bad to worse in agony. O God, help us to escape from this awful thing—the wrath, the wrath to come!  
III. I close now by offering SOME FEW WORDS OF EXPOSTULATION.  
You will kindly look at the thirty-first verse. He says, “Who shall declare his way to his face? And who shall repay him what he has done!” Now there are many men who think they shall come off Scot free because in this life there are none who will dare to mention their sins to their face. The covetous man is very seldom rebuked for his covetousness. If a man lives an unclean life he does not usually read books which would prick his conscience. If a man acts dishonorably in his trade, if another should tell him of it, he would be exceedingly insulted.  
It is true a faithful minister will often make men feel uneasy in their sins—for he will be led by God’s direction to give such a description of the offenses and of the punishment—that he will make sinners tremble in their shoes. But still are there not some among you here today who can sin with both your hands and there is no Elijah to say, “You are the man”? You have none to meet you in Naboth’s vineyard and say to you, “Have you killed and taken possession?” There is perhaps hardly a “still small voice”—though there used to be one—the agonizing face of your wife when first you had forsaken the way of virtue.  
The ghastly look of your mother as you were bringing down her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. The sorrowful gaze of your little children when first their father became a drunkard—these were still voices to you, but they are hushed now. When God gives you up, then indeed your damnation slumbers not. But remember however cheaply you can sin now, God will not fear insulting you. He will bring your sins to your remembrance and there shall be no consideration of your dignity. He will not consult your feelings. He will not look upon you as a great one. He will bring your sins to remembrance in no courtly phrases and in no polished terms.  
You shall find that the lips of Justice know not how to make distinctions between you and the basest menial whom once you despised. Now if a man should speak your character it would be libel. But when God speaks it, you shall not threaten Him! What? Do you think that He will fear and tremble before you? Who are you, O man, that the lips of the Eternal God should be silent about you? Who are you that He should fail to draw your character in black or crimson hues? He will convict you to your face and you shall be utterly unable to plead guiltless of your sins.  
And then the text says “Who shall repay him?” Ah, there is no hand which dares repay you now. You have gone unpunished. No law can touch you, you say. Ah, but there is a Divine Law which overrides the law that is human. And if the arm of human justice is too short, the arm of God is as long as it is strong and He will reach you—and to the last jot and tittle pay you your due reward. You shall not escape even in the slightest degree. No pleas and prayers, no tears and excuses shall have any avail with Him— till Justice shall have had its uttermost farthing—you shall by no means come out from there.  
And now, Sinner, why will you dare the wrath of God? Why will you run this fearful risk? Why will you make your bed in Hell? Why will you dwell in everlasting burnings? Is it wise, or are you mad and is your reason gone? Have I preached to you a bugbear and a fable?—If so, go your way and sin. But oh, if it is true—and it must be—unless you are prepared to reject that precious Book and the very name of Christian—if it is true! Soul, I pray you let me feel for you, if you will not feel for yourself.  
Why dash yourself upon the point of Jehovah’s javelin? Why destroy yourself against the bosses of His shield? What can there be that makes you so in love with ruin? Why will you hug the grave and embrace destruction? Soul, again I say—are you mad?—Are you mad?—Are you mad? May the Lord teach you reason and may He help you to flee to the only Refuge where a sinner may find mercy.  
I shall close when I have tried to set out the way of Mercy. I have read in the old Histories of England that Edward the Second, one of our kings, was exceedingly enraged against one of his courtiers. Being out hunting one day he threatened the courtier with the severest punishment. There was a river between them at the time and the courtier, thinking that he was perfectly safe, ventured to offer some jeering remark upon the king— telling him that at any rate he would not be likely to chastise him until he got at him. The king, feeling his anger hot within him, told him that the water should not long divide them. He leaped into the middle of the stream and with some difficulty gained the other side.  
The courtier, in great alarm, fled in terror. The king pursued him with might and main, spurring his horse to the utmost. Nor did his anger cease. He carried his drawn sword in his hand with the intention of killing him. At last the courtier, seeing that there was no hope for any escape, knelt down upon the grass and laying bare his neck, said, “I heartily deserve to die. Mercy, King! Mercy!” The king put his sword back into the scabbard in a moment and said, “While you sought to escape me I determined to destroy you, but when I see you humble at my feet I freely forgive you.”  
Even so is it with the King of Heaven. Sinners, you say there is this life between you and God. Ah, but how soon will the white horse of Justice pass the stream and then flee. Flee as you may today, He will surely overtake you. He now is swift to destroy—let it be yours on your knees to make confession of your sin and say, “I deserve Your wrath, Great King, I deserve Your wrath.” And if to this you are enabled to add the plea of the precious blood of Christ, the sword of Justice will return into its scabbard and He will say, “I am just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly.” For Jesus died and inasmuch as Jesus Christ has died, Justice is satisfied on the account of all believers. Go your way, your sins which are many are all forgiven you.  
“What must I do to be saved?” one says. This is all you have to do—and this the Holy Spirit will work in you—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart.” “What is that?” you say. “I believe Him to be Divine. I believe that He is able to save.” That will not save you, there must be something more than that. “What then?” “Believe in him”—carry out practically your belief that He is able to save by trusting yourself in His hands. To exhibit again an old picture which has often been used—there is a child in a burning house hanging from the upper window. A strong man stands beneath and offers to catch him, if he will but drop from yonder hot window sill to which he still clings.  
“Drop, my child,” he says, “I will catch you.” The child believes the strength of his preserver. That does not save him. He trusts to the strength—he lets go his hold and falls—is caught and is preserved. That is faith. Let go your hold of your good works, your good thoughts and all else—and trust in Christ. He never did let one soul dash itself to earth yet, that did but fall into His hands. Oh, for grace for everyone of us to say in the words of Watts—  
*“A guilty, weak and helpless worm,  
On Christ’s kind arms I fall;  
He is my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus and my all.”*

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÷Job 22.15

THE OLD WAY OF THE WICKED  
NO. 859

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 7, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Have you marked the old way which wicked men have trod? Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was swept away with a flood: Which said unto God,**

**Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?” Job 22:15-17.**

“HAVE you marked the old way?” Antiquity is no guarantee for truth. It was the old way, but it was the wrong way. If our religion is to be settled by antiquity, we shall presently pass back to the worst form of idolatry, for we would have to become Druids. It is not always that “the old is better.” Sometimes, by reason of the depravity of human nature, the old is the more corrupt. The oldest of all would be the best, but how shall we come at it? Adam was once perfection—but how shall we regain that state? Old, exceedingly old, is the path of sin and the path of error, for as old as the Father of Lies is sin.

Antiquity is, moreover, no excuse for sin. It may be that men have long transgressed, but use in rebellion will not mitigate the treason before the eternal Throne. If you know better, it will not stand you in any place that God winked at the ignorance of others in former ages. If you have had more light than they, you shall have severer judgment than they— therefore plead not the antiquity of any evil custom as an excuse for sin. It was an old way, but they who ran in it perished in it just as surely as if it had been a new way of sinning entirely of their own invention. Antiquity will be no consolation to those who perish by following evil precedents. It will serve no purpose to lost souls that they sinned as thousands sinned before them! And if they shall meet long generations of their ancestors lost in the same overthrow, they shall by no means be comforted by such grim companionship.

Therefore, it becomes all of us to examine whether those religious dogmas which we have accepted on account of their apparent venerableness of age and universality of custom are, indeed, the Truth of God. We are not among those who believe that the traditions of the fathers are the ultimate tests of the Truth of God. We have heard the voice which says, “To the Law and to the Testimony. If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.” We would not affect novelty for its own sake—that were folly—neither will we adore and venerate antiquity for its own sake, for that would lead us into idolatry and superstition.

Is the thing right? Then follow it, though you have discovered it but yesterday. Is it wrong? Then, though the road were trod by sinners of the first ages, yet do not pursue it unless you desire to meet with the same end as they. Search and look to your creeds, your worships and your customs, for this world has long enough been deluded by hoary superstitions. Search, my Hearer, search and look right carefully within your heart, for you may be deceived and it were a pity if it should be so with you while there are such opportunities given you to discover and rectify your mistakes. We shall now, this morning, in the words of the text, mark the old way of wicked men, observe it carefully and consider it well. There shall be three points this morning, the way, the end, the warning.

I. The first shall be THE WAY—“the old way which wicked men have trod.” First, what it was. There is no doubt that Eliphaz is here alluding to those who sinned before the Flood. He is looking to what were ancient days to him. Living as he did, in what is olden time to us, his days of yore were the days beyond the Flood and the old way he speaks of is the way and course of sinners before the world was destroyed by water.

Now this way, in the first place, was a way of rebellion against God. Adam, our first parent, knew God’s will—that will ought not to have been irksome to him. The command was a very easy one. The denial of the one tree to him should have been no great loss. He ought to have been well content when all the rest of the garden was his own leasehold, to have that one tree belong to the Great Freeholder of all—but he set his will in direct antagonism to the will of the Most High. The sin itself looked small. The act of plucking the forbidden fruit appeared to be trivial, but within the loins of it lurked a dark hostility to the mind of God which led to open breach of the Lord’s command.

That is the way in every transgressor’s case, for every sinner is a rebel against God. Though the man, at the time when he commits the sin, may claim that he was not thinking of God, yet the fact of his acting without regard to Him whom he ought always reverently to consider was, in itself, a sin. Sin is a defiance of Divine authority, it throws down the gauntlet and challenges the rights of the King of kings. Are there any here, this morning, who are pursuing that old way which wicked men have trod? Do not many of you neglect, as a rule, the consideration of what is God’s mind? Do you not act as unrestrainedly as if there were no God at all? Do you not constantly follow after that which the Lord abhors?

I fear many of you are traversing the way of rebellion and are daily provoking the Great Judge. I pray you beware, for this is the old way which wicked men have trod and you may be sure that as God met with them, and their rebellion soon ended in terrible destruction, so will He also meet with you, for God’s ways are equal and He deals out justice to sinners, now, as He did then.

In the next place, the old way was a way of selfishness. Why did Eve take of that fruit? It was because she believed that the taking of it would delight her appetite and would also make her wise. It was to gain something for self that evil was done. And her children also have participated in the same feeling. It was this that made Nimrod the mighty tyrant of the world. It was this which led the sons of God before the Flood to look upon the daughters of men, for they were fair, because they sought their own pleasure and not the service of God. Self reigned! The men cast themselves down before their own natural propensities, indulged their wantonness and had no delight in God. This is the old way which wicked men have trod and I fear it is a well-trod path today.

How do the mass of mankind cry? “Show us any good! Show us something that shall give us pleasure, amusement, sport—we care little what it is! Let it be decent and respectable, if so it may be, but by any means let us disport ourselves and find pleasure, or get gain, or heap to ourselves honor!” Man seeks himself, still, and this is the root of man’s sin. He cannot believe that if he would find himself he must not seek himself. He cannot believe the Savior’s testimony that he that would save his life must be content to lose it—that in looking after God and denying self we follow the highest and surest road to promote our own happiness.

No, the sinner resolves to serve self, first, and then, perhaps, he will condescend, even, to follow God Himself out of self-love and be religious and devout and worship God after his fashion in order to save himself, still seeking self even at the foot of the Throne of God! Well, dear Friend, if you, this morning, have not been taught that you must live unto God and not to self. If you are still following out your own ends and aims, and if the main object of your life is to acquire wealth or to get position, or to live in comfort, or to indulge your passions—then depend upon it, you are treading in the old way which wicked men have trod—and as it has always ended in disappointment, so will it with you! The apple stolen out of God’s garden has turned to ashes in the hand! The Abimelech of self has become a tyrant! Fire has come forth from the bramble which men have made a king and their cedars have been burned! Be wise, I pray you, and forsake the road which leads to misery!

The old way, in the third place, was a way of pride. Our mother, Eve, rebelled against God because she thought she knew better than God did. She would be as a God—that was her ambition and the same thought had entered into her husband’s mind. He was not content to be what his Maker would have him. He would, if he could, leap into the very Throne of Deity and put upon his own head the diadem of universal dominion! An ambitious pride led them both astray and this, I fear, is the road in which many are constantly treading. Content to be as nothing before God, no, they will not—they boast that they are something and they lift up their heads and claim dignity and ask for respect.

Lie at the feet of Jesus Christ and receive salvation as a gift of mercy, pure mercy? No, that they will not—they talk of merits, prayers, tears! They will, if they can, find something of their own in which to trust. They wrap their miserable rags about them and claim that they are welldressed, and being fascinated by self-deceit, they imagine that they are rich and increased in goods when they are naked and poor and miserable!

This old way which wicked men have trod is still frequented by the mass of those who hear the Gospel, but who reject it, to their own confusion. O you who are pilgrims in it, remember Pharaoh and how the Lord crushed the pride of that haughty monarch! Remember He has always cut down the lofty trees and leveled towering hills, and it is His sworn purpose to stain the pride of all glory and to bring into contempt all the excellency of earth. Tarry awhile, O pilgrim of pride, and humble yourself in dust and ashes that you may be exalted by the hand of God!

Hoping that each one before me is undergoing the process of selfexamination, I would further remark that the old way which wicked men have trod is a way of self-righteousness. Cain, especially, trod that road. He was not an outwardly irreligious man, but quite the reverse. Inasmuch as a sacrifice must be brought, he will bring an offering on his own account. If Abel kneels by the altar, Cain will kneel by the altar, also. It was respectable and reputable in that age to pay deference to the unseen God—Cain therefore does the same. But mark where the flaw was in his religion!

Abel brought a bloody sacrifice, a lamb, indicating his faith in the great atoning sacrifice which was to be offered in the end of the world in the Person of the Lamb of God, Christ Jesus. But Cain presented an unbloody offering of the fruits of the earth, the products of his own toil. And he thought himself as good as Abel, perhaps better. When the Lord did not accept his service, the envious heart of the self-righteous man boiled over with indignation and he became a persecutor, yes, a murderer. None are so bitter as the self-righteous. None so cruelly persecute the righteous as those who think themselves righteous and are not.

It was because Saul of Tarsus boasted in a fancied righteousness of his own that he breathed out threats against those who found their righteousness alone in Christ. The old way of self-righteousness, then, was trod by the feet of the first murderer and it is trod still by tens of thousands of men. Ah, your Church attendance and your Chapel attendance, your receiving of the sacrament, your Baptism, your confirmation, your ceremonies of all sorts and kinds, your gifts to the poor, your contributions to charities, your amiable speeches and your repetitions of your liturgies, or of your extemporaneous prayers—these, all put together, are rested on as the rock of your salvation!

Beware, I entreat you, for this is the old way of the Pharisee when he thanked God that he was not as other men! It is the old way of universal human nature which evermore goes about to establish its own righteousness and will not submit itself to the righteousness of Christ! As surely as the Pharisees were condemned as a generation of vipers and could not escape the damnation of Hell, so surely every one of us, if we set up our righteousness in the place of Christ’s righteousness, will meet with condemnation and will be overthrown by God’s sudden wrath! Mark that old way and I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, flee from it! By God’s Grace, flee from it now!

The old way which wicked men have trod was, in the next place, a way of unbelief. Noah was sent to tell those ancient sinners that the world would be destroyed by a flood. They thought him an old dotard and mocked him to scorn. For 120 years that “preacher of righteousness” continually lifted up his warning voice. He threatened that the world would certainly be deluged and the ungodly sons of men would surely be swept away. He pointed to the ark of safety which he was building in testimony against them and besought them to humble themselves and break off their sins by righteousness—but they would not believe the Prophet, preacher of righteousness though he was—they turned his most earnest words into jests and his tender invitations were made the subject of their scorn.

This was the old way and the old way has not lost its pilgrims. In different forms and different ways, the atheism of the human heart still continues to discover itself, yes, and discover itself in Christian congregations. You that are unconverted surely do not believe that you will be condemned by the righteous justice of God, or you would not be so much at ease. If you solemnly believed in the justice of God, you would not dare to bring it down upon your heads! If you really and in very truth believed in the great assize and in the Judge of all, you would not spend your lives in violation of the Law and in bringing upon yourself the penalty!

Oh, if you believed that there is a Hell for such as die out of Christ, you would be afraid to remain out of Christ another day! You would seek your chambers, fall upon your knees and cry to God in mercy that He would now accept you and let you now be reconciled to Him through His blood. Alas, you hear of God’s anger and you profess to believe in it, but you act like infidels and as you act, so you are! This old way of disbelief has always ended in confusion, for the Flood did come and their disbelief could not arrest its rising. The angry waters burst out from their lairs like beasts of prey, hungry for human life and the rebellious race was utterly destroyed! Even thus most surely shall the vengeance of God overtake us, whether we believe it or not, unless we fly to Christ, the Ark, and are housed in Him from the coming tempest.

I will not detain you much longer over this very terrible story, but the old way which wicked men have trod is a way of worldliness and carelessness and procrastination. What did those men do before the Flood? They married and were given in marriage till the Flood came and swept them all away. If any of them believed in Noah, they, at any rate said, “We will wait a little longer, there will be time for us to escape from the threatened flood when the first appearance of the descending rains and the heaving up of fountains shall be visible to us.” The whole world seems to have been making festival on that black day that closed the years of mercy. Never did the joy-bells ring more sweetly. Never was the marriage dance more merry. Never did eyes of love speak to loved eyes more than when the first booming of the terrible battle were heard afar off and Jehovah came forth to vengeance, dressed like a man of war, resolved to ease Him of His adversaries!

Are there not some of you treading in this old way of worldliness, dear Hearers, this very morning? Perhaps you are professors of religion and yet treading in this way. I mentioned the sons of God just now who are said by Moses to have looked upon the daughters of men and formed alliances with them. Perhaps you may be contemplating the same act and when the flood comes your profession will be no refuge to you, but you shall be swept away with the rest. Alas, this is the world’s great catechism, “What shall we eat and what shall we drink and with what shall we be clothed?” And this is the world’s trinity in unity, “The lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh and the pride of life.” And this is the course of this world—ever does it seek after its own gain and its own pleasure, saying to more solemn and serious things—“When I have a more convenient season I will send for you.”

Though the King of Heaven has spread a banquet, yet men make light of it! Though He has killed His oxen and His fatlings, they go their way, every man, to his farm and to his merchandise and so will they do till—

*“God’s right arm is bared for war,*

*And thunder clothes His cloudy car.”*  
Where shall the ungodly fly in that tremendous day? They have chosen this old way and have walked in it, but how will they escape Him when His flood shall sweep them away? Eliphaz says, “Have you marked the way?” I want you to stop a little while and look at that road, again, and mark it anew. The first thing I observe, as I look at it, is that it is a very broad way. Our Savior’s words are most true, “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction and many there are which go in there.”

The road of sin is so wide that it has room for rebels, for selfish sinners, for proud sinners, for professors of religion, for infidels, for the worldly and for the hypocrite. Those who tread the narrow way must all go in at one gate. They must all partake of one washing in the Savior’s blood. They must all be renewed by one Holy Spirit. They must walk in one command. But as for the ungodly, they may follow—

*“Each a different way*

*Though all the downward road.”*  
The road is so wide that there may be many independent tracks in it and the drunkard may find his way along it without ever ruffling the complacency of the hypocrite. The mere moralist may pick a clean path all the way, while the immoral wretch may wade up to his knees in mire throughout the whole road.  
Behold how sinners disagree and yet agree! How the Sadducee and the

Pharisee are opposed to each other in most respects and yet agree in this—that they are opposed to God! It is a broad road. Observe that it is a very popular road. The way downward to destruction is a very fashionable one and it always will be. To follow God and to be right has always been a thing espoused by the minority. Holy Richard Baxter says that, when a child, he marveled that if he ever met with a man who was much more holy than other men—spoke more of Christ, was more prayerful, was more scrupulous in business—he was always the man of whom the neighbors spoke worst! And he wondered more, as he read history, that the children of God always were the nicknamed ones, the persecuted ones, the despised ones—until he began to understand that text of Scripture, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her Seed.”

It must be so! The people of God must expect to go against the stream, as the living fish always do. They must stem the torrent of custom and of fashion. But if you want to follow the old way which wicked men have trod, you will find plenty of companions and everyone will give you good cheer. It is a very easy way, too. You need not trouble yourself about finding the entrance into it, you can find it in the dark! And the path is so exceedingly smooth that you need not exert yourself much to make great progress in it.

If you desire to go to Heaven and you ask me what is to be done, why, I am earnest to inform you rightly. But if you ask me what you are to do to be damned, well, nothing at all, it is only a little matter of neglect. “How shall we escape,” says the Apostle, “if we neglect so great a salvation?” Leave your boat alone, slip the oars, just sit still and fold your arms and she will descend to the rapids swiftly enough. The way to total destruction is most easy! But ah, if you would escape, Divine Grace must make you work out your own salvation! You must trust in Jesus and by His Grace tug at the oars like a man, for if the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the wicked appear?

This old way, if you look at it, is the way in which all men naturally run. I called it a popular road and a crowded road, but, indeed, it is the road of universal human nature! Only put a child on his feet and leave him alone, and his first footsteps are towards this broad way. He will need no teaching. You shall have no difficulties in training him. He will find out the evil path and he will run in it. Yes, and will delight in it—and unless the Grace of God shall turn him, he will continue in it even when he leans upon his staff. And when his hair grows gray he will still persevere in the old way which wicked men have trod.

For all that, it is a most unsatisfactory road. Dangerous, I should think, it must clearly be seen to be, even by those who think the least of it. Since you set out on it, my Brother, how many have perished from the way? Look back, I pray you, upon your companions—where are they now? They have gone to the place appointed for all living, one by one, and I will ask you, now, what testimony have they left behind as to the way? When I speak of the pathway to the skies, I can recount a thousand testimonies of dying Christians who have all spoken well of the ways of God. Their unanimous testimony, borne, mark you, in the light of another world where hypocrisy will be impossible—the unanimous testimony has been, that her, “ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.”

But who ever heard of the testimony of an ungodly man, when dying, to the sweetness of sin and to the excellence of unholiness? Why, I think I might stake the whole matter upon the testimony of such a one as Byron, a man of gigantic genius, having an experience of the widest kind, who had drunk of the bowl of pleasure and of fame to its very dregs. His testimony put into other words is precisely that of Solomon—“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” He became an unhappy man, wearied of life and died disgusted with all that he had seen. Better far for him had he lived the most obscure Believer in Christ, who, dying, could have exclaimed, “I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, therefore there is laid up for me a crown of life that fades not away.” Let the testimonies, then, of those who have trod this road and found it out to be so poor a one, convince you that it is dangerous for you to tread it, for all along the route you meet with nothing but disappointments. If you wish to spend your money for that which is bread and your labor for that which truly profits, you will leave this tempting but deceptive pathway and fly to another road in which you shall have present comfort and everlasting felicity.

One thing more I want you to notice before I take you away from this old way which wicked men have trod, and it is this, that across it here and there Divine mercy has set bars. Along the road of sin men dash with increasing rapidity every year. It is marvelous the rate at which wickedness will travel when it has once overcomes all the drags and brakes of common sense and of respect to one’s fellows. The course of sin is downhill and the rate of sinning is every day accelerated. Across the first part of the ungodly man’s course, God has been pleased to place many chains and bars and barricades—and one of those, though it may be but a frail one—is to you, dear Hearer, the subject of this morning.

You were led here that I might say to you as solemnly as I can, if you are selfish, if you are proud, if you are self-righteous, if you are indulging the lusts of your flesh, you are on the old way which wicked men have trod and, for your own sake, stop! The Angel of Mercy stands before you, now, and bids you tarry. Why will you die? Why will you choose a path that even now gives you no rest? Why select a way which hereafter shall fill you with eternal misery? O tarry awhile and ask yourself whether it is well to fling away your everlasting hope and ruin yourself for present willfulness! O pause awhile!

That dead child at home lies in your pathway like the dead Amasa, who, as he lay decaying in his blood, made an army pause. That sickness of yours from which you have just recovered. That loss of property which has made you so sorrowful. That dire affliction which you see in a beloved wife—all these are bars and chains—will you leap over them—will you go steeple-chase to Hell? Oh, sorry exertion for so miserable an end! No, but let Mercy arrest you. God’s hand is put upon the bridle now—He reins up your horse. He thrusts back the steed upon its haunches—will you heed your Maker? Will you let your conscience listen to His voice? Stay on the plains of mercy! If you break through this warning, you may have another and another, but the further the road is traveled the fewer the barricades and the impediments become—till the last part of that tremendous road which leads down to death is all smooth as glass and a soul may take a dreadful slide—as down the steep sides of an Alpine mountain and so glide into Hell without the soul being disturbed.

The Lord may give you up and then, like the train of which we read the other day in the newspapers, when the engine had become overpowered by the weight and the brakes were of no further use, the whole will run down the tremendous decline to destruction. God permits the last end of many men to be just such an awful descent. Oh, for God’s sake, put the breaks on this morning! For Christ’s sake, I pray you, seek to arrest the growing force of your lusts—its growing tendency towards evil—and may His Spirit make use of the words which the text has suggested to us, to come to a dead halt, and to be saved by faith in Jesus!

II. We come now to say a little concerning THE END—“Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was swept away with a flood.” The end of these ancient travelers was that the Flood came and swept them all away. It is a parallel case to the end of all ungodly men. I do not intend, however, to detain you long upon the horrible subject, but only to utter these few words. The end of these travelers was not according to their unbelief, but according to the despised Truth of God. They would not believe Noah, but the Flood came. You may reject the testimony of God’s Bible. You may despise the daily warnings of God’s ministers, but the result will be as we have said.

God is bound to make true His threats as well as His promises. His people bear witness that He has never lied to them in a single gracious Word and you may be sure He will never lie to you if you persevere in your sin—every single threatening Word will be fulfilled. He is very loath to punish, but He will do it. He will unsheathe His heavenly sword, and He will strike and none shall stand against the stroke. God did not fail at the end of the 120 years to visit the guilty world, and He will not fail, when your iniquities are full, to visit you. If your ears refuse the language of His Grace, as surely as there is a God in Heaven, you shall be made to feel the power of His vengeance.

Those who will not be covered by the wings of Mercy, as a hen covers her chicks, shall see Justice darting upon them as with the wings of an eagle. Power reigned in the world’s creation—Providence reigns in the world’s preservation. Mercy reigned in its redemption, but Justice will reign in its condemnation. Remember this, then, unbelief will not, laugh as it may, remove one jot of the penalty! The Flood, like the destroying fire which will come upon ungodly men, was total in its destructiveness. It did not sweep away some of them, but all, and the punishments of God will not be to a few rebels, but to all. It will find out the rich in their palaces, as well as the poor in their hovels. The sword of Vengeance will not be bribed, neither will it be made quiet by prayers and entreaties—when it is once drawn out of the scabbard of Mercy—it shall find out the sinner, even though he seeks sanctuary in the Church of God and lays hold on the horns of the altar of profession.

He that is not washed in Jesus’ blood and covered with His righteousness, shall find the overthrow of God to make no exceptions. It will be an overthrow of the most awful kind. What a sight the angels must have seen as they saw the miserable men and women of that old world fleeing to the hills and to the mountains and to the tops of the craggy rocks to escape, if possible, the ever-advancing Flood! I shall not try to make your ears listen to their cries and their imprecations. Oh, will it ever be your fate, thus hopelessly, to fear the floodgates of Divine Vengeance drawn up and the wrath of God, like flaming fire, let loose upon you and your fellow sinners?

Moreover, it was a final overthrow. None out of the ark outlived the Flood. They perished, every one of them. So shall it be when the wrath of God comes—it shall be eternal destruction from the Glory of the Lord and from the presence of His power. There is no hope for those with whom God deals in justice—no expectation—no, not a ray of expectancy can ever reach the gloomy chambers of their despair. Their death-knell is tolled. Their prison is fastened forever. God has turned the key in the lock and hurled that key into the abyss where even He will never find it to unlock and to unloose. The fetters of the damned are everlasting! The fires that burn about them never can be quenched and their worm shall never die!

O that men would take heed of this and not wantonly incur that tremendous wrath of which the Scripture, if it speaks but sparingly, yet speaks most solemnly! I am not of those who delight to dwell upon this subject. I have accused myself, sometimes, that I have so seldom spoken of the terrors of the Law, that I have not entered into details with regard to the wrath to come and the judgments that await the wicked. O let me urge you not to tempt the mercy of God, nor provoke His wrath lest you should know in your own experience with a bitter and fearful knowledge far more than I either care to say to you this morning, or could say if I cared! Consider the old way which wicked men have trod and how they were swept away with the devouring Flood.

The text gives us two pictures and these two may suffice to bring out the meaning of Eliphaz. First, he says, they were “cut down out of time.” The representation here is that of a tree with abundant foliage and widespreading boughs, to which the woodsman comes. He feels his axe—it is sharp and ready—and he gives blow after blow till the tree begins to shake and quiver. And at last, leaning to the side to which it must fall, with a tremendous crash it falls headlong on the turf. Such is the sinner in his prosperity, spreading himself like a green bay tree—birds of song are among his branches and his fruit is fair to look upon. But the axe of Death is near and where the tree falls there it must forever lie. Fixed is its everlasting state. The crash which we hear in this world as the sinner dies does but foretell to us his perpetual doom.

The other picture of the text is that of a building which is utterly swept away. Here I would have you notice that Eliphaz does not say that the Flood came and swept away the building of the wicked, but swept away their very foundations! If in the next world the sinner only lost his wealth or his health, or his outward comforts of this life, it would be subject for serious reflection. But when it comes to this—that he loses his soul, his very self. When not the comfort of life, but life itself is lost—not the comforts of the mind, but the mind itself—oh, then it becomes a thing to consider with all one’s reason and with something more of the enlightenment which God’s Spirit can add to our reason!

O that we would but be wise and think of this! May God grant that we may not run the risks of having the foundation of our hope, our comfort, our very joy torn up by an overwhelming torrent and swept away, every stone of it, while we poor fools who built on sand shall wring our hands with anguish to think that we would not take the warning and build on the Rock while we might have done so!

III. And now our last word is THE WARNING of the text. And its warning seems to me to be summed up in the enquiry of everyone of us, “Am I, or am I not, treading in that broad way?” I would not like a hearer to go out of this place, this morning, without my having accosted him personally, as best I may while standing here and put to him the question, Are you treading in the old way which wicked men have trod?

“Ah,” says one, “I do not know.” Do you want to know? I will help you to answer it. Are you traveling in the narrow way in which Believers in Christ are walking? “I cannot say that,” you say. Well, then, I can tell you without hesitation that you are treading in the broad way, for there are but two ways—the one the way of mercy that leads upward to the chambers of peace—and the other the way of sin that leads down to the gates of Hell. Be not deceived, there are no neutrals here! Christ’s word is, “He that is not with Me, is against Me. And he that gathers not with Me, scatters abroad.”

Do you say, “I take no part in this quarrel. I am not for God and I am not against Him”? No, then, out of your own mouth are you condemned! If you are not for God, who made you, then you have thrown off your allegiance and denied the rights of God to possess the creature which He Himself has formed! You are in the wide and broad way. The Lord help you! But if you cannot answer the question, I will help you in another way. Friend, did you ever experience a great change? Are you a new man? If not, you are in the old way, for the way of nature for every one of us is the old way and none ever runs in the way of righteousness but such as are renewed by the interposition of the Holy Spirit.

“You must be born again.” “Except a man be born again from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “That which is born of the flesh is flesh. And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Do I hear one say, “Then I trust I am changed. I trust I have come into the narrow way”? Brother, bless God for it this morning! Hang your head in shame to think you have been in the broad road, but bless the Grace which has taken you from it! And be sure to prove your gratitude by trying to rescue others! This very day, as much as lies in you, tell the Gospel of your salvation, that it may be the Gospel of their salvation, too. Have you bread to eat while others starve? Eat not your morsel alone. Have you light while others are in the dark? Lend them your candle—you shall see all the better for the loan. God help you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to prove by your life to others that you love God because you love your brother also.

As for you who confessedly are in the old way, would you turn, would you leave it? Then the turning point is at yonder Cross where Jesus hangs a bleeding Sacrifice for the sons of men. Stop there, stay there! Look up and count the purple drops which flow from His dear hands and feet and side! And if the Holy Spirit shall help you to say, “Jesus, accept me, wash me from my sin and take me to be Your servant and lead me in a right way, even the way everlasting,” then it is done and this very day you may go your way rejoicing! The turning point is not a thing of months, weeks, and years, but rather of seconds when the Grace of God comes to work with man!

My prayer is that some who came in here today the slaves of Satan, may go out the Lord’s free men and that pilgrims in the way to ruin may become travelers on the road to Heaven and to God be the glory! Amen.

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Peter 3.*  
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÷Job 22.26

DELIGHT IN THE ALMIGHTY

NO. 1839

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 3, 1885, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For then shall you have your delight in the Almighty, and shall lift up your face unto God.”  
Job 22:26.**

THE Lord said to Eliphaz and his friends, “you have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has.” And, therefore, we must always regard what they said with careful discrimination. They were wise men according to their light, but they were quite at sea in their judgment of Job. However, in this particular verse, Eliphaz declared that which is taught in many other parts of Holy Scripture and we may profit by his utterance. God grant that by His Spirit we may fully experience the joys described in the words before us.

Eliphaz and his friends had judged Job from their own point of view, making their own experience to be the standard. They, themselves, had prospered and, therefore, they inferred that if a man served God, he must necessarily prosper in worldly things—and that if he did not succeed as they had done, he must have been guilty of great crimes. Though they could not discover any actual fault in Job, they concluded, without further evidence, that he must have been a hypocrite and have acted oppressively to his servants, or have been unmindful of the claims of the poor, or in some other way have brought upon himself the wrath of God. It never entered their mind that so terrible a sickness and such a list of dreadful calamities could have befallen any man except as a punishment for special sin. They inferred virtue from prosperity, and sin from adversity. Unrighteous and cruel logic! At once false and brutal! It renders men at once false witnesses and Pharisees, condemning the innocent because of their sorrows, and flattering themselves because of their ease.

To judge according to outward circumstances has been the tendency of men in all times—even David could not understand how it was that the wicked were so free from troubles while all day long he was, himself, plagued and chastened every morning. A right principle lay at the bottom of this wonder for, indeed, the Lord will reward the good and will punish the wicked, but a great mistake is made when we suppose that this life is the time for meting out rewards and punishments. God will, undoubtedly, when the time shall have fully come, discharge the full vials of His wrath upon the ungodly, but the present is a period of long-suffering, where the wicked spread themselves like a green bay tree. Unless God’s mercy shall lead them to repentance, they are in the same wretched condition as bullocks which are being fattened for the slaughter! Who envies them? Many of the ungodly have their portion in this life—they increase in riches— their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than heart can wish.

As for the children of God, it often happens that gall and wormwood are mingled with their drink—waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. We must not judge according to the sight of the eyes, or according to present conditions, or we shall make gross mistakes. The richest may be the most wicked and the poorest may be the most gracious. Those who suffer least may deserve to suffer most and those who are most afflicted in this life may have the highest glory in the life to come.

I suspect that Eliphaz and his friends had enjoyed smooth sailing. How could they judge the man who had done business amid tempests? Their mental life was not disturbed by great conflicts. They had not gone deeply into things, nor searched to the bottom of spiritual matters—they had no knowledge of their own hidden corruptions and had endured but little of the rod of chastisement and, consequently, they had been at ease. Their mistake was that they sat in judgment upon another who was more tried than themselves—and condemned him for being in sore distress. Their own serenity led them to judge the troubled one very harshly. This ought not to be. If any of us are inclined, thus, to judge and condemn, it is time that we put this mischievous spirit far from us. If we judge others, others will judge us. Two can always play at that evil game!

I remember a company of terribly despondent Believers who were, for years, a severe scourge to their happier Brethren. Having a deep sense of their inward corruptions, being sorely tempted of the devil and having only a weak and trembling faith, they tyrannized over others who were more happy than themselves. They judged that those who were not as much tempted as themselves did not exhibit the spot of God’s children. None were more bitter than these humble people in denouncing those who had not been as much humbled as themselves. Those who did not sit in the dust and groan to the same tunes as themselves, they judged to be very dubious Christians—and took care to scald them with that kind of hot pity which is not much different from contempt! This was as wrong as wrong can be. It is not to be endured that the sick should make themselves the standard of health; that dwarfs should set up to be the models of manhood! These worthy people set up a standard marked in very black ink and those who did not come up to so much grief and so much unbelief, they set aside as very questionable members of the Divine family.

This is manifestly vicious, but it is equally evil when judgments are pronounced from the other side. For persons in good health, whose livers act well, who have abundance of this world’s good and very little care and trial—who have not often had to stand by the grave and weep because the arrows of death have struck their dearest ones, who have never known what it is to be wounded in spirit—for these to set up their standard and condemn the weak and the sad, is a crime against the Lord! To say, “If you do not believe as firmly as we do. If you do not rejoice as we do; if you are not as sensible of sanctification as we are—you are not in Christ at all,” is a piece of arrogance very grievous to the Spirit of the Lord.

Oh, my strong Brother, listen to one who knows by experience the heaviness of a child of sorrow! Who made you a ruler in Israel? God’s children always play the fool when they play the judge—they are never in order when they act as if they were the head of the family of Grace. The Father knows all His children. All who observe carefully will also know that while some are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, others are weak in faith and mere babes in Grace. These little ones are not one jot the less precious in the sight of the great Father than the more fully grown ones! Let none of the strong cattle push the weak cattle with horn and with shoulder, for when the weak ones complain unto God, He will regard them and will avenge them upon the proud. If you are strong, God keep you so, and make you stronger—but use not your strength for treading down the weak! If you are weak, the Lord strengthen you, and deliver you from this malady, but do not envy the strong and begin to speak lightly of those who excel you. The more of light, the more of joy, the more of holy confidence, the more of faith—the more glory to God— therefore covet these things earnestly as among the best gifts. May the Holy Spirit help us to attain the highest degree of Grace, but may He always prevent us from judging our Brethren! Here was the fault of Eliphaz. He was right in many of his statements, but he was wrong in his ungenerous application of them to holy Job.

I want, this morning, as God shall help me, to lead you up to the pastures on the hilltops. I pray that I may help you to a higher and joyful experience in the things of God, while I shall speak, first, of a desired position towards God—“Then shall you have your delight in the Almighty, and shall lift up your face unto God.” And secondly, upon the question—when can this happy experience be realized? “Then,” says the text and, therefore, there is such a time when we can have delight in the Almighty and lift up our face unto God.

I. First, here IS A DESIRED POSITION TOWARDS GOD.  
Many men forget God—He is no object of delight to them, for they ignore His existence and they would even think it a great relief if it could be proven that there were no God—no God to observe them, no God to record their misdeeds, no God to call them to judgment, no God to punish them for their iniquities. Let us pity the multitudes who claim to be happy without God, for it is the extreme of depravity when, blotting out God from his soul, a man obtains a wretched comfort as the consequence of his folly. To be without God is to be without rest in the present and without hope for the future.  
Great numbers of men go a stage further—they believe in God, they cannot doubt that there is a Most High God who judges the children of men— but their only thought towards Him is that of dread and dislike. They do not want to hear of Him! If the things of God are forced upon their attention, they are soon weary of such distasteful themes, for they only look upon God as a just and terrible Judge who will certainly punish them for their transgressions. It is woe to them even to think of the great God. Though this dread of God and this neglect of God cannot deliver them out of His hands, yet they find a kind of comfort in it. As we are told of the ostrich, (I know not whether it is true or not), that when it cannot escape the hunter, it buries its head in the sand so as not to see its pursuer—so these foolish persons blind their own eyes and thus produce a foolish security of heart! They think of God with dread, dismay, despondency and despair.  
I am grieved to add that this principle even tinctures the thoughts of true friends of God, for when they bow before God it is not only with the reverence of a loving child, but with the terror of a slave! They are afraid of Him who should be their exceeding joy. Their view of God is incorrect, for it is not such as the Spirit of Adoption would give them. They are really trusting in Him and in the great Propitiation which He has set forth, but they have not come to know Him under that blessed term which our Savior puts into our mouth when He bids us say, “Our Father, which are in Heaven.” Such trembling ones are still under the spirit of bondage which causes them to fear, as condemned persons dread the executioner. They stand like Israel trembling at the foot of Sinai—they have not come unto Mount Zion and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel. God is still, to them, exceedingly terrible, so that they fear and quake. Even though they are His children, they are not able to lift up their faces unto their own Father. They haunt the outer courts of the sanctuary, but into the Most Holy Place they do not dare to enter—they see the smoke of the burnt offering, but they have not learned to feed upon it and so to have happy communion with God. These people may be safe, but they are not happy! They may be saved from sin, but not from sorrow! Faith, if it were stronger, would, effectually slay and bury servile fear.  
Let us meditate upon what is here meant by delighting in the Almighty. The man who experiences this delight is glad that there is a God. That atheistic philosophy which makes the whole world to be a chance production which grew of itself, or developed itself by some innate force, is a very dreary piece of fiction to the man who delights himself in the Almighty. I tremble at any teaching, religious or scientific, which seems to place God further off than we have believed Him to be. To draw Him nearer to me and, myself nearer to Him, is the innermost longing of my soul! Do you not feel the same? I know you do if you have a child-like spirit towards Him. We delight to see God in the shadow of every passing cloud, in the coloring of every opening flower, in the glitter of every dewdrop, in the twinkle of every star! The Lord is personally at work in all the processes of Nature and natural laws are simply the Lord’s usual method of operation. Our God is so near us that in Him we live and move and have our being! At this spring tide, in the fragrance of the flowers and the song of birds, we perceive God everywhere present, renewing the face of the year. Beloved, the thought of God is to the souls of those who know and love Him the most delightful that can cross the mind! To put God away from us is injury to our happiness, as well as treason to our duty—but to get nearer and clearer views of His Omnipresence, His Omniscience, His Omnipotence, is to increase the joy of our heart.  
To go a step further, the delight of the Believer in his God is a delight in God as He really is, for there are, in the world, many false gods of men’s own imagination. Remember that your own thoughts of what God is are far from being correct unless they are drawn from His own Revelation. This sacred Book is infallible, but not our thoughts—and where we differ from God as He has revealed Himself, we differ from the Truth of God. It is as easy to make an idol out of your own thought as it is for the Hindu to make a god of the mud of the Ganges. There is but one God revealed in Holy Scripture, in Nature and in Providence—His name is Jehovah—the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob and who has still further declared Himself as the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! He is God in undivided unity of Essence, in the trinity of His Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
With all our souls we worship and adore Him! Just as God appears in Holy Scripture, we are to delight in Him, regarding Him as love, as mercy, as long-suffering, as justice, as power, as purity, as all goodness and greatness in one! The characteristic which seems to cause most delight to perfect saints in Heaven is not love, alone, nor mercy, alone, but that which comprehends Grace and mercy, and much more—I mean holiness. This is the perpetual cry of the seraphim, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.” The holiness of God, or, if you will, the wholeness of God, the completeness of God, the perfection of God is the delight of all Believers. We would not tone down a single attribute. We would not disturb the equilibrium of the Divine perfections, but we delight in God in all those aspects of His Character which are mentioned in His Holy Word.  
Further, he that delights in God delights not only in God as He is, but in all that God does—and this is a higher attainment than some have reached. “It is the Lord,” said one of old, “let Him do what seems good to Him.” Too many would call God to their bar and hold a trial upon what He does with men in this life, and with the wicked in the world to come. Far other was the spirit of the Apostle when he said, “No, but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have You made me thus?” Concerning any event we simply ask—Has God done it? Then we bow before His decree and say no more, for what He has done must be right and wise. When the Lord afflicts us and hides the reason from our eyes, let us not contend with Him. And if we cannot go further, let us be silent before Him, even as was the afflicted man of God of whom we read, “Aaron held his peace.” Better, still, will it be if we can complete our confidence and say with Job, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.” He that delights in the Almighty will delight in Him even though he smarts beneath His hand, and will bless Him even when His dispensations are killing ones—as said the Patriarch of Uz, “though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”  
Practically put, this delight in the Almighty shows itself in the Christian when nothing else remains to him. If he is stripped of everything, he cries, “The Lord is my portion!” When the cupboard is bare and the garments are worn out—and poverty stares the man in the face—he says, “My God is such a satisfactory and all-sufficient portion that I am rich and increased in goods while possessing nothing but my God.” The same is true when such a man is surrounded with every earthly comfort, for he still feels, “The Lord is my portion.” The saint begs vehemently of his God that he may not have his portion in this life. If God were to multiply his stores beyond his power to count them, he would be dissatisfied unless in all these he saw his Father’s covenant love. One saint, who suddenly became poor, was still as happy as ever, for he said, “When I had abundance, I saw God in all things and now that I have lost my property I see all things in God.” These are equally blessed states of mind!  
It were well to combine them and see God in all things, and all things in God at the same time! So it should be with the Believer. “Why,” he says, “these earthly comforts never were my delights—these were not my daily manna, but only little snacks for the time—sips of sweetness while I pass through the barren wilderness.” The Lord was and is my chief portion, my well of comfort, the rock of my salvation. If we make props of our outward joys, we shall fall when they are taken away, but it we rest wholly upon the foundation of Divine Love, altogether apart from external things, we shall never be moved. Happy is the Christian who can practically enjoy delight in the Almighty by making Him to be his All in All—all the day and every day!  
You will see this delight in God exhibiting itself in frequent meditations upon God. Such a man has pleasure in being alone with God and his sweetest occupation is meditation upon the years of the right hand of the Most High. He finds, in holy contemplation, pastures large and green in which his soul does feed and lie down—  
*“My God, You are mine, what a comfort Divine! What a blessing to know my Jesus is mine.”*These happy meditations very soon show themselves in words. The man that delights in the Almighty delights to speak about Him. That which is in the well will, before long, come up in the bucket—and that which is in the heart will soon display itself in the tongue. Is there any conversation more elevating, more consoling, more strengthening than conversation about the Lord our God? And when you go home from such society, do you not feel it sweet to fall asleep with the savor of it upon your lips? Is not holy converse infinitely better than all the mirth and merriment of the world’s amusements? Here is something to feed upon, something solid, something real—saints delight to contribute to such conversation and to receive instruction from it.  
“Delight yourself in the Lord.” This will give you pleasure in the midst of pain. Do you know what it is to have many aches, sufferings and, perhaps, a throbbing head—and yet to feel that you have another self which has no pain because it dwells in God, where all is calm and quiet? You felt that it would be a great mercy to be released from this painful life and yet you have not raised the question with your God, but have waited His good pleasure. Faith has made you feel, “wherever I am, whatever I feel, so long as God is near me and His sweet love fills my bosom, I will greatly rejoice and triumph in the God of my salvation.”  
This will show itself in your life, for it will be a pleasure to do anything to exalt the name of God. It will gild your ordinary conversation with heavenly splendor if, in it, you adorn the doctrine of God your Savior in all things. You will march to Heaven beneath the spell of celestial music and the bliss of the glorified will stimulate your spirits when you can feel that all is for God, and that God is All in All to you. This is to delight yourself in the Almighty. God give us to get into that state and to stay there till we leap to Heaven and are in that state!  
I call your attention to the special name by which Eliphaz describes the ever-blessed God. He says, “Delight yourself in the Almighty.” Is it not singular that he should choose a term descriptive of Omnipotence as the paramount cause of the Believer’s delight? God is Love and I can readily understand how one might delight himself in God under that aspect. But the Believer is taught to delight himself in God as strong and mighty. What a mercy it is that there is a power that makes for righteousness!— that at the back of all these wars and confusions and behind all sin and false doctrine—there is an infinitely powerful God! During the last few weeks you have felt an intense joy in the Omnipotence of God. You have whispered to your forebodings—“It is all right. The Almighty is not paralyzed, His arm is not shortened: the Lord reigns.” Brothers and Sisters, the pendulum swings to and fro, advancing and retreating, but yet there is a real progress made—you cannot see it by watching the pendulum, but up higher on the face of the clock there is evidence of an onward march and of a coming hour!  
The Kingdom of God is coming—righteousness shall prevail! Delight, also, in the fact that Jehovah is almighty in mercy—mighty to save. He can forgive the greatest sin. He can change the hardest heart. He can help us to fight out unto victory the sternest of our battles against unrighteousness! He is stronger than sin and Satan, for all power dwells with Him. When you look at this phase of it and think of His dear Son exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins, you may, indeed, delight in the Almighty Redeemer, as “able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” Surely, when you see Omnipotence linked with righteousness and mercy, you will delight yourself in the Almighty!  
Think, also, of the Lord’s almightiness in the matter of the keeping, preserving, defending and perfecting of all His people. The sheep of His pasture shall not perish, for the Good Shepherd is Omnipotent to smite the roaring lion who would devour them. None that trust in Him shall ever be ashamed or confounded, world without end. All the elect are well secured within the fold of Jesus, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. Delight yourselves in the Almighty, for all the power of God is enlisted on the side of the Believer. To me, I confess, it is an intense joy that He is almighty to carry out every one of His eternal purposes. Jesus shall not fail nor be discouraged! That which Jehovah has willed shall be—in the unfolding of the great roll of history it shall be found that it tallies exactly with the Divine purposes and immutable decrees! He that sits on the flood reigns King forever and ever. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Let our hearts delight that the Lord God Omnipotent already reigns and let us pray that in yet, a further sense, His Kingdom may come, as come it will. Let us delight ourselves in the Almighty, linking that word to every other attribute and rejoicing that He has almighty love and Omnipotent Grace. Again, let us say “Hallelujah!”  
Now, let us turn with intense satisfaction to the other expression

used by Eliphaz—“You shall lift up your face unto God.” What does it mean? Does it not mean, first, joy in God? When a man hangs his head down, he is unhappy—it is the attitude of misery. But oh, when our thoughts of God are changed, and our relationship to God is different, we lift up our faces and sun our countenances in the light of God’s favor! The face of God in His Anointed is toward the Believer and, therefore, the Believer’s face is toward the Most High. He has said, “Seek you My face,” and how can we seek His face but with our own faces? “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,” is the Divine call—and the Believer looks to God with intense joy, knowing that in Him is his salvation!  
Does it not signify, also, that this man is reconciled to God and clear before Him? How can he, who is guilty, look up? Guilt makes a man hang his head. “Conscience makes cowards of us all.” But oh, my Brothers and Sisters, when the atoning Sacrifice has come with all its power to us— when we are washed in the blood of the Lamb and we are clean every whit—then we lift up our face unto God! In that tremendous day when Heaven and earth shall flee before the face of the Judge, we shall be bravely calm, fearing no word of doom because we are cleansed by the atoning Sacrifice, and justified by the righteousness in which we put our trust! What a blessed thing to lift up one’s face unto God in confidence towards Him through Christ Jesus!  
Does not our text indicate fearlessness? Fear covers her face and would gladly hide herself, altogether, even though to accomplish concealment, the rocks must fall upon her. That sacred bravery which the Holy Spirit breathes into the child of God makes him cry, “Abba, Father,” and, in the spirit of adoption, he lifts up his face unto God!  
May it not also signify expectation? “I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from where comes my help.” “My expectation is from Him,” says David. Oh, to lift one’s face toward God, looking for deliverance, safety and rest— and expecting both Grace and glory from His right hand!  
Brethren, I am talking very simply of things well known to me, and yet I cannot convey to you a sense of the joy of a face uplifted unto God. You must feel it for yourselves, by lifting up your own faces. Some of you poor creatures cannot lift up your faces unto God by reason of despondency, but we pray that you may yet do so. If you have ever looked unto the Lord through the glass of the Atonement, you will then be able to lift up your faces towards Him with a calm delight. As for you who are God’s own people and yet go through the world in bondage, I charge you, cry unto the Lord to change your condition and fill you with His joy—for then your faces will shine in the light of His face!  
I am sure that he who has this delight in God and this lifting up of the face towards God, is a man that has wonderful peace with regard to the past. The past is forgiven, its iniquity covered, for the Lord has looked in love upon him. The man who walks in happy communion with God has a wonderful peace with regard to the present. Is it well with you? “Exceedingly well! God loves me, and I love Him. I am brought into fellowship with Him by Christ Jesus, my Lord, and we are friends, with a friendship which is secured by mutual delight and sealed by Covenant engagements, so that it can never cease to be.”  
Such a man has peace with regard to the future. He has no fear of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. He is not afraid of coming dangers in life, nor of the pangs of death, nor the terrors of judgment. When you delight in the Lord, nothing can disturb the unbroken current of your joy! The sublime serenity of the heavens which arch above your head enters into your own spirit when the Lord, who made the heavens, dwells in your heart! Strive after this sacred peace! Delight in the Almighty and lift up your faces unto God.  
II. I must close by noticing our second point, and that is, WHEN CAN WE REALIZE THIS? I have not confidence enough in Eliphaz to make his answer to the question the only one that I shall give you. I must give you something fuller and better than was known to him.  
First, a man can realize all this when he knows that he is reconciled to God. What is God’s way of effecting reconciliation between a sinner and Himself? Every sinner is under the curse of the broken Law, for it is written, “Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them.” No one of us has continued in the perfect observance of the whole Law and, therefore, God’s righteous verdict is against us! The only way of escape from the curse is through the glorious Son of God who took our nature and was made a curse for us, as it is written, “Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.” He stood in our place, bore the punishment due to our guilt and thus became a curse on our behalf. All the sacrifices of the Jews were types of this—they were fingers of light pointing to the one, all-sufficient Sacrifice. That Sacrifice the Lord has accepted for men and He has set forth the Lord Jesus to be the Propitiation for our sins, and not for ours, only, but for the sins of the whole world, so that whoever believes in Jesus Christ, God’s appointed Sacrifice, is set free from sin. And being set free from sin, he can then delight in the Almighty and lift up his face unto God!  
Yet even this could not effect our delight in God unless there was something else. So there must be, in the next place, a renewed nature. Our old nature will never delight in God. The carnal mind is enmity against God! It is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can be. It is an alien from the life of God and an alien it will always be. So, then, you must be born again— and when a man is born again of the Spirit of God and receives a new nature—that new nature delights in the Almighty! There is an old nature in us which still fights against God, but the new nature, which is of Divine origin, cries after God as a child after its mother. It lives in God as fish live in the sea! God is its element, its life, its All in All. So, Beloved, if you have been both reconciled and renewed. If you have felt the power of the blood of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit begetting in you a new nature— then you can delight yourselves in God!  
In addition to this, you will delight in God much more fully when the Spirit bears witness with your spirit that you are born of God. The spirit of sonship is the spirit of delight in God. What son is afraid to behold his father’s face? A loving child suns himself in his father’s smile! How I have seen little children clambering up their father’s knees looking into his face and saying, “What a dear face it is!” This is a faint picture of our joy in God through Jesus Christ, by whom, also, we have received the Atonement. What would some of you give to see the dear face of that dear father who was taken from you years ago! I can understand Cowper saying of his mother’s picture—  
*“Oh, that those lips had language!”*  
Oh, that our departed ones could speak to us, again! But our heavenly Father always lives, so never let it be said that we dare not lift up our faces unto Him! We look up and say in our darkest moments— *“For yet I know I shall Him praise,  
Who graciously gave to me,  
The health of my countenance,  
Yes, my own God is He.”*  
I cannot tell you the inexpressible sweetness of that last line to my soul. Thousands of times it has fallen from my lips. If I have nothing else, I have a God, and my soul lays hold on Him as Jacob grasped the angel. I will not let Him go! Whether He blesses me or does not bless me, I still will cling to Him with desperate resolve and cry, “my Lord and my God.” This God is our God forever and ever! He shall be our God even unto death.  
To come back to Eliphaz and to conclude with him. We shall delight ourselves in God and lift up our face when we do as Eliphaz, here, tells us. First, when we live in communion with Him. “Acquaint, now, yourself with Him, and be at peace.” If we do not know God, how can we delight in Him? What delight can there be in an unknown God? Brothers and Sisters, you are not half as happy as you might be because you do not study this Book, where, as in a glass, you may see the face of Jehovah your God! Oh, that you knew more of His dear Son, for he that has seen Him has seen the Father! Take God for your daily company. “Acquaint now yourself with Him.” Great as He is, dare to be free with Him. Though you are but dust and ashes, yet, like Abraham, speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend, for as you know your God so shall you delight in Him and lift up your face unto Him.  
Then, further, we must, if we are to know this delight, lay up God’s words in our hearts—(v. 22). “Receive, I pray you, the Law from His mouth and lay up His words in your heart.” Your neglected Bibles hide your God! When dust falls on the Scriptures, dust falls on the eyes of those who have neglected them—and then they cannot behold the Glory of the Lord God. The more of Scripture is understood, fed upon and received into the inward parts, the more will be your delight in God! You can have no pleasure in the Speaker if you despise the Word spoken—let it be to you as marrow and fatness.  
There must be added to this delight in the Word of God a constant cleansing of the way. “If you return to the Almighty, you shall be built up, you shall put away iniquity far from your tabernacles.” God cannot manifest Himself to us if we continue in sin. If you professing Christian people are as greedy and hard as other people in your dealing with the world— and if in your families you are as quarrelsome and untruthful as the ungodly—God cannot come to your tabernacles. There must be purification of life, or there cannot be fellowship with the Lord. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Impurity of heart will cause blindness of the eyes as to spiritual things. Careful walking will bring joyful walking, but if you lose your purity, you will lose your peace. If you are a child of God, you cannot sin without feeling the rod—you must obey the Lord in order to enjoy the Lord. Walk in the footsteps of Christ, who did always the things which pleased the Father, and you will receive the joyful witness—“This is My beloved son!” Put away sin wherever you perceive it and ask for Grace to be helped to detect it in all its lurking places. Seek out the Babylonian garment and the wedge of gold which Achan has hidden, or else the Lord cannot abide with you. Get rid of your idols!— *“So shall your walk be close with God,  
Calm and serene your frame.  
So purer light shall mark the road  
That leads you to the Lamb.”*  
In addition to this, there must be a constant trust. “Yes, the Almighty shall be your defense, and you shall have plenty of silver.” (See v. 25). He who does not trust God cannot delight in Him. You cannot lift up your face to Him while you think Him untrue. A childlike confidence is essential to a holy joy. Let us throw ourselves upon God, as a swimmer casts himself upon the water, that it may bear him up! Let us trust in God as a child trusts its mother, without the shadow of a question. We sometimes know a great deal too much of what we ought not to know. I see some of God’s children very anxious to feed upon the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—but as for me, I am content with the tree of life! The old serpent still persuades men to pluck forbidden fruit from that evil tree!  
I know children of God who hold their hands to their heads and cry, “Would God we had never read that skeptical book and never learned how to distrust the Lord!” Let the times past suffice for the feeding of doubt. Let us eat no more carrion, but feed upon the salted meat of the Word of God! Let us quit the garlic of Egypt and feed on the manna of Heaven! We do not need to know what the world believes or does not believe, for the world lies in the Wicked One. We do not care what may be the spirit of the age, for the spirit of the world in all ages is the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience! Be it yours and mine to come to Christ, to live on Him and to believe on Him with unstaggering faith—so shall we delight ourselves in God and lift up our faces to Him.  
Lastly, let us abide in continual prayer. Verse 27—“You shall make your prayer unto Him, and He shall hear you, and you shall pay your vows.” Lack of prayer is a great lack, indeed! Slackness at the Mercy Seat will soon take away the spring and elasticity of our spiritual walk. If we are to have a closer walk with God, we must have closer communion with God in supplication.  
Now, dear children of God, I have set all this before you, but what power can be in my words unless the Holy Spirit blesses them? I have watered this sermon with strong desires for the spiritual benefit of you all and now I am mourning over the many who do not know anything at all about it! They are still devoid of the knowledge of God and of all desire for Him. I am very, very sorry for you. My heart pities you. We have heard of “the Bitter Cry” from the slums of London, and a bitter cry it well may be, but there is a poverty, compared with which mere lack of bread is riches! There is a degradation, compared with which the low estate of the pauper is nobility itself! To live without your God—how terrible a death! You know not what joy means! You have not begun to spell the word, “delight,” until you have begun with God. True joy comes only from a true knowledge of the true God.  
Oh, Sirs, if I had to die like a dog, I should wish to be a Christian, for the sake of the bird in the hand of present delight! If there were no hereafter, the immediate peace and joy of trusting my God are an overflowing reward. But there is a hereafter and what will you ungodly ones do when that hereafter dawns upon you? You have done without God all your days and God will do without you all eternity! What terror lies in that fact! He will say, “Depart!” because you always did depart. He will decree your continuance in the path which you chose and bid you keep on going away from Him forever.  
He will say, “He that is filthy, let him be filthy still,” and what more dreadful doom can fall upon any one of you? O, you immortal spirits, you need an immortal God! O, you that cannot cease to be, you need the Highest of all Beings in whom you may hide yourselves from ceaseless anguish! Trust in God and then shall you be filled with infinite happiness, but not till then. God bring you to Himself, that He may bring you to delight! May the uplifted Savior draw you and uplift you! May you begin the life of Heaven by an immediate delight in the Almighty—and from that delight may you never cease! To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 62, 63.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—42 (PART I), 229, 688. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2546 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 22.29

A MESSAGE TO THE GLAD AND THE SAD  
NO. 2546

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 5, 1897, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 17, 1884.

**“When men are cast down, then you shall say, there is lifting up; and He shall save the humble person.”  
Job 22:29.**

THIS is Eliphaz, the Temanite, who is speaking, and he is telling Job what he thinks would be the condition of a man who had been sincere. He says that surely, God’s Presence would be with him, the light would shine upon his ways and then, when he was, himself, happy in the Light of God, when other men were cast down, he would be able to say to them, “there is lifting up.” Keeping that thought in mind, I will commence my discourse, this evening, by observing that if any of us have the Light of God, it is not given to us for ourselves alone. There is nothing selfish in the gifts of God. The Jews were elected to receive the Oracles of God, but it was in order that they might keep them for the rest of us, that in the midst of Israel the lamp of the Truth of God might be trimmed and kept burning for the nations that then waited in darkness.

When God calls any man by His Grace, it is with a view to others. Your salvation has many hooks to it with which to draw on the salvation of many more. If a man is truly converted, the influence of his conversion will spread to others—it is an act of mercy from God to him with a view also to his children, his friends, his neighbors, his dependents. It is the same with the Light in the Believer’s heart. When you are very merry, shut not up your mirth within your own soul, but sing Psalms that others may hear your gladness. When God makes you a feast, eat not your morsel, alone, but call in many of the poor, the lame, the halt and the blind, that they may feast with you, for there are many such in God’s family and they will be glad to come to spiritual as well as to temporal feasts. If your face is made to shine in the Light of God, it is not that you may see it, for Moses “knew not that the skin of his face shone,” but it is that others may see what a Light God has put in your countenance and may rejoice in that Light.

I fear that many Christian people have lost their comfort through trying to keep it to themselves. The manna was sweet and they had gathered more than they could eat. They went, therefore, to their chest and stored it up, and expected to go on the morrow and have another feast all to themselves. But when they lifted the lid—ah, you know what happened to manna if they kept it till the morning! And our joys will also breed worms and stink (that is the plain English of it), when we keep them to ourselves! They are meant to be scattered abroad. In this respect, “There is that which scatters and yet increases and there is that which withholds more than is meet, but it tends to poverty.”

Now, coming to our text, my talk will be on this wise. First, I will try to show you what the happy Christian ought to do. And, secondly, what downcast people ought to do.

I. first, then, WHAT THE HAPPY BELIEVER OUGHT TO DO. “When men are cast down, then you shall say, there is lifting up.”  
Well, he ought to do this, first—he should notice those who are cast down. We are such foolish creatures that sometimes, when the Lord trusts us with a happy experience, we begin to grow mightily proud and we look down upon His tried and afflicted people. Even among those who know the Lord, if they have a very charming experience and enter into high fellowship with God, there is a tendency to begin to think that the poor doubting and fearing ones are very much to be censured and blamed, or, at any rate, that they are to be ignored and left to themselves. “Well,” says someone, “really it quite depresses me to talk with old Mrs. So-and-So, and I could not keep my joy if I were to go and try to encourage that young man who is always so cast down.” Ah, my dear Friend, but if you begin to talk like that, it may not be long before you will even envy that old lady you now despise—and wish you were half as hopeful of salvation as that young man whom you just now condemned! Remember that when the fat cattle begin to push with horn and with shoulder, the Lord knows how to bring their fat down very speedily, so that they can be trusted among the lean cattle without being so domineering over them. The duty of a happy Christian is to take notice of those who are not so joyous as he is, to seek them out, to condescend to men of low estate. When you have abundant provision in your house, it is your duty to send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. Mind that you attend to this matter lest your Lord should put you on short commons, too, and make you feel a little more as you ought to towards the afflicted.  
The next thing a happy Christian ought to do when he has noticed and found out the sad ones, he should go and talk to them. “When men are cast down, then you shall say, there is lifting up.” I often speak upon this subject and, therefore, I cannot say anything new. But I do wish to say over again that if all joyful Believers who have attained to full assurance of faith would more often speak to troubled ones, they might do a vast amount of good. I think, dear Friends, that you miss many opportunities of serving the Lord through forgetfulness or through diffidence. I notice that when converts do not begin to speak a little for Christ very early in their Christian career, they become tongue-tied—that is how we get so many dumb members of the Church who seem as if they could not offer up a prayer to save their lives. And what is worse, they cannot talk to their personal friends about the things of God. It is a very great pity that it is so and I think I must have an operation performed on some of you children who are dumb. It is a very sad thing for the father of a family to have a number of children who never speak. There is a sweetness about every child’s voice, is there not? There is a different tone, a different form of speech with each child, and it would not content the head of the household if he could say, “I can hear the older ones speak, but the youngest is quite silent.” We want them all to open their mouths, to begin their speech with childlike prattle—then we shall be glad when they can all speak plainly the language of the land in which they were born.  
Dear Christian people, try to be speaking Christians! Especially when you come across any who are cast down. Remember what you, yourself, owe to some loving word spoken by a Brother or Sister in years gone by. Will you not repay it by speaking comfort to some of the sorrowing ones? Many of you owe your hope of Heaven to the preaching of the Word. It may be that you cannot preach and if you attempted it, you would be very unwise. But do try, with such ability as you have, to tell at least to one other in bondage that there is liberty to be had, that his chain may be cut and that he may escape from the taskmaster’s hand. Say to him, “though you are cast down, there is lifting up.” Look for the sad and sorrowful and speak to them, and so be, each one of you, according to your ability, a comforter by the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit.  
The particular thing I would have you say to them is this, remind them of the promises of God. When any persons say to you, “Well, if I were to meet with a desponding person, I would not know what to do,” tell them to commence by quoting a promise from the Scriptures. When that eminent German critic, Bengel, the very father of true Biblical criticism, lay sick, he was very sorely tried with doubts and fears and he, therefore, sent for a young man from the College and said to him, “Young brother, it is very dark with me I need you to say something that will cheer me.” But the youth answered, ,’My dear Sir, you are an old man, you cannot expect me to say anything that can comfort you.” “But,” said Bengel, “you are a student of divinity and you will have to speak to men, like me, who are cast down, if you are to do any real service in the ministry. I hope you will have something cheering to say to me.” “Then, Sir,” the student replied, “I do not know that I can say anything to you except that, ‘This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’”  
“Ah!” exclaimed Bengel, “what better thing could you have said? You have opened a window for me.” When that great saint and preacher, Augustine, lay dying—and I venture to say of Augustine that among all who were born of women, there has hardly ever been a greater than he— his mind was equal to any philosophy for its depth, its length and its breadth. And as an instructor in theology he still remains, under Christ, next to the Apostle Paul, the master-teacher of the churches—yet, as he lay dying, he asked to have certain texts of Scripture printed in large capitals. Which do you suppose he chose? You may think that he selected some deep and mysterious passage about the high doctrine which he so greatly loved, but he did nothing of the kind. He chose those texts of Scripture which we commonly quote to sinking sinners—such as these—“He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” “Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” And that great saint feasted his dying eyes on the texts which we usually give to babes in Christ’s faith, or those who are seeking the Savior, for they suited him just then!  
I want you who are very happy, you whom the Lord has made joyous and glad so that you keep high festival from January to December, and all your days seem like Heaven upon earth—and there are some of us who have come to that blessed point—to be sure to tell others those rich and gracious words of God which abound in the Scriptures! Have them at your fingertips, so that you can find them in the Bible. Have them on the end of your tongue, so that you can quote them without turning to the Bible! Have them in the very center of your heart, so that they shall cheer and warm you, and that the heat from them shall radiate to warm others! It is a very bad stove that lets all the heat go out at the top of the chimney—we need a grate that will throw the warmth into the room. I pray that God may make us distributors of joy among those who have little or none of it in themselves.  
We ought, with those who are cast down, not only to tell them the promises, but we should tell them our own experience. A recital of our personal experience of God’s goodness often helps a poor soul who is in deep trial. Just draw a chair up and sit by the sick one’s bedside, and say, “I sought the Lord and He heard me.” “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.” If you can tell something that happened to you when you were in a condition similar to that of the person you are trying to comfort, you have hit the nail on the head. Who can cheer the widow like those of you who are widows? Who can comfort a bereaved mother like one who has been, herself, bereaved? Who can speak with a man in a great business trial like one who has been in much the same business and has been a loser, too? You feel so glad, somehow, that there is sympathy left in the world, that there is somebody whose face has been furrowed and tear-stained like your own. So, tell your own experience, dear Friends. If you haven’t any, do not tell it—but if you have, spread it abroad to the honor of your great Father’s name that others may be encouraged. Tell them, when they are cast down, that there is lifting up, for you were cast down and you were lifted up! Tell them that God deals thus with His children, and brings them low on purpose that they may see the power of His hand when He lifts them up!  
If you do this, you may hope to be successful in cheering other people. Our text says, “When men are cast down, then you shall say, there is lifting up; and He shall save the humble person.” And as the next verse puts it, very often the good man will “deliver the island of the innocent.” When it is in danger, the godly man shall interpose and God will hear his prayer, and God’s suffering people shall be screened from danger. To all of you who are very joyful and happy, I would say—do not go to bed until you have found somebody who is sitting in darkness, to whom you can say, “Friend, the Lord has, by His Grace, made my lamp burn very brightly, so I have brought it to you, that your lamp may be lighted, too.” There is so much misery in this world that none of us ought to add to it. Some, alas, do so by their nasty speeches, their cross-grained tempers, their cutting, sarcastic observations and, sometimes, by their slanderous judgments. Let us, on the contrary, seek to increase happiness and joy wherever we can! Let us try to cheer all the disconsolate and spread throughout this weary world some of that savor of rest which the Lord smelled of old in Noah’s sacrifice, and which He makes us, also, to rejoice in as we take Christ’s yoke upon us and learn of Him, and so find rest unto our souls.  
II. Now, secondly, I will pass on to tell you WHAT DOWNCAST PEOPLE OUGHT TO DO.  
What should they do when we speak to them in the spirit I have described? Ought they not to respond to our desire to comfort them? You know, dear Friends, you cannot comfort a man against his will. You may lead a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink. You may bring forward the most cheering promises, but you cannot lay them home to the heart that is weary if it refuses to receive them. What ought those who are cast down to do in order to help us in the task of cheering them?  
Well, first, they should remember that they are not infallible. The most infallible people I have seen are those who are very much cast down, for they know so much better than we do who try to comfort them. “Yes, yes,” they exclaim, “that is all very well for you to talk like that, but if you were in our circumstances, it would be a very different thing.” Then you quote what you judge to be a suitable promise, but they say, “that does not apply to our case,” and they spy out some little real or supposed difference by which they escape from the comfort you are so anxious to administer to them. Some people are wonderfully ingenious in inventing a great variety of processes of self-torture. In the black days of the Spanish Inquisition, with their thumbscrews, and their racks, and their Virgin’s embrace, and other diabolical things, they went a very long way in torturing their fellow men, but even the Spanish Inquisition had nothing like as much cleverness as the little inquisition that men and women set up in their own souls with which to torture themselves!  
About a month ago, you remember that my text was concerning those fools who abhor all manner of meat [Sermon #1824, Volume 31—The History of

Sundry Fools—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at

http://www.spurgeongems.org ] and there are still some persons of that kind left in the world! This dish is too hot and that is too cold. This steak is too tender and that other is too tough—they do not like this drink because it is so sweet, others cry out because it is so sour—their food is never cooked so as to suit them and, “their soul abhors all manner of meat.” My dear Friend, without being in the least sarcastic, but speaking to you very tenderly, I should like to hint that you do not know everything, after all. Though you may be a peer in the realm of misery, yet all wisdom does not lie with peers, in whatever house they may dwell! They sometimes make mistakes and, perhaps, you, also, are making a mistake just now. Is it not just possible that some of us know at least a little which you do not know, which might really help you in your time of trouble? There is a saying that “lookers-on see more than players,” and I believe that, often, lookers-on can see the needs of a man’s case better than he can see them himself! If you were not much of a seaman, and were out at sea, tossed up and down, and almost ready to perish through the fury of the waves, I think you ought not to be above taking warning from the signal of some old sailor who can tell you just what you ought to do in the hour of your distress. Should you not be willing to say, “That man is not so much troubled as I am. His brain is clearer, his heart is calmer, I should not wonder but what he might direct me rightly”?

The way for you sad souls to help us to comfort you is for us to see that you are willing to receive the message that the comforter is anxious to bring you. Then the battle is well begun and will soon end in a victory. Yet, how often, when we try to cheer the downcast, we meet with many who say, “We will never be convinced by that style of argument. It may be very good reasoning for some people, but it would never affect us.” If it had so happened that the style of address had been quite different. If the earnest pleader had spoken from quite another quarter of the heavens of the Truth of God, such a hearer would have said, “That is not the way to persuade me. There may be a good deal for some minds in that style of talking, but to persons of my disposition and of my peculiar culture, there is no force about it.” I have met with this gentleman numbers of times and I have heard him confute himself again and again. He has said today what he denied yesterday, and will repeat tomorrow! It has been his method to constantly say and to unsay, only he must always hinder all who would be the means of comforting him! I wish that any of us who may be in that state of mind would try to get out of it because if there is a good thing to be had, we ought not to need much persuasion to accept it—and if this good thing should be peculiarly necessary to our welfare and somebody who cannot have any motive but our good should entreat us to think of it—I fancy that it would be a sensible thing on our part to give a sober and discreet hearing to what he has to say.

Why, ordinarily, when we are unprejudiced, if we are driving along a road and somebody holds up his hands to alarm us, we pull up to know what he needs and if anybody were to shout at our door in the middle of the night, we would be anxious to enquire what was the reason for the disturbance. If there is a fire near us, we are usually ready enough to be warned, or if there is any good news to be heard, we are usually eager to be informed concerning it. And it is a strange thing that in matters which relate to our higher nature, our immortal soul which is to live forever in happiness or woe, we are so apt to refuse instruction and turn a deaf ear to those who seek our good! I beg you, dear Friends, to believe that in these matters you are not infallible, and that some people know more than you do!

Next to that, you should be willing to believe what is reported to you by credible persons. Suppose any of us who have been troubled as you now are troubled, come to you and say, “Dear Friend, you will get out of this horrible pit and miry clay; he that is cast down, as you now are, will be lifted up again. You are feeling the burden of sin, but there is mercy and pardon even for you. You say that you have no strength, but there is One who is both able and willing to give you strength. I went to the Lord when I was just as downcast as you now are and when I rested wholly on Him, I found mercy, and if you will do the same, you will find mercy, too. Do you not think that you ought to believe my testimony? Do you imagine that I would deceive you? I know your sorrow of heart makes you feel a little bitter, yet do not say, in your haste, ‘All men are liars,’ for there are many who can join me in testifying to the Lord’s pardoning mercy. If it is a matter touching your body, you will trust yourself with the doctor when you believe he has some ability as a physician and, in like manner, ought you not, when Christian people earnestly tell you the Truth about the Good Physician, to say to yourself, ‘They would not deceive me. They are speaking in accordance with God’s Word. I will believe them and I will believe God, and I will not doubt that through faith in Christ I shall have as happy an issue out of my soul-trouble as they have had’? If you will not go as far as that, you must permit me to say that I think you are acting very wrongly and that I really fear you desire to remain somewhat in the dark. I pray you, believe first, that you are not infallible and believe next, that which Christians testify to you.

Especially, dear sad Heart, believe the great Truth of my text— “When men are cast down, there is lifting up.” Let me ask why you are cast down. “Oh,” you cry, “I am so sad because of my sin.” Then listen—“The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Oh, that you would believe these testimonies of God concerning the putting away of sin and not be cast down any longer! “But,” you say, “I have no righteousness and I cannot be accepted of God without a righteousness. I thought I had one, once, but I see that it is only a heap of filthy rags.” Just so. I am glad you have discovered that fact, but the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth and worked out a perfect righteousness which He puts upon every believing sinner! The righteousness of Christ will be set to your account and imputed to you, if you believe in Him! And then, with His spotless vesture on, you shall be, even in the sight of the Most High, holy as the Holy One! You are cast down, but “there is lifting up.”

“Yes,” you say, “I know that the Lord says that there is lifting up, but I am so weak I cannot do anything.” Should you be cast down about that? The Lord Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, is able to give you boundless strength. There is nothing that you will be called upon to do but what you shall be enabled to do if you will but trust the Lord. He will be your strength! He will help you to repent! He will help you to believe! He will help you to be gracious, to persevere, to resist temptation and to conquer sin if you will only trust Him! You are cast down, but you have no need to be, for “there is lifting up.” I do not mind what it is about which you are cast down, dear Soul, if you will but trust. All things are possible to him that believes. Many of us have found it so ourselves, therefore we pray you to do as we have done—cease from all confidence in yourself and rest wholly in Christ—for so shall you certainly find eternal salvation.

Do not neglect to notice the second part of the text, for there is something else to be believed there—that God will save the humble. The margin has it, “He shall save him that has low eyes.” The man who looks low. Now, dear Friends, are you a man who looks low? Some men are always looking up to the stars—their heads are swimming with conceit of their own excellence. God will not save such people—at least not while they continue to be so proud. He will bring you down, if you are as high as that in your own estimation, for God will not give His Glory unto another. But if you are a man who looks low, He will save you. You have been looking to yourself, have you? You cannot see anything bright there—all is dark. I am glad it is so, for you are the sort of man God delights to save!

You have been looking down to the earth and you wondered you were not in your grave, or in Hell. That is right—you are the sort of man on whom God looks with approval! You thought that the very poorest of His people were worth ten thousand times as much as you were. You have envied the doorkeeper in the House of God. You are the sort of man God will save! We have some people about who are so big, so good, so intelligent, so wonderfully cultured and altogether such superior persons, that they cannot be content in any ordinary position. But these very superior persons, in their own opinion, are generally despised by God and by men, too! But those who think nothing of themselves, those who feel that they deserve only condemnation from God and who say that if He will but save them, it will be all of Grace, the gratitude for which they can never express—these are the people whom the text tells us that God will save!

I like to hear sinners give themselves a bad character—I mean, not in pretense, but in real earnest. There was a Brother came to me, the other night, in deep distress of soul. I let him tell me all his case. By what he said, he seemed to have been a terrible sinner, and when he had gone through the long black list, I said, as I looked at him, “You are the very man Jesus Christ came to save.” And then I began to pick out the texts of Scripture that suited his case. I know he thought Jesus Christ came to save good people, but nowhere in the Bible is there anything of that kind, though we are told that, “Christ died for the ungodly.” I got my poor sinful friend to see that Christ came to take the place of the guilty and that great Truth of Substitution laid hold upon him! I would that you might be led to the same point, and to say, “I am a sinner and I trust the sinners’ Savior.” If you are cast down on account of your sin, “there is lifting up.” God will save the humble, the man or woman of low eyes. If you are as nothing in your own sight, God will save you! If you are less than nothing and yet trust Christ, He will be your All in All. I would that every downcast soul in the world would simply believe the promise of God and rest on it, trusting in Jesus and in Jesus only!

I have just two observations to make and then I have done my sermon. First, what a very little difference there is, after all, between those who are up and those who are down! You, my Brother, are full of joy and you begin to comfort a man who has no joy at all. He tells you what a sinner he is and if you feel as you ought, you say to yourself, “I was once just the same as this man now is, only perhaps he feels his sin more than I did.” And when you comfort and direct him, so that he says, “My faith would touch the hem of Christ’s garment,” I know it brings the tears into your eyes and you say, “I will do the same. It may be that my past faith has been all a mistake, so I will begin again.” I like to meet with people who are always beginning, just resting in Christ after 30 years’ experience, as they did at the first, and saying, “I am nothing, but Christ is everything. I am more and more decreasing, that He may more and more increase and fill the full circle of my being to its utmost bound.”

Then, do you not think it would be a good thing if those who are very happy and those who are very miserable, would alike give up walking by their feelings and would, both of them, live by faith? If there were two women in Sarepta, and one of them had a bushel of meal and a great keg of oil—and the other had only a little oil in a cruse and a handful of meal in the barrel—if they both lived by faith, it would not make any difference whether they had much or little meal and oil. Of the two, I should think that the one who had the big barrel would begin to see the meal diminish—and she might fret—while the woman who had so little would never see her handful diminish, so she would not fret, for she lived by a miracle of faith! And I should think that the rich woman had better get down to be as poor as the other woman and live in the best possible way—by faith in God! I find that I cannot get on when I live by my feelings. They are like a barometer, sometimes they point to, “fair,” sometimes to, “much rain.” There is very little in our feelings that is to be depended upon! The air may have something to do with them, or they may be affected by what we wear, or what we eat, or with the last person who spoke to us—the most unreliable things in the world are our own feelings! Let us, each one, say, “Lord, I will believe You though I feel heavy and dull. Lord, I will still believe You, though I am now light and joyful. Lord, my hope is in Your Son when I cannot see any evidence of Grace in my soul—and my trust is in your Son alone when all my evidences are bright and clear.”

Our poor feelings may depend on which way the wind is blowing! When a man goes to France on business three times a week, he is not very particular to ask what sort of passage he will be likely to have. It is those who play at traveling that need to have the water as smooth as glass! So, children of God who do real business with their Heavenly Father come to be almost indifferent whether they are very glad or very sad, for, after all, the safety of the man who crosses the sea does not depend upon his feelings, but on the boat in which he is sailing! So, our safety lies in the stability of the Christ to whom we have committed ourselves— not in our feelings which are as variable as the vapors that fill the sky. “Trust you in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” Put down your own feelings and lift up the Cross of Christ! Cling to Him and say, with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” So shall it be well with you, both now and forever. The Lord bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOB 23.**

We shall read, this evening, in the Book of Job. May the good Spirit instruct us during our reading! Here we shall see Job in a very melancholy plight, grievously distressed in mind and yet, for all that, holding fast to his God. We do not want any of you to get into this gloomy condition, but if you are in such a state as that, or if you ever should be, may you behave as well as Job did! It needs a deal of Divine Grace to travel all right in the dark, to keep in the good way when you cannot see it, to cling to God when you cannot even feel that He is near you. But the Lord can give Grace even for such an emergency as that.

Verses 1, 2. Then Job answered and said, Even today is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Job admitted that he groaned, but he claimed that he had good reason for doing so—that, indeed, the source of his grief was greater than the streams of his grief—so that he could not, even with his groans and tears, express half the anguish that he felt.

3, 4 *.*Oh that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat! I would order my cause before Him and fill my mouth with arguments. Good men are washed towards God even by the rough waves of their grief. And when their sorrows are deepest, their highest desire is not to escape from them, but to get at their God. “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” Job wanted to spread out his whole case before the Lord, to argue it with Him, to present his petitions to the Most High and to find out from God why He was contending with him. It is all right with you, Brothers and Sisters, if your face is towards your God in rough weather. It is all wrong with you, Brothers and Sisters, if the weather is very calm and your face is turned away from your God.

5. I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say unto me. I am not sure that Job would know and understand all that God said. The Lord says a great deal, even to men like Job, that they do not easily understand, and it is not for us to require that God should explain everything to us. He gives not account of any of His matters. “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus?” Our wisdom will be to plead with God our suit for pardon and for mercy, and to ask Him to at least make us understand the way of salvation, that we may run in it and be at peace with Him.

6. Will He plead against me with His great power! “If I were to go to God and urge my suit with Him, would He crush me with the might of His majesty? Would He overwhelm me with His Omnipotence?”

6. No, but He would put strength in me. Such was Job’s faith in God, that he was sure He would rather help him than hinder him—“He would put strength in me.”

7, 8. There the righteous might dispute with Him; so should I be delivered forever from my Judge. Behold, I go forward, but He is not there. “I look to the future, I try to forecast the days that are yet to come, but I cannot see God there.”

8. And backward, but I cannot perceive Him. “I remembered the days of old. I turned over the pages of my diary, but I could not find Him there.” There are cases in which one who is a true child of God cannot, for a while, find his Father. Do not condemn yourself because you are in the dark! On the contrary, remember then that there are many who fear the Lord, yet who walk in darkness and have no Light. Let all such trust in the name of the Lord and stay themselves upon their God—and in due season the Light of God will come to them.

9. On the left hand, where He does work, but I cannot behold Him: He hides Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him. If this is the case with you, be thankful that you want to see your God. Let your very desires after Him, your anxiety because you miss Him and the sorrow of your spirit when you are, apparently, deserted by Him, encourage you to believe that you are one of His children! Another woman’s child will not cry after you, dear mother—it is your own child that cries after you—and if you were not a child of God, you would not long and cry for the joy of His Presence. If you were not His child, that Presence would be no delight to you, it would be your dread.

10. But He knows the way that I take. Oh, what a mercy that is! “I cannot see Him, but He can see me. My grief has blinded my eyes with floods of tears, but nothing blinds His eyes. Like as a father pities his children, so does He pity me and regards me with the full observation of His gigantic mind—‘He knows the way that I take.’”

10. When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. It is grand to be able to say that while you are in the fire! It is very easy to say it about another man who is in the furnace, but when you are in there, yourself, then to say, “I shall come forth as gold,” is the sublimity of faith! It is a very simple matter to say, “If I were again put into the fire, I know I should come forth as gold.” But it is when the burning heat is melting you, when you seem to be shriveled up in the crucible and so little of you is left—then is the time to say, “When the Lord has finished His work upon me, when He has thoroughly assayed me, I shall come forth as gold.”

11 *.*My foot has held His steps, His way have I kept, and not declined. You cannot talk like that in the time of trouble if you have not led a sincere, upright and gracious life. Those battles into which men come in the Valley of Humiliation are often brought about by their tripping when they are going down the hill. Our sins find us out at length, but if God enables us to walk uprightly, then we feel very confident—not in our own uprightness, but in God’s love and Grace.

12, 13. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips. I have esteemed the Words of His mouth more than my necessary food. But He is in one mind and who can turn Him! Job looks at His grief and says concerning it, “It is according to God’s mind that I should have this grief, and who can turn Him?” There may be times when God wills that His servant should be in trouble. And when God lets down the iron bar, who can lift it up? When He shuts up a soul in Doubting Castle, how shall it escape until He wills its deliverance?

13-15. And what His soul desires, even that He does, for He performs the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with Him. Therefore am I troubled at His Presence, when I consider if am afraid of Him. Yet he longed for Him. So, sometimes, we long for the Presence of God, yet that Presence strikes us with a solemn awe whenever we are favored with it. We ask to see our Lord, yet when we do see Him, we have to say, with John, “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.” Or perhaps we are like Peter who, when the Lord Jesus was in his boat, fell down before Him and cried, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” The majesty of Christ’s pure Presence was too much for poor imperfect Peter—and so it is for us.

16, 17. For God makes my head soft, and the Almighty troubles me because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither has He covered the darkness from my face. Now you see where you might be if you had Job’s experience. If you are not there, be very grateful. And if you are there, say, “There is a better man than I am who has been this way before me. I can see his footprints on the sands of time and I am encouraged by his example to trust my Lord in the darkest hour.” You are not the only man or woman who has been in the coal cellar—there have been better than you in the dark places of the earth before now! Therefore, still have hope and be confident in God that in His own good time He will deliver you.

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A WORD IN SEASON

NO. 731

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

**“When men are cast down, then you shall say, There is lifting up; and He shall save the humble person.”  
Job 22:29.**

ALTHOUGH we cannot take everything that Eliphaz the Temanite happened to say as being of Divine authority—the immediate Inspiration of the Holy Spirit—yet in this case he evidently gives utterance to such a great and important Truth of God that we may regard these words of his as being the words of God, confirmed as they are by like sentiments to be found in other parts of the Scriptures. If you read the verse carefully you will sympathize with the perplexity of expositors who have been not a little puzzled to know which, out of three meanings, is the one intended. I shall not presume to pronounce an arbitrary decision, but after mentioning the three different constructions, I shall dwell upon the last, and amplify it for practical uses.

The first is that this verse may be read by way of discrimination. When other men—the wicked and ungodly—are cast down, Believers, resting upon their God, shall be able to say, “There is lifting up.” And instead of harboring a thought of despair, they shall cling to the promise that God will save the humble person. The text may thus indicate the distinction there is between the righteous and the wicked. When the flood came, the ungodly world was bowed down by fear, but Noah could say, “There is lifting up.” And as the ark began to float upon the waters, his mind was perfectly convinced that God would save the humble.

When the fiery sleet began to fall upon Sodom and Gomorrah, the wicked were wise too late, and they, too, were filled with dismay. But Lot, as he escaped out of the city, could feel that there was for him “lifting up,” and that God had saved out of the midst of destruction that “humble person,” whose ears and heart had been vexed with the ungodly speeches of the Sodomites. Let us learn, therefore, and so leave this aspect of the text, that the Lord has put a difference between Israel and Egypt—a difference never so conspicuous as in time of trouble. He will not mete out the same measure to His friends as to His enemies. The black side of the pillar of Providence shall be turned towards the Egyptians, while the bright side shall shine fully and cheerfully into the faces of the Israelites.

Just as the Red Sea is swallowing up God’s foes, His friends upon the other bank shall be singing their psalms of victory and magnifying His power to save. Humble Christian, whatever may occur, you need never fear! If all the predicted tribulations which some men delight in anticipating should be fulfilled tomorrow, it would not matter to you. If the earth should rock and reel, if the sun should be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, and the stars should fall like fig leaves from the tree— you, if you could no longer be safe under Heaven—would be caught up into Heaven! But anyhow, God would be sure to preserve you. When the wicked are bowed down you shall be able to sing, “There is lifting up.”

The second way of reading the text is full of personal consolation. “When men are cast down”—appropriating the calamity when we, ourselves, are cast down, and leaving out the discrimination between the righteous and the wicked. When we, in common with the rest of mankind, suffer by the adversities incidental to all men—when we find out that we are “born to trouble as the sparks fly upward”—then our Father comes to our relief, cheers us with comfort and inspirits us with hope, sweetly whispering in our ears, “There is lifting up. Hope in God.” After all the waves and billows had gone over the Psalmist’s head, Hope rises up out of the deep and sings, as the waters stream from her hair, “Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him.”

And as her countenance glistens in the sun, and is made bright by the brine into which she has dived, she adds, “He is the help of my countenance and my God.” Christian Brother, possibly you are at this very hour sorely cast down. You are reflecting upon yesterday’s ills, or foreboding worse ills on the morrow. “What shall I eat? And what shall I drink?” may be questions which are pressing grievously on your mind. Parents may be here whose dear children are sick, or it may be worse than that. Perhaps there is a father whose rebellious son is vexing his heart and making his hair turn gray. You are bowed down, many of you. Some from one cause and some from another. Oh that your trials may bring your faith into exercise!

You are in your Father’s hands. He is the God of hope! Yes, and He is the God of patience and consolation. The Lord reigns—all things work together for good to them that love God. You may safely conclude that there is lifting up. Though you may now feel very humble under these afflicting dispensations, yet, as certainly as God’s Word says, “He shall save the humble person,” so certainly will he send salvation unto you. Be of good courage, then! Perhaps the text is God’s message to your sinking spirits— “It is I. Be not afraid.”

The third way of understanding the text, however, is that upon which I wish to dwell. A practical obligation is here enforced. “When men are cast down”—that is, when other men are cast down, either by spiritual anxieties or by peculiar troubles of a worldly sort—then the Christian’s business is to act the part of a comforter. He is to step in and say to his brethren or his neighbors, “There is lifting up.” It should be his occupation to tell out this good news—this panacea for heart-troubles—God saves humble souls. There is no necessity for despair this side of Hell. As long as a man is in this trial state there is hope that his sackcloth may be put off, that he may be girded with gladness and made partaker of the fullness of joy!

You will see then, Friends, that my intention is to address myself to Christians—earnestly exhorting them to look after opportunities for usefulness, that they may tell others of the glad tidings.

I. To this end, FAVORABLE SEASONS, a well-timed occasion, a suitable hour should never be lost sight of. “When men are cast down.” You cannot talk with some men until you find them cast down. They are too shy and reserved, too proud and unapproachable, or perhaps too profane and blustering to allow you to say a word to them about eternal things. But you can catch them sometimes. When sorrow has plowed the soil, the good seed may get, perhaps, into the heart that always was so hard.

Now, Brethren, as you read it, “When men are cast down,” you will do well to remember that these seasons frequently occur in the life of every man. Sometimes men are cast down because they have had losses in business, or have had sickness in the house. Or death has come and taken away a child, or they are infirm in body. Or maybe the cholera has been down the street, or something or other has occurred to alarm and agitate and dispirit them. They feel that this world is not the happy world they thought it was.

Now is your opportunity! Now is your time! When men are cast down, then go to them and say, “There is lifting up.” Tell them that there is another Lamp that was never kindled in this world, and never blown out in this world, either, which will gild the darkness of their poverty, of their sickness, and of their sorrow. Be sure not to let a single Providential opportunity escape you, but plunge in, now that God has made the breach in the sinner’s city wall. Make haste now! Dash in, you soldiers of the Cross, sword in hand!

Sometimes men are cast down when they have been listening to a very solemn sermon. God has helped the minister to sketch their portraits and they have sat and wondered at it. And though they have been careless before, yet now they begin to quake. Have you ever found your friends leaving the House of God thoughtful and serious—not chatting about a thousand frivolities, but saying to you, when you get home—“What a striking sermon!”? Why, such things occur here every day! The tear of penitence often waters this floor, and when it does not amount to that, though the sinner’s goodness may be as the morning cloud and as the early dew, yet there are frequent times when our hearers are impressed and depressed.

They sit in the pew and begin to think it is all wrong with them. Their soul is cast down, and they wish that they could find salvation. Now is your time, Christian! Now is your time! Do not lose it! Do not let them go behind those curtains, or outside those doors till you have told them that there is lifting up. When the darkness is around their spirits, point them to the great Light of the world. Tell them that “there is life for a look at the Crucified One,” that there is life at this very moment for everyone who casts himself upon the Redeemer’s finished sacrifice! These opportunities are very frequent, and if you think for a minute you will see that they are not to be despised by those of you who wish to win souls.

If David would win the battle he must take care to remember God’s advice. “When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then shall you bestir yourself.” When you see the sign of an impression in a man’s mind, then you should be active to seek to bring the Truth of God home to him, and to lead him to the Cross! For at such times men are willing to hear. They would stop their ears before, but now they will give you a comparatively cheerful audience. No, they are often even anxious to hear!

They will send for the minister when they are sick. And at a funeral, what an opportunity the Christian minister may often have, and not the Christian minister only, but any of you! When God’s great minister, Death, comes into a house, then remember they will want to hear you. A man’s fellow workman, who chaffed the Christian and laughed at him, will be pleased enough to see him when the wife gets ill. And he will even ask him to come and tell her of the things which make for her peace. Never be slow to go, my Brothers and Sisters! If you can but find time, never miss one of these opportunities!

Now that the fish are ready to take the bait, you Galilean fishermen let the nets be cast and the hooks laid, and seek if you can to catch souls! These opportunities, be it remembered, are sent by God for this very purpose. No doubt Providence is the handmaid of Grace. If Christians were but wide awake they would soon see that the wheels of Providence are all working to assist the Church of God. To an earnest Christian laborer everything is a tributary of labor. He knows how to use the roughest instruments. I will venture to say that the beasts of the field are in league with him and the stones of the field are at peace with him. For him cholera is less to be dreaded than to be turned to account—it will give him an entrance where he found none before.

Even poverty, with all its drawbacks, may help the man of God who sincerely desires to bring souls to Jesus. Greatly as you dread the evils which are before you, yet may you have a holy skill to use them, as the mariner does an ill wind, just tacking about, and putting the sail so that the wind, which seemed to drive in his teeth, may help him towards his desired haven. At such times, then, when men are cast down, I say it to you, Brothers and Sisters, and especially would I say it to myself, let none of these favorable seasons be lost!

II. The ACCEPTABLE TIDINGS we have to announce may now, for a few minutes, engage our thoughts. Do any of you say, “If we speak to these people, what are we to tell them?” You are to tell them that, “There is lifting up.” That is the best and most opportune news you can bring them, after all. When men are not cast down we have to tell them that they ought to be. We have to deal out to them the Law of God, as the seamstress takes the sharp needle first and then draws the silken thread afterwards.

But in this case, when a man is cast down, the needle has gone through. Men are impressed, thoughtful, anxious, and now the Gospel which we have to take to them is that there is lifting up. Of all things in the world to be dreaded, despair is the chief. Let a man be abandoned to despair and he is ready for all sorts of sins. When fear unnerves him action is dangerous. But when despair has loosed his joints and paralyzed his conscience, the vultures hover round him waiting for their prey. As long as a man has hope for himself you may have hope of him. But Satan’s object is to drive out the last idea of hope from men that then they may give themselves up to be his slaves forever.

Brothers and Sisters, let me just say to you who are in trouble—and I hope every faithful Christian will repeat what I say again and again— THERE IS HOPE. There is hope about your pecuniary difficulties, about your sickness, about your present affliction. God can help you through it. Do not sit down with your elbows on your knees and cry all day. That will not get you through it. Call upon God who sent the trouble. He has a great design in it. It may be that He has sent it as a shepherd sends his black dog to fetch the wandering sheep to him. It may be He has a design in making you lose temporal things that you may gain eternal things. Many a mother’s soul had not been saved if it had not been for that dear infant which was taken from her bosom—not till it was taken to the skies did God give the attractive influence which drew her heart to pursue the path to Heaven!

Do not say there is no hope! Other people have been as badly off as you are. And even if it should seem as if you have come to the end of your rope, yet still there is hope. Go and try again on Monday morning, [Prayer Meeting at the Tabernacle] my good Friend. God’s Providence has a thousand ways of helping us if we have but the heart to pray. Are you in despair about your character? It may be that there is somewhere here a woman who says, “I have fallen. my character is gone. There is no hope for me.” My Sister, there is lifting up! Some who have fallen as terribly as you have done have been restored by Sovereign Grace.

And there may be one here who has been a drunkard, or about to become a thief—no one knows it, perhaps, but he is conscious of great degradation—and he says, “I shall never be able to look my fellow men in the face.” Ah, my dear Friend, you do not know what Christ can do for you if you but rest and trust in Him! Supposing you should be made into a new creature, would not that alter the matter? “Oh!” you say, “but that can never be!” No, say I, but that shall be, for Christ says, “Behold, I make all things new.” “If any man is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature.”

There was an old fable about a spring at which old men washed their faces and then grew young. Now there is a spring which wells up from the heart of the Lord Jesus, and if an old sinner washes there, not only his face, but his whole spirit shall become like unto a little child, and shall be clean in the sight of God! There is hope still. “Ah,” says one, “but you do not know my case.” No, my dear Friend, and I do not particularly desire to know it, because this sweeping truth can meet it no matter what it may be!

“All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Oh, what a precious Gospel I have to preach! I have not to preach a little Christ for little sinners, but a great Savior for great offenders! Noah’s ark was not made to hold a few mites—the elephant went in, and the lion went in, and the largest beasts of prey went in—and there was found room for each of them. So my Master, who is the great Ark of salvation, did not come into this world to save a few of you who are little sinners—“He is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him.”

See Him yonder? See Him on the Cross in agonies extreme, bearing grief and torment numberless, and sweating in agony—all for love of you who were His enemies? Trust Him! Trust Him, for there is hope! There is lifting up! However bowed down you may be, there is in the Gospel, hope even for you! I seem as if I were walking along a corridor, and I see a number of condemned cells. As I listen at the keyhole I can hear those inside weeping in doleful, dolorous dirges. “There is no hope, no hope, no hope!”

And I can see the warden at the other end smiling calmly to himself, as he knows that none of the prisoners can come out as long as they say there is no hope. It is a sign that their manacles are not broken, and that the bolts of their cells are not removed. But oh, if I could look in! I think I can, I think I can open the little wicket gate, and cry, “There is hope!” He who said there is no hope is a liar and a murderer from the beginning, and the father of lies! There IS hope since Jesus died! There is hope anywhere except in the infernal lake. There is hope in the hospital where a man has sickened, and is within the last hour of his departure. There is hope though men have sinned themselves beyond the pale of society.

There is hope for the convict though he has had to smart under the lash. There is hope for the man who has cast himself away. Jesus is still able to save! “No hope” is not to be said by any of the mariners life brigade while he sights the crew of the sinking vessel. “No hope” is not to be said by any of the fire brigade while he knows there are living men in the burning pile. “No hope” is not to be said by any one of the valiant brigade of the Christian Church while the soul is still within reach of the sound of mercy.

“No hope” is a cry which no human tongue should utter! “No hope” is a cry which no human heart should heed. Oh, may God grant us Grace whenever we get an opportunity to go and tell all we meet with that are bowed down, “There is lifting up.” And tell them where it is likewise. Tell them it is only at the Cross! Tell them it is through the precious blood! Tell them it is to be had for nothing, through simply trusting Christ! Tell them it is of Free Grace, that no merits of theirs are wanted, that no good things are they to bring, but that they may come just as they are, and find lifting up in Christ!

III. What JOYFUL EMPLOYMENT this is! I should like to go forth enlisting tonight! I shall not require you to wear scarlet. You shall wear what you like, but if I may but enlist you I shall be very happy. Christian men and women, all of you without exception, old and young, I want you! I know many of you are already engaged but I want you all to follow out the dictates of my text, “When men are cast down, then you shall say, There is lifting up; and He shall save the humble person.”

I want you to volunteer in this blessed enterprise, this heavenly mission of saying to cast-down ones, “There is lifting up.” If you engage in this holy adventure there are several things which you will need. The first will be observation. You must have a quick eye to know when a man is cast down. Some people are so out of sympathy with souls that they do not know a broken heart from a hard heart—but there is a way of getting into such communion with people without even talking with them—that you know within a little who is impressed and who is not. I should like to have, all over the Tabernacle, a little lot of you Christian people like sentries, watching that young man who is here for the first time to-night.

Watching that young woman who has been here for the last six weeks— watching your opportunity! As soon as ever you see the first wave of the Spirit’s manifestation—the face is often the tell-tale sign of what is going on within—to speak to them. I want you to watch, so as to say, “Now that one is cast down I will break the ice, I will speak, and I will say, There is lifting up.” You must have keen eyes to watch for the Spirit’s work if you are to be fishers of men! Next to this you have need of deep sympathy. If you try to speak for Christ, and do it in a rough way, you had better hold your tongue.

A person I saw only a day or two ago said that she was standing in deep thought after a sermon, under which she had been devoutly impressed, when a good friend accosted her in a gruff voice and with an uncouth manner, and said, “When are you coming forward to join the Church?” It was well meant. But it was done in such a way that every good impression melted before the repulsive tones. Speak gently and kindly, with tenderness and sympathy. You know what I mean. There is a world of difference between the putting on of a pretense of kindness and the real “kindness” which comes right down to a man and makes him feel that you really do sympathize with him, and can enter into all his griefs.

Ask the Lord, Christian Friend, when you have got a quick eye for observation, to drop a tear with it, so that you may know how to weep with them that weep, and to speak gently. Another thing you will want will be knowledge. How can you tell them about the Savior if you do not understand, yourselves, how it is that He saves, or never proved the remedy you attempt to apply? Be well-instructed in the faith, and seek also to be wellinstructed in the twists and turns of the human heart so that you may know how to follow up these persons when they will try to escape from their own mercy, and, if possible, to put from them the comfort which you have to bring them.

In all this you will find great help from your own experience. No luau is so fitted to bring others to Christ as one who has come himself, though perhaps the means by which he was drawn may have been peculiar and somewhat different from the common course. It was said that Martin Luther was one of the best teachers for a minister. He had been so much troubled in getting peace for his own soul that he was singularly wellqualified to assist others who were struggling in the Slough of Despond. Make good use of your experience! Store up lessons from it so you will be making yourselves yet more and more serviceable as a helper to these distressed ones.

Add to your experience assurance. The text does not tell us to say to these people, “I hope there may be lifting up,” but, “There is lifting up.” Full assurance makes a man strong. The Gospel is your lever, but full assurance must be the arm to work it with. Yes, and the fulcrum, too, upon which the lever must rest. Know yourselves to be saved! Do not live in the misty dungeon of doubt, where, “I hope so,” is the only ray of light that breaks through the crevice, while, “I fear it is not so,” is the reflection cast on the opposite wall. Come forth into the daylight that you may be sure of it. Then you will be able to speak boldly and so you will be likely to comfort those that are cast down.

And do let me recommend promptness to you. There is nothing like quickness and decision in speaking when the opportunity presents itself. If you are about to seal a letter, you must bring down the seal while the wax is still hot enough to receive the impression. Do not procrastinate, and say, “Well, I should like to speak to that young man, but I will put it off till tomorrow.” If he has the appearance of being impressionable tonight, look after him now! As “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,” so a present opportunity is worth unspeakably more than any precarious venture that lies beyond your present reach. Do not let the time slip.

While, however, it becomes you to be prompt, you need not be in a hurry. Calm self-possession is very preferable to impetuous haste. I remember seeing a doctor when there was an accident in the street. He proceeded immediately to the spot, but do you think he went rushing down to the man as if he would break his neck? No. On the contrary, he walked down very quietly and demurely to the chemist’s shop where the man was lying, and I could not help thinking that this was a common-sense thing to do even in an emergency—for if he had run and got out of breath, he would not have been able to have done half so well when he got there as he was able to do by going steadily to his work.

The feverish excitement of hurry you should avoid—but there must be no delay. Unseemly haste might spoil your aim because you would not be able to speak properly. But a senseless hesitancy would miss the golden opportunity, thwart the purpose altogether and leave you to regret that you had ever spoken at all. Still nothing will avail unless there is much prayer. We had need pray that God may give efficacy to the counsels He has given us, and reward our obedience to them with abundant fruit. Oh, Brethren, prayer is the grand thing, after all, for us who have no might of ourselves!

It is wonderful what prayer can do for any of us. A dear Friend said the other day, “Look at Jacob. In the early part of his life there was much that was unseemly in his character, and very much that was unhappy in his circumstances. Crafty himself, he was often the victim of craft, reaping the fruit of his own ways. But one night in prayer—what a change it did make in him! Why it raised him from the deep poverty of a cunning supplanter to the noble peerage of a prince in Israel!”

Bethel itself is hardly more memorable in his history than Peniel. And what might one night spent in prayer do for some of us? Supposing we were to try it instead of the soft bed! We need not go to the brook—it is enough that, like Jacob, we are alone in some place where sighs and cries would be heard by none but God. One night spent thus in solitary prayer might put the spurs on some of you, and make you spiritual knights in God’s army, able to do great exploits. Oh, yes, may all other gracious exercises be started in prayer, crowned with prayer, and perfected by much prayer.

IV. I must now close by noticing some STIMULATING MOTIVES to engage in this blessed employment. Remember, Christian Friend, your own case. When you were troubled in spirit did anybody speak to you? Then you are bound to repay the kindness by speaking to someone who is now in the same condition. Or do you say that nobody spoke to you? Well, then, I am sure you blame them for not doing so, and you may well see to it that you do not incur the same censure yourselves.

I thank God that most of you do try to look after souls. But occasionally, very occasionally, it happens that a young convert will say to me, “I have been here six months, Sir, and no one has spoken to me.” I sometimes ask them in what part of the Tabernacle they sit, and yet I do not like to know when I am informed. However, I will suppose that I have forgotten it now, or, at least I will forbear to indicate it tonight, but one of these times I shall make bold to say that there is a certain corner of the Tabernacle where nobody seems to care for souls. If I should do that, you know, it will be a cause of blushing and of shame to some of you!

Do mend your ways before it comes to that. Oh, do not let there be a single spot in this place where it shall be possible for a person to sit even for a month without someone earnestly asking him about his soul! Do it wisely, prudently, gently—not rudely, but lovingly—not intrusively, but kindly. Who can tell how much good may be done by this simple means! Let it be done with a gracious motive, remembering how needful it was in your own case. Let it be done, moreover, with a grateful recollection of what you owe to Christ. Oh, you owe your own soul to Him! How can you repay Him but by bringing others?

I beseech you, prove your gratitude—not by bringing the alabaster box and breaking it upon His head—but by bringing sinners whose penitence and faith shall be sweeter perfume even than the costly ointment which the woman poured on her Lord. Watch for souls out of gratitude to Him. Let me cheer you onward by the prospect of success. Perhaps the very first person you speak to may be given you for your reward! Possibly you may meet with a repulse. If so, try again, and yet again and again—as long as you have breath. But what if you should bring only one soul to Christ? It were a rich reward for a thousand disappointments! Remember, dear Friends, that it is for your own good. While you sleep you do not know whether you love Christ or not—but you would soon prove the sincerity of your love if you were trying to serve Him.

You do not know what you can do till you have tried! He who can only do a little, if he does that little, will soon be able to do twice as much! If he still perseveres, he will be able to do four times as much presently, and his labors of love will increase and multiply till I know not what extent they may reach. You cannot preach, the most part of you. You could not go out into the street and proclaim the Word of Life, but you can talk to a neighbor—any or all of you! And since this is a thing that you can do, do it, I pray you! It may be breaking the ice for you, and by-and-by you will be able to swim in the deep waters and serve the Lord right well. To make a beginning, therefore, I ask you to do this small thing.

Oh, my Christian Friends, shall the blood of souls lie on any of you? Would you wish to feel that you were responsible for the spiritual ruin of some person who sits next to you here? I wish I could always feel that I was clear of the blood of this congregation myself. I do seek to be. Yet I feel convinced that my own efforts for the conversion of men are so feeble that if I do not have the assistance of you all, I cannot reckon upon a blessing commensurate to the great assembly gathered here. But if you will help me! If you will each of you watch as some of you do! If you will each pray as some of you do! If you all catch the holy enthusiasm and are filled with the Divine fire, I know not what eternal purposes God may here fulfill, nor what glory He may bring to His name!

You have, many of you, been Christians now for years. You are not young, raw recruits that need to be trained in the very elements of our spiritual warfare. You have seen battle. You have been in the midst of its din. I speak to you as to veterans—serve your God, now. By the blood that bought you, by the Spirit that quickened you, by the rest that is in store for you, by the Hell that awaits sinners if they perish—I charge you by the living God, the Judge of the quick and the dead—be instant in season and out of season! Be ever abundant in every good word and work! Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord! And may His blessing descend upon the whole of our efforts, through His Divine Spirit.

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÷Job 23.10

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?  
NO. 2098

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 4, 1889, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“But He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”  
Job 23:10.**

On several Sabbath mornings of late I have earnestly handled spiritual subjects which I trust may have been for the edification of the people of God. But it will not do to continue in that line. I am a fisher of men as well as a shepherd of the flock. I must attend to both offices. Here are souls perishing, sinners that need to be saved by Christ, and therefore I must leave the flock and go after the wanderers. I must lay down the crook and take up the net.

By a simple sermon, full of earnest expostulation, I would reason with the careless. At this moment I have not so much to expound doctrine as to arouse hearts. Oh, for the power of the Holy Spirit, without which I must utterly fail in my design! We have this morning been praying for the conversion of many—we expect our prayers to be heard. The question is not, Will there be any converted under this sermon? But, Who will it be? I trust many who have come here with no higher motive than to see the great congregation and to hear the preacher, may, nevertheless, be met with in God’s infinite mercy and placed in the way of eternal life. May this be the spiritual birthday of many—a day to be remembered by them throughout eternity!

Job could not understand the way of God with him. He was greatly perplexed. He could not find the Lord, with whom at some prior time he constantly abode. He cries, “Behold, I go forward but He is not there. And backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He does work but I cannot behold Him: He hides Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him.” But if Job knew not the way of the Lord, the Lord knew Job’s way.

It is a great comfort that when we cannot see the Lord, He sees us, and perceives the way that we take. It is not so important that we should understand what the Lord is doing as that the Lord should understand what we are doing and that we should be impressed by the great fact that He does understand it. Our case may be quite beyond our own comprehension, but it is all plain to Him who sees the end from the beginning and understands the secrets of all hearts.

Because God knew his way, Job turned from the unjust judgments of his unfeeling friends and appealed to the Lord God Himself. He pleaded in the supreme court, where his case was known and he refused the verdicts of erring men. He that does right seeks the light. And as Job saw that the light was with God, he hastened to that light, that his deeds might be made manifest. Like a bird of the day, which begins to signal the return

of the morning, he could sing when he stood in the light of God. He was glad that the Lord knew his way, his motive and his desires. For from that truth he inferred that he would be helped in his trials and brought safely through them—“When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

These words afford rich consolation to the saints. And if I were to use them for that purpose, I should expect the Lord’s people greatly to rejoice in the Lord, whose observant eyes and gracious thoughts are always upon them. Our whole condition lies open to Him with whom we have to do. Though never understood by men, we are understood by our God—

*“It is no surprising thing  
That we should be unknown—  
The Jewish world knew not their King,  
God’s everlasting Son.”*

As the Son of God was known to the Father, though unknown to all the world, so are we hidden from the knowledge of men but well known of the Most High. “The Lord knows them that are His.” “You have known my soul in adversities.”

I quit the design of comforting the people of God for the more presently pressing work of arousing the unconverted. Their way is evil and the end thereof is destruction. Oh, that I could arouse them to a sense of their condition! To that end I shall ask four questions of every man and woman within reach of my voice. God knows the way that you take. I will ask you first—Do you know your own way? Secondly—Is it a comfort to you that God knows your way? Thirdly—Are you tried in the way? And, if so, fourthly—Have you confidence in God as to the result of that trial? Can you say with Job, “When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold”?

I. My Hearer, I ask you, first—Do You have a way? There is a way which you have taken, chosen, selected for yourself—there is a way which you follow in desire, word and act. So far as your life is left to your own management, there is a way which you voluntarily take and willingly follow. Do you know what that way is? It is not everyone who does know as much as that. It is a very simple question to put to you. But yet it is a very needful one to a great many. For many walk on as in a dream.

Do you know where you are going? “Of course,” says one, “everybody knows where he is going.” Do you know where you are going and do you carefully consider your end? You are steaming across the deep sea of time into the main ocean of eternity—to what port are you steering? Where go you, O Man? The birds in the Heaven know their time and place when they fly away in due season. But do you know where you are speeding? Do you keep watch, looking ahead for the shore? What shore are you expecting to see? For what purpose are you living? What is the end and drift of your daily action?

I fear that many in this vast congregation are not prepared to give a deliberate answer which will be pleasant to utter and to think upon. Is not this suspicious? If I were to go out tomorrow by sea, I should not walk on board a steamboat and then enquire, “Where are you going?” The captain would think me a crazy fellow if I embarked before I knew where the vessel was going. I first make up my mind where I will go, and then select a vessel which is likely to carry me there in comfort. You must know where you are going.

The main thing with the captain of a steamer will be the getting his vessel safely into the port for which it is bound. This design overrules everything else. To get into port is the thought of every watch, every glance at the chart, every observation of the stars. The captain’s heart is set upon the other side. His hope is safely to arrive at the desired haven and he knows which is the haven of his choice. He would not expect to get there if he did not set his mind on it. How is it with you, dear Friend? You are speeding towards Heaven or Hell—which of these is your port?

I know of no ultimate abode of souls except the brightness of the Father’s glory, or the darkness of Jehovah’s wrath—which of these will be your end? Which way are you intentionally going? What is it you are aiming at? Are you living for God? Or are you so living that the result must be eternal banishment from His Presence?

Surely, to press this inquiry upon you needs no eloquence of speech. The question is vital to your happiness and self-interest should induce you to weigh it. I shall not use a single metaphor or illustration. For I am not here to please, but to arouse. I charge every man and woman in this house now to consider this question—Where are you going? What will be the end of the life you are now leading? Do not cast away the inquiry. It is not impertinent. It is not unnecessary. In the name of the Lord, I beseech you, answer me.

If you answer that question, allow me to put another—Do you know how you are going? In what strength are you pursuing your journey? If you feel able to say, “I am seeking that which is right and good,” I then press the inquiry, In what strength are you pursuing it? Are you depending upon your own power, or have you received strength from on High? Do you rely on your own resolves and determinations, or have you received help from the Spirit of God? Remember, there are days in every life-voyage in which the storm-fiend puts all human power to a nonplus. Even in the fairest weather we are all too apt to run on rocks or quicksand.

But the voyage of life is seldom altogether a pleasant one and we must be prepared for tempests. Our own unaided strength will not endure the waves and the winds of the ocean of life. And if you are trusting to yourself, disaster will befall you. The Lord brings men to the desired haven. But left to themselves, they are no match for the thousand dangers of their mysterious voyage. Is God with you? Has the Lord Jesus become your strength and your song? Do you sail beneath the blood-red flag of the Cross? If you are trusting in the Lord alone, disappointment, failure and shipwreck are impossible.

But if you are hastening on without God for your Guide and Protector, then will your weakness and folly be made clear before long to your inevitable ruin. You may put on all steam and forge ahead in the teeth of the wind. But all in vain—you will never reach the fair havens. Are there any here who decline to answer my question? Will you not tell us where you are going? When a great vessel is crossing the sea and another comes within sight, they propose the question, “Where are you bound?” If the other vessel took no notice, gave no answer whatever, it would look suspicious.

A craft that will not say where it is going! We don’t like the looks of it. If one of Her Majesty’s vessels were about and it challenged a sail and received no reply to the question, “To what port are you bound?” I think they would fire a shot across her bow and make her heave to, till she did answer. Might not the silent craft prove to be a pirate? When a man confesses that he does not know where he is going, or what his business may be, the policeman concludes that he is probably going where he ought not to go and has business on hand which is not what it should be. If you are afraid to consider your future, your fear is a bad omen.

The tradesman who is afraid to look into his accounts will before long have them looked into for him by an officer from the Bankruptcy Court. He that dares not see his own face in the glass must be an ugly fellow. And you that dare not behold your own characters, have bad characters. Not know where you are going? Ah me, do you wish to find yourselves in Hell all of a sudden? Would you, like the rich man, lift up your eyes in hopeless misery? I am suspicious of you who cannot tell where you are going. And I wish you would be suspicious of yourselves. You who do not like self-examination are the persons who need it most. You who shun awkward questions are the very people who need to face them.

I usually speak out—pretty plainly—and those of you who are used to me are not displeased. But sometimes strange hearers are offended and say that they will not come to be spoken to in such a fashion. Ah, my Friend! Your ill humor shows that you are in an ill condition and do not care to be corrected. If you were honestly desirous to be set right, you would like straight talk and honest rebukes. Do you prefer to go to a doctor who is known to say, “There is not much the matter—a little change and a dose of medicine, will soon put you all right”? Do you pay your guineas to be flattered? No.

The man who is wise wants to know the truth, however alarming that truth may be. The man who is honest and hopeful, desires a thorough examination and invites the preacher to deal truthfully with him, even if the result should cause distress of mind. If you decline to see where you are going, it is because you are going down into the pit. If you decline to answer the question, What is your way? I fear your way is one that you cannot defend, whose end will cause you endless lament.

Is anyone here compelled to say, “I have chosen the evil road”? Remember, the Lord knows the way that you take. I am anxious that you should, yourself, know the truth about your condition and prospects. I dread much your going on in ignorance. I wish every man here who is serving Satan to be aware that he is doing it. “If Jehovah is God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him”—be hearty one way or the other. If you have chosen the service of sin, own it like a man, to yourself, at least. Choose your way of life in broad daylight. If you propose to die without hope in Christ, say as much.

If you resolve to let the future happen as it may, and to run all risks, then put down in black and white your daring resolution. If you believe that you shall die like a dog and see no hereafter, do not at all conceal from yourself your doggish degradation but be true to your own choice. If you choose the way of evil pleasures, do it deliberately, and after weighing all that can be said on the other side.

But there is this comfort to me, if it does not comfort you—that if you have chosen the wrong way, that choice need not stand. The Grace of God can come in and lead you at once to reverse your course. Oh, that you may now say, “I had not thought of it but I certainly am going in the wrong direction and, God helping me, I will not go an inch further!” Through our Lord Jesus Christ the past can be forgiven. And by the power of the Holy Spirit the present and the future can be changed. The Grace of God can lead you to turn away from that which you have eagerly followed, and cause you to seek after that which you have disregarded.

Oh, that today your cry might be, “For holiness and Heaven!” You have not been up to now on the Lord’s side but now enlist in the army of the Lord Jesus. I would gladly stay your vessel in her evil voyage. I am firing a shot across your bow. I solemnly warn you to consider your ways. Think, what will the end of these things be? Break off your sins by righteousness. For it is time to seek the Lord. “Turn you, turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel?” This is the voice of God’s own Word to you—hear it and be admonished and, God helping you, turn at once.

But, my Friend, are you drifting? Do you say, “I am not distinctly sailing for Heaven, neither am I resolutely steering in the other direction. I do not quite know what to say of myself”? Are you drifting, then? Are you like a vessel which is left to the mercy of the winds and the waves? Ignoble condition! Perilous case! What? Are you no more than a log on the water? I should not like to be a passenger in a vessel which had no course marked out on the chart, no pilot at the wheel, no man at watch. Surely, you must be derelict, if not water-logged. And you will come to a total wreck before long.

Yours is a dark prospect. Some time ago, I read in a paper of a gentleman being brought up before the magistrate. What was the charge against him? “Nothing very serious,” you will say. He was found wandering in the fields. He was asked where he was going and he said he was not going anywhere. He was asked where he came from and he said he did not know. They asked him where his home was and he said he had none. They brought him up for wandering as—what?—a dangerous lunatic. The man who has no aim or object in life but just wanders about anywhere or nowhere, acts like a dangerous lunatic and assuredly he is not morally sane.

What? Am I aiming at nothing? Have I all this machinery of life, making up a vessel more wonderful than the finest steamboat and am I going nowhere? My heartthrobs are the pulsing of a Divinely arranged machinery—do they beat for nothing? Do I get up every morning and go about this world and work hard and all for nothing which will last? As a being created of God for noble purposes, am I spending my existence in a purposeless manner? How foolish! Why, surely, I have need, like the prodigal, to come to myself. And if I do come to myself, I shall ask myself, Can it be right that I should thus be wasting the precious gifts of time and life and

power? If I were nothing, it were congruous that I should aim at nothing. But, being a man, I ought to have a high purpose and to pursue it heartily.

Do not say that you are drifting. It is a terrible answer, implying grievous danger and casting a suspicion upon your sanity. If you have reason, use it in a reasonable way and do not play the fool.

But can you say, “Yes, I am bound for the right port”? It may be that your accents are trembling with a holy fear. But none the less I am glad to hear you say as much. I rejoice if you say, “Christ commands me. I am trusting to His guidance. He is my way, my life, my end.” Dear Friend, I congratulate you. We will sail together, as God shall help us, under the convoy of our Lord Jesus, who is the Lord High Admiral of the sea of life. We will keep with His squadron till we cast anchor in the glassy sea.

But now that you know your way and are assured that you are on the right tack, put on all steam. Exert your strength in the work to which your life is consecrated. Waste not a single moment. Let no energy lie dormant, arouse every faculty. If you are serving the Lord, serve Him with all your might. Is it not written, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”? Those words sound to me like great strokes of the soul’s paddle wheels! They urge us to press forward in the holy voyage.

Brothers and Sisters, we must run, for our life is to be a race. It must be hard running, too. “Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” If we really are on the right way, let us press forward with all our powers. And may God help us that we may win the prize! Answer this first question and know of a surety whose you are, and where you are, and where you are going.

II. Secondly, IS IT A COMFORT TO YOU THAT GOD KNOWS YOUR WAY? Solemnly, I believe that one of the best tests of human character is our relation to the great Truth of God’s omniscience. If it startles you that God sees you, then you ought to be startled. If it delights you that God sees you, you may reasonably conclude that there is within your heart that which is right and true, which God will approve of. You are among those who know the truth, for you come to the light and cry, “Search me, O God.”

Allow me to apply the test to you now, by asking what you think of the Truth of God that the Lord knows you altogether. Remember, if your heart condemns you, God is greater than your heart and knows all things. But if your heart condemns you not, then have you confidence towards God. Dear Friend, it is quite certain that God does know the way that you take. The Hebrew may be read, “He knows the way that is in me,” from which I gather that the Lord not only knows our outward actions but our inward feelings. He knows our likes and dislikes, our desires and our designs, our imaginations and tendencies. He knows not only what we do but what we would do if we could.

He knows which way we should go if the restraints of society and the fear of consequences were removed. And that, perhaps, is a more important proof of character than the actions of which we are guilty. God knows what you think of, what you wish for, what you are pleased with—He knows not only the surface of your character but the secret heart and core of it. The Lord knows you altogether. Think of that. Does it give you any joy, this morning, to think that the Lord thus reads all the secrets of your bosom? Whether you rejoice therein or not, so it is and ever will be.

The Lord knows you approvingly if you follow that which is right. He knows them that put their trust in Him. That is to say, He approves of them. If there is in you even a faint desire towards God, He knows it and looks with pleasure upon it. If you practice private prayer, if you do good by stealth, if you conquer evil passions, if you honor Him by patience, if you present gifts to Him which nobody ever hears of—He knows it all and He smiles upon it. Does this give you pleasure, greater pleasure than if men praised you for it? Then it is well with you. But if you put the praise of men before the approval of God, you are in an evil way. If you can say this morning, “I am glad that He knows what I do, for His approval is Heaven to me,” then conclude that there is a work of Grace in your heart and that you are a follower of Jesus.

God knows your way, however falsely you may be represented by others. Those three men who had looked so askance upon Job, accused him of hypocrisy and of having practiced some secret evil. But Job could answer, “The Lord knows the way that I take.” Are you the victim of slander? The Lord knows the truth. Though you have been sadly misunderstood, if not willfully misrepresented by ungenerous persons, yet God knows all about you. And His knowledge is of more importance than the opinions of dying men. If you are not afraid to put your character and profession before the eyes of the Lord, you have small reason for disquietude, though all men should cast out your name as evil.

The Lord knows the way that you take, though you could not yourself describe that way. Some gracious people are slow of speech and they have great difficulty in saying anything about their soul affairs. Coming to see the elders of the Church is quite an ordeal. I am half afraid that they even feel it a trial to see me, poor creature that I am. They are timid in speech, though they would be bold in act. They could die for Jesus but they find it hard to speak for Him. Their heart is all right. But when they begin to talk, their tongue fails them. They are unable to describe their conversion, though they feel it. They love repentance but can barely describe their own repenting.

They have believed in the Lord Jesus but it would puzzle them to tell what faith is. Trembling One, fall back on this—“He knows the way that I take.” If I cannot express my faith, yet He accepts it—if I cannot describe His work in my soul, yet He discerns the work of His own hands. Another great mercy is that God knows the way we take when we hardly know it ourselves. There are times with the true children of God when they cannot see their way, nor even take their bearings. It is not every saint that knows his longitude and latitude. No, it is not every saint that is sure that he is a saint. We have to ask, “Is my repentance real? Is my faith true?

Have I really passed from death to life? Am I the Lord’s own?”

I do not wish you to be in such a state—it is a pity that such a question should be possible. But I know full well that many sincere saints are often put to the question and not altogether without reason. Herein is comfort— the Lord knows His children and He knows the truth of their graces, the preciousness of their faith, the heavenliness of their life. For He is the Former, the Author of them all. He knows His own work and cannot be deceived. Therefore, dear Friends, let us feel confident in God’s knowledge of us, since He is greater than our hearts and His verdict is more sure than that of conscience itself.

Once more, remember that at this very moment God knows your ways. He knows not only the way you have taken and the way you will take, but the way you are now choosing for yourself. He knows how you are acting towards the sermon you are hearing. It may be you conclude that the preacher is very tiresome. Be it so—but still the subject is one which ought to be pressed upon your consideration. Therefore, bear with me. But if you reply, “No, it is not that. But I do not want to be probed and pressed in this way.” Well, the Lord knows that you are taking the way of resisting His Spirit and hardening your neck against rebuke. Do you like that fact?

I think I hear one say, “I really wish to be right and I am afraid I am not right. Oh, that I could be made so!” God knows that feeling—breathe it into His ear in prayer. If you can say, “I am willing to be tested. I know to what port I am going. I am no pirate. I am bound for the New Jerusalem,” then I rejoice. Well, well, the Lord knows. He dearly sees your present thoughts, your present wishes, your present resolves. He knows your heart. Is that a comfort to you? If it is, well. But if it saddens you that God should know your present condition, then be afraid, for there is something about you to be afraid of.

He that sews fig leaves together, as Adam did, that he may hide himself from God, must know that he is naked. If he were clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, he would seek no concealment but would be willing both to examine himself and to be examined of the Lord. Thus have I handled these two questions—Do you know your way? Is it a comfort to you that God knows your way?

III. Thirdly, DO YOU MEET WITH TRIALS IN THE WAY? I anticipate your answer. Out of the many here present, not one has been quite free from sorrow. I think I hear one saying, “Sir, I have had more trouble since I have been a Christian than I ever had before.” I met with such a case the other day—a man said to me, “I never went to a place of worship for many years and I always seemed to prosper. At last I began to think of Divine things and I attended the House of God. But since then I have had nothing but trouble.” He did not murmur against God but he did think it very strange. Friend, listen to me. These troubles are no token that you are in the wrong way. Job was in the right way and the Lord knew it. And yet He allowed Job to be very fiercely tried.

Consider that there are trials in all ways. Even the road to destruction, broad as it is, has not a path in it which avoids trial. Some sinners go over hedge and ditch to Hell. If a man resolves to be a worldling, he will not find that the paths of sin are paths of peace. The wicked may well be ill at ease—for God walks contrary to them because they walk contrary to Him. No man, be he on the throne, or on the woolsack, or up in a mill, or down in a coal pit, can live without affliction.

In a cottage near a wood there are troubles as well as in the palace by the sea. We are born to trouble—if you look for a world without thorns and thistles, you will not find it here. Then, remember, the very brightest of the saints have been afflicted. We have in the Bible, records of the lives of Believers. Can you remember the life of a single Believer who lived and died without sorrow? I cannot. Begin with father Abraham—the Lord did try Abraham. Go on to Moses, a king in Israel. Were not his trials many and heavy? Remember David and all his afflictions.

Come down to New Testament times. The Apostles were so tried that one of them said, “If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.” Through much tribulation they reached their rest. If the saints of God confessed that theirs was a troublous way, you need not suppose that you are out of the road because your way is full of difficulty. Is there any ocean upon which a ship can sail in which it shall be quite sure that no storms will arise? Where there is sea there may be storms. So where there is life there will be changes, temptations, difficulties and sorrows.

Trials are no evidence of being without God—many trials come from God. Job says, “When He has tried me.” He sees God in his afflictions. The devil actually worked the trouble. But the Lord not only permitted it but He had a design in it. Without the Divine concurrence, none of his afflictions could have happened. It was God that tried Job, and it is God that tries us. No trouble comes to us without Divine permission. All the dogs of affliction are muzzled until God sets them free. No, against none of the seed of Israel can a dog move its tongue unless God permits.

Troubles do not spring out of the ground like weeds that grow anywhere but they grow as plants set in the garden. God appoints the weight and number of all our adversities. If He declares their number ten, they cannot be eleven. If He wills that we bear a certain weight, no one can add half an ounce more. Since every trial comes from God, afflictions are no evidence that you are out of God’s way.

Besides, according to the text, these trials are tests—“When He has tried me.” The trials that came to Job were made to be proofs that the Patriarch was real and sincere. Did not the enemy say—“Have not You made an hedge about him and about his house and about all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has and he will curse You to Your face.” The devil will have it that as dogs follow men for bones, so do we follow God for what we can get out of Him.

The Lord lets the devil see that our love is not bought by temporal goods. That we are not mercenary followers but loving children of the Lord, so that under dire suffering we exclaim, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” By the endurance of grief, our sincerity is made manifest—and it is proven that we are not mere pretenders but true heirs of God.

Once more upon this point—if you have met with troubles, remember they will come to an end. The holy man in our text says, “When He has tried me.” As much as to say, He will not always be doing it. There will come a time when He will have done trying me. Beloved, put a stout heart to a steep hill and you will climb it before long. Put the ship in good trim for a storm, and though the winds may howl for a while, they will at length sob themselves asleep. There is a sea of glass for us after the sea of storms. Only have patience and the end will come.

Many a man of God has lived through a hundred troubles when he thought one would kill him. And so will it be with you. You young beginners, you that are bound for the kingdom but have only lately started for it, be not amazed if you meet with conflicts. If you very soon meet with difficulties, be not surprised. Let your trials be evidence to you that you are in the right, rather than that you are in the wrong way—“for what son is he whom the Father chastens not?” He that will go to Hell will find many to help him there. But he that will go to Heaven may have to cut his way through a host of adversaries.

Pluck up your courage. The rod is one of the tokens of the child of God. If you were not God’s child you might be left unchastened. But inasmuch as you are dear to Him, He will whip you when you disobey. If you were only a bit of common clay, God would not put you into the furnace. But as you are gold and He knows it, you must be refined. And to be refined it is needful that the fire should exercise its power upon you. Because you are bound for Heaven you will meet with storms on your voyage to glory.

IV. Fourthly, HAVE YOU CONFIDENCE IN GOD AS TO THESE STORMS? Can you say, in the language of the text, “When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold”? If you are really trusting in Jesus, if He is everything to you, you may say this confidently. For you will find it true to the letter. If you have really given yourself up to be saved by Divine Grace, do not hesitate to believe that you will be found safe at the last. I do not like people to come and trust Christ with a temporary faith as though He could keep them for a day or two but could not preserve them all their lives. Trust Christ for everlasting salvation—mark the word “everlasting.”

I thank God, that when I believed in His Son, Jesus Christ, I laid hold upon final perseverance—I believed that where He had begun a good work He would carry it on and perfect it in the day of Christ. I believed in the Lord Jesus, not for a year or two but for all the days of my life and to eternity. I want your faith to have a hand of that kind, so that you grasp the Lord as your Savior to the uttermost. I cannot tell what troubles may come, nor what temptations may arise. But I know in whose hands I am and I am persuaded that He is able to preserve me, so that when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. I go into the fire but I shall not be burned up in it—“I shall come forth.”

Like the three holy children, though the furnace was heated seven times hotter, yet the Son of Man will be with me in the furnace and, “I shall come forth,” with not even the smell of fire upon me. Yes, “I shall come forth,” and none can hinder me. It is good to begin with this holy confidence and to let that confidence increase as you get nearer to the recompense of the reward. Has He not promised that we shall never perish? Shall we not, therefore, come forth as gold?

This confidence is grounded on the Lord’s knowledge of us. “He knows the way that I take”—therefore—“when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” If something happened to us which the Lord had not foreseen and provided for, we might be in great peril. But He knows our ways even to the end and is prepared for its rough places. If some amazing calamity could come upon us which the Lord had not reckoned upon, we might well be afraid of being wrecked. But our Lord’s foreseeing eyes have swept the horizon and prepared us for all weathers. He knows where storms do lurk and cyclones hide away. And He is at home in managing tempests and tornadoes.

If His far-seeing eyes have spied out for us a long sickness and a gradual and painful death, then He has prepared the means to bear us through. If He has looked into the mysterious unknown of the apocalyptic revelation and seen unimaginable horrors and heart-melting terrors, yet He has forestalled the necessity which He knows is coming on. It is enough for us that our Father knows what things we have need of and, “when He has tried us, we shall come forth as gold.”

This confidence must be sustained by sincerity. If a man is not sure that he is sincere, he cannot have confidence in God. If you are a bit of gold and know it, the fire and you are friends. You will come forth out of it. For no fire will burn up gold. But if you suspect that you are some imitation metal, some mixture which glitters, but is not gold, you will then hate fire and have no good word for it. You will proudly murmur at the Divine dispensations, Why should I be put into the fire? Why should I be tried? You will kick against God’s Providence if you are a hypocrite. But if you are really sincere, you will submit to the Divine hand and will not lie down in despair.

The motto of pure gold is, “I shall come forth.” Make it your hopeful confidence in the day of trouble. I want you to have this sense of sincerity which makes you know that you are what you profess to be, that you may also have the conviction that you will come forth out of every possible trial. I shall be tempted, but “I shall come forth.” I shall be denounced by slander, but “I shall come forth.” Be of good cheer—if you go into the fire gold, you will come forth gold!

Once more, he says, “I shall come forth as gold.” But how does that come forth? It comes forth proved. It has been assayed and is now warranted pure. So shall you be. After the trial you will be able to say, “Now I know that I fear God. Now I know that God is with me, sustaining me. Now I see that He has helped me and I am sure that I am His.”

How does gold come forth? It comes forth purified. A lump of ore may not be so big as when it went into the fire but it is quite as precious. There is quite as much gold in it now as there was at first. What has gone? Nothing but that which is best gone. The dross has gone. But all the gold is there. O Child of God, you may decrease in bulk but not in bullion!

You may lose importance but not innocence. You may not talk so big, but there shall be really more to talk of. And what a gain it is to lose dross! What gain to lose pride! What gain to lose self-sufficiency! What gain to lose all those propensities to boastings that are so abundantly there! You may thank God for your trials, for you will come forth as purified gold.

Once more, how does gold come forth from the furnace? It comes forth ready for use. Now the goldsmith may take it and make what he pleases of it. It has been through the fire and the dross has been taken away from it and it is fit for his use. So, Beloved, if you are on the way to Heaven and you meet with difficulties, they will bring you preparation for higher service—you will be a better and more useful person. You will be a woman whom God can more fully use to comfort others of a sorrowful spirit.

Spiritual afflictions are heavenly promotions. You are going a rank higher—God is putting another stripe upon your arm. You were only a corporal, but now He is making a sergeant of you. Be not discouraged. You that have set out for Heaven this morning, do not go back because you get a rainy day when you start. Do not be like Pliable. When he got to the Slough of Despond, and tumbled in, all he did was to struggle to get out on the side nearest home. He said, “If I may only once get out of this bog, you may have that grand city for yourself.”

Come, be like Christian, who, though he did sink, always kept his face in the right way and always turned his back to the City of Destruction. “No,” he said, “if I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, I will go down with my eyes towards the hills from where comes my help.” “I am bound for Canaan and if all the Canaanites stand in the way in one block, I will die with my face towards Jerusalem—I still will hold on, God helping me, even unto the end.”

May the Lord so bless you, for He knows the way you take. And when He has tried you, He will bring you forth as gold. Amen.  
**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 139.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—914, 139, 701.  
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1526 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 23.11

THE FAIR PORTRAIT OF A SAINT  
NO. 1526

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 7, 1880, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“My foot has held fast to His steps, His way have I kept and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” Job 23:11, 12.**

THUS Job speaks of himself, not by way of boasting, but by way of vindication. Eliphaz the Temanite and his two companions had brought distinct charges against Job’s character. Because they saw him in such utter misery they concluded that his adversity must have been sent as a punishment for his sin and, therefore, they judged him to be a hypocrite who, under cover of religion, had exercised oppression and tyranny. Zophar had hinted that wickedness was sweet in Job’s mouth and that he hid iniquity under his tongue. Eliphaz charged him with hardness of heart to the poor and dared to say, “You have taken a pledge from your brother for nothing and stripped the naked of their clothing.” This last, from its very impossibility, was meant to show the extreme meanness to which he falsely imagined that Job must have descended—how could he strip the naked? He was evidently firing at random.

As neither he nor his companions could discover any palpable blot in Job upon which they could distinctly lay their finger, they bespattered him right and left with their groundless accusations. They made up, in venom, for the lack of evidence to back their charges. They felt sure that there must be some great sin in him to have procured such extraordinary afflictions and, therefore, by smiting him all over, they hoped to touch the sore place. Let them stand as a warning to us never to judge men by their circumstances and never to conclude that a man must be wicked because he has fallen from riches to poverty.

Job, however, knew his innocence and he was determined not to give way to them. He said, “You are forgers of lies, physicians of no value. O that you would altogether hold your peace and it should be your wisdom!” He fought the battle right manfully. Not, perhaps, without a little display of temper and self-righteousness, but still, with much less of either than any of us would have shown had we been in the same plight and had we been equally conscious of perfect integrity. He has, in this part of his selfdefense, sketched a fine picture of a man perfect and upright before God. He has set before us the image to which we should seek to be conformed. Here is the high ideal after which every Christian should strive and happy shall he be who shall attain to it.

Blessed is he who, in the hour of his distress, if he is falsely accused, will be able to say with as much truth as the Patriarch could, “My foot has held His steps, His way have I kept and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” I ask you, first, to inspect the picture of Job’s holy life, that you may make it your model. After we have done this, we will look a little below the surface, asking the question, “How was he enabled to lead such an admirable life as this? Upon what meat did this great Patriarch feed that he had grown so eminent?”

We shall find the answer in our second head, Job’s holy sustenance—“I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” May He, who worked in Job His patience and integrity, by this, our meditation, teach us the same virtues by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I. Let us sit down before this sketch of JOB’S HOLY LIFE—it will well repay a meditative study. Note, first, that Job had been, all along, a man fearing God and walking after the Divine Rule. In the words before us he dwells much upon the things of God—“His steps.” “His way.” “The commandment of His lips.” “The words of His mouth.” He was pre-eminently one that “feared God and eschewed evil.” He knew God to be the Lord and worthy to be served and, therefore, he lived in obedience to His Law which was written upon his instructed conscience. His way was God’s way! He chose that course which the Lord commanded. He did not seek his own pleasure, nor the carrying out of his own will.

Neither did He follow the fashion of the times, nor conform himself to the ruling opinion or custom of the age in which he lived—fashion and custom were nothing to him—he knew no rule but the will of the Almighty. Like some tall cliff which breasts the flood, he stood out almost alone, a witness for God in an idolatrous world. He acknowledged the living God and lived “as seeing Him who is invisible.” God’s will had taken the helm of the vessel and the ship was steered in God’s course according to the Divine compass of Infallible Justice and the unerring chart of the Divine Will!

This is a great point to begin with. It is, indeed, the only sure basis of a noble character. Ask the man who seeks to be the architect of a great and honorable character this question—Where do you place God? Is He second with you? Ah, then, in the judgment of Him whose view comprehends all human relationships, you will lead a very secondary kind of life, for the first and most urgent obligation of your being will be disregarded. But is God first with you? Is this your determination, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”? Do you seek, first, the kingdom of God and His righteousness?

If so, you are laying the foundation for a whole or holy character, for you begin by acknowledging your highest responsibility. In this respect you will find that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Whether the way is rough or smooth, uphill or down dale, through green pastures or burning deserts, let God’s way be your way! Where the fiery cloudy pillar of His Providence leads, be sure to follow and where His holy statutes command, there promptly go. Ask the Lord to let you hear His Spirit speak like a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk you in it.” As soon as you see from the Scriptures, or from conscience, or from Providence, what the will of the Lord is, make haste and delay not to keep His Commandments.

Set the Lord always before you. Have respect unto His statutes at all times and in all your ways acknowledge Him. No man will be able to look back upon his life with complacency unless God has been sitting upon the throne of his heart and ruling all his thoughts, aims and actions. Unless he can say with David, “My soul has kept Your testimonies and I love them exceedingly,” he will find much to weep over and little with which to answer his accusers. We must follow the Lord’s way, or our end will be destruction! We must take hold upon Christ’s steps, or our feet will soon be in slippery places! We must reverence God’s Word, or our own words will be idle and full of vanity. And we must keep God’s Commandments, or we shall be destitute of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

I set not forth obedience to the Law as the way of salvation, but I speak to those who profess to be saved already by faith in Christ Jesus and I remind all of you who are numbered with the company of Believers that if you are Christ’s disciples you will bring forth the fruits of holiness—if you are God’s children you will be like your Father! Godliness breeds Godlikeness! The fear of God leads to imitation of God and where this is not so, the root of the matter is lacking. The Scriptural rule is, “by their fruits you shall know them,” and by this we must examine ourselves.

Let us now consider Job’s first sentence. He says—“My foot has held fast to His steps.” This expression sets forth great carefulness. He had watched every step of God, that is to say, he had been minute as to particulars, observing each precept which he looked upon as being a footprint which the Lord had made for him to set his foot in and, observing, also, each detail of the great example of His God. In so far as God is imitable He is the great example of His people, as He says—“Be you holy, for I am holy”—and again, “Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.” Job had observed the steps of God’s Justice that he might be just.

Job had observed the steps of God’s mercy that he might be pitiful and compassionate. He had observed the steps of God’s bounty that he might never be guilty of churlishness or lack of liberality. And he had studied the steps of God’s Truth that he might never deceive. He had watched God’s steps of forgiveness, that he might forgive his adversaries and God’s steps of benevolence that he might, also, do good and communicate, according to his ability, to all that were in need. In consequence of this he became eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. He delivered the poor that cried and the fatherless and those that had none to help. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him and he caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. “My foot,” he says, “has held fast to His steps.” He means that he had labored to be exact in his obedience towards God and in his imitation of the Divine Character.

Beloved, we shall do well if we are, to the minutest point, observant of the precepts and example of God in all things. We must follow not only the right road, but His footprints in that road. We are to be obedient to our heavenly Father not only in some things, but in all things—not in some places but in all places, abroad and at home, in business and in devotion—in the words of our lips and in the thoughts of our hearts. There is no holy walking without careful watching. Depend upon it, no man was ever good by chance, nor did anyone ever become like the Lord Jesus by a happy accident. “I put gold into the furnace,” said Aaron, “and there came out this calf”—but nobody believed him. If the image was like a calf it was because he had shaped it with an engraving tool. If it is not to be believed that metal will, of itself, take the form of a calf, much less will character assume the likeness of God, Himself, as we see it in the Lord Jesus! The pattern is too rich and rare, too elaborate and perfect to ever be reproduced by a careless, half-awakened trifler! No, we must give all our heart and mind and soul and strength to this business and watch every step or else our walk will not be close with God, nor pleasing in His sight. O to be able to say, “My foot has held fast to His steps!” Notice here that the expression has something in it of tenacity. He speaks of taking hold upon God’s steps. The idea needs to be lit up by the illustration contained in the original expression. You must go to mountainous regions to understand it.

In very rough ways a person may walk all the better for having no shoes on his feet. I sometimes pitied the women of Mentone coming down the rough places of the mountains barefooted, carrying heavy loads upon their heads, but I ceased to pity them when I observed that most of them had a good pair of shoes in the basket at the top! And I perceived, as I watched them, that they could stand where I slipped because their feet took hold upon the rock, almost like another pair of hands. Barefooted they could safely stand and readily climb where feet encased after our fashion would never carry them!

Many Orientals have a power of grasp in their feet which we appear to have lost from lack of use. An Arab in taking a determined stand, actually seems to grasp the ground with his toes! Roberts tells us in his wellknown, “Illustrations,” that Easterns, instead of stooping to pick up things from the ground with their fingers, will pick them up with their toes. And he tells of a criminal condemned to be beheaded, who, in order to stand firm when about to die, grasped a shrub with his foot. Job declares that he took fast hold of God’s steps and thus secured a firm footing. He had a hearty grip of holiness, even as David said, “I have stuck unto Your testimonies.” That eminent scholar, Dr. Good, renders the passage, “In His steps will I rivet my feet.” He would set them as fast in the footprints of truth and righteousness as if they were riveted there, so firm was his grip upon that holy way which his heart had chosen.

This is exactly what we need to do with regard to holiness—we must feel about for it with a sensitive conscience to know where it is and when we know it, we must seize upon it eagerly and hold to it as for our life. The way of holiness is often craggy and Satan tries to make it very slippery. Unless we can take hold of God’s steps we shall soon slip with our feet and bring grievous injury upon ourselves and dishonor to His holy name. Beloved, to make up a holy character, there must be a tenacious adherence to integrity and piety. You must not be one that can be blown off his feet by the hope of a little gain, or by the threatening breath of an ungodly man—you must stand fast and stand firm and against all pressure and blandishment you must seize and grasp the precepts of the Lord and abide in them, riveted to them.

Standfast is one of the best soldiers in the Prince Immanuel’s army and one of the most fit to be trusted with the colors of His regiment. “Having done all, still stand.” To make a holy character we must take hold of the steps of God in the sense of promptness and speed. Here again I must take you to the East to get the illustration. They say of a man who closely imitates his religious teacher, “His feet have laid hold of his master’s steps,” meaning that he so closely follows his teacher that he seems to take hold of his heels. This is a blessed thing, indeed, when Divine Grace enables us to follow our Lord closely. There are His feet and close behind them are ours. He takes another step and we plant our feet where He has planted His.

A very beautiful motto is hung up in our infant classroom at the Stockwell Orphanage, “What would Jesus do?” Not only may children take it as their guide, but all of us may do the same, whatever our age. “What would Jesus do?” If you desire to know what you ought to do under any circumstances, imagine Jesus to be in that position and then think, “What would Jesus do? for what Jesus would do, that ought I to do.” In following Jesus we are following God, for in Christ Jesus the brightness of the Father’s Glory is best seen. Our example is our Lord and Master, Jesus the Son of God, and, therefore, this question is but a beam from our guiding Star. Ask in all cases—“What would Jesus do?” That unties the knot of all moral difficulty in the most practical way and does it so simply that no great wit or wisdom will be needed.

May God’s Holy Spirit help us to copy the line which Jesus has written, even as scholars imitate their writing master in each stroke and line and mark and dot. Oh, when we come to die and have to look back upon our lives, it will be a blessed thing to have followed the Lord fully! They are happy who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Blessed are they in life and death of whom it can be said—as He was, so were they, also, in this world. Though misunderstood and misrepresented, yet they were honest imitators of their Lord! Such a true-hearted Christian can say, “He knows the way that I take. He tried me and I came forth as gold. My foot has held fast to His steps.” You will avoid many a sorrow if you keep close at your Master’s heels.

You know what came of Peter’s following afar off—try what will come of close walking with Jesus. Abide in Him and let His Words abide in you, so shall you be His disciples. You dare not trust in your works and will not think of doing so, but you will bless God that, being saved by His Grace, you were enabled to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit by a close and exact following of the steps of your Lord. Three things, then, we get in the first sentence—an exactness of obedience, a tenacity of grip upon that which is good and a promptness in endeavoring to keep in touch with God and to follow Him in all respects. May these things abound in us!

We now pass on to the second sentence. I am afraid you will say, “Spare us, for even unto the first sentence we have not yet attained.” Labor after it then, Beloved. Forgetting the things that are behind, except to weep over them, press forward to that which is before. May God give you those sensitive grasping feet which we have tried to describe—feet that take hold on the Lord’s way—and may you throughout life keep that hold, for “blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord.”

The next sentence runs thus—“His way have I kept”—that is to say, Job had adhered to God’s way as the rule of his life. When he knew that suchand-such a thing was the mind of God, either by his conscience telling him that it was right, or by a Divine Revelation, then he obeyed the intimation and kept to it! He did not go out of God’s way to indulge his own fancies, or to follow some supposed leader—to God’s way he kept from his youth—even till the time when the Lord Himself said of him, to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God and eschews evil?” The devil could not deny it and did not attempt to do so, but only muttered, “Does Job serve God for nothing? Have You not set a hedge about him and all that he has?”

When Job uttered our text, he could have replied to the malicious accuser that even when God had broken down his hedges and laid him waste, he had not sinned nor charged God foolishly. He heeded not his wife’s rash counsels to curse God and die—he still blessed the Divine Name even though everything was taken from him. What noble words are those—“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Though bereft of all earthly comfort, he did not forsake the way of holiness, but still kept to his God! Keeping to the way signifies not simply adherence, but continuance and progress in it.

Job had gone on in the ways of God year after year. He had not grown tired of holiness, nor weary of devotion, neither had he grown sick of what men call straight-laced piety. He had kept the way of God on and on and on, delighting in what Coverdale’s version calls God’s, “high street”—the highway of holiness. The further he went, the more pleasure he took in it and the more easy he found it to his feet, for God was with him and kept him—and so he kept God’s way. “Your way have I kept.” He means that, notwithstanding the difficulties in the way he persevered in it. It was stormy weather, but Job kept to the old road. The sleet beat in his face, but he kept His way—he had gone that path in fair weather and he was not going to forsake his God now that the storms were out—and so he kept His way.

Then the scene changed, the sun was warm and all the air was redolent with perfume and merry with the song of birds, but Job kept His way. If God’s Providence flooded Job’s sky with sunshine, he did not forsake God because of prosperity, as some do, but kept His way—kept His way when it was rough, kept His way when it was smooth. When he met with adversities, he did not turn onto a side road, but traveled the King’s highway, where a man is safest, for those who dare to assail him will have to answer for it to a higher power. The high street of holiness is safe because the King’s guarantee is given that, “no lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up on it.” The righteous shall keep God’s way and so Job did, come fair, come foul.

When there were others in the road with him and when there were none, he kept His way. He would not even turn aside for those three good men, or men who thought themselves good, who sat by the wayside and miserably comforted, that is to say, tormented him! He kept God’s way as one whose mind is made up and whose face is set like a flint. There was no turning him, he would fight his way if he could not have it peaceably. I like a man whose mind is set upon being right with God, a self-contained man, by God’s Grace, who does not need patting on the back and encouraging and who, on the other hand, does not care if he is frowned at, but has counted the cost and abides by it. Give me a man who has a backbone—a brave fellow who has grit in him!

It is well for a professor when God has put some soul into him and made a man of him, for if a Christian man is not a man as well as a Christian, he will not long remain a Christian man. Job was firm—a well-made character that did not shrink in the wetting. He believed his God! He knew God’s way and he kept to it under all circumstances from his first start in life even until that day when he sat on a dunghill and transformed it into a throne where he reigned as among all mere men, the peerless prince of patience! You have heard of the patience of Job and of this, as one part of it, that he kept the way of the Lord.

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, on this second clause let me utter this word of self-examination. Have we kept God’s way? Have we got into it and do we mean to keep it? Some are soon hot and soon cold. Some set out for the New Jerusalem like Pliable, very eagerly, but the first Slough of Despond they tumble into shakes their resolution and they crawl out on the homeward side and go back to the world. There will be no comfort in such temporary religion, but dreadful misery when we come to consider it on a dying bed! Changeful Pliables will find it hard to die! O to be constant even to the end, so as to say, “My foot has held fast to His steps, His way have I kept.” God grant us Grace to do it by His Spirit abiding in us!

The third clause is, “And not declined,” by which I understand that he had not declined from the way of holiness, nor declined in the way of God. First, he had not declined from it. He had not turned to the right hand nor to the left. Some turn away from God’s way to the right hand by doing more than God’s Word has bid them do—such as invent religious ceremonies and vows and bonds and become superstitious—falling under the bondage of priestcraft and being led into will-worship and things that are not Scriptural. This is as truly wandering as going out of the road to the left would be!

Ah, dear Friends, keep to the simplicity of the Bible! This is an age in which Holy Scripture is very little accounted of. If a Church chooses to invent a ceremony, men fall into it and practice it as if it were God’s ordinance! Yes and if neither Church nor Law recognize the performance, yet if certain self-willed priests choose to burn candles and to wear all sorts of bedizenments and bow and cringe and march in procession, there are plenty of simpletons who will go whichever way their clergyman chooses, even if he should lead them into downright heathenism. “Follow my leader” is the game of the day, but, “Follow my God,” is the motto of a true Christian!

Job had not turned to the right. Nor had he turned to the left. He had not been lax in observing God’s Commandments. He had shunned omission as well as commission. This is a very heart-searching matter, for how many there are whose greatest sins lie in omission. And remember, sins of omission—though they sit very light on many consciences and though the bulk of professors do not even think them sins—are the very sins for which men will be condemned at the last! How do I prove that? What said the great Judge? “I was hungry and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; sick and in prison and you visited Me not.” It was what they did not do that cursed them, more than what they did do. So look well to it and pray God that you may not decline from the way of His precepts, from Jesus who, Himself is the one and only Way.

Furthermore, I take it Job means that he had not even declined in that way of God. He did not begin with running hard and then get out of breath and sit by the wayside and say, “Rest and be thankful.” No, he kept up the pace and did not decline. If he was warm and zealous once, he remained warm and zealous. If he was indefatigable in service, he did not gradually tone down into a sluggard, but he could say, “I have not declined.” Whereas we ought to make advances towards Heaven, there are many who are, after 20 years of profession, no more forward than they were, but perhaps in a worse state! Oh, beware of a decline!

We were accustomed to use that term years ago to signify the commencement of a consumption, or perhaps the effects of it and, indeed, a decline in the soul often leads on to a deadly consumption. In a spiritual consumption the very life of religion seems to ebb out little by little. The man does not die by a wound that stabs his reputation, but by a secret weakness within him which eats at the vitals of godliness and leaves the outward surface fair. God save us from declining! I am sure, dear Friends, we cannot, many of us, afford to decline much, for we are none too earnest, none too much alive now! This is one of the great faults of Churches—so many of the members are in a decline that the Church becomes a hospital instead of a barracks.

Many professors are not what they were at first—they were very promising young men, but they are not performing old men. We are pleased to see the flowers on our fruit trees, but they disappoint us unless they knit into fruit and we are not satisfied, even then, unless the fruit ripens to a mellow sweetness. We do not make orchards for the sake of blossoms—we want apples! And so it is with the garden of Grace. Our Lord comes seeking fruit and instead He often finds nothing but leaves. May God grant to us that we may not decline from the highest standard we have ever reached. “I would,” said the Lord of the Church of Laodicea, “that you were either cold or hot.”

Oh, you lukewarm ones, take that warning to heart! Remember, Jesus cannot endure you—He will spit you out of His mouth—you make Him sick to think of you. If you were downright cold He would understand you. If you were hot He would delight in you. But being neither cold nor hot He is sick at the thought of you! He cannot endure you and, indeed, when we think of what the Lord has done for us, it is enough to make us sick to think that anyone should drag on in a cold, inanimate manner in His service, who loved us and gave Himself for us!

Some decline because they become poor—they even stay from worship on that account. I hope none of you say, “I do not like to come to the Tabernacle because I have no fit clothes to come in.” As I have often said, any clothes are fit for a man to come here if he has paid for them! Let each come by all manner of means in such garments as he has and he shall be welcome. But I know some very poor professors who, in the extremity of their anxiety and trouble, instead of flying to God, fly from Him. This is very sad. The poorer you are, the more you need the rich consolations of Divine Grace. Do not let this temptation overcome you, but if you are as poor as Job, be as resolved as he to keep to the Lord’s way and not decline.

Others fly from their religion because they grow rich. They say that three generations will never come on wheels to a dissenting place of worship and it has proven to be sadly true in many instances, though I have no cause to complain of you as yet. Some persons, when they rise in the world, turn up their noses at their poor friends. If any of you do so, you will be worthy of pity, if not of contempt! If you forsake the ways of God for the fashion of the world you will be poor gainers by your wealth! The Lord keep you from such a decline! Many decline because they conform to the fashion of the world and the way of the world is not the way of God! Does not James say, “Know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God”?

Others wander because they get into ill company, among witty people, or clever people, or hospitable people who are not gracious people. Such society is dangerous! People whom we esteem, but whom God does not esteem, are a great snare. It is very perilous to love those who love not God. He shall not be my bosom friend who is not God’s friend, for I shall probably do him but little service and he will do me much harm. May the Grace of God prevent your growing cold from any of these causes and may you be able to say, “I have not declined.” One more sentence remains— “Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips”—that is to say, as Job had not slackened his pace, so much less had he turned back. May none of you ever go back.

This is the most cutting grief of a pastor, that certain persons come in among us and even come to the front, who, after a while, turn back and walk no more with us. We know, as John says, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” Yet what anguish it causes when we see apostates among us and know their doom! Take heed, Brothers and Sisters, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God! Let Lot’s wife be a warning! Season your souls with a fragment of salt from that pillar and it may keep you from corruption.

Remember that you can turn back, not only from all the Commandments and so become an utter apostate, but there is such a thing as backing at single Commandments. You know the precept to be right, but you cannot face it—you look at it and look at it and look at it and then go back, back, back from it, refusing to obey. Job had never done so. If it was God’s command, he went forward to perform it. It may be that it seems impossible to go forward in the path of duty, but if you have faith, you are to go on whatever the difficulty may be. The slave was right who said, “Massa, if God say, ‘Sam, jump through the wall,’ it is Sam’s business to jump and God’s work to make me go through the wall.” Leap at it, dear Friends, even if it seem to be a wall of granite! God will clear the road. By faith the Israelites went through the Red Sea as on dry land. It is ours to do what God bids us, as He bids us, when He bids us and no hurt can come of it. Strength equal to our day shall be given, only let us cry, “Forward!” and push on.

Here just one other word. Let us take heed to ourselves that we do not go back, for going back is dangerous. We have no armor for our back, no promise of protection in retreat. Going back is ignoble and base. To have had a grand idea and then to turn back from it like a whipped cur, is disgraceful. Shame on the man who dares not be a Christian! Even sinners and ungodly men point at the man who put his hand to the plow and looked back and was not worthy of the kingdom. Indeed, it is fatal! For the Lord has said, “If any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.” Forward! Forward though death and Hell obstruct the way, for backward is defeat, destruction, despair! O God, grant us of Your Grace that when we come to the end of life we may say with joy, “I have not gone back from Your Commandments.” The Covenant promises persevering Grace and it shall be yours—only be sure that you trifle not with this Grace.

There is the picture which Job has sketched. Hang it up on the wall of your memory and God help you to paint after this old master, whose skill is unrivalled!

II. Secondly, let us take a peep behind the wall to see how Job came by this character. Here we note Job’s HOLY SUSTENANCE—“I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” First, then, God spoke to Job. Did God ever speak to you? I do not suppose Job had a single page of inspired writing. Probably he had not even seen the first books of Moses. He may have done so, but probably he had not. God spoke to him! Did He ever speak to you? No man will ever serve God aright unless God has spoken to him. You have the Bible and God speaks in that Book and through it—but mind you, do not rest in the printed letter without discerning its spirit. You must try to hear God’s voice in the printed letter.

“God has, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son” but oh, pray that this Divine Son may speak by the Holy Spirit right into your heart! Anything which keeps you from personal contact with Jesus robs you of the best blessing! The Romanist says he uses a crucifix to help him to remember Christ and then his prayers often stop at the crucifix and do not get to Christ—and in the same manner you can make an idol of your Bible by using the mere words as a substitute for God’s voice to you. The Book is to help you to remember God, but if you stick in the mere letter and get not to God at all, you misuse the sacred Word of God. When the Spirit of God speaks a text right into the soul. When God Himself takes the promise or the precept and sends it with living energy into the heart—this is that which makes a man have a reverence for the Word—he feels its awful majesty, its Divine supremacy and while he trembles at it he rejoices and goes forward to obey because God has spoken to him!

Dear Friends, when God speaks, be sure that you have open ears to hear, for oftentimes He speaks and men regard Him not. In a vision of the night when deep sleep falls upon men, God has spoken to His Prophets, but now He speaks by His Word, applying it to the heart with power by His Spirit. If God speaks but little to us, it is because we are dull of hearing. Renewed hearts are never long without a whisper from the Lord. He is not a dumb God, nor is He so far away that we cannot hear Him! They that keep His ways and hold His steps, as Job did, shall hear many of His Words to their soul’s delight and profit! God’s having spoken to Job was the secret of his consistently holy life.

Then note that what God had spoken to him, he treasured it up. He says in the Hebrew that he had hid God’s Word more than ever he had hidden his necessary food. They had to hide grain away in those days to guard it from wandering Arabs. Job had been more careful to store up God’s Word than to store up his wheat and his barley! He was more anxious to preserve the memory of what God had spoken than to garner his harvests! Do you treasure up what God has spoken? Do you study the Word? Do you read it? Oh, how little do we search it compared with what we ought to do! Do you meditate on it? Do you suck out its secret sweets? Do you store up its essence as bees gather the life-blood of flowers and hoard up their honey for winter food?

Bible study is the metal that makes a Christian! It is the strong meat on which holy men are nourished! It is that which makes the bone and sinew of men who keep God’s way in defiance of every adversary! God spoke to Job and Job treasured up His Words. We learn from our version of the text that Job lived on God’s Word—he reckoned it to be better to him than his necessary food. He ate it. This is an art which some do not understand—eating the Word of the Lord. Some look at the surface of the Scriptures. Some pull the Scriptures to pieces without mercy. Some cut the heavenly bread into pieces and show their cleverness. Some pick it over for plums, like children with a cake. But blessed is he that makes it his meat and drink! He takes the Word of God to be what is, namely, a Word from the mouth of the Eternal and he says, “God is speaking to me in this and I will satisfy my soul upon it. I do not need anything better than this, anything truer than this, anything safer than this! And having got this, it shall abide in me, in my heart, in the very bowels of my life. It shall be interwoven with the warp and woof of my being.”

But the text adds that he esteemed it more than his necessary food. Not more than dainties only, for those are superfluities, but more than his necessary food and you know that a man’s necessary food is a thing which he esteems very highly. He must have it. “What? Take away my bread?” he asks, as if this could not be borne. To take the bread out of a poor man’s mouth is looked upon as the highest kind of villainy—but Job would sooner that they took the bread out of his mouth than the Word of God out of his heart! He thought more of it than of his necessary food and I suppose it was because meat would only sustain his body, but the Word of God feeds the soul. The nourishment given by bread is soon gone, but the nourishment given by the Word of God abides in us and makes us live forever! The natural life is more than meat, but our spiritual life feeds on meat even nobler than itself, for it feeds on the Bread of Heaven, the Person of the Lord Jesus!

Bread is sweet to the hungry man, but we are not always hungry and sometimes we have no appetite. But the best of God’s Word is that he who lives near to God has always an appetite for it and the more he eats of it the more he can eat! I confess I have often fed upon God’s Word when I have had no appetite for it, until I have gained an appetite. I have grown hungry in proportion as I have felt satisfied—my emptiness seemed to kill my hunger—but as I have been revived by the Word I have longed for more! So it is written, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled”—and when they are filled they shall continue to enjoy the benediction, for they shall still hunger and thirst, though filled with Grace!

God’s Word is sweeter to the taste than bread to a hungry man and its sweetness never spoils, though it dwells long on the palate. You cannot be always eating bread, but you can always feed on the Word of God. You cannot eat all the meat that is set before you—your capacity is limited that way and none but a glutton wishes it otherwise. But oh, you may be ravenous of God’s Word and devour it all and yet long for more! You are like a little mouse in a great cheese and you shall have permission to eat it all, though it is a thousand times greater than yourself! Though God’s thoughts are greater than your thoughts and His ways are greater than your ways, yet may His ways be in your heart and your heart in His ways! You may be filled with all the fullness of God, though it seems a paradox. His fullness is greater than you and all His fullness is infinitely greater than you, yet you may be filled with all the fullness of God! So that the Word of God is better than our necessary food—it has qualities which our necessary food has not.

No more, except this—you cannot be holy, my Brothers and Sisters, unless you, in secret, live upon the blessed Word of God—and you will not live on it unless it comes to you as the Word of His mouth. It is very sweet to get a letter from home when you are far away. It is like a bunch of fresh flowers in winter time. A letter from the dear one at home is as music heard over the water. But half a dozen words from that dear mouth are better than a dozen pages of manuscript, for there is a sweetness about the look and the tone which paper cannot carry! Now, I want you to get the Bible to be not a book, only, but a speaking trumpet through which God speaks from afar to you so that you may catch the very tones of His voice! You must read the Word of God to this end, for it is while reading, meditating and studying and seeking to dip yourself into its spirit that it seems, suddenly, to change from a written book into a talking book or phonograph!

It whispers to you or thunders at you as though God had hidden Himself among its leaves and spoke to your condition! It speaks as though Jesus, who feeds among the lilies, had made the chapters to be lily beds and had come to feed there! Ask Jesus to cause His Word to come fresh from His own mouth to your soul and if it is so and you thus live in daily communion with a personal Christ, my Brothers and Sisters, you will then, with your feet take hold upon His steps! You will then keep His way! You will then never decline or go back from His Commandments, but you will make good speed in your pilgrim way to the Eternal City.

May the Holy Spirit daily be with you! May each of you live under His sacred mist and be fruitful in every good word and work. Amen and amen.  
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Sermon #406 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 23.13

THE INFALLIBILITY OF GOD’S PURPOSE  
NO. 406

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 25, 1861, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“But He is in one mind and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, even that He does.”  
Job 23:13.**

IT is very advantageous to the Christian mind frequently to consider the deep and unsearchable attributes of God. The beneficial effect is palpable in two ways—exerting a sacred influence both on the judgment and the heart. In respect to the one it tends to confirm us in those good old orthodox doctrines which lie as the basis of our faith. If we study man and make him the only object of our research, there will be a strong tendency in our minds to exaggerate his importance. We shall think too much of the creature and too little of the Creator—preferring that knowledge which is to be found out by observation and reason to that divine Truth which revelation alone could make known to us. The basis and groundwork of Arminian theology lies in attaching undue importance to man and giving God the second place rather than the first.

Let your mind dwell for a long time upon man as a free agent, upon man as a responsible being—upon man, not so much as being under God’s claims as having claims upon God—and you will soon find in your thoughts a set of crude doctrines. You will support these doctrines with the letter of some few isolated texts in Scripture which may be speciously quoted but which really in spirit are contrary to the whole tenor of the Word of God. Thus your orthodoxy will be shaken to its very foundations and your soul will be driven out to sea without peace or joy.

Brethren, I am not afraid that any man who thinks worthily about the Creator—stands in awe of His adorable perfections and sees Him sitting upon the Throne, doing all things according to the counsel of His will—will go far wrong in his doctrinal sentiments. He may say, “My heart is fixed, O God” and when the heart is fixed with a firm conviction of the greatness, the omnipotence, the divinity of Him whom we call God, the head will not wander far from Truth. Another happy result of such meditation is the steady peace, the grateful calm it gives to the soul. Have you been a long time at sea and has the continual motion of the ship sickened and disturbed you? Have you come to look upon everything as moving till you scarcely put one foot before the other without the fear of falling down because the floor rocks beneath your path?

With what delight do you put your feet at last upon the shore and say, “Ah, this does not move. This is solid ground. Though the tempest howl this island is safely moored. She will not start from her bearings. When I tread on her she will not yield beneath my feet.” Just so is it with us

when we turn from the ever-shifting, often boisterous tide of earthly things to take refuge in the Eternal God who has been “our dwelling place in all generations.” The fleeting things of human life and the fickle thoughts and showy deeds of men are as moveable and changeable as the waters of the treacherous deep. But when we mount up, as it were, with eagles’ wings to Him that sits upon the circle of the earth—before whom all its inhabitants are as grasshoppers—we nestle in the Rock of Ages which from its eternal socket never starts and in its fixed immovability never can be disturbed.

Or to use another simile. You have seen little children running round and round and round till they get giddy. They stand still a moment and everything seems to be flying round about them. But by holding fast and still and getting into the mind the fact that that to which they hold at least is firm—at last the world grows still again—and the world ceases to whirl. So you and I have been these six days like little children running round in circles and everything has been moving with us. Perhaps as we came to this place this morning we felt as if the very promises of God had moved, as if Providence had shifted, our friends had died, our kindred passed away. We came to look on everything as whirling—nothing firm, nothing fixed.

Brethren, let us get a good grip today of the immutability of God. Let us stand still awhile and know that the Lord is God. We shall see at length that things do not move as we dreamed they did—“to everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heavens.” There is still a fixedness in that which seems most fickle. That which appears to be most dreamy has a reality. Inasmuch as it is a part of that divinely substantial scheme which God is working out, the end whereof shall be His eternal glory. It will cool your brain, it will calm your heart, my Brother. It will make you go back to the world’s fight quiet and composed. It will make you stand fast in the day of temptation if now through divine grace you can come near to God, who is without variableness or shadow of a turning and offer Him the tribute of our devotion.

The text will be considered by us this morning—first, as enunciating a great general Truth. And secondly, out of that general Truth we shall fetch another upon which we shall enlarge, I trust, to our comfort.

I. The text may be regarded as TEACHING A GENERAL TRUTH. We will take the first clause of the sentence, “He is in one mind.” Now the fact taught here is that in all the acts of God in Providence He has a fixed and a settled purpose. “He is in one mind.” It is eminently consolatory to us, who are God’s creatures, to know that He did not make us without a purpose and that now, in all His dealings with us He has the same wise and gracious end to be served. We suffer, the head aches, the heart leaps with palpitations, the blood creeps sluggishly along where its healthy flow should have been more rapid. We lose our limbs, crushed by accident, some sense fails us.  
The eye is eclipsed in perpetual night. Our mind is racked and disturbed. Our fortunes vary. Our goods disappear before our eyes. Our children, portions of ourselves, sicken and die. Our crosses are as continual as our lives, we are seldom long at ease. We are born to sorrow and certainly it is an inheritance of which we are never deprived. We suffer continually. Will it not reconcile us to our sorrows that they serve some end? To be scourged needlessly we consider to be a disgrace—but to be scourged if our country were to be served we should consider an honor— because there is a purpose in it. To suffer the maiming of our bodies because of some whim of a tyrant would be a thing hard to bear. But if we administer thereby to the weal of our families, or to the glory of our God, we would be content not to be mutilated once but to be cut piecemeal away so that His great purpose might be answered.

O Believer, ever look, then, on all your sufferings as being parts of the Divine Plan and say, as wave upon wave rolls over you, “He is in one mind!” He is carrying out still His one great purpose. None of these comes by chance—none of these happens to me out of order—but everything comes to me according to the purpose of His own will and answers the purpose of His own great mind. We have to labor, too. How hard do some men labor who have to toil for their daily bread! Their bread is saturated with their sweat. They wear no garment which they have not woven out of their own nerves and muscles. How sternly, too, do others labor who have with their brain to serve their fellowmen or their God!

How have some heroic missionaries spent themselves and been spent in their fond enterprise! How have many ministers of Christ exhausted not simply the body but the mind! Their hilarity so natural to them has given place to despondency and the natural effervescence of their spirits has at last died out into oneness of soul through the desperateness of their ardor. And sometimes this labor for God is unrequited. We plow, but the furrow yields no harvest. We sow, but the field refuses the grain and the devouring bellies of the hungry birds alone are satisfied therewith. We build, but the storm casts down the stones which we had quarried with Herculean efforts piling one on another.

We sweat, we toil, we fail. How often do we come back weeping because we have toiled, as we think, without success! Yet, Christian man, you have not been without success, for “He is still in one mind.” All this was necessary to the fulfillment of His one purpose. You are not lost—your labor has not rotted under the clods. All, though you see it not, has been working together towards the desired end. Stand upon the beach for a moment. A wave has just come up careening in its pride. Its crown of froth is spent. As it leaps beyond its fellow it dies. It dies. And now another and it dies. And now another and it dies. Oh, weep not, deep sea! Be not sorrowful, for though each wave dies, yet you prevail!

O mighty ocean! Onward does the flood advance till it has covered all the sand and washed the feet of the white cliffs. So is it with God’s purpose. You and I are only waves of His great sea. We wash up. We seem to retire as if there had been no advance. Anther wave comes. Still each wave must retire as though there had been no progress. But the great divine

sea of His purpose is still moving on. He is still of one mind and carrying out His plan. How sorrowful it often seems to think how good men die! They learn through the days of their youth and often before they come to years to use their learning they are gone. The blade is made and annealed in many a fire but before the foeman uses it, it snaps!

How many laborers, too, in the Master’s vineyard, who when by their experience they were getting more useful than ever have been taken away just when the Church wanted them most! He that stood upright in the chariot guiding the steeds suddenly falls back and we cry, “My father, my father, the horsemen of Israel and the chariot thereof!” Notwithstanding all this we may console ourselves in the midst of our grief with the blessed reflection that everything is a part of God’s plan. He is still of one mind— nothing happens which is not a part of the divine scheme. To enlarge our thoughts a moment—have you ever noticed, in reading history, how nations suddenly decay? When their civilization has advanced so far that we thought it would produce men of the highest mold, suddenly old age begins to wrinkle its brow, its arm grows weak, the scepter falls and the crown drops from the head and we have to say, “Is not the world gone back again?”

The barbarian has sacked the city and where once everything was beauty, now there is nothing but ruthless bloodshed and destruction. But, my Brethren, all those things were but the carrying out of the Divine Plan. Just as you may have seen sometimes upon the hard rock the lichen spring—as soon as the lichen grows grand—it dies. But why? It is because its death prepares the moss and the moss which is feebler compared with the lichen growth, at last increases till you see before you the finest specimens of that genus. But then the moss decays. Yet weep not for its decaying—its ashes shall prepare a soil for some plants of a little higher growth—and as these decay, one after another, race after race, they at last prepare the soil upon which even the goodly cedar itself might stretch out its roots.

So has it been with the race of men—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome have crumbled. Each and all—when their hour had come—to be succeeded by a better. And if this race of ours should ever be eclipsed—if the Anglo Saxons’ boasted pride should yet be stained—even then it will prove to be a link in the divine purpose. Still, in the end His one mind shall be carried out. His one great result shall be thereby achieved. Not only the decay of nations but the apparent degeneration of some races of men—and even the total extinction of others—forms a part of the fixed purpose of God. In all those cases there may be reasons of sorrow, but faith sees grounds of rejoicing.

To gather up all in one, the calamities of earthquake, the devastations of storm, the extirpations of war and all the terrible catastrophes of plague have only been co-workers with God—slaves compelled to tug the galley of the divine purpose across the sea of time. From every evil, good has come. And the more the evil has accumulated the more has God glorified Himself in bringing out at last His grand, His everlasting design. This, I take it, is the first general lesson of the text—in every event of Providence God has a purpose. “He is in one mind.”

Mark, not only a purpose, but only one purpose—for all history is but one. There are many scenes, but it is one drama. There are many pages, but it is one book. There are many leaves, but it is one tree. There are many provinces, yes, and there are many lords and rulers, yet there is but one empire and God the only Potentate. “O come let us worship and bow down before Him—for the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods!”

2. “Who can turn Him?” This is the second clause of the sentence and here I think we are taught the doctrine that the purpose of God is unchanged. The first sentence shows that He has a purpose, the second shows that it is incapable of change. “Who can turn Him?” There are some shallow thinkers who dream that the great plan and design of God was thrown out of order by the Fall of man. The Fall they consider all accidental circumstances—not intended in the Divine Plan and thus—God being placed in a delicate predicament of requiring to sacrifice His justice or His mercy used the plan of the atonement of Christ as a divine expedient.

Brethren, it may be lawful to use such terms—it may be lawful to you— it would not be to me. For am I persuaded that the very Fall of man was a part of the divine purpose—that even the sin of Adam, though he did it freely—was nevertheless contemplated in the divine scheme and was by no means such a thing as to involve a digression from His primary plan. Then came the deluge and the race of man was swept away but God’s purpose was not affected by the destruction of the race. In later years His people Israel forsook Him and worshipped Baal and Ashtaroth. But His purpose was not changed any more by the defection of His chosen nation than by the destruction of His creatures.

And when later the Gospel was sent to the Jews and they resisted it and Paul and Peter turned to the Gentiles, do not suppose that God had to take down His book and make an erasure or an amendment. No, the whole was written there from the beginning. He knew everything of it—He has never altered a single sentence nor changed a single line of the divine purpose. What He intended the great picture to be—that it shall be at the end. And where you see some black strokes which seem not in keeping, these shall yet be toned down. And where there are some brighter dashes, too bright for the somber picture—these shall yet be brought into harmony. And when in the end God shall exhibit the whole, He shall elicit both from men and angels tremendous shouts of praise, while they say, “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are Your ways, You King of Saints! You only are holy. All nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments are made manifest.”

Where we have thought His government wrong, there shall it prove most right and where we dreamed He had forgotten to be good, there shall His goodness be most clear. It is a sweet consolation to the mind of one who muses much upon these deep matters that God never has changed in any degree from His purpose. And the result will be, notwithstanding everything to the contrary, just precisely in every jot and tittle what He foreknew and foreordained it should be. Wars may rise and other Alexanders and Caesars may spring up, but He will not change. Now, nations and peoples, lift up yourselves and let your parliaments pass your decrees but He changes not.

Now, rebels, foam at the mouth and let your fury boil—but He changes not for you. Oh, nations and peoples and tongues—and you round earth— you spin on your orbit still and all the fury of your inhabitants cannot make you move from your predestinated pathway. Creation is an arrow from the bow of God and that arrow goes on, straight on, without deviation to the center of that target which God ordained that it should strike. Never varied is His plan. He is without variableness or shadow of a turning. Albert Barnes very justly says, “It is, when properly understood, a matter of unspeakable consolation that God has a plan—for who could honor a God who had no plan—who did everything haphazardly? It is matter of rejoicing that He has one great purpose which extends through all ages and embraces all things. For then everything falls into its proper place and has its appropriate bearing on other events. It is a matter of joy that God does execute all His purposes—for as they are all good and wise—it is desirable that they should be executed. It could be a calamity if a good plan were not executed. Why, then, should men murmur at the purposes or the decrees of God?”

3. The text also teaches a third general Truth. While God had a purpose and that purpose has never changed, the third clause teaches us that this purpose is sure to be effected. “What His soul desires, that He does.” He made the world out of nothing. There was no resistance there. “Light be,” said He and light was. There was no resistance there. “Providence be,” said He and Providence shall be. And when you shall come to see the end as well as the beginning you shall find that there was no resistance there. It is a wonderful thing how God effects His purpose while still the creature is free. They who think that predestination and the fulfillment of the divine purpose is contrary to the free agency of man know not what they say, nor what they affirm.

It were no miracle for God to effect His own purpose if He were dealing with sticks and stones, with granite and with trees—but this is the miracle of miracles—that the creatures are free, absolutely free and still the divine purpose stands! Herein is wisdom! This is a deep unsearchable mystery. Man walks without a leash—yet treads in the very steps which God ordained him to tread in—as certainly as though manacles had bound him to the spot! Man chooses his own seat, selects his own position, guided by his will he chooses sin, or guided by diving grace he chooses right. And yet in his choice God sits as sovereign on the Throne—not disturbing but still overruling—and proving Himself to be able to deal as with free creatures as with creatures without freedom. As able to effect His purpose when He has endowed men with thought and reason and judgment, as when He had only to deal with the solid rocks and with the imbedded sea.

O Christians! You shall never be able to fathom this but you may wonder at it. I know there is an easy way of getting out of this great deep— either by denying predestination altogether or by denying free agency altogether. But you can hold the two—you can say, “Yes, my consciousness teaches me that man does as he wills, but my faith teaches me that God does as He wills and these two are not contrary the one to the other. And yet I cannot tell how it is. I cannot tell how God effects His end. I can only wonder and admire and say, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out.” Every creature free and doing as it wills yet God more free still and doing as He wills—not only in Heaven but among the inhabitants of this lower earth.

I have thus given you a general subject upon which I would invite you to spend your meditations in your quiet hours. I am persuaded that sometimes to think of these deep doctrines will be found very profitable. It will be to you like the advice of Christ to Simon Peter—“Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught.” You shall have a draught of exceeding great thoughts and exceeding great graces if you dare to launch out into this exceeding deep sea and let out the nets of your contemplation at the command of Christ.

“Behold God is great.” “O Lord! how great are Your works and Your thoughts are very deep! A brutish man knows not, neither does a fool understand this.”

II. I now come to the second part of my subject, which will be, I trust, cheering to the people of God. From the general doctrine that God has a plan—that this plan is invariable and that this plan is certain to be carried out—I drew the most precious doctrine that IN SALVATION GOD IS OF ONE MIND. And who can turn Him? And what His heart desires, that He does. Now, mark, I address myself at this hour only to you who are the people of God. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart? Is the spirit of adoption given to you whereby you can say, “Abba, Father”? If so, draw near, for this Truth is for you.

Come then, my Brethren—in the first place let us consider that God is of one mind. Of old, my Soul, He determined to save you. Your calling proves your election and your election teaches you that God ordained to save you. He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. He is of one mind. He saw you ruined in the Fall of your father Adam, but His mind never changed from His purpose to save you. He saw you in your nativity. Your youthful follies and disobedience He saw, but never did that gracious mind alter in its designs of love to you. Then in your manhood you did plunge into vice and sin. Cover, O darkness, all our guilt and let the night conceal it from our eyes forever! Though we added sin to sin and our pride waxed exceeding high and hot, yet He was of one mind—

*“Determined to save, He watched over my path When Satan’s blind slave, I sported with death.”*

At last, when the happy hour arrived, He came to our door and knocked and He said, “Open to Me.” And do you remember, O my Brother, how we said, “Go away, O Jesus! We want You not”? We scorned His grace. We defied His love! But He was of one mind and no hardness of heart could turn Him. He had determined to have us for His spouse and He would not take “No” for an answer. He said He would have us and He persevered. He knocked again. And do you remember how we half opened the door? But then some strong temptation came and we shut it in His very face. But even then He said, “Open to Me, my Dove, My head is wet with the dew and My locks with the drops of the night”—yet we bolted and barred the door and would not let Him in. But He was of one mind and none could turn Him.

Oh, my soul weeps now when I think of the many convictions that I stifled, of the many moves of His Spirit that I rejected and those many times when conscience bade me repent and urged me to flee to Him but I would not. My souls weeps when I think of those seasons when a mother’s tears united with all the intercession of the Savior, yet my heart was harder than granite—and I refused to move and would not yield. But He was of one mind.

He had no fickleness in Him. He said He would have us and have us He would. He had written our names in His book and He would not cross them out. It was His solemn purpose that yield we should. And O that hour when, by His grace, we yielded at last! Then did He prove that in all our wanderings He had been of one mind. And O since then, how sorrowful the reflection! Since then how often have you and I turned? We have backslidden and if we had the Arminian’s god to deal with, we should either have been in Hell or out of the Covenant at this hour.

I know I should be in the Covenant and out of the covenant a hundred times a day if I had a god who put me out every time I sinned and then restored me when I repented. But no, despite our sin, our unbelief, our backslidings, our forgetfulness of Him, He was of one mind. And Brethren, I know this, that though we shall wander still, though in dark hours you and I may slip and often fall, yet His loving kindness changes not. Your strong arm, O God shall bear us on. Your loving heart will never fail. You will not turn Your love away from us, or make it cease or pour upon us Your fierce anger—but having begun You will complete the triumphs of Your grace.

Nothing shall make You change Your mind. What joy is this to you, Believers? For your mind changes every day, your experience varies like the wind and if salvation were to be the result of any purpose on your part, certainly it never would be effected. But since it is God’s work to save and we have proved that He is of one mind, our faith shall revel in the thought that He will be of one thought even to the end—till all on Glory’s summit we shall sing of that fixed purpose and that immutable love which never turned aside until the deed of grace was triumphantly achieved.

Now, Believer, listen to the second lesson—“ Who can turn Him?” While He is immutable from within, He is immovable from without. “Who can turn Him?” That is a splendid picture presented to us by Moses in the Book of Numbers. The children of Israel were encamped in the plains of Moab. Quietly and calmly they were resting in the valley—the tabernacle of the Lord in their midst and the pillar of cloud spread over them as a shield. But on the mountain range there were two men—Balak, the son of Zippor, king of the Moabites and Balaam the Prophet of Pethor.

They had built seven altars and offered seven bullocks and Balak said unto Balaam, “Come, curse me Jacob, come, defy Israel.” Four times did the Prophet take up his parable. Four times did he use his enchantments, offering the sacrifices of God on the altars of Baal. Four times did he vainly attempt a false divination. But I would have you mark that in each succeeding vision the mind of God is brought out in deeper characters. First, Balaam confesses his own impotence, “How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? How shall I defy whom the Lord has not defied?”

Then the second oracle brings out more distinctly the divine blessing, “Behold, I have received commandment to bless—and He has blessed and I cannot reverse it.” A third audacious attempt is not with a heavier repulse, for the stifled curse recoils on themselves—“Blessed is he that blesses you and cursed is he that curses you.” Once again in the vision that closes the picture, the eyes of Balaam are opened till he gets a glimpse of the Star that should come out of Jacob and the Scepter that shall rise out of Israel with the dawning glory of the latter days. Well might Balaam say, “There is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel.”

And now transfer that picture in your mind to all your enemies and specially to that arch-fiend of Hell. He comes before God today with the remembrance of your sins and he desires that he may curse Israel. But he has found a hundred times that there is no enchantment against Jacob nor divination against Israel. He took David into the sin of lust and he found that God would not curse him there, but bless him with a sorrowful chastisement and with a deep repentance. He took Peter into the sin of denying his Master and he denied Him with oaths and curses. But the Lord would not curse him even there, but turned and looked on Peter, not with a lightning glance that might have shivered him but with a look of love that made him weep bitterly.

He has taken you and me man times into positions of unbelief and we have doubted God. Satan said—“Surely, surely God will curse him there,” but never once has He done it. He has smitten, but the blow was full of love. He has chastised, but the chastisement was fraught with mercy. He has not cursed us nor will He. You can not turn God’s mind. Then, fiend of Hell, your enchantments cannot prosper, your accusations shall not prevail. “He is in one mind, who can turn Him?” And Brethren, you know when men are turned, they are sometimes turned by advice. Now who can advise God. Who shall counsel the Most High to cast off the darlings of His bosom or persuade the Savior to reject His spouse?  
Such counsel offered were blasphemy and it would be not pungent to

His soul. Or else men are turned by entreaties. But how shall God listen to the entreaties of the Evil One? Are not the prayers of the wicked an abomination to the Lord? Let them pray against us—let them entreat the Lord to curse us. But He is of one mind and no revengeful prayer should change the purpose of His love. Sometimes men are changed by the ties of relationships—a mother interposes and man yields—but in our case who can interpose?

God’s only begotten Son is as much concerned in our salvation as His Father and instead of interposing to change, He would—if such a thing were needed—still continue to plead that the love and mercy of God might never be withdrawn. Oh, let us rejoice in this—

*“Midst all our sin and care and woe,*

*His Spirit will not let us go.”*  
The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people. “He is in one mind and who can turn Him?”

I know not how it is but I feel that I cannot preach from this text as I should like. But oh, the text itself is music to my ears! It seems to sound like the martial trumpet of the battle and my soul is ready for the fray. It seems now that if trials and troubles should come—if I could but hold my hand upon this precious text—I would laugh at them all. “Who can turn Him?”—I would shout—“Who can turn Him?” Come on, earth and Hell, come on—for “who can turn Him?” Come on, you boisterous troubles, come on, you innumerable temptations, come on, slanderer and liar, “who can turn Him?” And since He cannot be changed, my soul must and will rejoice “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

I wish I could throw the text like a bombshell into the midst of the army of doubters that that army might be routed at once—for when we get a text like this—it must be the text which takes effect and not our explanation. This surely is a most marvelous deathblow to our doubts and fears—

*“He is in one mind,  
And who can turn Him?”*

And now with a few words upon the last sentence I shall conclude— God’s purpose must be effected—“What His soul desires, that He does.”  
Beloved, what God’s soul desires is your salvation and mine—if we are His chosen. And that He does. Part of that salvation consists in our perfect sanctification. We have had a long struggle with inbred sin and as far as we can judge we have not made much progress. Still is the Philistine in the land and still does the Canaanite invade us. We sin still and our hearts still have in them unbelief and proneness to depart from the living God. Can you think it possible that you will ever be without any tendency to sin? Does it not seem a dream that you should ever be without fault before the Throne of God—without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing?  
But yet you shall be—His heart desires it and that He does. He would have His spouse without any defilement. He would have His chosen generation without anything to mar their perfection. Now, inasmuch as He spoke and it was done, He has but to speak and it shall be done with you. You cannot rout your foes but He can. You cannot overcome your besetting sins but He can do it. You cannot drive out your corruptions, for they have chariots of iron, but He will drive out the last of them till the whole land shall be without one enemy to disturb its perpetual peace. O what a joy to know that it will be before long! Oh, it will be so soon with some of us—such a few weeks—though we perhaps are planning on years of life!  
A few weeks, or a few days and we shall have passed through Jordan’s flood and stand complete in Him, accepted in the Beloved! And should it be many years—should we be spared till the snows of a century shall have fallen upon our frosted hair—yet even then we must not doubt that His purpose shall at last be fulfilled. We shall be spotless and faultless and unblameable in His sight before long.  
Another part of our salvation is that we should at last be without pain, without sorrow—gathered with the Church of the First-born before the Father’s face. Does it not seem—when you sit down to think of yourself as being in Heaven—as a pretty dream that never will be true? What? Shall these fingers one day smite the strings of a golden harp? O aching head! Shall you one day wear a crown of glory that fades not away? O toil-worn body! Shall you bathe yourself in seas of heavenly rest? Is not Heaven too good for us, Brothers and Sisters? Can it be that we, poor we, shall ever get inside those pearly gates or tread the golden streets? Oh shall we ever see His face? Will He ever kiss us with the kisses of His lips?  
Will the King immortal, invisible, the only wise God, our Savior, take us to His bosom and call us all His own? Oh, shall we ever drink out of the rivers of pleasure that are at the right hand of the Most High? Shall we be among that happy company who shall be led to the living fountains of waters and all tears be wiped away from our eyes? Ah, that we shall be! For “He is in one mind and who can turn Him? and what His soul desires, that He does.” “Father, I will that they whom You have given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.” That is an immortal omnipotent desire. We shall be with Him where He is. His purpose shall be effected and we shall partake of His bliss.  
Now rise, you who love the Savior and put your trust in Him—rise like men who have God within you and sit no longer down upon your dunghills. Come, you desponding ones. If salvation were to be your own work you might despair—but since it is His and He changes not, you must not ever doubt—  
*“Now let the feeble all be strong,  
And make Jehovah’s power their song;  
His shield is spread o’er every saint.  
And thus supported, who can faint?”*  
If you perish—even the weakest of you—God’s purpose cannot be effected. If you finally fall, His honor will be stained. If you perish, Heaven itself will be dishonored—Christ will have lost one of His Members. He will be a king whose regalia has been stolen—no, He will not be complete Himself—for the Church is His fullness and how can He be full if a part of His fullness shall be cast away? Putting these things together, let us take courage and in the name of God let us set up our banners. He that has been with us up to now will preserve us to the end and we shall soon sing in the fruition of Glory as we now recite in the confidence of faith—that His purpose is completed and His love immutable.  
I say by way of closing such a subject ought to inspire every man with awe. I speak to some here who are unconverted. It is an awful thought— God’s purpose will be subserved in you. You may hate Him, but as He got honor upon Pharaoh and all his hosts, so will He upon you. You may think that you will spoil His designs—that shall be your idea—but your very acts, though guided with that intent, shall only tend to subserve His glory. Think of that! To rebel against God is useless, for you cannot prevail. To resist Him is not only impertinence but folly. He will be as much glorified by you, whichever way you go. You shall either yield Him willing honor or unwilling honor—but either way His purpose in you shall most certainly be subserved.  
O that this thought might make you bow your heads and say, “Great God, glorify Your mercy in me, for I have revolted. Show that You can forgive. I have sinned, deeply sinned. Prove the depths of Your mercy by pardoning me. I know that Jesus died and that He is set forth as a Propitiator. I believe on Him as such. O God! I trust Him—I pray You will glorify Yourself in me by showing what Your grace can do in casting sin behind Your back and blotting out iniquity, transgression and sin.”  
Sinner, He will do it. He will do it. If thus you plead and thus you pray, He will do it. There was never a sinner rejected yet that came to God with humble prayer and faith. Go to God today. Confess your sin and take hold of Christ as upon the horns of the altar of mercy and of sacrifice. If you do you shall find that it was a part of the Divine Plan to bring you here today, to strike your mind with awe, to lead you humbly to the Cross, to lead you afterwards joyfully to your God—and to bring you perfect at last before His Throne!  
God add His blessing for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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÷Job 23.3

LONGING TO FIND GOD  
NO. 2272

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1892. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1890.

**“Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!”  
Job 23:3.**

**Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” Observe that Job is so taken up with his one great desire that he forgets that everybody else is not thinking in the same way—and he uses a pronoun, though he has not before uttered the name of God. The man is carried away with his desire. He does not say, “Oh, that I knew where I might find God!” but, “where I might find *Him*.” An overwhelming passion will often speak like that. See how the Song of Songs, that sweet canticle of love, begins, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth for Your love is better than wine.” There is no mention of any person’s name. We forget many things when we are taken up with one thing. We forget that, as Madame Guyon wrote**—

*“All hearts are cold, in every place”***and when our heart grows *warm*, we fancy that all other hearts are warm, too. Remember how Mary Magdalene, when she met our Lord on the Resurrection Morning and, “supposing Him to be the gardener,” said to Him, “Sir, if you have borne Him hence, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” No, but Mary, you have not mentioned the *name* of the Person! You begin, “If you have borne *Him* hence.” How should another know of whom you speak? This is the way of a concentrated individuality! When it is set, desperately set, upon some one object, it forgets to whom it speaks—it only remembers the beloved one upon whom its affections are fixed.**

**Now, this is one reason why the man who is earnestly seeking after God is often misunderstood. He does not speak as one would speak who is cool and calm. His heart is hot within him and his words are fire-flakes, so that those about him say, “The man is mad! He is not sober as he used to be. He is going out of his mind.” I would to God that many were so mad that they cried in the depths of their soul, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” *If God knows whom you are seeking*, it is of small consequence whether your fellow creatures know, or do not know! If He accepts you, do not be cast down if men misunderstand you.**

**Thus, you see, Job’s longing was all-absorbing. It was also *personal*—he longed to *personally* find God. I know many people who have great longings, but they are for things that are trivial compared with the longing of Job! Job does not sigh to comprehend the incomprehensible. He does not wish to find out the Divine decree. He does not trouble about where free agency and predestination meet. He does not desire to know out of mere curiosity, or for the attainment of barren knowledge! His cry is, “Oh, that I knew where I might find *Him*! Oh, that I could get at God! Oh, that I could have dealings with the Most High! Oh, that I could feel at perfect peace with Him, rest in Him and be happy in the light of His Countenance!”**

**Now, some of you, perhaps, in years gone by, were very curious and anxious about various theological questions. The time was when you would have disputed with almost anyone who came along, but you have given all that up and now you want to find God and to be reconciled to Him. You want to know from God’s own lips that there is peace between you and that He loves you and will never cease to love you. You have been, perhaps, for weeks trying to find a way of access to God and, though there is such a way, and it is close to you, you have not yet perceived it. This one thing occupies your mind—not that you may know about God, or split hairs about doctrinal theories concerning Him—but that you may find HIM. I would to God it were the case with everyone in this congregation, that you either had Him or were sighing and crying after Him. This is not a point upon which any man can afford to be neutral. We must find God, for if we do not, we are lost!**

**On further reading the text, I feel still more pleased with Job’s determination about getting to God. He says, “Oh, that I knew *where*** I might find Him!” He does not make any condition as to where he might find God. If it were in Heaven, he would try to scale its heights. If it were in the abyss, he would hopefully plunge into the deep. If God is far away, at the uttermost ends of the earth, Job is willing to go there. If God is to be found in His Temple, or, for the matter of that, in the lowest dungeon, Job only wants to know where he may find Him. And if he may find Him, he will not make any conditions as to where it may be. We noticed in our reading that Job said, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat!” He was willing to come even to God’s Judgement Seat if he could not find Him anywhere else.

It will be a great mercy for you if you are so anxious to find God that you will not set any bounds as to where you shall find Him. You would be glad to find Him at your usual place of worship, but you would be just as glad to find Him in the midst of quite another people. You would be thankful to find Him in your own chamber when you bow your knees in prayer, but you would be quite as pleased to find Him in the midst of your business. You would rejoice to find Him whether it was in the heat of noontide, or in the cool of midnight. Your cry is, “Only let me find Him, and time and place shall be of no consequence to me.”

With regard to instrumentalities, also, you would be pleased to be converted to God by a learned and eloquent minister, but you would be quite as willing to find Christ by means of the most illiterate. You will be quite content with the man against whom you have been prejudiced, if God will but bless him to you. Yes, though it were your own servant girl, or some boy in the street—if they could but tell you the way of salvation so that you could find God—you would be perfectly satisfied! I know you would, for you put in no, “ifs,” or, “buts,” or conditions. Your one cry is, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” You are absorbed with that one desire! Your whole soul is possessed by that one earnest longing to find God! This desire is intensely personal and practical and it inspires you with the full determination that, at all costs and all hazards, if you can but find out where God is, you will come to Him.

Now, I am going to talk about this desire to find God. I have had it from one or two here present who are deeply anxious, that this is the cry of their spirit day and night, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” In trying to meet their case, our first enquiry will be, What sort of desire is this?—the desire that makes a man, or a woman, or a child cry out, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” And, secondly, What is the answer to it? How can they find God? And, thirdly, Why are some so long in finding God?

I. Our first question, concerning this longing to find God, is, WHAT SORT OF DESIRE IS THIS? I answer, first, that it takes many forms according to the circumstances of the person who has the desire. In Job’s case, it was a somewhat hazardous desire to come before the court of God to have his righteousness established. I have no doubt that, in bitterness of soul, many a sincere man, when maligned and lampooned, has wished that he could turn to God and have the matter judged by Him. “You know,” he says, “that I am not wicked. I have not been false. I have not been treacherous. Let the case against me be tried by the Great Judge of All who is righteous and impartial. Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!”   
But the desire is better and more usual on the part of children of God when they have lost the light of His Countenance. Beloved, the model Christian is the man who always walks in the Light of God, as God is in the Light. But how comparatively few there are of these! Many, I half fear the *most* of us, are at times in the dark. We wander. We lose our first love. We grow lukewarm. And then God hides His face. Many and many a true child of God has sighed out of the depth of his spirit, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” Are any of you less happy than you used to be? Are you less holy than you used to be? Are you less in prayer than in former years? Have you less tenderness of conscience? Have you less joy in the Lord? Are you doing less for Jesus and are you more content with the little that you do? Are you going back? Well, then, if God has not hid His face from you, in all probability He will!   
And then, when you are in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water, you will be like the fainting hart that pants for the brooks, and you will cry out after God. If you do not, it will be a damning mark. If you can live without your God, you who profess to be a child of God, it will look as if you never were His child. God has spoiled some of us for the world. It is never a matter of self-denial to us to give up its pleasures, for we have no taste for them. If we do not find joy in God, we are, of all men, most miserable. The brooks and cisterns are dry—and if the smitten Rock does not yield us water, we thirst, we faint, we die.   
But, Beloved, I want to dwell mainly upon this cry as coming from *the convicted sinner who has not yet rejoiced in God*. He has a burden pressing heavily upon him and he knows that he can never get rid of it except through the Grace of God in Jesus Christ—and he wants to get rid of it! So it has come to this, that day and night he says, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” I like this form of the desire best of all and I would willingly spend and be spent that I might encourage and help any who are thus seeking God as their Savior.   
Let me say this to any such who are here. *This desire is quite contrary to the desire of nature.* You feel yourself lost and yet this cry comes to your tongue, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” My dear Friend, this is not a natural desire! When you were satisfied with the world, you *never* had this desire! Time was when it never crossed your soul for a moment. When Adam and Eve sinned, they did not want to find God—they hid themselves among the trees of the Garden. And you, while you love sin, do not want to find God. You are like Jonah—you would willingly take ship and flee from God’s Presence, even to Tarshish. No, the natural man, without the Holy Spirit, never said, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” I should like you to get just a ray of the Light of God, not more, out of that remark. That ray of Light might cheer you while we proceed.   
I think that *this desire never comes except by Grace*. It never takes full possession of any man unless it is worked in him by the Grace of God. There may be a transient desire, but it is no more a sign of spiritual health than is the hectic flush of consumption a proof that the poor patient possesses vigorous physical strength. In the excitement of a revival meeting, you may say, “I wish I were a Christian,” but to carry this desire about with you—to have it always within you as a deep ground-swell of your soul, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!”—this is the work of the Holy Spirit! I trust that we have many here who feel these first pangs of the new birth, for where God begins with us by working in us this desire, He will, in due time, gratify it! If He gives us hunger, He gives us bread to satisfy its cravings. If He gives us a desire for Himself, He gives us Himself to satisfy that desire.   
Then it is sweet to think that *this desire is met by the seeking of the Savior*. The desire of a man after God is paralleled by Christ’s desire after him. “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Now, when a sheep begins to seek its shepherd and, at the same time the shepherd is seeking it, it cannot be long before the two meet! I read to you, last Thursday night, a letter from a poor soul, a harlot, who had come in here on the Sabbath morning and God had met with her. You know how easy it is to make up such a letter with the idea of asking for charity, but there was no name to this note, and it contained no request for charity. It was a true letter. There was one part of it that I commend to you. The writer said, “Before you receive this letter, I shall be home at my father’s house, from which I wickedly ran away.”   
Ah, there is the point, that going home, that getting back to the father! Now, I have no doubt that the father had sought his girl, but *when the girl began to seek him*, there would be a meeting very soon! If there is a soul here that wants Christ, Christ wants you! If you were sitting, now, upon Samaria’s well, He would come and sit by you, and He would say to you, “Give Me to drink,” for you alone can assuage the Savior’s thirst, the thirst to *save*, the thirst to *forgive*, the thirst to bring wanderers Home to the great Father’s House! Oh, Friend, if this cry is your cry, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” I can see much to comfort you in the thought that while you are seeking the Lord, He is also seeking you!   
But let me add that *it will be well if this desire never gets satisfied except by God,* for there are so many who do not seek till they find Him. A friend, writing to me, says, “You have taken away from me all my comfort. You have destroyed my self-righteousness. You have left me in a dreadful condition through the Word of God which you have preached to me. I used to go to early celebrations. I was at church three times a day. I thought that I took the very body and blood of Christ in the holy Eucharist. I had rested in my works—and now the whole structure is gone. I can rest in none of those things any more. My one cry is (and please to sing tonight that hymn that ends)—   
*“Give meChrist, or else I die!”*My dear Friend, your letter gave me great delight! I was glad to give out that hymn, but I pray you do not get content till you find God, for you can come here, you know, and you may even succeed in deceiving us so that you may be baptized, and join the Church and take communion—and you may rest in all that *without saving faith in Christ—*and you will not be an inch nearer to God than you were when you rested in the ceremonies of your former church. It is only God who can save you, only God in Christ who can give true rest to your soul! Men may change their churches and only change their refuge of lies. But if they come to Christ, whatever church they are in, if they have found Him and are trusting in Him and in Him, alone, their peace will be like a river and their righteousness as the waves of the sea! God bless any here who are opening their mouths and panting with this strong desire. But be sure that you are never comforted till Jesus comforts you! Never be fed except with the Bread of Heaven. Never rest until you find rest in Him whom God has appointed to be our rest, or else you will make a blunder, a fatal blunder, after all.   
II. Our second question, concerning this desire, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” is, WHAT IS THE ANSWER?   
Well, in the first place, there is something in the desire, itself, that gives you comfort, for God is near you *now*. If you want God, He is everywhere. He is here, He is nearer to you than your hands and feet, nearer to you than your eyes or your nerves. He is within you and round about you. You might ask, with the Psalmist, “Where shall I flee from Your Presence?” and find that task to be impossible. But if you really wish to find God, you may readily do so. He is here! You have not to pray at Jerusalem, nor at Mount Gerizim—   
*“Where’er we seek Him, He is found,   
And every place is hallowed ground.”*Believe it and speak to Him now! Show Him your heart now! Appeal to Him now, for He is truly near you at this moment!   
But you wish to lay hold upon Him. Then remember that *God is apprehended only by faith*. Eyes are of no use in this case—you cannot see a Spirit. Ears are of no use in this case—you cannot hear a Spirit. Your senses may be put aside now—the new senses—the new eyes, the new ears, is *faith*. If you *believe*, you shall see and you shall hear. Come, deal with God who is near you now, by faith. Believe that He is near you. Speak to Him. Gladly trust Him. Faith will apprehend all of God that can be apprehended and out of faith shall come many other blessed things that will make you still more familiar with your God. But now, even now, put out the arms of an inward faith and say, “I believe You.” Faith comprehends the Incomprehensible and takes the Infinite within itself!   
But still, if what you mean is, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him in the sense of calling Him my own, and having a joyful belief in His love!” well, then, I would say to you, if you want to find Him, search His Word. If you will read the Bible with the steady resolve to find God in Christ within its pages, I am certain that you will not have to read it long. There is here a holy magnetism, which if a man comes in contact with these sacred Words, shall begin to operate upon him. If you will take the Book and search it through to learn how God is to be found, you will find Him.   
Then, in connection with the Word written, *go and hear the Word spoken*, for there are minds that are more affected by speech than by what they read. If you will only hear a faithful Gospel minister attentively, it will not be long before you find God. If you go to hear a man merely because he is clever, or one who will tell you stories and interest you, you may never get any good out of him. But if you go saying, “I want to find Christ during this service. I want to lay hold on God to my soul’s eternal salvation,” I do not think that you will long frequent some places of worship that I could mention without saying, “I have found God.”   
Next to that, if you do not seem to profit by the reading and hearing of the Word, *seek the Lord in prayer*. Get to your chamber and there cry unto God and cease not your cries, for if you will seek Him as for silver and search for Him as for hidden treasure, you shall surely find Him! Prayer has a wonderful effect on God. He turns at the cry that comes from the heart. He is sure to look to the man who cries to Him for mercy.   
And at the same time that you are in prayer, or in connection with it, *meditate on Divine things*. Especially meditate on the *Person* of Christ, God and Man—on the *work* of Christ, especially His atoning Sacrifice. Meditate on the promises. Meditate on God’s wonders of Grace recorded in this delightful Book. Think and pray, and then think and pray again—and my impression is that you will not long have to say, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!”   
Yet there is one more word for you. If you would find God, *He is to be found in Christ Jesus*, “reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Do you know the Man, Christ Jesus? Can you, by faith, see Him? Fall at His feet! Accept Him as your Savior! Trust Him as the Giver and Forgiver, as saving from death and imparting life! Come and take Christ—and you have found God! No man believes in Christ and remains without the favor of God. Oh, that you would believe in Christ right now! This morning I preached about His Incarnation, Immanuel, God with us [#2163, Volume 36—*Immanuel—The Light of Life*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] Think much on this. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” God came here among men and took the form of a mortal creature— and here lived and died! Think of that, and believe in Him who is God and Man. Then think much of His life, of the many that He healed, the sick ones that He relieved, the sinful that came to hear Him, to whom He spoke only words of love. Look through the life of Christ and I am persuaded that if you are willing to do so, you will find among those who came to Him a case parallel to your own and will find Him dealing with it in love and mercy. And, while you are perusing that wondrous Life of love, you will find God! But if it is not so, go a little further—   
*“Go to dark Gethsemane,   
You that feel the tempter’s power.”*Stand amid the shade of the olives! Hear the Son of God groaning out His very soul, His sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. He pleaded there for sinners, for the guilty. Follow Him to Pilate’s Hall, see Him scourged and spat upon—and go, at last, to Calvary and sit down there in meditation—and mark the wounds in His blessed body, those sacred fountains of blood. See His emaciated frame exposed before the sun to the gaze of cruel men. Watch Him till you hear Him cry, “It is finished!” Then see the soldier set His heart abroach, for, even after death, His heart poured its tribute for us and then, as you remember that He made the heavens and the earth, and yet did hang upon that tree for the guilty, believe and trust Him.   
“Oh!” says one, “I cannot believe.” Now it is a curious thing that when I have met with persons who find it difficult to believe, I have often been obliged to say to them, “Well, now, there is a strange difference between you and me, for you cannot believe and I cannot disbelieve.” That is to say, when I see Christ, the Son of God, dying for guilty men, I cannot *make* myself *di*sbelieve. It seems to me to flash its own evidence upon my soul and I am convinced by the sight I see. How is it that you *cannot* believe when the Almighty God is one with His sinful creatures and dies to save them from eternal death? “Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” When you see that marvel of marvels, how can you disbelieve? I charge you, by the living God, look to Jesus on the Cross, as Israel in the wilderness, bitten by the serpents, looked to the bronze serpent—and by that look live!   
I think this is the way to find God, that is, to come to Christ, for, remember that He is not dead. He is risen! Where is the Christ now? He is at the right hand of God. He makes intercession for us—yes, for the rebellious, also, that the Lord God may dwell among them! Do you believe that Christ makes intercession for sinners? Then trust yourself with Him, first as your Redeemer, and now as your Intercessor! And so, by a simple trust, you shall find your God and no more say, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!”   
III. I have finished my discourse when I have very briefly answered the third question—WHY ARE SOME SO LONG IN FINDING GOD?   
I answer, partly because *they are not clear as to what they are seeking*. If you want to find God, well, here He is! You yourself know that He is everywhere, so that you have found Him! But what I fear some of you need is some kind of mark, some sign, some *feeling*. Now, that is *not* seeking God—*you are seeking something in addition to God*. I am sure that, in the hour of trial, nothing will stand a man in good stead but simple faith in God by Jesus Christ. “Oh!” says one, “I read of a man, the other day, who was under most wonderful conviction, and of another who had a very remarkable dream, and of another who heard a voice speaking to him.”   
Yes, yes, and all these pretty things are very well when you have faith in Christ. But if you do not trust yourself to Christ, these things are not worth a penny, for some day you will say to yourself, “How do I know that I did hear that voice? Might I not have been deceived? How can I be sure that that dream meant anything? May I not have eaten something for supper that made me dream it? And that joy that I felt may have been all a delusion.” But if you want God without any of these things, you want exactly what you need, and I pray you to come and take it by faith in Jesus. Here am I, a guilty sinner—that I *know* and *confess*. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—that I know by the witness of this Book. I am told that if I trust Him, I am saved. I *do* trust Him—I will not ask for a dream, or a vision, or a voice, or anything. Why should I? Beggars must not be choosers! If God gives me His salvation as He gives it to anybody else, I am perfectly happy, even though I have no striking story to tell and shall never point a moral or adorn a tale with any anecdote about myself. I am afraid, however, that many are not wanting God so much as wanting the odds and ends that sometimes go with Him.   
Again, there are some who are crying after God who are *hankering after their own idols*. Ah, me! You would like to keep some of your self-righteousness, or some of your sins. One of our friends, coming up from the Norfolk Broads, told me that when the time came to row home, he began pulling away at the oars and he thought that it was a very long way, and that the scenery was very monotonous, with the same old willow tree and everything the same as when he started. And someone going by said, “I suppose you know, old fellow, that you have got your anchor down.” That is exactly what he had forgotten! He was rowing with his anchor still down. You will not find God that way if you have an anchor still down! I do not know what your anchor is—perhaps it is the wine cup—you still take that drop too much. Perhaps it is an evil woman. Perhaps it is some trick in trade that you have been used to. Perhaps it is some secret sin that cannot be told. You cannot find God while you keep that. Achan, how can God come to your tent unless it is for judgment, while the Babylonian garment is hidden in the ground? Away with the idols and then shall you find the true God!   
And yet again, there are some who are *waiting to feel their need more.* They think that they cannot come to Christ till they feel more than they do at present. Now, again, I must get you to alter your cry. I thought that your cry was, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” But now your cry is, “Oh, that I knew that I really *needed* Him!” Have you not had enough of that experience? Time was with me when I thought too much of it. I believe a deep plowing does us good, but, if a man is always plowing and never sows anything, he will never have a harvest! Some of you are looking too much to your sense of need. You are NOT saved by your sense of need! *You are saved by the supply of that need*. Come as you are. “I have not a broken heart,” says one. Come to Christ *for* a broken heart. “I have not a tender conscience,” says another. Come to Christ *for* a tender conscience. You are *not* to get half the work done *yourself*, and *then* come to Christ to have it finished! Come as you are, just as you are, hard heart and all! Come along with you and trust yourself to Jesus—and you shall find God!   
I am afraid that there are also a great many who are *clouded in their minds by the great sorrow through which they have passed*, for you can be so distressed and distracted that you do not judge clearly. You remember Hagar, when the water in her bottle was spent, and her boy was dying of thirst? Just there, close behind her, was a well of water! The angel said to her, “What ails you, Hagar?” And we read, “God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.” Some of you have salvation at your fingertips, but you do not know it. You have it in your mouth, as Paul says, and you do not know it, or else you would swallow it down and live by it at once! Salvation is not up there in the heights, or down here in the deeps. The Apostle puts it thus, “If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”   
So runs the Gospel. Look for no other way. Believe! I said not, “Feel,” but, “Believe!” Dream not, dote not, imagine not, but believe! Say with your heart, “I believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. And I trust Him to save me—   
*“Tis done, the great transaction’s done;   
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine”*Now you shall begin a new life of obedience and holiness worked in you as the result of your having believed in Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin! Will you have Christ or not, Sinner? If you will not have Him, you must perish! If you will have Him, He gives Himself freely to you—and nothing is freer than a gift! Take Him, and go your way happy as the angels. God bless you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON *[JOB 23](tw://bible.*?id=18.23.0|_AUTODETECT_|).*

Job is in great physical pain through the sore boils that cover him from head to foot. He is still smarting under all the bereavements and losses he has sustained and he is somewhat irritated by the hard speeches of his friends. We read, in the second chapter of this book, that, “they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.” “Job’s comforters ,” even to this day, are regarded as those whose *thoughts* are preferred to their company. As the result of all the trials through which Job was called to pass, there is, in this chapter, somewhat of bitterness. We need not wonder at it—the wonder is that there is not more. You ought, in estimating a man’s actions or words, to judge of his circumstances at the time. Do not take Job’s words by themselves, but consider in what condition he was. Think what you would have done if you had been in his place—and you will not censure him, as you might otherwise have done.

Verses 1, 2. *Job answered and said, Even today is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning.* He could not express all his pain. He felt that he did not complain too much. His stroke was heavier than his groaning. His Words had bitterness in them, but he thought that they were justified by his affliction.

3. *Oh that I knew where I might find Him!* Job longed to find his God. He wanted to come to Him. He had been slandered by men, so he turns from the court of injustice below to the Divine Court of King’s Bench above, where he is sure of a righteous verdict—

*“Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!”*

3. *That I might come even to His seat!* To His Mercy Seat, and even to His Judgement Seat. Job was willing to appear even there!   
4. *I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments.* He felt that he dared plead before God. He was not guilty of the things laid to his charge, so he would be bold to speak even before God’s Judgement Seat. If Job had known a little more of God, as he did before his life ended, he might not have talked so glibly about ordering his cause before Him and filling his mouth with arguments. We remember how he afterwards spoke to the Lord, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ears: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Who among us would desire to come and argue our case with God without our heavenly Advocate?   
5. *I would know the words, which He would answer me, and understand what He would say unto me.* He was willing to hear God’s side of the argument, patient and anxious to understand the mind of God with whom he desired to plead. So far so good. There are some who do not wish to know what God would say to them. As long as they may express their own passionate desires, they have no ear and heart waiting to hear the voice of God. Very beautiful is the next verse—   
6. *Will He plead against me with His great power? No; but He would put strength in me.* He has confidence in the Lord that if he could have an audience with Him, God would not use His power *against* him, but, on the contrary, would *strengthen* him in order that he might state his case. Do I speak to a troubled heart here? Come to God with your burden! He will not use His power against you, but He will help you to plead with Him. Trembler, come and bow at His feet! He will not spurn you! He will lift you up. Despairing one, look to the Lord! He will not turn His wrath upon you, but He will help you to plead with Him. “Will He plead against me with His great power? No; but He would put strength in me.”   
7-9. *There the righteous might dispute with Him; so should I be delivered forever from my judge. Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: On the left hand, where He does work, but I cannot behold Him: He hides Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him.* Job had done his best to find his God. Forward, backward, to the right, and to the left, he had gone in all directions after Him, but he could not find Him. I know there are persons here, tonight, who are in that condition. And you will never rest, I hope, until you find the Lord. He is not far from you. I trust that with many of you, tonight is the happy hour in which your long searching shall end in a delightful finding!   
10. *But He knows the way that I take.* If I do not know His way, He knows mine! If I cannot find Him, He can find me! Here is my comfort—“He knows the way that I take.”   
10. *When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.* Here the true Job comes to the front. You get the gracious man once more on his feet. He staggered a little, but he now stands firm—“When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” So will you, my tried Sister, my afflicted Brother! The trial of your faith is but for a time—there will come an end to this furnace work! And when God has tried you, tested you, and taken away your dross—He will bring you forth and you will be pure gold—meet for the Master’s use—   
*“In the furnace God may prove you,   
There to bring you forth more bright,   
But can never cease to love you—   
You are precious in His sight!   
God is with you,  
God your everlasting light.”*

11. *My foot has held His steps, His way have I kept, and not declined.* Happy Job, to be able to say that, and to speak the truth! But there is a touch of self about it which we cannot quite commend. Be holy, but do not *claim* to be holy! Be steadfast before God, firm in your obedience to Him—but do not mention it—for your hope lies somewhere else. Yet we cannot condemn Job for declaring that he had kept God’s way. His friends were pleading against him, so he felt that he must defend himself.

12. *Neither have I gone back from the Commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.* Job was a happy man to be able to say that. I hope that many of you can say the same. If you were tried with great bodily pain and depression of spirit, you could say, through Divine Grace, “I have not turned away from God.” These are days when we need men of principle—men who can put their foot down and keep it down—men who cannot be turned aside. They call this firmness, “bigotry.” It is, however, only another name for Christian manliness! If you dare to do right and face a frowning world, you shall have God’s commendation, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

13. *But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him?* God has one mind and He will carry out what He wills. It is vain for any man to think of turning Him from His eternal purpose.   
13, 14. *And what His soul desires, even that He does. For He performs the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with Him.* You will find that men who are much tried fall back upon the granite foundation of the Divine Decree. God has ordained it, so they yield to it. They acquiesce in it because it is according to the eternal purpose of the Most High. Though we say little about it, now, there may come a time when some of you will have to say, as Job does, “For He performs the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with Him.”   
15. *Therefore am I troubled at His Presence: when I consider, I am afraid of Him.* It is a bad sign when a man of God becomes afraid of God! Yet there is a holy awe which may degenerate into a servile fear which has bondage. But even this may be the foundation of a holy confidence which will keep us in obedience to the Lord.   
16. *For God makes my heart soft—and the Almighty troubles me.* Are you saying that tonight? If so, I am glad you are here! I have, for many years, been compassed about with a large number of persons who come from the ends of England and Scotland—and from longer distances, too, in despair of soul, and seeking comfort—but I think that never in my life have I had more than I have had this week—persons unknown to me who are under conviction of sin and feeling the hand of God heavy upon them. By hard tugs I have had to bring them out of Giant Despair’s Castle! The Holy Spirit, alone, can do this work, but He sometimes makes use of a sympathetic brotherly word to give light to those who are in the dark. I am praying that He may do so, tonight, for there may be some here who say with Job, “God makes my heart soft, and the Almighty troubles me.”   
17. *Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither has He covered the darkness from my face.* He wished he had died before he came to such trouble, or that by some means such trouble had been turned away from him. May the Lord, if He sends you Job’s trouble, send you Job’s consolation! May He glorify Himself by your patient endurance, if He lays upon you His heavy hand!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—607, 594, 606.  
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THE ANXIOUS ENQUIRER NO. 2615

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 26, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1857.

**“Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” Job 23:3.**

WE will say nothing at this time concerning Job. We will leave the Patriarch out of the question and take these words as the exclamation forced from the aching heart of a sinner when he finds that he is lost on account of sin and can only be saved by Christ. “Oh that I knew where I might find Him”—my Savior—“That I might be saved by His love and blood!” There are some who tell us that a man, can, if he pleases, in one moment obtain peace with God and joy in the Holy Spirit. Such persons may know something of religion in their own hearts, but I think they are not competent to be judges of others. God may have given them some peace through believing and brought them into an immediate state of joy—He may have given them some repentance for sin and then quickly made them to rejoice in Jesus. But I believe that in many more cases, God begins by breaking the stony heart in pieces and often makes a delay of days, of weeks and even of months, before He heals the soul which He has wounded and gives life to the spirit which He has killed. Many of God’s people have been, even, for years seeking peace and, finding none, they have known their sins, they have been permitted to feel their guilt and yet, notwithstanding that they have sought the Lord earnestly with tears, they have not attained to a knowledge of their justification by faith in Christ.

Such was the case with John Bunyan. For many a dreary month he walked the earth in desolation and said he knew himself to be lost without Christ. On his bended knees, with tears pouring like showers from his eye, he sought mercy, but he found it not. Terrible words continually haunted him! Dreadful passages of Scripture kept ringing in his ears and he found no consolation until, afterwards, God was pleased to appear unto him in all the plentitude of Divine Grace and lead him to cast himself on the Savior!

I think there may be some here who have been for a long while under the hand of God—some who have been brought so far toward Heaven as to know that they are undone forever unless Christ shall save them. I may be addressing some who have begun to pray—many a time the walls of their chamber have resounded with their supplications. Not once, nor twice, nor 50 times, but very often have they bent their knees in agonizing prayer and yet, up to this moment, so far as their own feelings are concerned, their prayers are unanswered. Christ has not smiled upon them. They have not received the application of His precious blood and, perhaps, each one of them is at this hour saying, “I am ready to give up in despair. Jesus said He would receive all who came to Him, but apparently He has rejected me.” Take heart, O Mourner! I have a sweet message for you and I pray the Lord that you may find Christ on the spot where you are now standing or sitting—and rejoice in a pardon bought with blood!

I shall now proceed to consider the case of a man who is awakened and is seeking Christ, but who, at present, has not, to his own apprehension, found Him. First, I shall notice some hopeful signs in this man’s case. Secondly, I shall try to give some reasons why it is that a gracious God delays an answer to prayer in the case of penitent sinners. And then, thirdly, I shall close by giving some brief and suitable advice to those who have been seeking Christ, but have, up to the present time, found it a hopeless search.

I. First, then, observe that THERE ARE SOME VERY HOPEFUL SIGNS IN THE CASE OF THE MAN WHO HAS BEEN SEEKING CHRIST, THOUGH HE MAY NOT HAVE FOUND HIM.

Taking the text as the basis of observation, I notice as one hopeful sign that the man has only one objective—that he may find Christ. “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” The worldling’s cry is, “Who will show us any good—this good, that good, or any other good—fifty kinds of good! Who will show us any of these?” But the quickened sinner knows of only one good and he cries, “Oh that I knew where I might find HIM!” When the sinner is truly awakened to feel his guilt, if you could pour the gold of India at his feet, he would say, “Take it away! I need to find HIM.” If you could then give him all the joys and delights of the flesh, he would tell you he had tried all these and they but soured his appetite. His only cry is, “Oh that I knew where I might find HIM!”—

*“These will never satisfy!  
Give me Christ, or else I die!”*

It is a blessed thing for a man when he has brought his desires into a focus. While he has 50 different wishes, his heart resembles a pool of water which is spread over a marsh, breeding foul air and pestilence. But when all his desires are brought into one channel, his heart becomes like a river of pure water, running along and fertilizing the fields. Happy is the man who has only one desire, if that one desire is set on Christ, even though it may not yet have been realized. If it is his desire, it is a blessed sign of the Divine work within him. Such a man will never be content with mere ordinances. Other men will go up to God’s House and when they have heard the sermon, they will be satisfied. But not so this man! He will say, “Oh that I knew where I might find HIM!” His neighbor, who hears the sermon, will be content, but this man will say, “I need more than that! I want to find Christ in it.” Another man will go to the Communion Table—he will eat the bread and drink the wine—and that will be enough for him. But the quickened sinner will say, “No bread, no wine, will satisfy me! I need Christ. I must have Him! Mere ordinances are of no use to me. I want not the Savior’s clothes, I want Him! Do not offer me these things—you are only bringing me the empty pitcher while I am dying of thirst! Give me water, the Water of Life, or I shall die. It is Christ that I want.” This man’s cry is, as we have it here in our text, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!”

Is this your condition, my Friend, at this moment? Have you but one desire, and is that desire that you may find Christ? Then, as the Lord lives, you are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven. Have you but one wish in your heart, and is that one wish that you may be washed from all your sins in Jesus’ blood? Can you really say, “I would give all I have to be a Christian—I would give up everything I have and hope for if I might but feel that I have an interest in the Person and death of Christ”? Then, poor Soul, despite all your fears, be of good cheer—the Lord loves you and you shall soon come out into the daylight and rejoice in the liberty in which Christ makes men free.

There is another hopeful sign about this anxious enquirer. Not only has the man this one desire, but it is an intense desire. Hear the text again. “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” There is an, “Oh,” here. This proves an intensity of desire. There are some men who are apparently very religious, but their religion is never more than skin deep—it does not reach as far as their heart. They can talk of it finely, but they never feel it—it does not well up from the heart and that is a bad spring that only comes from the lips. But this character whom I am describing is no hypocrite—he means what he says. Other men will say, “Yes, we would like to be Christians. We would like to be pardoned and we would like to be forgiven.” And so they would—but they would like to go on in sin, too! They would like to be saved, but they would also like to live in sin! They want to hold with the hare and run with the hounds. They have no desire whatever to give up their sins—they would like to be pardoned for all their past transgressions—but go on just the same as before. Their wish is of no use because it is so superficial! But when the sinner is really quickened, there is nothing superficial about him. Then his cry is, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” and that cry comes from his very heart!

Are you in that condition, my Friend? Is your sigh a real one? Is your groan no mere fancy, but a real groan from the heart? Is that tear which steals down your cheek a genuine tear of penitence, which is the evidence of the grief of your spirit? I think I hear you saying, “Sir, if you knew me, you would not ask me that question. My friends say I am miserable day after day and so, indeed, I am. I go to my chamber at the top of the house and I often cry to God. Yes, Sir, I cry in such a style that I would not have anyone hear me. I cry with groans and tears that I may be brought near to God. I mean what I say.” Then, Beloved, you shall be saved! So surely as it is a real emotion of the heart, God will not let you perish. Never was there a sinner whose inmost spirit cried to the Lord for salvation who was not already loved of God! Never was there one who, with all his might, desired to be saved and whose soul groaned out that desire in hearty prayer, who was cast away by God! His mercy may tarry, but it will come. Pray on—He will hear you at last—and you shall yet “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

But notice again that in the text there is an admission of ignorance, which is another very hopeful sign. “Oh that I knew!” Many people think they know everything and, consequently, they know nothing. I think it is Seneca who says, “Many a man would have been wise if he had not thought himself so. If he had but known himself to be a fool, he would have become wise.” The doorstep to the Temple of Wisdom is a knowledge of our own ignorance. He cannot learn aright who has not first been taught that he knows nothing. A sense of ignorance is a very excellent sign of Grace. It is an amazing thing that every man seems to think himself qualified to be a Doctor of Divinity—a man who knows nothing of any other science, fancies he perfectly understands this greatest of all sciences and, alas, alas, for those who think they know so much about God’s things and yet have never been taught of God! Man’s school is not God’s school. A man may go to all the Colleges in creation and know as little of theology when he comes out as when he went into them. It is a good thing for a man to feel that he is only beginning to learn and to be willing to open his mind to the teaching of God’s Spirit, that he may be guided in everything by Him. He that is foolish enough to fancy that he knows everything need not think himself a Christian. He that boasts that he understands all mysteries, needs to fear as to his true state. But the quickened soul prays to the Lord, “Teach me.” We become little children when God begins to deal with us. Before that we were big, tall, men and women, and oh, so wise! But when He takes us in hand, He cuts us down to the stature of children and we put on the form of humility to learn the true lessons of wisdom—and then we are taught the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. Happy are you, O Man, if you know yourself to know nothing! If God has emptied you of your carnal wisdom, He will fill you with that which is heavenly. If He has taught you your ignorance, He will teach you His wisdom and bring You to Himself! And if you are taught to reject all you know and know it, God will certainly reveal Himself to you.

There is one more hopeful sign in my text that I must mention. It is this—the person I have spoken of is very careless about where it is he seeks Christ, so that he does find Him. Do you know, Beloved, that people, when they really feel the weight and the guilt of their sins, are the worst people in the world to stick up for denominations? Other men can fight with their fellow creatures about various minor matters, but a poor awakened sinner says, “Lord, I will be glad to meet You anywhere!” When we have never seen ourselves to be sinners, we are the most respectable religionists in the world—we venerate every nail in the church or chapel door—and we would not have anyone differ from us on any point of doctrine or practice! But when we feel our sins, we say, “Lord, if I could find You anywhere, I would be happy. If I could find you at the Baptist Meeting House. If I could find you in the Independent Chapel, I would be glad enough to go there. I have always attended a large, handsome church, but if I could find You in that little despised Meeting House, I would be glad to go there. Though it would be degrading to my rank and respectability, I would go there to find my Savior.” Some are foolish enough to think that they would rather not have Christ if He goes anywhere except to their own church—they must keep to their own denomination and can, by no means, overstep the line.

It is a marvelous thing, but I believe I describe the experience of many whom I am now addressing, when I say that there are very few of you who were brought to know the Lord where you were in the habit of attending. You have, perhaps, worshipped there since you were converted, but it was not your father’s church, not the place where you were born and bred, but some other into which you strayed for a time, where the King’s arrows stuck fast in your heart! I know it was so with me—I never thought of going to the Chapel where I was first brought to know the Lord, but it snowed so hard that I could not go to my ordinary place of worship, so I was obliged to go to the little Primitive Methodist meeting. And when I got in, the preacher read his text—“Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” It was a blessed text and it was blessedly applied to my soul! But if there had been any opportunity as to going into other places, I would not have been there! So the awakened sinner says, “‘Oh that I knew where I might find Him!’ Only let me know where Christ is to be found! Let the minister be the most despised in the world, I will go and hear him! Let the denomination to which he belongs be the most calumniated and slandered, there I will be found seeking Him! If I can but find Christ, I will be content to meet Him anywhere!”

If divers can go into the deeps to bring up pearls, we should not be ashamed, sometimes, to dive deep to bring up precious jewels of Divine Grace. Men will do anything to get gold—they will work in the most muddy streams, or under the most scorching sun—surely, then, we ought not to mind how much we stoop if we find that which is more precious than gold and silver, even “Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Is this how you feel? Then, Beloved, I have not only a hope for you, but I have a certainty concerning you! If you are brought to cry out, in all the senses I have mentioned, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” then, assuredly, the Lord has begun a good work in you and He will carry it on even unto the end.

II. But now, for my second point, I SHALL ENDEAVOR TO GIVE SOME REASONS WHY IT IS THAT A GRACIOUS GOD DELAYS AN ANSWER TO THE PRAYER OF PENITENT SINNERS. I think I hear someone asking, “How is it that God does not give a man comfort as soon as he repents? Why is it that the Lord makes some of His people wait in bondage when they are longing for liberty?”

In the first place, it is to display His own Sovereignty. Ah, that is a word that is not often mentioned in pulpits! Divine Sovereignty is a very unfashionable Doctrine. Few people care to hear of a God who does as He pleases, who is absolute monarch over man, who knows of no law but His own will—which is always the will to do that which is right, to do good to those whom He has ordained unto eternal life—and to scatter mercy lavishly upon all His creatures. But we assert that there is such a thing as Divine Sovereignty and, more especially in the work of salvation! God seems to me to argue thus, “If I gave to all men peace as soon as they asked for it, they would begin to think they had a right to it. Now, I will make some of them wait so that they may see that the mercy is absolutely in My hands and that if I chose to withhold it altogether, I might do so most justly. And so I will make men see that it is a gift of My Free Grace and not of their own merit.” In some of our squares, where the owners are anxious to keep the right of way in their own hands, they sometimes shut the gates, not because they would inconvenience us, but because they would have the public see that, although they may let them through, yet they have no right of way and might be excluded if the proprietors please. So is it with God—He says, “Man, if I save you, it is entirely of My own will and pleasure. I give My Grace, not because you deserve it, for then it were not Grace, but I give it to the most undeserving of men that I may maintain My right to dispense it as I please.” And I take it that this is the best way of proving God’s Sovereignty, namely, His making a delay between penitence and faith, or between penitence and that faith which brings peace with God and joy in the Holy Spirit. I think that is one very important reason.

But there is another. God sometimes delays manifesting His forgiving mercy to men in order that they may find out some secret sin. There is something hidden in their hearts of which they do not know. They come to God confessing their sins and they think they have make a clean breast of all their transgressions. “No,” says God, “I will not give you pardon yet, or I will not, at present, apply it to your conscience. There is a secret sin you have not yet discovered.” And He sets the heart to examine itself again—as Jerusalem is searched with candles—and, lo, there is some iniquity dragged out from the corner in which it was hidden! Conscience says, “I never knew of this sin. I never felt it to be a sin! Lord, I repent of it—will You not forgive me?” “Ah,” says the mighty Maker, “now I have proved you, tried you and cast out this dross. I will now speak to you the word of consolation and comfort.” Are you, then, a mourner seeking rest, and not finding it? I beseech you, look into your heart once more! Perhaps there is some hidden lust there, some secret sin. If so, turn the traitor out! Then will the Holy Spirit come and dwell in your soul and give you “the peace of God which passes all understanding.”

Another reason why God delays His mercy is that He may make us more useful in later life. A man is never made thoroughly useful until he has passed through suffering. I do not think there is much good done by a man who has never been afflicted. We must first prove in our own hearts and lives the Truths of God we are afterwards to preach, or we shall never preach them with effect! And if we are private Christians, we can never be of much use to our fellow men unless we have passed through trials similar to those which they have had to endure. So God makes some of His people wait a long time before He gives them the manifestation of their pardon, in order that, in later days, they may comfort others. The Lord is saying to many a tried soul, “I need you to be a consolation to others. Therefore I will make you full of grief and drunk with wormwood so that when you shall, in later years, meet with the mourner, you may say to him, ‘I have suffered and endured the same trial that you are passing through.’” There are none so fit to comfort others as those who have once needed comfort themselves. Then take heart, poor afflicted one, perhaps the Lord designs you for a great work! He is keeping you low in bondage, doubt and fear, that He may bring you out more clearly and make your light like the light of seven days, and bring forth your righteousness “fair as the moor, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners.” Wait, then, with patience, for God intends good to you and good to others through you, by this delay.

But the delay often arises not so much from God, as from ourselves. It is ignorance of the way of salvation which keeps many a man longer in doubt than he would be if he knew more about it. I do not hesitate to affirm that one of the hardest things for a sinner to understand is the way of salvation. It seems the plainest thing in all the world—nothing appears more simple than, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” But when the sinner is led to feel himself a sinner, he finds it not so easy to understand as he thought. We tell a man that with all their blackness, sinners may be pardoned. That with all their sins, they can be freely forgiven for Christ’s sake. “But,” says the man when he feels himself to be black, “do you mean to tell me that I am to be made whiter than snow? Do you really mean that I, who am lost, am to be saved, not through anything I do, or hope to do, but purely through what Another did ?” He can hardly believe it possible! He will have it that he must do something—he must do this, or that, or the other to help Christ—and the hardest thing in the world is to bring a man to see that salvation is of the Lord, alone, and not at all of himself! That it is God’s free and perfect gift which leaves nothing of ours to be added to it, but is given to us to cover us completely, from head to foot, without anything of our own!

Men will conceive what God would not have them imagine and they will not receive that which God would have them embrace! It may be very easy to talk of certain cures and to read of them. We may say, “Suchand-such a medicine is very effective and will work such-and-such a cure.” But when we, ourselves, are sick, we are often very dubious about the medicine! And if, having taken draught after draught of it, we find that it does not help us, perhaps we are brought to think that though it may cure others, it cannot cure us, because there has been such delay in its operation. So the poor soul thinks of the Gospel, “Certainly it cannot heal me.” And then he misunderstands the nature of the sacred medicine, altogether, and begins to take the Law instead of the Gospel. Now the Law never saved anyone yet, though it has condemned full many in its time—and will condemn us all unless we receive the Gospel.

If any here should be in doubt on account of ignorance, let me, as plainly as I can, state the Gospel. I believe it to be wrapped up in one word—Substitution. I have always considered, with Luther and Calvin, that the sum and substance of the Gospel lies in that word, Substitution—Christ standing in the place of man. If I understand the Gospel, it is this—I deserve to be lost and ruined. The only reason why I should not be damned is that Christ was punished in my place and there is no need to execute a sentence twice for the same sin. On the other hand, I know that I cannot enter Heaven unless I have a perfect righteousness. I am absolutely certain I shall never have one of my own, for I find that I sin every day. But then Christ had a perfect righteousness and He said, “Here, take My garment, put it on—you shall stand before God as if you were Christ—and I will stand before God as if I had been you. I will suffer in your place and you shall be rewarded for works which you did not do, but which I did for you.”

I think the whole substance of salvation lies in the thought that Christ stood in the place of man. The prisoner is in the dock. He is about to be taken away to death. He deserves to die, for he has been a great criminal. But before he is removed, the Judge asks whether there is any possible plan whereby the prisoner’s life can be spared. Up rises One who is, Himself, pure and perfect, has known no sin and, by the allowance of the Judge, for that is necessary, He steps into the dock and says, “Consider Me to be the prisoner. Pass the sentence on Me and let Me die. Reckon the prisoner to be Myself. I have fought for My country. I have deserved a reward for what I have done—reward him as if he had done good-and punish Me as if I had committed the sin.” “But,” you say, “Such a thing could not occur in an earthly court of law.” No, but it has happened in God’s Court of Law, in the great Court of King’s Bench where God is the Judge of All, it has happened! The Savior said, “The sinner deserves to die. Let Me die in his place and let him be clothed in My righteousness.”

To illustrate this, I will give you two instances. One is that of an ancient King who enacted a law against a certain crime—the punishment of anyone who committed the crime was that he should have both his eyes put out. His own son committed the crime. The king, as a strict judge, said, “I cannot alter the law. I have said that the loss of two eyes shall be the penalty—take out one of mine and one of his.” So, you see, he strictly carried out the law, but, at the same time, he was able to have mercy, in part, upon his son. But the case of Christ goes further than that. He did not say, “Exact half the penalty on Me and half on the sinner.” He said, “Put both My eyes out; nail Me to the tree; let Me die; let Me take all the guilt away and then the sinner may go free.” We have heard of another case, that of two brothers, one of whom had been a great criminal and was about to die, when his brother, coming into the court, decorated with medals and having many wounds upon him, rose up to plead with the judge that he would have mercy on the criminal for his sake. Then he began to strip himself and show his scars—how here and there on his big broad chest he had received saber cuts in defense of his country. “By these wounds,” he said, and he lifted up one arm, the other having been cut away, “by these, my wounds, and the sufferings I have endured for my country, I beseech you, have mercy on him.” For his brother’s sake, the criminal was allowed to escape the punishment that was hanging over his head. It was even so with Christ. “The sinner,” He said, “deserves to die. Then I will die in his place. He deserves not to enter Heaven, for he has not kept the Law of God, but I have kept the Law for him—he shall have My righteousness and I will take his sin—and so the Just shall die for the unjust, to bring him to God.”

III. I have thus turned aside from the subject, somewhat, in order to clear away any ignorance that might exist in the minds of certain of my hearers as to this essential point of the Gospel plan. And now I am, in closing my discourse, to give SOME ADVICE TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SEEKING CHRIST, BUT WHO HAVE NEVER FOUND HIM, AS TO HOW THEY MIGHT FIND HIM.

In the first place, let me say, Go wherever Christ goes. If Christ were to walk this earth again and heal the sick, as He did when He was here, before, many sick people would enquire, “Where will Christ be tomorrow?” And, as soon as they found out where He would take His walks, there they would be, lying on the pavement, in the hope that as He passed by, He would heal them. Go up, then, sick Soul, to Christ’s House! It is there that He meets with His people. Read His Word! It is there that He blesses them by applying sweet promises to them. Observe His ordinances. Do not neglect them. Christ comes to Bethesda Pool, so lie by the water and wait till He arrives. If you cannot put in your foot, be where Christ comes. Thomas did not get the blessing, for He was not with the other disciples when the Master came to them. Stay not away from the House of God, poor seeking Soul—be there whenever the doors are opened, so that, when Jesus passes by, He may look on you and say, “Your sins are forgiven you.”

And whatever else you do, when Christ passes by, cry after Him with all your might! Never be satisfied until you make Him stop. And if He should frown on you, seemingly for the moment, do not be silenced or stayed. If you are a little stirred by a sermon, pray over it—do not lose the auspicious moment. If you hear anything read which gives you some hope, lift up your heart in prayer at once! When the wind blows, then should the sails be set, and it may happen that God will give you Grace to reach the harbor’s mouth and you may find the haven of perpetual rest. There was a man who was born blind and who longed to have his sight. As he sat by the roadway, one day, he was told that Jesus was passing by. And when he heard that, he cried after Him, “Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me!” The people wanted to hear Christ preach, so they tried to hush the poor man, but he cried again, “You Son of David, have mercy on me!” The Son of David turned not His head. He did not look upon the man, but continued His discourse. But still the man shouted, “Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me!”

And then Jesus stopped. The disciples ran to the poor man and said, “Be still, trouble not the Master.” But he cried so much the more, “Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me!” And Jesus at last asked him, “What will you that I should do unto you?” He answered, “Lord, that I might receive my sight.” He received it “and followed Jesus in the way.” Perhaps your doubts say to you, “Hush! Do not pray any more.” Or Satan says, “Be still! Do not cry to Christ any more.” Tell your doubts and fears, and the devil, too, that you will give Christ no rest till He turns His eyes upon you in love and heals your diseases. Cry aloud to Him, O you awakened Sinner, when He is passing by!

The next piece of advice I would give you is this—think very much of Christ. No way that I know of will bring you faith in Christ as well as thinking of Him. I would advise you, conscience-stricken Sinner, to spend an hour in meditation on Christ. You do not need to devote that time to meditation on yourself—you will get very little good from that— you may know beforehand that there is no hope for you in yourself. But spend an hour in meditation on Christ. Go, Beloved, to your most private place of seclusion. Sit down and picture Christ in the garden—think you see Him there, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Then view Him standing in Pilate’s Hall. Behold Him with His hands bound, His back streaming with blood! Then follow Him till you see Him coming to the hill called Calvary. Think you see Him hurled backwards and nailed to the Cross. Then let your imagination, or rather your faith, bring before you the Cross lifted up and dashed into its socket, when every bone of Christ was jerked out of joint. Look at Him. Look at His crown of thorns and watch the beaded drops of blood trickling down His cheeks—

*“See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did ever such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown!  
His dying crimson, like a robe,  
Spreads over His body on the tree,  
Then am I dead to all the globe,  
And all the globe is dead to me.”*

I know of no means, under God, so profitable for producing faith as thinking of Christ, for while you are looking at Him, you will say, “Blessed Jesus, did You die for sinners? Then, surely, my Soul, His death is sufficient for you.” He is able to save unto the uttermost all those who trust in Him. You may think of a doctrine forever and get no good from it, if you are not already saved. But think of the Person of Christ and specially of His death, for that will bring you faith. Think of Him everywhere, wherever you go. Try to meditate on Him in all your leisure moments and then He will reveal Himself to you and give you peace.

None of us, not even the best of Christians, think and say enough of Christ. I went into a friend’s house, one day, and he said to me, as a sort of hint, I suppose, “I have known So-and-So these 30 years, without hearing anything of his religion.” I said, “You will not know me 30 minutes without hearing something of mine.” It is a fact that many Christian people spend their Sunday afternoons in talking about other subjects and Jesus Christ is scarcely ever mentioned. As for poor ungodly worldlings, of course they neither say nor think anything of Him. But oh, you that know yourself to be a sinner, despise not the Man of Sorrows! Let His bleeding hands rest on you! Look at His pierced side and, looking, you shall live! Remember, it is only by looking to Christ that we shall be saved, not by doing anything ourselves.

This brings me to close by saying to every awakened sinner—If you would have peace with God, and have it now, venture on Christ. We must venture on Christ, and venture wholly, or else we can never be saved. Yet it is hardly right to say venture, for it is no venture—there is not a grain of chance in it. He that trusts Himself to Christ need never fear. “But,” someone asks, “how am I to trust Christ? What do you mean by trusting in Christ?” Why, I mean just what I say—fully trust on what Christ did for the salvation of sinners. A Negro slave, when he was asked how he believed, said, “Massa, dis is how I believe—I fall flat down on de promise, I can’t fall no lower.” He had just the right idea about believing in Jesus. Believing is falling down on Christ and looking to Him to hold you up. I will illustrate it by an anecdote which I have often told. A boy at sea who was very fond of mounting to the masthead, one day climbed to the maintop, and could not get down. The sea was very rough and it was seen that, in a little while, the boy would fall on the deck and be dashed to pieces. His father saw but one way of saving his life. Seizing a speaking-trumpet, he shouted, “Boy, the next time the ship lurches, drop into the sea.” The next time the ship lurched, the boy looked down and, not at all liking the idea of throwing himself into the sea, still clung to the mast. The father, who saw that the boy’s strength would soon fail him, took a gun in his hand and cried out, “Boy, if you don’t drop into the sea the next time the ship lurches, I’ll shoot you!”

The boy knew his father meant it—and the next time the ship lurched, he leaped into the sea. It seemed liked certain destruction, but out went a dozen brawny arms and he was saved. The sinner, in the midst of the storm, thinks he must cling to the mast of his good works, and so be saved. Says the Gospel, “Let go your own works, and drop into the ocean of God’s Grace.” “No,” says the sinner, “it is a long way between me and God’s Grace. I will perish if I trust to that. I must have some other reliance.” “If you have any other reliance than that, you are lost.” Up comes the thundering Law of God and declares to the sinner that unless he gives up every dependence, he will be lost. Then follows the happy moment when the sinner says, “Dear Lord, I give up all my dependence, and cast myself on You. I take You, Jesus, to be my one objective in life, My only trust, the refuge of my soul.”

Can any of you say that in your hearts? I know there are some of you who can, but are there any who could not say it when they came here, but who can say it now? Oh, I would rejoice if one such were brought to God! I am conscious that I have not preached to you as I desired, but if one such has been brought to believe and trust in the Savior, I rejoice, for thereby God will be glorified!

But, alas, for such of you as will go away and say, “The man has talked about salvation, but what does it matter to us?” You think you can afford to laugh at God and His Gospel today, but remember, men cannot afford to despise boats when their vessel is going down in a storm, although they may do so on land. Death is after you and will soon seize you—your pulse must soon cease to beat. Strong as you are, now, your bones are not made of brass, nor are your ribs of steel. Sooner or later you must lie on your lowly pallet and there breathe out your last. Or, if you are ever so rich, you must die on your curtained beds and must depart from all your enjoyment into everlasting punishment! You will find it hard work to laugh at Christ, then! You will find it dreadful work to scoff at religion, then, in that day when Death gets hold of you, and asks, “Will you laugh now, Scoffer?” “Ah,” you will say, “I find it different from what I supposed. I cannot laugh now death is near me.”

Take warning, then, before death comes! Take warning! He must be a poor ignorant man who does not insure his house before it is on fire and he must be the greatest of fools who thinks it unnecessary to seek the salvation of his soul till he comes to the last moment and is in peril of his life! May God give you thought and consideration, so that you may be led to flee from sin and fly to Jesus! And may God, the Everlasting Father, give you what I cannot—His Grace, which saves the soul and makes sinners into saints and lands them in Heaven!

I can only close by repeating the Words of the Gospel, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” Having said this, if I had said no more, I would have preached Christ’s Gospel to you. The Lord give you understanding in all things and help you to believe, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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**“Oh that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat! I would present my case before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments.”  
Job 23:3, 4.**

IN Job’s uttermost extremity he cried after the Lord. The longing desire of an afflicted child of God is once more to see his Father’s face. His first prayer is not, “Oh that I might be healed of the disease which now festers in every part of my body!” Nor even, “Oh that I might see my children restored from the jaws of the grave, and my property once more brought from the hand of the spoiler!” No, the first and uppermost cry is, “Oh that I knew where I might find HIM—who is my God! That I might come even to His seat!”

God’s children run home when the storm comes on. It is the Heavenborn instinct of a gracious soul to seek shelter from all ills beneath the wings of Jehovah. “He that has made his refuge God,” might serve as the title of a true Believer. A hypocrite, when he feels that he has been afflicted by God, resents the infliction and, like a slave, would run from the master who has scourged him. But not so the true heir of Heaven! He kisses the hand which smote him and seeks shelter from the rod in the bosom of that very God who frowned upon him.

You will observe that the desire to commune with God is intensified by the failure of all other sources of consolation. When Job first saw his friends at a distance, he may have entertained a hope that their kindly counsel and compassionate tenderness would blunt the edge of his grief. But they had not long spoken before he cried out in bitterness, “Miserable comforters are you all!” They put salt into his wounds. They heaped fuel upon the flame of his sorrow. They added the gall of their upbraiding to the wormwood of his griefs.

In the sunshine of his smile they once had longed to sun themselves, and now they dare to cast shadows upon his reputation—most ungenerous and undeserved! Alas for a man when his wine cup mocks him with vinegar, and his pillow pricks him with thorns! The Patriarch turned away from his sorry friends and looked up to the celestial Throne, just as a traveler turns from his empty skin bottle and betakes himself with all speed to the well. He bids farewell to earth-born hopes, and cries, “Oh that I knew where I might find my God!”

My Brethren, nothing teaches us so much the preciousness of the Creator as when we learn the emptiness of all besides. When you have been pierced through and through with the sentence, “Cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm,” then will you suck unutterable sweetness from the Divine assurance, “Blessed is he that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.” Turning away with bitter scorn from earth’s hives, where you found no honey, but many sharp stings, you will rejoice in Him whose faithful Word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb.

It is further observable that though a good man hastens to God in his trouble, and runs with all the more speed because of the unkindness of his fellow men, yet sometimes the gracious soul is left without the comfortable Presence of God. This is the worst of all grief! The text is one of Job’s deep groans, far deeper than any which came from him on account of the loss of his children and his property: “Oh that I knew where I might find HIM!” The worst of all losses is to lose the smile of my God. He now had a foretaste of the bitterness of his Redeemer’s cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

God’s Presence is always with His people in one sense, so far as secretly sustaining them is concerned, but His manifest Presence they do not always enjoy. Like the spouse in the Song, they seek their Beloved by night upon their bed. They seek Him but they find Him not. And though they wake and roam through the city they may not discover Him, and the question may be sadly asked again and again, “Saw you Him whom my soul loves?” You may be beloved of God, and yet have no consciousness of that love in your soul. You may be as dear to His heart as Jesus Christ Himself, and yet for a small moment He may forsake you—and in a little wrath He may hide Himself from you.

But, dear Friends, at such times the desire of the believing soul gathers yet greater intensity from the fact of God’s light being withheld. Instead of saying with proud lip, “Well, if He leaves me I must do without Him. If I cannot have His comfortable Presence I must fight on as best may be,” the soul says, “No, He is my very life! I must have my God. I perish, I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, and nothing but the arm of God can deliver me.” The gracious soul addresses itself with a double zeal to find out God, and sends up its groans, its entreaties, its sobs and sighs to Heaven more frequently and fervently, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!”

Distance or labor are as nothing—if the soul only knew where to go she would soon overleap the distance. She makes no stipulation about mountains or rivers, but vows that if she knew where, she would go, even to His seat. My soul in her hunger would break through stone walls, or scale the battlements of Heaven to reach her God. And though there were seven Hells between me and Him, yet would I face the flame if I might reach Him—nothing daunted if I had but the prospect of at last standing in His Presence and feeling the delight of His love!

That seems to me to be the state of mind in which Job pronounced the words before us. But we cannot stop upon this point, for the object of this morning’s discourse beckons us onward. It appears that Job’s end, in desiring the Presence of God, was that he might pray to Him. He had prayed, but he wanted to pray as in God’s Presence. He desired to plead as before one whom he knew would hear and help him. He longed to state his own case before the seat of the impartial Judge, before the very face of the all-wise God. He would appeal from the lower courts, where his friends judged unrighteous judgment, to the Court of King’s Bench—the High Court of Heaven.

There, said he, “I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments.” In this latter verse Job teaches us how he meant to plead and intercede with God. He does, as it were, reveal the secrets of his closet, and unveils the art of prayer. We are here admitted into the guild of suppliants—we are shown the art and mystery of pleading. We have here taught to us the blessed handicraft and science of prayer—and if we can be bound apprentices to Job this morning, for the next hour, and can have a lesson from Job’s Master—we may acquire no little skill in interceding with God.

There are two things here set forth as necessary in prayer—ordering of our cause, and filling our mouth with arguments. We shall speak of those two things, and then if we have rightly learned the lesson, a blessed result will follow.

I. First, IT IS NEEDFUL THAT OUR SUIT BE ORDERED BEFORE GOD. There is a vulgar notion that prayer is a very easy thing, a kind of common business that may be done anywhere, without care or effort. Some think that you have only to take a book down and get through a certain number of very excellent words, and you have prayed and may put the book up again. Others suppose that to use a book is superstitious, and that you ought rather to repeat extemporaneous sentences, sentences which come to your mind with a rush, like a herd of swine or a pack of hounds—and that when you have uttered them with some little attention to what you have said, you have prayed.

Now neither of these modes of prayer were adopted by ancient saints. They appear to have thought a great deal more seriously of prayer than many do nowadays. It seems to have been a mighty business with them, a long-practiced exercise in which some of them attained great eminence, and were thereby singularly blest. They reaped great harvests in the field of prayer, and found the Mercy Seat to be a mine of untold treasures. The ancient saints were accustomed, with Job, to order their cause before God.

That is to say, as a petitioner coming into Court does not come there without thought to state his case on the spur of the moment, but enters into the audience chamber with his suit well prepared, having moreover learned how he ought to behave himself in the presence of the great one to whom he is appealing. It is well to approach the seat of the King of kings as much as possible with premeditation and preparation, knowing what we are about, where we are standing, and what it is which we desire to obtain.

In times of peril and distress we may fly to God just as we are, as the dove enters the cleft of the rock, even though her plumes are ruffled. But in ordinary times we should not come with an unprepared spirit, even as a child comes not to his father in the morning till he has washed his face. See yonder priest—he has a sacrifice to offer, but he does not rush into the court of the priests and hack at the bullock with the first pole-axe upon which he can lay his hand. No, when he rises he washes his feet at the bronze laver. He puts on his garments, and adorns himself with his priestly vestments—then he comes to the altar with his victim properly divided according to the law. He is careful to do according to the command, even to such a simple matter as the placing of the fat, and the liver, and the kidneys, and he takes the blood in a bowl and pours it in an appropriate place at the foot of the altar, not throwing it just as may occur to him, and kindles the fire not with common flame, but with the sacred fire from off the altar.

Now this ritual is all replaced, but the truth which it taught remains the same—our spiritual sacrifices should be offered with holy carefulness. God forbid that our prayer should be a mere leaping out of one’s bed and kneeling down, and saying anything that comes to hand! On the contrary, may we wait upon the Lord with holy fear and sacred awe. See how David prayed when God had blessed him—he went in before the Lord. Understand that—he did not stand outside at a distance, but he went in before the Lord and he sat down—for sitting is not a bad posture for prayer—let who will speak against it.

And sitting down quietly and calmly before the Lord, he then began to pray—but not until first he had thought over the Divine goodness, and so attained to the spirit of prayer. Then by the assistance of the Holy Spirit did he open his mouth. Oh that we more often sought the Lord in this style! Abraham may serve us as a pattern. He rose up early—here was his willingness. He went three days journey—here was his zeal. He left his servants at the foot of the hill—here was his privacy. He carried the wood and the fire with him—here was his preparation. And lastly he built the altar and laid the wood in order, and then took the knife—here was the devout carefulness of his worship.

David puts it, “In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up”—which I have frequently explained to you to mean that he marshaled his thoughts like men of war, or that he aimed his prayers like arrows. He did not take the arrow and put it on the bowstring and shoot, and shoot, and shoot anywhere! After he had taken out the chosen shaft, and fitted it to the string, he took deliberate aim. He looked—looked well— at the white of the target. He kept his eyes fixed on it, directing his prayer—and then drew his bow with all his strength and let the arrow fly.

And then, when the shaft had left his hand, what does he say? “I will look up.” He looked up to see where the arrow went, to see what effect it had—for he expected an answer to his prayers! He was not as many who scarcely think of their prayers after they have uttered them. David knew that he had an engagement before him which required all his mental powers. He marshaled up his faculties and went about the work in a workmanlike manner, as one who believed in it and meant to succeed. We should plow carefully and pray carefully. The better the work the more attention it deserves.

To be anxious in the shop and thoughtless in the closet is little less than blasphemy, for it is an insinuation that anything will do for God, but the world must have our best. If any ask what order should be observed in prayer, I am not about to give you a scheme, such as many have drawn out, in which adoration, confession, petition, intercession, and ascription are arranged in succession. I am not persuaded that any such order is of Divine authority. It is to no mere mechanical order I have been referring, for our prayers will be equally acceptable, and possibly equally proper, in any form.

There are specimens of prayers, in all shapes, in the Old and New Testament. The true spiritual order of prayer seems to me to consist in something more than mere arrangement. It is most fitting for us, first, to feel that we are doing something that is real—that we are about to address ourselves to God, whom we cannot see, but who is really present—whom we can neither touch nor hear, nor by our senses can apprehend, but who, nevertheless, is as truly with us as though we were speaking to a friend of flesh and blood like ourselves.

Feeling the reality of God’s Presence, our mind will be led by Divine Grace into an humble state. We shall feel like Abraham, when he said, “I have taken upon myself to speak unto God, I that am but dust and ashes.” Consequently we shall not deliver ourselves of our prayer as boys repeating their lessons, as a mere matter of rote. Much less shall we speak as if we were rabbis instructing our pupils, or as I have heard some do, with the coarseness of a highwayman stopping a person on the road and demanding his purse of him! No, we shall be humble, yet bold petitioners, humbly importuning mercy through the Savior’s blood. We shall not have the reserve of a slave but the loving reverence of a child, yet not an impudent, impertinent child, but a teachable, obedient child, honoring his Father, and therefore asking earnestly, but with deferential submission to his Father’s will.

When I feel that I am in the Presence of God, and take my rightful position in that Presence, the next thing I shall want to recognize will be that I have no right to what I am seeking, and cannot expect to obtain it except as a gift of Divine Grace. And I must remember that God limits the channel through which He will give me mercy—He will give it to me through His dear Son, and only through His Son, Jesus Christ. Let me put myself, then, under the patronage of the great Redeemer. Let me feel that now it is no longer I that speak but Christ that speaks with me, and that while I plead, I plead His wounds, His life, His death, His blood—Himself. This is truly getting into order.

The next thing is to consider what I am to ask for. It is most proper, in prayer, to aim at great distinctness of supplication. There is much reason to complain of some public prayers, that those who offer them do not really ask God for anything. I must acknowledge I fear to having so prayed myself, and certainly to having heard many prayers of the kind in which I did not feel that anything was sought for from God—a great deal of very excellent doctrinal and experimental matter uttered, but little real petitioning—and that little in a nebulous kind of state, chaotic and unformed. But it seems to me that prayer should be distinct—the asking for something definitely and distinctly because the mind has realized its distinct need of such a thing—and therefore must plead for it.

It is well not to beat round the bush in prayer, but to come directly to the point. I like that prayer of Abraham’s, “Oh that Ishmael might live before You!” There is the name and the person prayed for, and the blessing desired, all put in a few words—“Ishmael might live before You!” Many persons would have used a roundabout expression of this kind, “Oh that our beloved offspring might be regarded with the favor which You bear to those who,” etc. Say “Ishmael,” if you mean “Ishmael.” Put it in plain words before the Lord.

Some people cannot even pray for the minister without using such circular descriptives that you might think it were the parish usher, or somebody whom it did not do to mention too particularly. Why not be distinct, and say what we mean as well as mean what we say? Ordering our cause would bring us to greater distinctness of mind. It is not necessary, my dear Brethren, in the closet, to ask for every supposable good thing. It is not necessary to rehearse the catalog of every need that you may have, have had, can have, or shall have. Ask for what you now need, and, as a rule, keep to present need.

Ask for your daily bread—what you need now—ask for that. Ask for it plainly, as before God, who does not regard your fine expressions, and to whom your eloquence and oratory will be less than nothing and vanity. You are before the Lord! Let your words be few, but let your heart be fervent. You have not quite completed the ordering when you have asked for what you need through Jesus Christ. There should be a looking round the blessing which you desire, to see whether it is assuredly a fitting thing to ask. Some prayers would never be offered if men did but think. A little reflection would show to us that some things which we desire were better let alone.

We may, moreover, have a motive at the bottom of our desire which is not Christ-like—a selfish motive which forgets God’s Glory and caters only for our own case and comfort. Now although we may ask for things which are for our profit, yet we must never let our profit interfere in any way with the Glory of God. There must be mingled with acceptable prayer the holy salt of submission to the Divine will. I like Luther’s saying, “Lord, I will have my will of You at this time.” “What?” you ask, “You like such an expression as that?” I do, because of the next clause, which was, “I will have my will, for I know that my will is Your will.” That is well spoken, Luther! But without the last words it would have been wicked presumption!

When we are sure that what we ask for is for God’s Glory, then, if we have power in prayer, we may say, “I will not let You go except you bless me.” We may come to close dealings with God, and like Jacob with the Angel, we may even wrestle, and seek to give the Angel the fall sooner than be sent away without the benediction. But we must be quite clear, before we come to such terms as those, that what we are seeking is really for the Master’s honor.

Put these three things together: the deep spirituality which recognizes prayer as being real conversation with the invisible God. Much distinctness which is the reality of prayer—asking for what we know we want, and with much fervency, believing the thing to be necessary—and therefore resolving to obtain it if it can be had by prayer. And above all these, complete submission—leaving it still with the Master’s will. Commingle all these, and you have a clear idea of what it is to order your cause before the Lord.

Still, prayer itself is an art which only the Holy Spirit can teach us. He is the Giver of all prayer. Pray for prayer—pray till you can pray! Pray to be helped to pray, and give not up praying because you cannot pray—for it is when you think you cannot pray that you are most praying. And sometimes when you have no sort of comfort in your supplications, it is then that your heart, all broken and cast down, is really wrestling and truly prevailing with the Most High.

II. The second part of prayer is FILLING THE MOUTH WITH ARGUMENTS—not filling the mouth with many words nor good phrases, nor pretty expressions—but filling the mouth with arguments are the knocks of the rapper by which the gate is opened. Why are arguments to be used at all, is the first enquiry. The reply is, Certainly not because God is slow to give! Nor because we can change the Divine purpose. Nor because God needs to be informed of any circumstance with regard to ourselves or of anything in connection with the mercy asked!

Arguments to be used are for our own benefit, not for His. He requires for us to plead with Him, and to bring forth our strong reasons, as Isaiah said, because this will show that we feel the value of the mercy. When a man searches for arguments for a thing it is because he attaches importance to that which he is seeking. Again, our use of arguments teaches us the ground upon which we obtain the blessing. If a man should come with the argument of his own merit, he would never succeed—the successful argument is always founded upon Divine Grace—and hence the soul so pleading is made to understand intensely that it is by Grace and by Grace alone that a sinner obtains anything of the Lord.

Besides, the use of arguments is intended to stir up our fervency. The man who uses one argument with God will get more force in using the next, and will use the next with still greater power, and the next with still more force. The best prayers I have ever heard in our Prayer Meetings have been those which have been most full of arguments. Sometimes my soul has been fairly melted down when I have listened to Brethren who have come before God feeling the mercy to be really needed, and that they must have it, for they first pleaded with God to give it for this reason, and then for a second, and then for a third, and then for a fourth and a fifth, until they have awakened the fervency of the entire assembly!

My Brethren, there is no need for prayer at all as far as God is concerned! But what a need there is for it on our own account! If we were not constrained to pray, I question whether we could even live as Christians. If God’s mercies came to us unasked they would not be half so useful as they now are, when they have to be sought for—for now we get a double blessing—a blessing in the obtaining, and a blessing in the seeking! The very act of prayer is a blessing. To pray, is, as it were, to bathe one’s self in a cool purling stream, and so to escape from the heat of earth’s summer sun.

To pray is to mount on eagle’s wings above the clouds and get into the clear Heaven where God dwells. To pray is to enter the treasure house of God and to enrich one’s self out of an inexhaustible storehouse. To pray is to grasp Heaven in one’s arms, to embrace the Deity within one’s soul, and to feel one’s body made a temple of the Holy Spirit! Apart from the answer, prayer is, in itself, a benediction. To pray, my Brothers and Sisters, is to cast off your burdens. It is to tear away your rags. It is to shake off your diseases! It is to be filled with spiritual vigor. It is to reach the highest point of Christian health! God give us to be much in the holy art of arguing with God in prayer!

The most interesting part of our subject remains. It is a very rapid summary and catalog of a few of the arguments which have been used with great success with God. I cannot give you a full list—that would require a treatise such as Master John Owen might produce! It is well in prayer to plead with Jehovah His attributes. Abraham did so when he laid hold upon God’s justice. Sodom was to be pleaded for, and Abraham begins, “Perhaps there are fifty righteous within the city: will You also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from You to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from You. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Here the wrestling begins. It was a powerful argument by which the Patriarch grasped the Lord’s left hand, and stopped it just when the thunderbolt was about to fall! But there came a reply to it. It was intimated to him that this would not spare the city, and you notice how the good man, when sorely pressed, retreated by inches, and at last, when he could no longer lay hold upon Justice, grasped God’s right hand of Mercy, and that gave him a wondrous hold when he asked that if there were but ten righteous there the city might be spared. So you and I may take hold at any time upon the justice, the mercy, the faithfulness, the wisdom, the longsuffering, the tenderness of God! And we shall find every attribute of the Most High to be, as it were, a great battering ram with which we may open the gates of Heaven.

Another mighty piece of ordinance in the battle of prayer is God’s promise. When Jacob was on the other side of the brook Jabbok, and his brother Esau was coming with armed men, he pleaded with God not to suffer Esau to destroy the mother and the children, and as a master reason he pleaded, “And You said, Surely I will do you good.” Oh the force of that plea—he was holding God to His word: “You said.” The attribute is a splendid horn of the altar to lay hold upon, but the promise, which has in it the attribute and something more, is yet a mightier holdfast. “You said.”

Remember how David put it. After Nathan had spoken the promise, David said at the close of his prayer, “Do as You have said.” That is a legitimate argument with every honest man. Has God said, and shall He not do it? “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” Shall not He be true? Shall He not keep His word? Shall not every word that comes out of His mouth stand fast and be fulfilled? Solomon, at the opening of the temple, used this same mighty plea. He pleads with God to remember the word which He had spoken to his father David, and to bless that place.

When a man gives a promissory note his honor is engaged. He signs his hand and he must discharge it when the due time comes, or else he loses credit. It shall never be said that God dishonors His notes. The credit of the Most High never was impeached, and never shall be! He is punctual to the moment! He never is before His time, but He never is behind it. You shall search this Book through, and you shall compare it with the experience of God’s people, and the two tally from the first to the last! Many a hoary Patriarch has said with Joshua in his old age, “Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised: all has come to pass.”

My Brothers and Sisters, if you have a Divine promise, you need not plead it with an “if” in it—you may plead with certainty. If for the mercy which you are now asking, you have God’s solemnly pledged word, there will scarcely be any room for the caution about submission to His will. You know His will—that will is in the promise—plead it! Do not give Him rest until He fulfills it. He meant to fulfill it or else He would not have given it. God does not give His word merely to quiet our noise and to keep us hopeful for awhile, with the intention of putting us off at last. When He speaks, He speaks because He means to act.

A third argument to be used is that employed by Moses—the great name of God. How mightily did he argue with God on one occasion upon this ground! “What will You do for Your great name? The Egyptians will say, Because the Lord could not bring them into the land, therefore He slew them in the wilderness.” There are some occasions when the name of God is very closely tied up with the history of His people. Sometimes in reliance upon a Divine promise, a Believer will be led to take a certain course of action. Now, if the Lord should not be as good as His promise, not only is the Believer deceived, but the wicked world, looking on, would say, “Aha! Aha! Where is your God?”

Take the case of our respected brother, Mr. Muller, of Bristol. These many years he has declared that God hears prayer, and firm in that conviction he has gone on to build house after house for the maintenance of orphans. Now, I can very well conceive that if he were driven to a point of need of means for the maintenance of those thousand or two thousand children, he might very well use the plea, “What will You do for Your great name?” And you, in some severe trouble, when you have fairly received the promise, may say, “Lord, You have said, ‘In six troubles I will be with you, and in seven I will not forsake you.’ I have told my friends and neighbors that I put my trust in You, and if You do not deliver me now, where is Your name? Arise, O God, and do this thing, lest Your honor be cast into the dust.”

Coupled with this, we may employ the further argument of the hard things said by the revilers. It was well done of Hezekiah, when he took Rabshakeh’s letter and spread it before the Lord. Will that help him? It is full of blasphemy, will that help him? “Where are the gods of Arphad and Sepharvaim? Where are the gods of the cities which I have overthrown? Let not Hezekiah deceive you, saying that Jehovah will deliver you.” Does that have any effect? Oh yes! It was a blessed thing that Rabshakeh wrote that letter, for it provoked the Lord to help His people.

Sometimes the child of God can rejoice when he sees his enemies get thoroughly out of temper and take to reviling. “Now,” he says, “they have reviled the Lord Himself! Not me alone have they assailed, but the Most High Himself.” Now it is no longer the poor insignificant Hezekiah with his little band of soldiers, but it is Jehovah, the King of angels, who has come to fight against Rabshakeh. Now what will you do, O boastful soldier of proud Sennacherib? Shall not you be utterly destroyed, since Jehovah Himself has come into the fray? All the progress that is made by Popery, all the wrong things said by speculative atheists and so on, should be, by Christians, used as an argument with God why He should help the Gospel.

“Lord, see how they reproach the Gospel of Jesus! Pluck Your right hand out of Your bosom! O God, they defy You! Antichrist thrusts itself into the place where Your Son once was honored, and from the very pulpits where the Gospel was once preached, Popery is now declared! Arise, O God, wake up Your zeal, let Your sacred passions burn! Your ancient foe again prevails! Behold the harlot of Babylon once more upon her scarlet-colored beast rides forth in triumph! Come, Jehovah! Come, Jehovah, and once again show what Your bare arm can do!” This is a legitimate mode of pleading with God, for His great name’s sake.

So also may we plead the sorrows of His people. This is frequently done. Jeremiah is the great master of this art. He says, “Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire: their visage was blacker than a coal.” “The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!” He talks of all their griefs and needs in the siege. He calls upon the Lord to look upon His suffering Zion, and before long his plaintive cries are heard!

Nothing is so eloquent with the father as his child’s cry, but one thing is more mightier still, and that is a moan. When the child is so sick that it is past crying and lies moaning with that kind of moan which indicates extreme suffering and intense weakness, who can resist that moan? Ah, and when God’s Israel shall be brought very low so that they can scarcely cry but only their moans are heard, then comes the Lord’s time of deliverance, and He is sure to show that He loves His people!

Dear Friends, whenever you, also, are brought into the same condition, you may plead your moans, and when you see a Church brought very low, you may use her griefs as an argument why God should return and save the remnant of His people. Brothers and Sisters, it is good to plead the past with God. Ah, you experienced people of God, you know how to do this. Here is David’s specimen of it: “You have been my help. Leave me not, neither forsake me.” He pleads God’s mercy to him from his youth up. He speaks of being cast upon his God from his very birth, and then he pleads, “Now also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not.”

Moses also, speaking with God, says, “You did bring this people up out of Egypt.” As if he would say, “Do not leave Your work unfinished! You have begun to build, complete it! You have fought the first battle, Lord, end the campaign! Go on till You get a complete victory.” How often have we cried in our trouble, “Lord, You did deliver me in such-and-such a sharp trial, when it seemed as if no help were near. You have never forsaken me yet. I have set up my Ebenezer in Your name. If You had intended to leave me, why have You showed me such things? Have You brought Your servant to this place to put him to shame?”

Brethren, we have to deal with an unchanging God who will do in the future what He has done in the past because He never turns from His purpose, and cannot be thwarted in His design. The past thus becomes a very mighty means of winning blessings from Him. We may even use our own unworthiness as an argument with God. “Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness.” David in one place pleads thus: “Lord, have mercy upon my iniquity, for it is great.” That is a very singular mode of reasoning, but being interpreted it means, “Lord, why should You go about doing little things? You are a great God, and here is a great sinner. Here is a fitness in me for the display of Your Grace. The greatness of my sin makes me a platform for the greatness of Your mercy. Let the greatness of Your love be seen in me.”

Moses seems to have the same on his mind when he asks God to show His great power in sparing His sinful people. The power with which God restrains Himself is great, indeed. O Brothers and Sisters, there is such a thing as creeping down at the foot of the Throne, crouching low and crying, “O God, break me not—I am a bruised reed. Oh! Tread not on my little life, it is now but as the smoking flax. Will You hunt me? Will You come out, as David said, ‘after a dead dog, after a flea’? Will you pursue me as a leaf that is blown in the tempest? Will you watch me, as Job said, as though I were a vast sea, or a great whale? No, but because I am so little, and because the greatness of Your mercy can be shown in one so insignificant and yet so vile, therefore, O God, have mercy upon me.”

There was once an occasion when the very Godhead of Jehovah made a triumphant plea for the Prophet Elijah. On that august occasion when he had bid his adversaries see whether their god could answer them by fire, you can little guess the excitement there must have been that day in the Prophet’s mind. With what stern sarcasm did he say, “Cry aloud! For he is a god! Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or perhaps he sleeps and must be awakened.” And as they cut themselves with knives and leaped upon the altar, oh the scorn with which that man of God must have looked down upon their impotent exertions, and their earnest but useless cries!

But think of how his heart must have palpitated, if it had not been for the strength of his faith, when he repaired the altar of God that was broken down and laid the wood in order, and killed the bullock! Hear him cry, “Pour water on it. You shall not suspect me of concealing fire! Pour water on the victim.” When they had done so, he bids them, “Do it a second time.” And they did it a second time. And then he says, “Do it a third time.” And when it was all covered with water, soaked and saturated through, then he stands up and cries to God, “O God, let it be known that You only are God.”

Here everything was put to the test. Jehovah’s own existence was now put, as it were, at stake, before the eyes of men by this bold Prophet. And how well the Prophet was heard! Down came the fire and devoured not only the sacrifice, but even the wood and the stones—and even the very water that was in the trenches—for Jehovah God had answered His servant’s prayer. We sometimes may do the same, and say unto Him, “Oh, by Your Deity, by Your existence, if, indeed, you are God, now show Yourself for the help of Your people!”

Lastly, the grand Christian argument is the sufferings, the death, the merit, the intercession of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I am afraid we do not understand what it is that we have at our command when we are allowed to plead with God for Christ’s sake. I met with this thought the other day: it was somewhat new to me, but I believe it ought not to have been. When we ask God to hear us, pleading Christ’s name, we usually mean, “O Lord, Your dear Son deserves this of You. Do this unto me because of what He merits.”

But if we knew you well and you told us, “Sir, call at my office, and use my name, and say that they are to give you such a thing,” I should go in and use your name, and I should obtain my request as a matter of right and a matter of necessity. This is virtually what Jesus Christ says to us. “If you need anything of God, all that the Father has belongs to Me—go and use My name.” Suppose you should give a man your checkbook signed with your own name and left blank, to be filled up as he chose— that would be very nearly what Jesus has done in these words, “If you ask anything in My name, I will give it you.”

If I had a good name at the bottom of the check, I should be sure that I should get it cashed when I went to the banker with it! So when you have got Christ’s name, to whom the very justice of God has become a debtor, and whose merits have claims with the Most High—when you have Christ’s name there is no need to speak with fear and trembling and bated breath! Oh, waver not and let not faith stagger! When you plead the name of Christ you plead that which shakes the gates of Hell, and which the hosts of Heaven obey—and God Himself feels the sacred power of that Divine plea!

Brethren, you would do better if you sometimes thought more in your prayers of Christ’s griefs and groans. Bring before the Lord His wounds! Remind the Lord of His cries—make the groans of Jesus cry again from Gethsemane, and His blood speak again from that frozen Calvary! Speak out and tell the Lord that with such griefs, and cries, and groans to plead, you will not be denied! Such arguments as these will honor God.

III. If the Holy Spirit shall teach us how to order our cause, and how to fill our mouth with arguments, the result shall be that WE SHALL HAVE OUR MOUTH FILLED WITH PRAISES. The man who has his mouth full of arguments in prayer shall soon have his mouth full of benedictions in answer to prayer!

Dear Friend, you have your mouth full this morning, have you? What of? Full of complaining? Pray the Lord to rinse your mouth out of that black stuff, for it will little avail you, and it will be bitter in your heart one of these days. Oh, have your mouth full of prayer! Full of it! Full of arguments so that there is room for nothing else. Then come with this blessed mouthful and you shall soon go away with whatever you have asked of God. Only delight yourself in Him and He will give you the desire of your heart!

It is said—I know not how truly—that the explanation of the text, “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it,” may be found in a very singular Oriental custom. It is said that not many years ago—I remember the circumstance being reported—the King of Persia ordered the chief of his nobility who had done something or other which greatly gratified him, to open his mouth, and when he had done so he began to put into his mouth pearls, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, till he had filled it as full as it could hold, and then he bade him go his way. This is said to have been occasionally done in Oriental Courts towards great favorites.

Now certainly, whether that is an explanation of the text or not, it is an illustration of it. God says, “Open your mouth with arguments,” and then He will fill it with mercies priceless, gems unspeakably valuable. Would not a man open his mouth wide when he had to have it filled in such a style? Surely the most simple-minded among you would be wise enough for that! Oh, let us, then, open wide our mouth when we have to plead with God! Our needs are great—let our pleading be great, and the supply shall be great, too!

You are not straitened in Him—you are straitened in your own heart! The Lord give you large mouths in prayer, great potency, not in the use of language, but in employing arguments. What I have been speaking to the Christian is applicable in great measure to the unconverted man, too. God give you to see the force of it, and to fly in humble prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ and to find eternal life in Him.

*Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon—Numbers 14:1-21.* Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #108 New Park Street Pulpit 1

÷Job 23.6

THE QUESTION OF FEAR AND THE ANSWER OF FAITH  
NO. 108

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, AUGUST 31, 1856, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

**“Will He plead against me with His great power? No but He would put strength in me.”  
Job 23:6.**

I SHALL not, tonight, consider the connection of these words, or what was particularly intended by Job. I shall use them in, perhaps, another sense from that which he intended. No doubt Job meant to say that if God would allow him to argue his case before Him, it was his firm belief that God, so far from taking advantage of His superior strength in the controversy, would even strengthen him, that the controversy might be fair and that the judgment might be unbiased. “He would not plead against me with His great strength. No but He would put strength in me.” We shall use the text, however, tonight, in another sense.

It is one of the sure marks of a lost and ruined state when we are careless and indifferent concerning God. One of the peculiar marks of those who are dead in sin is this—they are the wicked who forget God. God is not in all their thoughts. “The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.” The sinful man is always anxious to keep out of his mind the very thought of the Being, the Existence, or the Character of God. And as long as man is unregenerate, there will be nothing more abhorrent to his taste, or his feelings than anything which deals with the Divine Being. God, perhaps, as Creator, he may consider. But the God of the Bible, the Infinite Jehovah, judging righteously among the sons of men— condemning and acquitting—that God he has no taste for! He is not in all his thoughts, nor does he regard Him. And mark you, it is a blessed sign of the work of Grace in the heart when man begins to consider God. He is not far from God’s heart who has meditations of God in his own heart. If we desire to seek after God, to know Him, to understand Him and to be at peace with Him, it is a sign that God has dealings with our soul, for otherwise we would still have hated His name and abhorred His Character.  
There are two things in my text, both of which have relation to the Divine Being. The first is, the question of fear—“Will He plead against me with His great power?” And the second is, the answer of faith—“No, but He will put strength in me.” The fearful and the prayerful, who are afraid of sin and fear God, together with those who are faithful and believe in God are in a hopeful state! And hence, both the question of the one and the answer of the other have reference to the great Jehovah, our God, who is forever to be adored!

I. We shall consider, in the first place, tonight, THE INQUIRY OF FEAR. “Will He plead against me with His great power?” I shall consider this as a question asked by the convicted sinner. He is seeking salvation, but when he is bid to come before his God and find mercy, he is compelled by his intense anxiety to make the trembling inquiry, “Will He plead against me with His great power?”

1. And, first, I gather from this question the fact that a truly penitent man has a right idea of many of God’s attributes. He does not understand them all, for instance he does not yet know God’s great mercy. He does not yet understand His unbounded compassion. But as far as his knowledge of God extends, he has an extremely great view of Him. To him, the Everlasting Jehovah appears great in every attribute and action and supremely great in His Majesty. The poor worldling knows there is a God. But He is to him a little God. As for the justice of God, the mere worldly man scarcely ever thinks of it. He considers that there is a God, but he regards Him as a Being who has little enough respect for justice. Not so, however, the sinner. When God has once convicted him of his sin, he sees God as a great God, a God of great justice and of great power. Whoever may misunderstand God’s great justice or God’s great power, a convicted sinner never will! Ask him what he thinks of God’s justice and he will tell you it is like the great mountains. It is high—he cannot attain unto it. “Ah,” he says, “God’s justice is very mighty. It must smite me. He must hurl an avalanche of woe upon my devoted head. Justice demands that He should punish me. I am so great a sinner that I cannot suppose He would ever pass by my transgression, my iniquity and my sin.” It is all in vain for you to tell such a man that God is little in His justice. He replies, “No,” most solemnly, “No.” And you can most plainly read his earnestness in his visage, when he replies, “No.” He replies, “I feel that God is just. I am even now consumed by His anger. By His wrath I am troubled.” “Tell me God is not Just?” he says, “I know He is. I feel that within an hour or two Hell must swallow me up unless Divine Mercy delivers me. Unless Christ shall wash me in His blood, I feel I can never hope to stand among the ransomed.” He has not that strange idea of God’s justice that some of you have. You think sin is a trifle! You suppose that one brief prayer will wipe it all away! You dream that by attendance at your churches and at your chapels you will wash away your sins! You suppose that God, for some reason or other, will very easily forgive your sin. But you have not a right idea of God’s justice! You have not learned that God never forgives until He has first punished—and that if He does forgive anyone—it is because He has punished Christ, first, in the place of that person! But he never forgives without first exacting the punishment. That would be an infringement on His justice. And shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? You have, many of you, lax enough ideas of the justice of the Divine Being. But not so the sinner who is laboring under a knowledge of sin!

An awakened soul feels that God is greatly powerful. Tell him that God is but a weak God and he will answer you—and shall I tell you what illustrations he will give you to prove that God is great in power? He will say, “Oh, Sir, God is great in power as well in justice. Look up yonder—can you not see in the dark past, when rebel angels sinned against God— they were so mighty that each one of them might have devastated Eden and shaken the earth? But God, with ease, hurled Satan and the rebel angels out of Heaven and drove them down to Hell.” “Sir,” says the sinner, “is He not mighty?” And then he will go on to tell you how God unbound the swaddling bands of the great ocean that it might leap upon the earth. And how He bade it swallow up the whole of mortal race, save those who were hidden in the ark. And the sinner says, with his eyes well near starting from their sockets—“Sir, does not this prove that He is great in power and will, by no means, acquit the wicked?” And then he proceeds, “Look again at the Red Sea. Mark how Pharaoh was enticed into its depths and how the parted sea, that stood aloof for a while to give the Israelites an easy passage, embraced with eager joy, locked the adverse host within their arms and swallowed them up quickly!” And as he thinks he sees the Red Sea rolling over the slain, he exclaims, “Sir, God is great in power! I feel He must be, when I think of what He has done.” And as if he had not finished his oration and would let us know the whole of the greatness of God’s power, he continues his narration of the deeds of vengeance. “O Sir, remember, He must be great in power, for I know that He has dug a Hell which is deep and large, without bottom. He has made a Tophet—the pile thereof is fire and much wood and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it. Yes, beyond a doubt,” groans the trembling soul, “He must be great in power! I feel He is and I feel more than that—I feel that Justice has provoked God’s arm of power to smite me—and unless I am covered in that righteousness of Christ, I shall, before long, be dashed to pieces and utterly devoured by the fury of His wrath.” The sinner, as far as the harsher attributes of God’s Nature are concerned, when he is under conviction, has a very fair and a just idea of the Divine Being! Though, as I have remarked before, he does not yet understand the mercy and the infinite compassion of God towards His Covenant people. He has too harsh a view of God, dwelling only upon the darker side and not upon those attributes which shed a more cheering light upon the darkness of our misery. That is the first Truth which I glean from the text.

2. The second Truth which I gather from this question, “Will He plead against me with His great power?” is this—that the trembling sinner feels that every attribute of God is against him as a sinner. “Oh,” he will say, “I look to God and I can see nothing in Him but a consuming fire! I look to His justice and I see it, with sword unsheathed, ready to smite me low! I look to His power and I behold it, like a mighty mountain, tottering to its fall to crush me! I look to His Immutability and I think I see stern justice written on its brow and I hear it cry, “Sinner, I will not save, I will condemn you.” “I look to his faithfulness and I mark that all His threats are as much,, ‘yes and amen,’ as His promises. I look to His love but even His love frowns and accuses me, saying, ‘you have slighted Me.’ I look to His mercy but even His mercy launches out the thunderbolt with accusing voice, reminding me of my former hardness of heart and harshly chiding me thus, ‘Go you to Justice and glean what you can, there. I, even I, am against you, for you have made Me angry!’”

Oh, trembling Penitent, where are you, tonight? Somewhere here, I know you are! Would to God there were many like you! I know you will agree with me in this statement, for you have a dread apprehension that every attribute of the Divine Being’s Character is armed with fire and sword to destroy you! You see all His attributes like heavy pieces of ordnance, all pointed at you and ready to be discharged! Oh that you may find a refuge in Christ! And oh, you who never were convicted of sin, let me, for one moment, lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet. Know this—perhaps you laugh at it—that all God’s attributes are against you if you are not in Christ! If you are not sheltered beneath the wings of Jesus, there is not one single glorious name of God, nor one celestial attribute which does not curse you! What would you think, if at your door, tonight, there should be planted great pieces of heavy cannon, all loaded, to be discharged against you? But do you know that where you sit, tonight, there are worse than heavy cannons to be discharged at you? Yes, I see them, I see them! There is God’s justice and there is the Angel of Vengeance, standing with the match, ready to bid it hurl vengeance at you. There is His power. There is His bare arm, ready to break your bones and crush you into powder! There is His love, all blazing, turned to hate because you rejected it. And there is His mercy, clad with mail, going forth like a warrior to overthrow you! What say you, O Sinner, tonight? Against you all of God’s attributes are pointed! He has bent His bow and made it ready. The sword of the Lord has been bathed in Heaven. It is bright and sharp, it is furbished. How will you escape when a mighty arm shall bring it down upon you? Or how will you flee when He shall draw His bow and shoot his arrows at you and make you a mark for all the arrows of His vengeance? BEWARE, BEWARE, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver! For tear you in pieces He will—unless you shelter in the Rock of Ages and wash yourselves in the stream of His wondrous blood! Fly to Him, then, you chief of sinners, fly! But if you will not, know this—God is against you! He will plead against you with His great power unless you have our All-Glorious Jesus to be your Advocate.

3. And just one more hint. The sinner, when he is laboring on account of guilt, feels that God would be just if He were to “plead against him with His great power.” “Oh,” he says, “If I go to God in prayer, perhaps. instead of hearing me, He will crush me as I would a moth.” What, Soul, would He be just if He did that? “Yes,” says the sinner, “Just, supremely just. Perhaps if I strip myself of all my ornaments and, like a naked one, fly to Him—perhaps then He will lash me harder than before and I shall feel it all the worse for this, my nakedness.” And will He be just, should the flagellation of His vengeance fall upon your shoulders? “Yes,” he says, “Infallibly just.” And should He smite you to the lowest Hell, would He be just? “Yes,” says the penitent, “Just, Infinitely just. I would have no word to say against Him. I would feel that I deserved it all. My only question is not whether He would be just to do it, but will He do it?” “Will He plead against me with His great power?” This is the question of fear. Some here, perhaps, are asking that question—now let them hear the reply of Faith. God give them a good deliverance!

II. THE REPLY OF FAITH IS, “No.” O sinner, hear that word, “No.” There are sonnets condensed into it. “Will He plead against me with His great power?” “No, NO,” say the saints in Heaven. “NO,” say the faithful on earth. “NO,” say the promises. “NO,” unanimously exclaim the oracles of Scripture! NO, most emphatically, NO! He will not plead against you with His great power but He will put strength into you!

1. And here we make a similar remark to that with which we commenced the former part of the sermon, namely, this—the fearful soul has a very right view of God in many respects, but the faithful soul has a right view of God in all respects! He who has faith in God, knows more of God than he who only fears Him. He who believes God, understands God better than any man. Why, if I believe God, I can see all His attributes vindicated. I can see the wrath of Justice expiated by yonder bleeding Sufferer on the accursed tree! I can see His mercy and His justice joining hands with His wrath! I can see His power now turned on my behalf and no longer against me. I can see His faithfulness become the guardian of my soul instead of the slaughterer of my hopes! I can see all His attributes standing, each of them conjoined, each of them glorious, each of them lovely and all united in the work of man’s salvation! He that fears God knows only half of God. He that believes God, knows all of God that He can know. And the more he believes God, the more he understands God, the more he comprehends His Glory, His Character, His Nature and His attributes.

2. The next thing is that the Believer, when he is brought into peace with God, does not tremble at the thought of God’s power. He does not ask, “Will He plead against me with His great power?” But he says, “No, that very power, once my terror and fear, is now my refuge and my hope, for He shall put that very power in me! I rejoice that God is Almighty, for He will lend me His Omnipotence—‘He will put strength into me.’” Now, here is a great thought! If I had power to handle it, it would give me opportunity, indeed, to preach to you. But I cannot reach the heights of eloquence, I shall therefore simply exhibit the thought for a moment to you. The very power which would have damned my soul, saves my soul. The very power that would have crushed me, God puts into me so that the work of salvation may be accomplished. No, He will not use it to crush me, but He will put that very strength into me! Do you see, there, the Mighty One upon His Throne? Dread Sovereign, I see Your awful arm! What? Will You crush the sinner? Will You utterly destroy him with Your strength? “No,” He says, “Come here, My Child.” And if you go to His Almighty Throne, “There,” He says, “that same arm which made you quake, see there, I give it to you! Go out and live. I have made you mighty as I am, to do My works. I will put strength into you. The same strength which would have broken you to pieces on the wheel shall now be put into you, that you may do mighty works!”

Now, I will show you how this great strength displays itself. Sometimes it goes out in prayer. Did you ever hear a man pray in whom God had put strength? You have heard some of us poor puny souls pray, I dare say, but have you ever heard a man pray who God had made into a giant? Oh, if you have, you will say it is a mighty thing to hear such a man in supplication! I have seen him as if he had seized the angel and would pull him down. I have seen him, now and then, slip in his wrestling. But, like a giant, he has recovered his footing and seemed, like Jacob, to hurl the angel to the ground! I have marked the man lay hold upon the Throne of Mercy and declare, “Lord, I will never let go, except You bless me.” I have seen him, when Heaven’s gates have been apparently barred, go up to them and say, “You gates, open wide in Jesus’ name!” And I have seen the gates fly open before him, as if the man were God, Himself, for he is armed with God Almighty’s strength! I have seen that man, in prayer, discover some great mountain in his way. And he prayed it down, until it became a very molehill. He has beaten the hills and made them like chaff, by the immensity of his might! Some of you think I am talking enthusiasm. But such cases have been and are now. Oh, to have heard Luther pray! Luther, you know, when Melancthon was dying, went to his deathbed and said, “Melancthon, you shall not die!” “Oh,” said Melancthon, “I must die! It is a world of toil and trouble.” “Melancthon,” he said, “I have need of you and God’s cause has need of you and as my name is Luther, you shall not die!” The physician said he would. Well, down went Luther on his knees and began to tug at Death. Old Death struggled mightily for Melancthon and he had got him well near on his shoulders. “Drop him,” said Luther, “drop him, I need him!” “He,” said Death, “he is my prey, I will take him!” “Down with him,” said Luther, “down with him, Death, or I will wrestle with you!” And he seemed to take hold of the grim monster and hurl him to the ground! And he came off victorious, like an Orpheus, with his wife, up from the very shades of death! He had delivered Melancthon from death by prayer! “Oh,” you say, “that is an extraordinary case.” No, Beloved, not one-half as extraordinary as you dream. I have men and women here who have done the same in other cases. They have asked a thing of God and have had it. That have been to the Throne and showed a promise and said they would not come away without its fulfillment and have come back from God’s Throne conquerors of the Almighty, for prayer moves the arm that moves the world! “Prayer is the sinew of God,” said one, “it moves His arm.” And so it is. Verily, in prayer, with the strength of the faithful heart, there is a beautiful fulfillment of the text, “He will put strength in me.”

A second illustration. Not only in prayer but in duty. The man who has great faith in God and whom God has girded with strength, how gigantic does he become? Have you ever read of those great heroes who put to flight whole armies and scattered kings like the snow on Salmon? Have you ever read of those men that were fearless of foes and stalked onward before all their opposers, as if they would as soon die as live? I read, this day, of a case in the old Church of Scotland, before that King James who wished to force the black prelacy upon them. Andrew Melville and some of his associates were deputed to wait upon the king and, as they were going with a scroll ready written, they were warned to take care and return, for their lives were at stake. They paused a moment and Andrew said, “I am not afraid, thank God, nor feeble-spirited in the cause and message of Christ. Come what pleases God to send, our commission shall be executed.” At these words the deputation took courage and went forward. On reaching the palace and having obtained an audience, they found his majesty attended by Lennox and Arran and several other lords, all of whom were English. They presented their remonstrance. Arran lifted it from the table and glancing over it, he then turned to the ministers and furiously demanded, “Who dares sign these treasonable articles?” “WE Dare,” said Andrew Melville, “and will render our lives in the cause.” Having thus spoken, he came forward to the table, took the pen, subscribed his name and was followed by his Brethren. Arran and Lennox were confounded. The king looked on in silence and the nobles in surprise. Thus did our good forefathers appear before kings and yet were not ashamed. “The proud had them greatly in derision, yet they declined not from the Law of God.” Having thus discharged their duty, after a brief conference, the ministers were permitted to depart in peace. The king trembled more at them than if a whole army had been at his gates. And why was this? It was because God had put His own strength into them, to make them masters of their duty! And you have some such in your midst now. They may be despised, but God has made them like the lionlike men of David who would go down into the pit in the depth of winter and take the lion by the throat and slay him. We have some in our Churches—but a remnant, I admit—who are not afraid to serve their God! Like Abdiel, they are “faithful among the faithless found.” We have some who are superior to the customs of the age and scorn to bow at mammon’s knee—who will not use the trimming language of too many modern ministers but stand out for God’s Gospel and the pure white banner of Christ—unstained and unsullied by the doctrines of men. Then are they mighty! Why they are mighty is because God has put strength in them!

Still, some say, I have dealt with extraordinary cases. Come then, now we will have a home-case, one of your own sort that will be like yourselves! Did you ever stand and take a view of Heaven? Have you discerned the hills which lie between your soul and Paradise? Have you counted the lions you have to fight, the giants to be slain and the rivers to be crossed? Did you ever notice the many temptations with which you must be beset, the trials you have to endure, the difficulties you have to overcome, the dangers you have to avoid? Did you ever take a bird’s-eye view of Heaven and all the dangers which are thickly strewn along the path? And did you ever ask yourself this question, “How shall I, a poor feeble worm, ever get there?” Did you ever say within yourself, “I am not a match for all my foes, how shall I arrive at Paradise?” If you have ever asked this question, I will tell you what is the only answer for it—you must be girded with Almighty Strength or else you will never gain the victory! Easy your path may be, but it is too hard for your infantile strength without Almighty Power. Your path may be one of little temptation and of shallow trial. But you will be drowned in the floods, yet, unless Almighty Power preserves you. Mark me! However smooth your way, there is nothing short of the bare arm of Deity that can land any of you in Heaven! We must have Divine strength, or else we shall never get there. And there is an illustration of these words—“No, but He will put His strength in me.”

“And shall I hold on to the end?” says the Believer. Yes, you will, for God’s strength is in you. “Shall I be able to bear such-and-such a trial?” Yes, you will. Cannot Omnipotence stem the torrent? And Omnipotence is in you! Like Ignatius of old, you are a God-bearer. You bear God about with you! Your heart is a Temple of the Holy Spirit and you shall yet overcome. “But can I ever stand firm in such-and-such an evil day?” Oh, yes you will, for He will put His strength in you. I was in company, some time ago, with some ministers. One of them observed, “Brother, if there were to be stakes in Smithfield again, I am afraid they would find very few to burn among us.” “Well,” I said, “I do not know anything about how you would burn. But this I know right well, that there always will be those who are ready to die for Christ.” “Oh,” he said, “but they are not the right sort of men.” “Well,” I said, “but do you think they are the Lord’s children?” “Yes, I believe they are, but they are not the right sort.” “Ah,” I said, “but you would find them the right sort if they came to the test, every one of them! They have not yet got burning Grace! What would be the use of it?” We do not need the Grace till the stakes come. But we shall have burning Grace in burning moments. If now, tonight, a hundred of us were called to die for Christ, I believe there would not only be found a hundred but five hundred, that would march to death and sing all the way! Whenever I find faith, I believe that God will put strength into the man. And I never think anything to be impossible to a man with faith in God, while it is written, “He will put strength in me.”

3. But now the last observation shall be, we shall all need this at the last—and it is a mercy for us that this is written, for never shall we require it, perhaps, more than then. O Believer, do you think you will be able to swim the Jordan with your own strength? Caesar could not swim the Tiber, equipped as he was. And do you hope to swim the Jordan with your flesh about you? No, you will sink, unless Jesus—as Aeneas did Anchises, from the flames of Rome, upon his shoulders—lifts you from Jordan and carries you across the stream—you will never be able to walk across the river! You will never be able to face that tyrant and smile in his face unless you have something more than mortal. You will need, then, to be belted about with the belt of Divinity, or else your loins will be loosed and your strength will fail you, when you need it most! Many a man has ventured to the Jordan in his own strength. But oh, how he has shrieked and howled, when the first wave has touched his feet! But never weakling went to death with God within him but he found himself mightier than the grave! Go on, Christian, for this is your promise. “He will put strength in me”—

*Weak, though I am, yet through His might, I all things can perform.”*  
Go on! Dread not God’s power but rejoice at this—He will put His strength in you—He will not use His power to crush you.  
Just one word and then, farewell. There is within reach of my voice, I am thoroughly convinced, one who is seeking Christ, whose only fear is this—“Sir, I would, but I cannot pray. I would, but I cannot believe. I would, but I cannot love. I would, but I cannot repent.” Oh, hear this, Soul—“HE WILL PUT HIS STRENGTH IN YOU.” Go home. And down on your knees, if you cannot pray, groan! If you cannot groan, weep! If you cannot weep, feel! If you cannot feel, feel because you cannot feel! For that is as far as many get. But stop there—mark you, stop there—and He will give you His blessing! Do not get up till you have got the blessing. Go there in all your weakness. If you do not feel it, say, “Lord, I do not feel as I ought to feel—but oh that I could! Lord, I cannot repent as I would repent—oh that You would help me!” “Oh, Sir,” you say, “but I could not go as far as that, for I don’t think I have got a strong desire.” Go and say, “Lord I would desire. Help me to desire.” And then sit down and think of your lost estate. Think of your ruin and the remedy and think on that. And mark you, while you are on the way, the Lord will meet with you. Only believe this, that if you try Christ, He will never let you try in vain! Go and risk your soul on Christ, tonight, neck or nothing, Sinner! Go now, break or make! Go and say, “Lord, I know I must be damned if I have not Christ.” Stay there and say, “If I perish, I perish only here.” And I tell you, you will never perish! I am a bonds man for God—this head to the block if your soul goes to Hell if you pray sincerely and trust Christ! This neck to the gallows, again, I say, this neck to the rope and to the hangman’s gallows, if Christ rejects you after you have earnestly sought Him! Only try that, I beseech you, poor Soul. “Oh,” you say, “but I have not strength enough. I cannot do that.” Well, poor Soul, crawl to the Mercy Seat and there lie flat, just as your are. You know that misery often speaks when it utters not a word. The poor cripple squats himself down in the street. He says nothing. There protrudes a ragged knee and there is a wounded hand. He says nothing. But with his hands folded on his breast he looks at every passerby. And though not a word is spoken, he wins more than if he daily drawled out his tale, or sung it along the street! So do you—sit like Bartimaeus by the wayside begging. And if you hear Him pass by, then cry, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me!” But if you can scarcely say that, sit there and exhibit your poor wounds. Tell the Lord your desperate condition. Strip your loathsome sores and let the Almighty see the venom. Turn out your heart and let the rank corruption be all inspected by the Almighty eyes. “And He has mercies rich and free.” Who can tell poor Sinner, who can tell? He may look on you—  
*“Jesus died upon the tree  
And why, poor Sinner, not for thee?  
“His Sovereign Grace is rich and free,  
And why, poor Sinner, not for thee?  
Our Jesus loved and saved ME!  
Say why, poor Sinner, why not THEE?”*  
Only do this and if you are a sinner, hear this—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” He will not, “Plead against you with His great power. No, He will put His strength in you!” The Lord dismiss you with His blessing!

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2732 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 23.8

BELIEVERS TESTED BY TRIALS  
NO. 2732

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JUNE 23, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 17, 1880.

**“Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He works, but I cannot behold Him: He hides Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him: but He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”  
Job 23:8-10.**

JOB, as we noticed in our reading, was at that time in very deep distress. I commend this fact to the notice of any here who are very sorely tried. You may be the people of God and yet be in a terrible plight, for Job was a true servant of the Most High, yet he sat down among the ashes and scraped himself with a potsherd because he was covered with sore boils and, at the same time, he was reduced to absolute poverty. The path of sorrow has been trod by thousands of holy feet—you are not the first one who could sit down and say, “I am the man that has seen affliction.” You were not the first tried one, you are not the only one and you will not be the last one. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” So let this be some comfort to you—that you are one of the Lord’s suffering children, one of those who have to pass through rough roads and fiery places in the course of their pilgrimage to Heaven.

Job had to experience one trial which must have been very keen, indeed, for it was brought about by his three choice friends who were evidently men of mind and mark, for their speeches prove that they were by no means second-class men. Job would not have selected for his bosom friends any but those who were of high character, estimable in disposition, and able to converse with him upon high and lofty themes. Such, no doubt, those three men were and I expect that when Job saw them coming towards him, he looked for a store of comfort from them, imagining that they would at least sympathize with him and pour out such consolations as their own experience could suggest, in order that he might be somewhat relieved. But he was utterly disappointed—these friends of his reasoned that there must be some extraordinary cause for such unusual distress as that into which Job had fallen. They had never seen wrong in him, but, then, he might be a very cunning man and so have concealed it from them.

As long as they had known him, he seemed to be a generous, liberal soul, but, perhaps, after all, he was one of those who squeeze the uttermost farthing out of the poor. They could not read his heart, so they put the worst construction upon his sorrows and said, “Depend upon it, he is a hypocrite! We will apply caustic to him and so we will test him, and see whether he really is what he professes to be. We will rub salt into his wounds by bringing various charges against him.” And they did so in a most horrible fashion. That is a cruel thing for anybody to do and one that cuts to the quick. Possibly, some people who used to court your company and would not let you go down the street without bowing to you—now that your circumstances are changed, do not recognize you. Or if they cannot help seeing you, they appear to have some distant recollection that, years ago, you were a casual acquaintance, or, perhaps, if they do speak in a kind, friendly way, though their words are smoother than butter, war is in their heart—though their words are softer than oil, yet are they drawn swords.

You must be a bad man because you have come down in the world—it cannot be that you are the respectable person they thought you were, or you would not have lost your estate, for, in the estimation of some folk, to be respectable means to have a certain amount of cash! The definition was once given, in a court of law that if a man kept a carriage and one horse, it was proven, by that fact, that he was respectable. That is the way of the world—respect and respectability depend upon so much money—but the moment that is gone, the scene changes. The man is the same—yes, he may be a better and a nobler man without the money than with it—but it is only noble men who think so. It is only right-minded persons who judge not by the coat or the purse, but who say, with Burns—

*“A man’s a man for a’ that,”*  
whatever may be his condition. Character is the thing to which we ought to look—the man himself, and not merely his surroundings. But Job had to bear just that ignoble sort of scorn that some men seem to delight to pour upon the sorrows of others!

I want, first, to call your attention to Job’s desire in the time of his trouble. It was his earnest desire to get to his God. Secondly, we will notice Job’s distress because he could not find Him. “Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him.” And, thirdly, we will consider Job’s consolation. “He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

I. First, then, notice JOB’S DESIRE IN THE TIME OF HIS TROUBLE. He wanted his God. He did not long to see Bildad, or Eliphaz, or Zophar, or any earthly friend—his cry was, “Oh, that I knew where I might find HIM! That I might come even to His seat!” This is one of the marks of a true child of God—that even when God smites him, he still longs for His Presence. If you get to the very back of all Job’s calamities, you will see that God sent them, or, at least, permitted Satan to afflict him. “Yet,” says Job, “I will not turn in anger against God because of this. ‘Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.’ Let Him do what He will with me, I will still seek to get near to Him and this shall be my heart’s desire, ‘Oh that I knew where I might find Him!’” An ungodly man, if he has made any pretense of fellowship with God in his days of prosperity, forsakes Him as soon as adversity comes. But the true child of God clings to his Father however roughly He may deal with him.  
We are not held captive to God by a chain of sweets, nor are we bought with cupboard love, nor bribed in any other way to love Him, but now, because He first loved us, our heart has loved Him, and rested in Him—and if cross Providences and strange dealings come from the hand of the Most High, our cry shall not be, “Oh that we could get away from Him!” but, “Oh that we knew where we might find Him, that we might come even to His seat!” This is the mark of our regeneration and adoption—that, whatever happens, we still cling to our God!  
For, beloved Friends, when a man is in trouble, if he can but get to God, in the first place, he is quite sure of justice. Men may condemn us falsely, but God never will. Our character may be cruelly slandered and, doubtless, there have been good men who have lived for years under false accusations—but God knows the way that we take. He will be the Advocate of His servants when their case is laid before the heavenly Court of King’s Bench. We need not be afraid that the verdict will not be just—“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”  
We also know that if we can get to God, we shall have an audience. Sometimes men will not hear us when we are pleading for justice. “I do not want to hear a word you have to say,” says the man who is so prejudiced that he will not listen to our plea. But there is an ear that no prejudice ever sealed! There is a heart that is always sympathetic towards the griefs of a Believer. You are sure to be heard, Beloved, if you pour out your heart before the God that hears prayer! He will never be weary of your cries—they may be poor, broken utterances—but He takes the meaning of the sighs of His saints, He understands the language of their groans. Go, then, to God because you are sure of an audience.  
What is more, in getting near to God, a man is sure to have strength. You notice how Job puts it—“‘Will He plead against me with His great power? No, but He would put strength in me.” When once we get to realize that God is with us, how strong we are! Then we can bear the burden of want or of pain, or even the sharp adder’s tongue of slander. The man who has God with him is a very Samson—he may fling himself upon a troop of Philistines and smite them hip and thigh! He may lay hold of the pillars of their temple, rock them to and fro, and bring down the whole building upon them! I say not that we shall work miracles, but I do say that, as our days, so shall our strength be—  
*“I can do all things, or can bear  
All sufferings, if my Lord is there.”*  
And, once more, he who gets to his God is sure of joy. There was never a soul that was right with God and that was unhappy in the Presence of God! Up yonder in Glory, how gladly they smile! How I would like to photograph their beaming faces! What a group that would be—of angel faces bathed in everlasting light and the faces of those redeemed from among men—all radiant with celestial joy! What gives them that gladness? It is because God is there that they are so happy—  
*“Not all the harps above  
Can make a heavenly place,  
If God His residence remove,  
Or but conceal His face.”*  
Just as the sun makes the landscape bright and fair, so does the light of God’s Countenance make all His people glad. It would not matter to a man whether he were in a dungeon or a palace if he had the constant Presence of God! I am not speaking at random when I make that assertion. Read the record of the martyr days of the Church and you will understand that the Presence of God caused His persecuted people to be the happiest in the whole world! No minstrels in royal halls ever sang so sweetly as did the prisoners of the Lord who were confined in deep, dark, underground dungeons where they could scarcely breathe. No, that is not all, for some have been happy even on the rack. Think of brave Lady Anne Askew sitting on the cold stones after the cursed inquisitors had torn her poor feeble frame almost limb from limb—and when they tempted her to turn from the faith, she answered—  
*“I am not she that lyst  
My anker to let fall  
For every dryslynge mist;  
My shippe’s substancyal.”*  
Some who were tortured, not accepting deliverance, declared, as in the case of Lawrence, that the gridiron was a bed of roses and that they never were so joyous as when their body was being consumed in the fire—every finger being like a lighted candle—for they were able, even then, to cry, “None but Christ! None but Christ!” It is amazing how the Presence of God seems to be a salve that kills all pain—an uplifting, like an angel’s wing, that bears upward one who, without it, would be utterly crushed. The martyr is torn in pieces and full of agonies—and yet all his sufferings are transformed till they become sweet harmonies of intense delight because God is with him! Oh give me God, give me God, and I care not what you withhold from me! “Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.”  
II. The brightness of the first part of my subject will help to make the second portion all the darker. We are now to consider JOB’S DISTRESS—the agony of a true child of God who cannot find his Father.  
Your experiences are not all alike, Brothers and Sisters, and I do not want you to try to make them all alike. Some of you have very happy experiences and very little spiritual trial. I am glad it is so. I only hope you will not be superficial, or conceited, or censorious of others. But there are some who know the darker paths in the heavenly pilgrimage—and it is to those that I specially speak just now. Dear Friends, I pray you to remember that a man may be a true servant of God and even an eminent and distinguished servant of God like Job, and yet he may sometimes lose the light of God’s Countenance and have to cry out, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” There are some special, superfine, hot-pressed Christians about, nowadays, who do not believe this. They say, “You ought to be joyous! You ought never to be depressed—you ought to be perfect!” All which is quite true, but it is a great deal easier to say so than to show how it is to be realized! And these Brothers and Sisters who talk as if it were a very simple matter, like counting your fingers, may someday find that it is more difficult than they think—as some of us have sometimes done.  
Job could not find his God—this is apparently strange. He was a specially good man, one who did what he could for all around him—a very light in the city where he dwelt—a man famous in all the country, yet in great trouble—one might have thought that God would certainly comfort him! He has lost everything. Surely, now, the Lord will return to him and be gracious to him and, above all other times, he will now be cheered with the Presence of God! Yet it was not so. He was a man who valued the company of God and who cried, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” Yet he could not find Him. It is passing strange, or, at least, it appears to be so.  
Yet notice, next, that it is essentially necessary to some trials that God should withdraw the light of His Countenance. Our Lord Jesus Christ, with all the woes that He endured, could not have been made perfect through sufferings unless He had learned to cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” When God means to smite any child of His with the rod, He cannot do it with a smile. Suppose a father is chastening his son and all the while is comforting him—where is the chastening? No, the very essence of the medicinal sorrow that is to do good to our souls will lie in our having to bewail the absence of the smile of God.  
This is essential to our trial, but it is greatly perplexing. I do not know of anything that so troubles a Christian as when he does not know where his God is. “God is everywhere,” says one. I know He is, but yet there is a special Presence which He manifests to His people and sometimes it seems to them as if He were nowhere at all. So Job exclaimed, “Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him.” Tried children of God, you have had this experience and it is very perplexing because, when you cannot find your God, you cannot make out why you are being troubled! An affliction that will talk is always a light one, but I dread most of all a dumb affliction that cannot tell me why it has come. When I look around it, and ask, “Why is this?” and I cannot get an answer, that is what plagues me much. And when you cannot find God, you do not know what to do, for, in losing Him, you have lost your Guide. You are in a maze and know not how to get out of it. You are like a man in a net—the more you pull this way or that—the more you tighten the bonds that hold you prisoner! Where you hoped to have relieved yourself, you only brought yourself into further difficulties in another direction—and this bewilderment is one of the worst of sorrows.  
The loss of God’s Presence is also inexpressibly painful to a Believer. If you can live without God, I am afraid you will die without God. But if you cannot live without God, that proves that you are His, and you will bear me out in the assertion that this is the heaviest of mortal griefs—to feel that God has forsaken you and does not hear your prayer—no, does not even seem to help you to pray, so that you can only groan, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him! . . . Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him.”  
Then, dear Friends, in closing what I have to say about this dark side of the subject, let me remind you that it is marvelously awakening because the true child of God, when he finds that his Father has forsaken him for a while, gets to be terribly unhappy. Then he begins to cry and to seek after God. Look at Job—he hunts for God everywhere—forward, backward, on the left hand, on the right hand. He leaves no quarter unvisited. No part of the earth is left without being searched over that he might find his God. Nothing spreads a real Christian to his bearings and awakes all his

faculties like the consciousness of his Lord’s absence. Then he cries, “My God, where are You? I have lost the sense of Your Presence! I have missed the light of Your Countenance.”  
A man in such a case as this goes to the Prayer Meeting in the hope that other people’s prayers may help to make his sad heart happy again. He reads his Bible, too, as he has not read it for months. You will also find him listening to the Gospel with the utmost eagerness and nothing but the Gospel will satisfy him. At one time, he could listen to that pleasant kind of talk that lulls the hearers to sleep, but now he needs a heartsearching ministry and a message that will go right into him and deal faithfully with him—and he is not content unless he gets it. Besides this, he is anxious to talk with Christian friends of riper experiences than his own and he deals seriously and earnestly with these eternal matters which, before, he perhaps trifled with as mere technicalities. You see a man who once lived in the light of God’s Countenance and you will find him wretched, indeed, when the light is gone. He must have his God.  
III. Now, lastly, I want to speak, for a little while, concerning THE TRIED BELIEVER’S CONSOLATION. It is a very sweet consolation—“He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”  
God knows and understands all about His child. I do not know His way, but He knows mine. I am His child and my Father is leading me, though I cannot see Him, for all around me, it is so misty and dark. I can scarcely feel His hand that grasps my little palm, so I cry to Him, “Where are You, my Father? I cannot see my way. The next step before me threatens to plunge me into imminent peril. I know nothing, my Father, but You know.” That is just where knowledge is of most use—it does not so much matter what you do not know so long as God knows, for He is your Guide. If the guide knows the way, the traveler under his care may be content to know but little. “He knows the way that I take.” There is nothing about you, my Brother, which God does not perfectly understand. You are a riddle to yourself, but you are no riddle to Him. There are mysteries in your heart that you cannot explain, but He has the clue of every maze, the key of every secret drawer—and He knows how to get at the hidden springs of your spirit. He knows the trouble that you could not tell to your dearest friend, the grief you dare not whisper in any human ear!  
I find that the Hebrew has this meaning, “He knows the way that is in me.” God knows whether I am His child or not—whether I am sincere or not. While others are judging me harshly, He judges me truly—He knows what I really am. This is a sweet consolation! Take it to yourself, tried Believer.  
Next, God approves of His child. The word, “know,” often has the meaning of approval, and it has that sense here. Job says “God approves of the way that I take.” When you are in trouble, it is a grand thing to be able to say, “I know that I have done that which is right in the sight of God, although it has brought me into great trial. ‘My foot has held His steps, His way have I kept, and not declined.’” If you have a secret and sure sense of God’s approval in the time of your sorrow, it will be a source of very great strengthening to your spirit.  
But Job meant more than this. He meant that God was considering him—and helping him even then. The fact that He knows of our needs guarantees that He will supply them. You remember how our Lord Jesus Christ puts this Truth of God—“Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.” Does He know all about our need? It is all right then—the Head of the house knows the need of all the members of His family, and that is enough, for He never yet failed to supply all the needs of those who depend upon Him. When I need guidance, He will Himself be my Guide. He will supply me when I lack supplies. He will defend me when I need defense. He will give me all things that I really require. There is an old proverb that says, “Where God is, nothing is lacking,” and it is blessedly true! Only remember that there is an ancient precept with a gracious promise attached to it, “Delight yourself, also, in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” Believe it, and obey it, and you shall find it true in your case.  
Furthermore, when Job says, “When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold,” he comforts himself with the belief that God times and manages all things—that his present distresses are a trial by which God is testing him. A man who is like solid gold is not afraid to be tested. No tradesman is afraid to put into the scales that which is full weight, for if it is weighed, it will be proved to be what he says it is. When the inspector of weights and measures comes round, the gentleman who does not like to see him is the man of short weights and incorrect scales. He who knows he is upright and sincere dares say even to the Lord, Himself, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my ways: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” We do not profess to be perfect, but we dare claim to be sincere—and he who is sincere is not afraid of being tested and tried. Real gold is not afraid of the fire—why should it be? What has it to lose? So Job seems to say, “I know that God has put integrity within my spirit and now that He is testing me, He will not carry the test further than, by His Grace, I shall be able to bear.”  
Lastly, Job’s comfort was that God secures the happy result of trial. He believed that when God had tried him, He would bring him forth as gold. Now, how does gold come out of the crucible? How does a true Christian come out of the darkness and obscurity of missing his God for a while? How does he come out like gold? In the Hebrew, the word has an allusion to the bright color of the gold, so, when a Christian is tried, is there not a bright color upon him? Even though he may have lost, for a while, the bright shining of God’s Countenance, when that brightness returns, there is a luster about him which you cannot help seeing! He will speak of his God in a more impressive way than he ever spoke before. Examine the books that are most comforting to Believers and that satisfy their souls, and you will find that the men who wrote them were those who had been severely tried—and when they came out of the fire—there was a brilliance upon them which would not otherwise have been there. If you walk in darkness and see no light, believe that when God has tried you, you shall come forth with the brightness of newly-minted gold!  
But brightness is of little value without preciousness—and the children of God grow more precious through their trials and, being precious, they become objects of desire. Men desire gold above almost everything else, yet the Lord has said, “I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.” There are some godly men whose company we court and some Christian women whose society, when they talk of spiritual things, is worth a Jew’s eye to one that is in distress. Happy are they whom God has passed through the fire—who become precious and desirable when they come out of it!  
And they become honorable, too. “When He has tried me,” said Job, “even though my friends now despise me, when I come forth, they shall have different thoughts concerning me.” They thought a great deal more of Job when God was angry with them and would not restore them to His favor until the Patriarch had prayed for them—than they thought of him when they went to find fault with him! And the day shall come to you, true child of God, when those who now persecute you and look down upon you, shall look up to you! Joseph may be cast into the pit by his brothers and sold into Egypt, but he shall yet sit on the throne—and all his father’s sons shall bow before him!  
Once more, you shall come out of the fire uninjured. It looks very hard to believe that a child of God should be tried by the loss of his Father’s Presence and yet should come forth uninjured by the trial. Yet no gold is ever injured in the fire. Stoke the furnace as much as you may, let the blast be as strong as you will, thrust the ingot into the very center of the white heat, let it lie in the very heart of the flame—pile on more fuel, let another blast torment the coals till they become most vehement with heat—yet the gold is losing nothing, it may even be gaining. If it had any alloy mingled with it, the alloy is separated from it by the fire—and to gain in purity is the greatest of gains. But the pure gold is not one drachma less! There is not a single particle of it that can be burnt. It is still there, all the better for the fiery trial to which it has been subjected! And you, dear child of God, whatever may befall you, shall come out of the fire quite uninjured. You are under a dark cloud just now, but you shall come out into brightness and you shall have lost nothing that was worth keeping! What is there that you can lose? When death comes, what will you lose?—  
*“Corruption, earth, and worms  
Shall but refine this flesh,  
Till my triumphant spirit comes  
To put it on afresh!”*  
When we put on our new clothes, this body that shall have passed through God’s transforming hand—shall we be losers? No, we shall say, “What a difference! Is this my Sabbath garment? The old one was dark and dingy, dusty and defiled. This is whiter than any fuller could make it and brighter than the light!” You will scarcely know yourselves, my Brothers and Sisters! You will know other people, I daresay, but I think you will hardly recognize yourselves when once you have put on your new array. You cannot really lose anything by death! You will not lose the eyes you part with for a while, for, when Christ shall stand at the latter day, upon the earth, your eyes shall behold Him! You shall lose no faculty, no power, but you shall infinitely gain even by death itself—and that is the very worst of your enemies, so that you shall certainly gain by all the rest! Come then, pluck up courage and march boldly on! Fear no ghosts, for they are but specters—there is no reality about them!  
Beloved, note well this closing word. God is here. You need not go forward to find Him, or backward to hunt after Him, or on the left to search for Him, or on the right to see Him. He is still with His people, as He said, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” “Fear not: for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” Oh, seek Him, then, every one of you, and God bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOB 23; 24.**

Always remember, dear Friends, that one of the great lessons of the Book of Job is this—that we may never judge a man’s character by his condition. The best of men may have the most of suffering and of poverty, while the worst of men may prosper in everything. Do not imagine because a man suddenly becomes very poor or a great sufferer, that therefore he must be a great sinner—otherwise, you will often condemn the innocent, and you will, at the same time, be guilty of flattering the wicked. Job’s friends had cruelly told him that he must be a hypocrite, or else he would not have lost his property and have been smitten with such a remarkable sickness. So he appeals to God against their unrighteous judgment.

Job 23:1, 2. Then Job answered and said, Even today is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. “Although my groaning is heavy, yet it is not so burdensome as my griefs might warrant.”

3. Oh that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat! “To His Judgment Seat, that I might plead my cause and vindicate my character even there.”

4-6. I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say unto me. Will He plead against me with His great power? “Being the great God, will He silence me by a display of His Omnipotence? Oh, no! He is too just to do that.”

6. No; but He would put strength in me. “He would help me to argue my case. He would deal fairly with me. He would not be like you so-called friends of mine, who sit there and exult over my weakness and my griefs, and torture me with your cruel words.”

7-10. There the righteous might dispute with Him; so should I be delivered forever from my Judge. Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He works, but I cannot behold Him: He hides Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him: but He knows the way that I take. “If I cannot find Him, or see Him, He can see me, and He knows all about me.”

10. When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. This is beautiful faith on the part of Job. It is very easy for us to read these lines and to say, “No doubt, tried men do come out of the furnace purified like gold.” But it is quite another thing to be in the crucible ourselves and to read such a passage as this by the light of the fire, and then to be able to say, “We know it is true, for we are proving its truth even now.” This is the kind of Chapter that many a broken heart has to read by itself alone. Many a weeping eye has scanned these words of Job and truly blessed has that troubled one been who has been able to chime in with the sweet music of this verse—“He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

11. My foot has held fast to His steps, His way have I kept, and not declined. It is a great thing to be able to say that, as Job truly could, for we have the witness of the Spirit of God that Job was “perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” It was not selfrighteousness that made him speak as he did—he had the right to say it and he said it.

12, 13. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. But He is of one mind, and who can turn Him? “His mind is made up to chasten me. He means to afflict me again and again, so what can I do but yield to His will?”

13. And what His soul desires, even that He does. There is, on Job’s part, a reverential bowing before the Supreme Power—an acknowledgment of God’s right to do with him as He wills.

14. For He performs the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with Him. “More arrows to pierce me, more sorrows to grieve me.”

15-17 . Therefore am I troubled at His Presence: when I consider, I am afraid of Him. For God makes my heart soft, and the Almighty troubles me: because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither has He covered the darkness from my face. He wished that he had died before those evil days had come upon him; and that is the way that a good man, an undoubted saint of God, is sometimes driven to speak. There are, perhaps, some who will say, “Then we don’t want to be children of God if that is how they are tried.” Ah, but that was only the sorrow of an hour. See where Job is now! Think of what he was even a few days after he made this mournful complaint, when God had turned his sighing into singing, and his mourning into morning light! In the next Chapter, Job speaks of those who were the reverse of himself—wicked and ungodly men who, nevertheless, prospered in this life.

Job 24:1. Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know Him not see His days? “Why do they live so long? Why do they appear to have such prosperity?”

2-4. Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof. They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow’s ox for a pledge. They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together. “They are hard-hearted enough to rob even poor widows and orphan children.”

5. Behold, as wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work. Like wild asses, their work consists in going forth to do mischief.  
5. Rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness yields food for them and for their children. For there are some so hard that they would skin a flint, and out of the wilderness would manage to get food. Yet such hard oppressors of others sometimes seem to prosper for a while.  
6-12. They reap everyone his corn in the field: and they gather the vintage of the wicked. They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that they have no covering in the cold. They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter. They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor. They cause him to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf from the hungry; which make oil within their walls, and tread their winepresses, and suffer thirst. Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded cries out: yet God lays not folly to them. He lets them alone, leaves them to do as they please. So it seems, but this is not the Day of Judgment, and this is not the place of final retribution! Now and then God flashes forth His anger against some gross sinner or some national crime, but as for the most of men’s sins, He bears with them till that tremendous day shall come which draws on apace, when He shall hang the heavens in sackcloth, and hold the last assize, and every man shall receive according to his works.  
13-17. They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof. The murderer rising with the light kills the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief. The eye also of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguises his face. In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light. For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one knows them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death. These are the men who plunder secretly, who rob, yet cannot bear to be known as thieves.  
18. He is swift as the waters; their portion is cursed in the earth. There was no curse upon Job, and no curse can come near the true child of God. His scanty portion is still blest. But the large portion of the ungodly is cursed even while he is on the earth!  
18-20. He beholds not the way of the vineyards. Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so does the grave those which have sinned. The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him. What a sarcastic utterance! This man, who lorded it over others—how glad the worm shall be to get at him! This fat worldling shall be a rich feast for the worms!  
20. He shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree. It shall snap off and be brought to an ignominious end.  
21-24. He preys on the barren that bears not: and does not good to the widow. But God draws the mighty away with His power: He rises up, but no man is sure of life. Though it be given him to be in safety, whereon he rests; yet His eyes are upon their ways. They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all others, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn. In the East, they generally reap their harvest by just taking off the tops of the ears of corn and leaving the straw. Thus will the wicked be cut off.  
25. And if it is not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech worth nothing? Job challenges all men to contradict what he affirms—that the righteous may be greater sufferers, and the wicked may for a while prosper, but that God will, in the end, overthrow the ungodly and establish the righteous.

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÷Job 27.10

THE TOUCHSTONE OF GODLY SINCERITY  
NO. 985

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

**“Will he always call upon God?”  
Job 27:10.**

WHEN Job resumes his address in this chapter he appeals to God in a very solemn matter as to the truth of all that he had spoken. No less vehemently does he assert his innocence of any signal crime, or his consciousness of any secret guile which could account for his being visited with extraordinary suffering. I do not know that his language necessarily implies any culpable self-righteousness. It appears to me, rather, that he had good cause to defend himself against the bitter insinuations of his unfriendly friends.

Possibly his tone was rash, but his meaning was right. He might well feel the justice of vindicating his character before men—but it was a pity if, in so doing, he seemed to utter a protest of complete purity in the sight of God. You may remember how Paul under equal, if not exactly similar provocation, tempered his speech and guarded against the danger of misconstruction. Thus he wrote to the Corinthians—“With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yes, I judge not my own self. For I know nothing by myself [or myself, as though he should say, ‘My conscience does not accuse me of wrong’] yet am I not hereby justified.”

But the two holy men are very like in one respect—for just as Paul, in the struggles of the spirit against the flesh faced the peril and mounted guard against it—“lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself shall be a castaway”—so Job lays bare before his own eyes, and points to the view of those who heard him the features of a hypocrite—lest by any means he should turn out to be such.

In terrible language he describes and denounces the hypocrite’s flattering hope and withering doom. The suspicion that he himself could harbor a vain presence in his own breast, or would pretend to be what he was not was utterly abhorrent to Job’s honest heart. He placed himself at the bar. He laid down the Law with rigor. He weighed his case with exactness. And so he forestalled his adversaries’ verdict by judging himself that he might not be judged. Who, then, is this “wicked man,” thus portrayed before us? And what are the first symptoms of his depravity?

We ask not the question idly, but in order that we take heed against the uprising of such an evil in ourselves—  
*“Beneath the saintly veil the votary of sin May lurk unseen.  
And to that eye alone  
Which penetrates the heart, may stand revealed.”*

The hypocrite is very often an exceedingly neat imitation of the Christian.

To the common observer he is so good a counterfeit that he entirely escapes suspicion. Like base coins which are cunningly made, you can scarcely detect them by their ring. It is only by more searching tests that you are able to discover that they are not pure gold, the current coin of the realm.

It would be difficult to say how nearly any man might resemble a Christian and yet not be “in Christ a new creature.” Or how closely he might imitate all the virtues and yet at the same time possess none of the fruits of the Spirit as before the judgment of a heart-searching God. In almost all deceptions there is a weak point somewhere. Never is a lying story told but, if you are keen enough, you may, from internal evidence, somewhere or other detect the flaw. Though Satan himself has been engaged in the manufacture of impostures for thousands of years, yet whether through the lack of skill on his part, or through the folly of his agents, he always leaves a weak point. His clattering statements are a little too strongly scented and smell of lies. And his mimic Christians are so overdone in one place, and slovenly in another, that their falsehood betrays itself.

Now, in discriminating between saints and hypocrites, one great testpoint is prayer. “Behold, he prays,” was to the somewhat skeptical mind of Ananias demonstration enough that Paul was really converted. If he prays, it may be safely inferred that the breath of prayer arises from the life of faith. The process of spiritual quickening has at least begun. And so the hypocrite desires to possess that vital action. If the Christian prays, he will betake himself to the like exercise. If the Christian calls upon God, the deceiver takes care that he will likewise make mention of the name of the Lord.

And yet, between the prayer of the truly converted man and the prayer of the hypocrite there is a difference as radical as between life and death, although it is not apparent to everybody. No one, it may be, at first can be aware of it except the man himself, and sometimes even he scarcely perceives it. Many are deceived by the fine expressions, by the apparent warmth, and by the excellent natural disposition of the hypocrite. They think, when they hear him call upon God, that his supplications are sufficient evidence that he is truly a quickened child of God.

Prayer is always the telltale of spiritual life. If the prayer is not right— there is no Grace within. Slackened prayer indicates a decrease of Divine Grace. If prayer is stronger, you know the whole man is stronger. Prayer is as good a test of spiritual life and health as the pulse is of the condition of the human frame. Therefore I say the hypocrite imitates the action of prayer while he does not really possess the spirit of prayer.

Our text goes deeper than the surface and enquires into vital matters. Prayer is a test, but here is a test for the test—a trial even for prayer itself. “Will he always call upon God?” That is the point! He calls upon God now, and he appears to be intensely devout. He says he was converted in the late revival. He is very fervid in expression, and very forward in manner at present. But will it continue? Will it wear? Will it last? His prayerfulness has sprung up like Jonah’s gourd in a night. Will it perish in a night?

It is beautiful to look upon, like the early dew that glistens in the sunlight as though the morning had sown the earth with Oriental pearls. But will it pass away like that dew? Or will it always abide? “Will he always call upon God?” That is the point! O that each one of us may now search ourselves and see whether we have those attributes connected with our prayer which will prove us not to be hypocrites! Pray our search will not show that, on the contrary, we have those sad signs of base dissembling and reckless falsehoods which will before long show us to be dupes of Satan, impostors before Heaven. “Will he always call upon God?”

This question, simple as it is, I think involves several pertinent enquiries. The first point which it raises is that of CONSISTENCY. Is the prayer occasional, or is it constant? Is the exercise of devotion permanent and regular, or is it spasmodic and inconstant? Will this man call upon God in all seasons of prayer? There are certain times when it is most fit to pray, and a genuine Christian will and must pray at such periods. Will this hypocrite pray at all such times, or will he only select some of the seasons for prayer?

Will he only be found praying at certain times and in selected places? Will he always, in all fit times, be found drawing near to God? For instance, he prayed standing at the corners of the streets where he was seen of men—he prayed in the synagogue, where everybody could mark his fluency and his fervor—but will he pray at home? Will he enter into his closet and shut the door? Will he there speak to the Father who hears in secret? Will he there pour forth petitions as the natural outflow of his soul?

Will he walk the field at eventide, in lonely meditation, like Isaac, and pray there? Will he go to the housetop with Peter, and pray there? Will he seek his chamber as Daniel did, or the solitude of the garden as did our Lord? Or is he one who only prays in public—who has the gift of prayer rather than the spirit of prayer—who is fluent in utterance rather than fervent in feeling? Oh, but this—this is one of the surest of tests by which we may discern between the precious and the vile!

Public prayer is no evidence of piety! It is practiced by an abundance of hypocrites! But private prayer is a thing for which the hypocrite has no heart—and if he gives himself to it for a little time he soon finds it too hot and heavy a business for his soulless soul to persevere in—and he lets it drop. He will sooner perish than continue in private prayer. O for heart searching about this! Do I draw near to God alone? Do I pray when no eye sees, when no ear hears? Do I make a conscience of private prayer? Is it a delight to pray? For I may gather that if I never enjoy private prayer I am one of those hypocrites who will not always call upon God.

The true Christian will pray in business. He will pray in labor. He will pray in his ordinary calling—like sparks out of the chimney, short prayers fly up all day long from truly devout souls. It is not so with the mere pretender. The hypocrite prays at Prayer Meetings, and his voice is heard in the assembly—sometimes at tedious length. But will he pray with exclamatory prayer? Will he speak with God at the counter? Will he draw near to God in the field? Will he plead with his Lord in the busy street with noiseless pleadings?

When he finds that a difficultly has occurred in his daily life, will he, without saying a word, breathe his heart into the ear of God? Ah, no! Hypocrites know nothing of what it is to be always praying, to abide in the spirit of prayer. This is a choice part of Christian experience with which they do not meddle. But be sure of this—where there is genuine religion within, it will be more or less habitual to the soul to pray. Some of us can

say that to be asking blessings from God in brief, wordless prayers comes as natural to us as to eating, drinking, and breathing.

We never encounter a difficulty but by God’s Grace we resolve it by appealing to the wisdom of God—never meet with any opposition but what we overcome it by leaning upon the power of God. To wait upon the Lord and speak with Him has become a habit with us—not because it is a duty—we have left legal bondage far behind—but because we cannot help it, our soul is inwardly constrained to do it. The nature within as naturally cries to God as a child cries after its mother.

The hypocrite prays in his fashion because it is a task allotted to him— the Christian because it is a part of his very life. This is an ever standing mark of distinction by which a man may discern himself. If your prayer is only for certain hours, and certain places, and certain times—beware lest it turn out to be an abomination before the Lord. The fungus forced by artificial heat is a far different thing from the rosy fruit of a healthy tree, and the unreal devotions of the unspiritual differ widely from the deep inward groanings of renewed hearts. If you pray by the almanac, observing days and weeks, you may well fear that your religion never came from the great Father of Lights with whom are no changing moons.

If you can pray by the clock, your religion is more mechanical than vital. The Christian does not fast because it is Lent. If his Lord reveals His face he cannot fast merely because a Church commands him. Neither can he, therefore, feast because it happens to be a festival on the calendar. The Spirit of God might make his soul to be feasting on Ash Wednesday, or his soul might be humbled within him at Easter. He cannot be regulated by the dominical letter and the new moons and days of the month. He is a spiritual character, and he leaves those who have no spiritual life to yield a specious conformity to such ecclesiastical regulations. His newborn nature spurns such childish bonds. The living soul prays evermore with groanings that cannot be uttered, and believingly rejoices evermore with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

A second point in debate is that of CONTINUANCE. “Will he always call upon God?” There are trying periods and sifting seasons. Those who hold on through these are the true Christians. Those who suspend prayer at these test intervals are false. Now times of joy and sorrow are equally critical seasons. Let us look at them in turn. Will the hypocrite call upon God in times of pleasure? No. If he indulges himself in what he calls pleasure, he dares not pray at night when he comes home. He goes to places where he would think it a degradation of prayer to think of praying.

The genuine Christian prays always, because if there is any spot where he dares not pray, just there he dares not be found. Or if there is any engagement about which he could not pray, it is an engagement that shall never ensnare him. Someone once proposed to write a brief formal prayer to be said by a pious young lady when attending a theater, and another to be repeated by a Christian gentleman when shuffling a pack of cards. There might as well be another form of prayer to be offered by a pious burglar when he is breaking into a home, or by a religious assassin when he is about to commit murder!

There are things about which you cannot pray—they have nothing to do with prayer. Many tolerated amusements lead to outrages upon the morals of earth, and are an insult to the holiness of Heaven. Who could think of praying about them? Herein is the hypocrite discerned. He does that which he could not ask a blessing upon. Poor as is the conscience he owns, he knows it is ridiculous to offer prayer concerning certain actions which, notwithstanding, he has the hardihood to perform.

The Christian avoids things which he could not pray about. And so he feels it a pleasure to pray always. Equally trying is the opposite condition of depression and sorrow. There, too, we try the question, “Will he always call upon God?” No. The hypocrite will not pray when in a desponding state. He breathed awhile the atmosphere of enthusiasm. His passions were stirred by the preacher and fermented by the contagious zeal of the solemn assembly. But now a damp cold mist obscures his view—chills his feelings—settles in his heart. Others are growing cold and he is among the first to freeze. He is down-hearted and discouraged. In a while, like King Saul, he succumbs to the evil spirit.

Were he a Christian, indeed, he would follow in the wake of David, and say—“Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.” But he has no heart to hope on in ill weather. He built up his hopes tastefully, and he admired the structure which was of his own piling. But the rain descended, the floods came, the winds blew, and down it all went. And therefore, being a hypocrite, he said within himself—“Now I have no enjoyment of religion—it has lost its novelty. I have worn out its delights. I have now no comfort from it. I will give it up.”

Thus in the trying hour the deceiver is laid bare. Look at the real Christian when a storm bursts over him which shakes his confidence and spoils his joy—what does he do? He prays more than he ever did. When his mountain stood firm and he said, “I shall not be moved,” he perhaps grew too slack in prayer. But now, when all God’s waves and billows are going over him, and he hardly knows whether he is a child of God or not and questions whether he has any part or lot in the matter, he proves that all is right within by crying unto God in the bitterness of his soul, “O God, have mercy upon me, and deliver me from going down into the pit.”

By God’s Grace a Christian’s despair makes him pray. It is a despair of self. A worldling’s despair makes him rave against God and give up prayer. Mark then, how in the opposite seasons of joy and sorrow prayer is put into the crucible and tested. All our times of pleasure ought to be times of prayer. Job accounted his family festivities opportune for calling his children together for special devotion. No less should our periods of despondency become incentives to prayer! Every funeral knell should ring us to our knees. The hypocrite cannot keep the statutes and ordinances, but the true Christian follows them. The Christian is alike at home in seeking the Lord, calling upon His name, or asking counsel and guidance at His Mercy Seat—in any variety of experience—and every diversity of circumstance.

“Will he always call upon God?” Here is the question of CONSTANCY.

Will he pray constantly? It seems to most men a very difficult thing to be praying always, to continue in prayer, to pray without ceasing. Yes. And herein, again, is there a great distinction between the living child of God and the mere pretender. The living child of God soon finds that it is not so much his duty to pray as his privilege, his joy—a necessity of his being.

What moment is there when a Christian is safe without prayer?

Where is there a place where he would find himself secure if he ceased to pray? Just think of it! Every moment of my life I am dependent upon the will of God as to whether I shall draw another breath or not. Nothing stands between me and death but the will of God. An angel’s arm could not save me from the grave, if now the Lord willed me to depart. Solemn, then, is the Christian’s position—ever standing by an open tomb. Should not dying men pray? We are always dying. As life is but a long dying, should it not be also a long praying? Should we not be incessantly acknowledging to God in prayer and praise the continuance of our being, which is due to His Grace?

Brothers and Sisters, every moment that we live we are receiving favors and benefits from God. There is never a minute in which we are not recipients of His bounty. We are likely to thank God for His mercies as if we thought they came at certain set times. So in truth they do—they are new every morning—great is His faithfulness! And they soothe us night by night, for His compassion fails not! There are mercies streaming on in one incessant flow. We never cease to need. He never ceases to supply. We want constant protection, and He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.

Lest any hurt us, He keeps us night and day. The river of God rolls on with undiminished volume and unimpeded velocity. How greatly does He enrich us! Should we not be ever careful to secure His gifts, to reap the harvest He provides, and as His people to take these good things from His gracious hands? But, oh, let us take heed to mingle prayer with all our thanksgiving lest He should curse the benefit over which we have asked no blessing. Lest He blight the crops of which we have dedicated to Him no first fruits—or smite us with the rod of His anger—while the food is yet in our mouths.

Our cravings know no abatement, our dependence on God knows no limit. Therefore our prayers should know no intermission. Speak of beggars—we are always beggars. Is it not better for us, then, to be regular pensioners than mere casuals? Whatever God has given us we are as needy still. We are always, if taken apart from Him, naked, poor, and miserable—altogether dependent upon Him—as well for the soul as for the body. Good thoughts, spiritual aspirations, holy Graces—yes, and for the breath of our nostrils and the bread of our mouths are we totally dependent upon God.

If we are always needing, we should be always pleading. Besides that, dear Friends, we are always in danger. We are in an enemy’s country. Behind every bush there is a foe. We cannot reckon ourselves to be secure in any place. The world, the flesh and the devil constantly assail us. Arrows are shot from beneath us, and from around us—while the poison of our own corruption rankles within us. At any moment temptation may get the mastery over us, or we ourselves may go astray and be our own tempters.

Storms may drive us, whirlpools suck us down, quicksands engulf us—and if none of these accomplish our shipwreck we may flounder of ourselves, or perish of spiritual dry rot. We need, then, each hour to watch, and each separate moment to pray, “Hold You me up, and I shall be safe.” Are you wealthy? Pray God that your silver and your gold bring no spiritual plague with them! Do not let your money stick to your hands or your heart, for in proportion as it glues itself to you it poisons you. Pray God to sanctify your abundance so that you may know how to abound—a difficult piece of knowledge to attain.

Are you poor? Then ask to be kept from envy, from discontent and all the evils that haunt the narrow lanes of poverty. Pray that as you are each in danger, one way or another, you may all be kept hour by hour by the constant Grace of God. If we knew what poor, weak, helpless creatures we are, we should not need to be told always to pray. We should wonder how we could think of living without prayer! How can I, whose legs are so feeble, try to walk—without leaning on my Father’s hand? How can I, who am so sickly, wish to be a day without the Good Physician’s care?

The hypocrite does not see this. He does not discern these perpetual needs and perpetual gifts, these perpetual dangers and perpetual preservations—not he. He thinks he has prayed enough when he has had his few minutes in the morning and his few minutes at night. He trots through his form of morning devotion just as he takes his morning wash, and has he not settled the business for the day? If at evening he says his prayers with the same regularity with which he puts on his slippers, is it not all he needs? He almost thinks that little turn at his devotions to be a weariness. As to his heart going up in prayer to God, he does not understand it. If he is spoken to concerning it, it sounds like an idle tale, or mere cant.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, “we ought always to pray, and not to faint,” because we are always sinning. If I were not evermore sinning—if I could pause in that constant aberration of mind from the pure, the unselfish, the holy—perhaps I might suspend confession and relax supplication awhile. But if unholiness stains even my holy things—if in my best endeavors there is something of error, something of sin—ought I not to be continually crying to God for pardon and involving His Grace?

And are we not constantly liable to new temptations? May we not fall into grosser sins than we have up to now committed unless we are preserved by a power beyond our own? O pray perpetually—for you know not what temptations may assail you. Pray that you enter not into temptation. If perhaps in some favored moment we could imagine ourselves to have exhausted all the list of our needs. Were we enjoying complete pardon and full assurance—did we stand upon the mountain’s brow bathing our foreheads in the sunlight of God’s favor—if we had no fear, no care, no trouble of our own to harass us, yet we might not therefore cease to pray!

The interests of others, our kindred, our neighbors, our fellow creatures might—ah, MUST—then start up before us and claim that we should bear upon our breasts their memorial. Think of the sinners around you hardening in transgression! Some of them dying, seared with guilt or frenzied with despair! O Brethren, how could you cease to intercede for others—if it were possible, which it is not—that you should have no further need to supplicate for yourselves? The grand old cause which we have espoused,

and the Christ who has espoused our cause—both these demand our prayers.

By the Truth of God whose banner waves above us! By the King’s love who has ennobled us—to whose Person fires us this day with ardor for His Cross, and zeal for His Gospel—we are constrained to unwavering devotion! So spoke the Gospel of old, and so does the Spirit of God prompt us now. “Prayer also shall be made for Him continually. And daily shall He be praised.” O that in our case the prediction might be verified, the promise fulfilled!

Not so the hypocrite—he will not have it on this fashion. Enough for him to have prayers on Sunday. Enough to get through family prayers at any rate, and if that does not please you, the morning prayer and the evening prayer shall be said by rote at the bedside—will not these suffice? Praying all day long? Why he considers that it would be almost as bad as Heaven, where they are singing without ceasing. So he turns on his heels, and says he will have none of it. Nor shall he! For where God is, he shall not go. The Lord will tell him, “I never knew you: depart from me, you worker of iniquity.”

“Will he always call upon God?” The question may be an enquiry as to IMPORTUNITY. Will the hypocrite pray importunately? He will do no such thing! I have heard farmers talk about the way to know a good horse. It will serve me to illustrate the way to tell a good Christian. Some horses, when they get into the traces, pull. And when they feel the load move they work with all their might. But if they tug and the load does not stir, they are not for drawing any longer. There is a breed of really good horses in Suffolk which will tug at a dead weight, and if they were harnessed to a post, they would pull till they dropped though nothing stirred.

It is so with a lively Christian. If he is seeking a great favor from God, he prays, whether he gets it or not, right on—he cannot take a denial. If he knows his petition to be according to God’s will and promise, he pleads the blood of Jesus about it. And if he does not get an answer at once, he says, “My Soul, wait”—WAIT! A grand word—“wait only upon God. For my expectation is from Him.”

As for the hypocrite, if he gets into a Church and there is a Prayer Meeting and he feels, “Well, there is a fire kindling and an excitement getting up”—ah, how that man can pray! The wagon is moving behind him, and he is very willing to pull. But the sincere Believer says, “I do not perceive any revival yet. I do not hear of many conversions. Never mind, we have prayed that God will glorify His dear Son—we will keep on praying. If the blessing does not come in one week, we will try three. If it does not come in three weeks, we will try three months. If it does not come in three months, we shall still keep on for three years.

“And if it does not come in three years, we will plead on for thirty years. And if it does not come then, we will say, ‘Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and your Glory unto their children.’ We will plead on until we die, and mingle with those who beheld the promise afar off. They were persuaded of it, prayed for it, and died believing it would be fulfilled.” Such prayer would not be wasted breath. It is treasure put out to interest—seed sown for a future harvest. It is the aspiration of saints kindled by the Inspiration of God. The genuine Believer knows how to tug. Jacob, when he came to Jabbok, found that the angel was not easily to be conquered. He laid hold of Him, but the angel did not yield the blessing.

Something more must be done. Had Jacob been a hypocrite he would have let the angel loose at once, but being one of the Lord’s own, he said, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” When the angel touched him in the hollow of his thigh and made the sinew shrink, had Jacob been a hypocrite he would have thought, “I have had enough of this already. I may be made to shrink all over. I cannot tell what may happen next. I will have no more of this midnight encounter with an unknown visitor. I will get me back to my tent.”

But no. He meant to prevail, and though he felt the pain, Yet he said— *“With You all night I mean to stay,  
And wrestle till the break of day.”*

He did so and became a prince from that night. Will you take a denial from God? You shall have it! O importunate Christian, you are he whom God loves! Alas for those who only give, as it were, runaway knocks at the door of Heaven, like boys in the street that knock and run away—they shall never find the blessing. Oh, to continue in prayer! It is the very test of sincerity. That is why of the hypocrite it is said, “Will he always call upon God?” A hypocrite leaves off praying in either case. He leaves off if he does not get what he asks for, as I have shown you. And he leaves off if he does get what he asks for. Has he asked to be recovered from sickness when ill? If he gets well, what cares he for praying again?

Did he pray that he might not die? Oh, what a long face he drew, and what drawling professions of repentance he groaned out! But when his health is regained, and his nerves braced—his spirits cheered, and his manly vigor has come back to him—where are his prayers? Where are the vows his soul made in anguish? He has forgotten them all. That he is a hypocrite is palpable, for he leaves off praying if he does not get heard— and if he does. There is no keeping this man up to God’s statute or his own promise. He has not the heart for true devotion, and soon fails in the attempt to exercise it.

“Will He always call upon God?” Here is the trial of PERSEVERANCE. Will he always continue to pray in the future? Will he pray in years to come, as he now professes to do? I call to see him when he is very sick. The doctor gives a very poor account of him. His wife is weeping. All over the house there is great anxiety. I sit down by his bedside. I talk to him, and he says, “Oh, yes, yes, yes.” He agrees with all I say, and he tells me he believes in Jesus. And when he can sit up, he cries, “God be merciful to me.”

His dear friends are godly people. They feel so pleased. They look forward to his recovery, and reckon upon seeing him a new creature—a disciple of Christ. Besides, he has told them that when he gets up, his will be an earnest life of faith and obedience to the Lord. He will not be a mere professor—he means to throw his whole soul into the Master’s service! Now look at him. He recovered. And when he broke forth from that sick chamber, and was able to dispense with the ministry of those gentle patient women who nursed him and prayed for him, what does the hypocrite do?

Oh, he says he was a fool to think and speak as he did! He admits he was frightened, but he disclaims every pious expression as an infirmity of his distracted brain—the delirium of his malady—surely not the utterance of his reason! And he recants all his confessions like the atheist in Addison’s “Spectator.” Addison tells us that certain sailors heard that an atheist was on board their vessel—they did not know what an atheist was, but they thought it must be some odd fish. And when told it was a man who did not believe in God, they said, “Captain, it would be an uncommonly good thing to pitch him overboard.”

Presently a storm comes on and the atheist is dreadfully sick and very fearful. There, on the deck, he is seen crying to God for mercy and whining like a child that he is afraid he will be lost and sink to Hell. This is the usual courage of atheism! But when the coward reached the shore he begged the gentlemen who heard him pray to think nothing of it, for indeed, he did not know what he was saying. He had, no doubt, uttered a great deal of nonsense. There are plenty of that sort—who pray in danger—but brag when they get clear of the storm. Hereby the hypocrite is discovered. Once take away from him the trouble and you do away with the motive for which he put on the cloak of religion.

He is like a boy’s top which will spin as long as you whip it. The man will pray while he smarts, but not one whit longer. The hypocrite will pray today, in a society congenial for prayer, but he will discard prayer tomorrow when he gets laughed at for it in his business. Some old friend of his drops in, who has heard that he has been converted, and he begins to ridicule him. He asks him whether he has really turned a Methodist? He makes some coarse remarks rather to the chagrin of our courageous friend, till he, who set out so boldly to Heaven with his prayers, feels quite small in the presence of the skeptic.

It he were right in heart he would not only have a proper answer to give to the mocker, but in all probability he would carry the war into the enemy’s country and make his antagonist feel the folly of his sins and the insanity of his conduct in living without a God and without a Savior. The meet object of ridicule and contempt is the godless, the Christless man. The Christian need never be ashamed or lower his colors. The hypocrite may well blush and hide his head for if there is any creature that is contemptible, it is a man who has not his heart where he professes it to be.

Neither will such a one always call upon God if he gets into company where he is much flattered. He feels, then, that he has degraded himself somewhat by associating with such low, mean people as those who make up the Church of God. And if he prospers in business, then he considers that the people he once worshipped with are rather inferior to himself—he must go to the world’s church—he must find a fashionable place where he can hear a gospel that is not for the poor and needy, but for those who have the key of aristocratic drawing-rooms and the select assemblies.

His principles—well, he is not very particular—he swallows them. Probably his nonconformity was a mistake. The verities which his fathers suffered martyrdom to defend, for which they were deprived of their possessions, driven as exiles from their country, or cast into prison, he flings away as though they were of no value whatever. Many have fallen from us through the temptations of prosperity who stood firmly enough under persecution and adversity. It is another form of the same test, “Will he always call upon God?”

Besides, if none of these things should occur, the man who is not savingly converted and a genuine Christian generally gives up his religion after a time because the novelty of it dies off. He is like the stony ground that received the seed, and because there was no depth of earth the sun could play upon it with great force, and up it sprang in great haste. But because there was no depth of earth, therefore it soon was scorched. So this man is easily impressible, feels quickly, and acts promptly under the influence of a highly emotional nature. Says he, “Yes, I will go to Heaven,” as he inwardly responds to the appeal of some earnest minister.

He thinks he is converted, but we had better not be quite so sure as he is. “Wait a bit, wait a bit.” He cools as fast as he was heated. Like thorns under a pot that crackle and blaze and die out, leaving but a handful of ashes, so is it with all his godliness. Before long he gets tired of religion, he cannot stay with it—what a weariness it is! If he perseveres awhile, it is no more pleasure to him than a pack is to a pack horse. He keeps on as a matter of formality—he has got into it and he does not see how to break away—but he likes it no better than an owl loves daylight. He holds on to his forms of prayer with no heart for prayer—and what a wretched thing that is!

I have known people who felt bound to keep up their respectability when they had little or no income. Their debts were always increasing, their respectability was always tottering, and the strain upon their dignity was exhausting their utmost resources. Such persons I have considered to be the poorest of the poor. An unhappy life they lead, they never feel at ease. But what an awful thing it is to have to keep up a spiritual respectability with no spiritual income—to overflow with gracious talk when there is no well of Living Water springing up within the soul—to be under the obligation to pay court to the sanctuary while the heart is wandering on the mountain. To be bound to speak gracious words and yet possess no gracious thoughts to prompt their utterance.

O Man, you are one of the devil’s double martyrs because you have to suffer for him here in the distaste and nausea of your hypocritical profession, and then you will be made to suffer hereafter also for having dared to insult God and ruin your soul by being insincere in your profession of faith in Jesus Christ! I may be coming close to home to some persons before me—I am certainly pressing my own conscience very severely. I suppose there is no one among us who does not feel that this is a very searching matter.

Well, dear Friends, if our hearts condemn us not, only then have we peace towards God. But if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things. Let us confess to Him all past failures, and though we may not be conscious of hypocrisy (and I trust we are not so), yet, let us say, “Lord, search and try me, and know my ways. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the Way everlasting.”

I was speaking with a gentleman last night, and I said to him, “You are a director of such a Life Assurance Company, are you not?” “Yes,” he said. “Well,” I said, “yours is a poor society, is it not?” “It is a very good one,” he replied, “a very good one.” “But it is very low down in the list.” “What list is that?” “Why, the list that has been sent round by certain persons to let

the public see the condition of the life assurance companies.” “Well,” said he, “where is it to be seen?” “Oh, never mind where it is to be seen—is it true?” “No, it is not true. Our Society stands well—admirably well.” “How so?” “Well, you know such a man, he is an excellent actuary and a man of honor.”

“Yes.” “Well, when we employed him to go over our accounts, we said just this to him—‘Take the figures, examine them thoroughly, sift our accounts, and tell us where the figures land. Tell us just that, neither less nor more. Do not shirk the truth in the slightest degree. If we are in a bankrupt state, tell us. If we are flourishing, tell us so.’ ” My friend has convinced me that his office is not what I feared it was. I have much confidence in any man’s business when he wishes to know and to publish the unvarnished truth.

I have great confidence in the sincerity of any Christian man who says habitually and truthfully, “Lord, let me know the very worst of my case, whatever it is. Even if all my fair prospects and bright ideals should be but dreams—the fabric of a vision. If yonder prospect before me of green fields and flowing hills should be but an awful mirage, and on the morrow should change into the hot burning desert of an awful reality—so be it— only let me know the truth. Lead me in a plain path. Let me be sincere before You, O You heart-searching, rein-trying God!”

Let us, with such frank candor, such ingenuous simplicity come before the Lord. Let as many of us as fear the Lord and distrust ourselves take refuge in His Omniscience against the jealousies and suspicions which haunt our own breasts. And let us do better still—let us hasten anew to the Cross of Jesus and thus end our difficulties by accepting afresh the sinners’ Savior. When I have a knot to untie as to my evidence of being a child of God, and I cannot untie it, I usually follow Alexander’s example with the Gordian knot, and cut it.

How do I cut it? Why, in this way. Say, O Conscience, this is wrong, and thus is wrong. You say, O Satan, my faith is a delusion, my experience a fiction, my profession a lie. Be it so, then, I will not dispute it, I end that matter. If I am no saint, I am a sinner—there can be no doubt about that! The devil himself is defied to question that. Then it is written that, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” And to sinners is the Gospel preached, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.”

By His Grace I do believe on Him. If I never did before I will, by His Grace, now—and all my transgressions are therefore blotted out! And now, Lord, grant me Grace to begin again, and from this time forth let me live the life of faith, the life of prayer. Let me be one of those who will pray always. Let me be one of those who will pray when they are dying, having prayed all their lives. Prayer is our very life—ceasing prayer we cease to live! As long as we are here preserved in spiritual life we must pray. Lord, grant it may be so with each one here present, through the power of Your Spirit, and the merit of Jesus’ blood. Amen, and Amen.

Portion of Scripture Read Before Sermon—Job 27 Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
Sermon #2557 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 27.2

A VEXED SOUL COMFORTED

NO. 2557

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 21, 1883.

**“The Almighty has vexed my soul.”  
Job 27:2.**

THE word, “who,” was put into this verse by the translators, but it is not needed. It is better as I have read it to you, “The Almighty has vexed my soul.” The marginal reading is, perhaps, a more exact translation of the original—“The Almighty has embittered my soul.” From this we learn that a good man may have his soul vexed. He may not be able to preserve the serenity of his mind. We think and think rightly, that a Christian man should “glory in tribulations, also,” and rise superior to all outward afflictions. But it is not always so with us. It is necessary, sometimes, that we should be “in heaviness through manifold temptations.” Not only are the temptations needed for the trial of our faith, but it is even necessary that we should be in heaviness through them. I hardly imagine that the most quiet and restful Believers have always been unruffled. I can scarcely think that even those whose peace is like a river have always been made to flow on with calm and equable current. Even to rivers there are rapids and cataracts, and so, I think, in the most smoothly-flowing life, there surely must be breaks of distraction and of distress. At any rate, it was so with Job. His afflictions, aggravated by the accusations of his so-called friends, at last made the iron enter into his very soul and his spirit was so troubled that he cried, “The Almighty has embittered my soul!”

It is also clear, from our text, that a good man may trace the vexation of his soul distinctly to God. It was not merely that Job’s former troubles had come from God, for he had borne up under them—when all he had was gone, he had still blessed the name of the Lord with holy serenity. But God had permitted these three eminent and distinguished men, mighty in speech, to come about him, to rub salt into his wounds, and so to increase his agony. At first, too, God did not seem to help him in the debate, although afterwards He answered all the accusations of Job’s friends and put them to the rout. Yet, for a time, Job had to stand like a solitary champion against all three of them and, against young Elihu, too. So he looked up to Heaven and he said, “The Almighty has embittered my soul. That is the end of the controversy. I can see from where all my troubles come.”

Advancing a step further, we notice that in all this, Job did not rebel against God, or speak a word against Him. He swore by that very God who had vexed his soul. See how it stands here—“As God lives, who has taken away my judgment, and the Almighty, who has vexed my soul.” He stood fast to it that this God was the true God. He called Him good, he believed Him to be almighty—it never occurred to Job to bring a railing accusation against God, or to start aside from his allegiance to Him. He is a truly brave man who can say with Job, “‘Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.’ Let God deal with me as He will, yet He is good and I will praise His name. What if He has vexed my soul? He has a right to vex me, so I will not kick against the pricks. Let Him grieve me, let Him put gall and wormwood into my cup if so it shall please Him, but still will I magnify His name, for He is good and only good.” Here is the strength of the saints—here is the glory which God gets out of true Believers—that they cannot and will not be soured against their God!

Now go another step and notice that this embittering of Job’s soul was intended for his good. The Patriarch was to have his wealth doubled and he, therefore, needed double Grace that he might be able to bear the burden. He was also to be a far holier man than he had been at the first. Perfect and upright as he seemed to be, he was to rise a stage higher. If his character had been deficient in anything, perhaps it was deficient in humility. Truly Job was no proud man, he was generous, kind and meek, but, possibly, he had a little too high a notion of his own character, so even that must be taken away from him. Other Divine Graces must be added to those he already possessed. He must have a tenderness of spirit which appears to have been lacking. He must become as gentle as a maid. As he had been firm as a man of war, consequently, this bitterness of soul was meant to help him towards perfection of character. When that end was accomplished, all the bitterness was turned into sweetness. God made the travail of his soul to be forgotten by reason of the joy that came of it. Job no longer thought of the dunghill and the potsherd, and the lost sheep, and the consumed camels—he only thought of the goodness of God who had restored everything to him, again, and given him back the dew of his youth and the freshness of his spirit.

Child of God, are you vexed and embittered in soul? Then bravely accept the trial as coming from your Father and say, “The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?” “Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” Press on through the cloud which now lowers directly in your pathway—it may be with you as it was with the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, “they feared as they entered the cloud,” yet in that cloud they saw their Master’s Glory and they found it good to be there. Fear not, have confidence in God—all your sorrows shall yet end in joy and the thing which you deplore, today, shall be the subject of tomorrow’s sweetest songs. The Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall see no more forever. Therefore, be of good courage and let your hearts be strengthened.

I am going to take the text right away from its connection. Having explained it as it relates to Job and those like Job, I want to use it for the benefit of anyone else who can fitly use the expression, “The Almighty has vexed my soul.” My sermon will be like an archer’s arrow—God knows where the heart is at which I am aiming. I draw the bow at a venture—the Lord will direct the bolt between the joints of the harness of the one it is intended to strike.

I. First, I shall speak upon A PERSONAL FACT. Many a person has to say, “The Almighty has embittered my soul.”  
This happened to you, dear Friend, perhaps, through a series of very remarkable troubles. Few persons were happier than Job and few have found misfortunes tread so fast upon one another’s heels. What were the troubles in your case? It may be that one child was taken away and then another—and yet a third. Or, perhaps, your infant was carried to the grave, to be soon followed by its dear mother, and you are left to mourn alone. Bereavement has followed bereavement with you until your very soul is embittered. Or it may be that there is one ill at home and you fear that precious life cannot be preserved—your cup seems full of trembling. Or, possibly, you have had a series of disasters in business such as you could not have foreseen or prevented. It seems, to you, indeed, as if no man was ever so unsuccessful—you have not prospered in anything. Wherever you have put your hand, it has been like the hoof of the Tartar’s horse which turns the meadow into a desert—nothing goes well with you. Perhaps you have desired to be a man of learning. You have worked very hard and now your health is failing you, so that you cannot go through the examination for which you have been preparing. You would willingly die at your post if you had a hope of gaining the honor to which you aspire, but this is denied you. On the very doorstep of success, you are stopped. God seems to have embittered your life.  
Or you of the tender heart have been disappointed and rejected, and your love has been thrown away. Or you of the energetic spirit have been foiled and driven back so many times that you perceive that your attempts are fruitless. Or you, a man of true integrity, have been cruelly slandered and you feel as if you could not bear up under the false charge that is in the air all around you. Ah, I know what that means! There are many like you, with whom the Almighty is dealing in all wisdom and goodness, as I shall have to show you.  
It may be, however, that you have not had a succession of troubles, but you have had one trial constantly gnawing at your heart. It is only one, but that one you are half-ashamed to mention, for it seems so trifling when you try to tell it to another. But to you it is as when a wasp stings and continues to sting—it irritates and worries you. You try patience, but you have not much of that virtue. You seek to escape from the trouble, but it is always boring into your very heart. It is only some one little thing—not the devil, only a messenger of Satan, one of his errand boys, one of the small fry of trouble. You cannot make out how you can be so foolish as to let it worry you, but it does. If you rise up early, or if you sit up late, it is still there tormenting you. You cannot get rid of it and you cry, “The Almighty has embittered my soul.” Time was when you would have laughed at such things and put them aside with a wave of your hand—but now they follow you into business, they are with you at the desk, they come home with you, they go to bed with you—and they worry you even in your dreams.  
Perhaps I have not yet hit the mark with you, my Friend. It is neither a succession of troubles nor yet any one trouble. In fact, you have no trouble at all in the sense of which I have been speaking. Your business prospers, you are in fine health, your children are about you, everyone holds you in good esteem—yet your very soul is embittered. I hope that it has become saddened through a sense of sin. At one time you did not think that there was any fault to be found with you, but you have had a peep in the mirror of the Word, the Spirit of God holding the candle. You have had a glimpse of yourself, your inner life and your condition before God and, therefore, your soul is vexed. Ah, many of us have gone through that experience and, wretched as it is, we congratulate you upon it! We are glad that it is so with you!  
Is it more than a sense of sin? Is it a sense of wrath as well? Does it strike you that God is angry with you and has turned His hand against you? Does this seem to loosen the very joints of your bones? Ah, this is a dreadful state of heart, indeed—to feel God’s hand day and night upon you till your moisture is turned into the drought of summer! Yet, again I congratulate you on it, for the pilgrim path to Heaven is by Weeping Cross—the road to joy and peace is by the way of a sense of sin and a sense of the Lord’s anger!  
It may be that this is not exactly your case, but you are restless and weary. Somehow you cannot be easy, you cannot be at peace. Someone recommended you go to a play, but it seemed such a dull piece of stupidity you came away worse than you went! Your doctor says that you must have a change of air. “Oh,” you cry, “I have had 50 changes of air and I do not improve a bit!” You are even weary of that in which you once delighted. Your ordinary pursuits, which once satisfied you, now seem to be altogether stale, flat and unprofitable. The books that charmed your leisure have grown wearisome. The friends whose conversation once entranced you, now seem to talk but idle chit-chat and frivolity.  
Besides all that, there is an undefined dread upon you. You cannot tell exactly what it is like, but you almost fear to fall asleep lest you should dream and dreaming should begin to feel the wrath to come. When you wake in the morning, you are sorry to find that you are where you are and you address yourself sadly to the day’s business, saying, “Well, I will go on with it, but I have no joy in it at all. The Almighty has embittered my soul.” This happens to hundreds and they do not know what it means, they cannot understand it—but I hope that I may be privileged to so explain it that some may have to say that never did a better thing happen to them than when they fell into this state—that never, in all their lives, did they take so blessed a turning as when they came down this dark lane and began to murmur, “The Almighty has embittered my soul.”  
II. From this personal fact of which I have spoken, I want to draw AN INSTRUCTIVE ARGUEMENT which has two edges.  
The first is this. If the Almighty—note that word, “Almighty”—has vexed your soul as much as He has, how much more is He able to vex it? If He has embittered your life up to the present point and He is, indeed, almighty, what more of bitterness may He not yet give you? You may go from being very low in spirit to being yet more heavy even unto despair. You may even come to be like Bunyan’s man in the iron cage, or like the demoniac wandering among the tombs! Remember what God has done in the case of some men and if He can do that on earth, what can He not do in Hell? If this world, which is the place of mercy, yet contains in it men so wretched that they would rather die than live, what must be the misery of those who linger in a state of eternal death—and yet from whom death forever flies? O my God, when my soul was broken as between the two great millstones of Your justice and Your wrath, how my spirit was alarmed! But if You could do this to me here, what could You not have done to me hereafter if I had passed out of this world into the next with unforgiven sin? I want everyone who is in sore soul-trouble to think over this solemn Truth of God and consider what God can yet do with him.  
Now turn the argument the other way. If it is the Almighty who has troubled us, surely He can also comfort us. He that is strong to sink, is also strong to save. If He is almighty to embitter, He must also be almighty to sweeten. Draw, then, this comfortable conclusion—“I am not in such a state of misery that God cannot lift me right out of it into supreme joy.” It is congenial to God’s Nature to make His creatures happy. He delights not in their sorrow, but if, when He does make them sorrowful, He can make life unendurable—if His anger can fill a man with terror so that he fears his own steps and starts at his own shadow—if God can do that on the one hand, what can He not do on the other? He can turn our mourning into music! He can take off from us the ashes and the sackcloth and clothe us in beauty and delight! God can lift up your head, poor Mourner, sorrowing under sin and a fear of wrath. I tell you, God can at once forgive your sin, turn away all His wrath and give you a sense of perfect pardon—and with it a sense of his undying love! Oh, yes, that word, “Almighty,” cuts both ways! It makes us tremble and so it kills our pride. But it also makes us hope and so it slays our despair. I put in that little piece of argument just by the way.  
III. Now I come to my third point which is more directly in my road. And that is this. Here is A HEALTHFUL ENQUIRY for everyone whose soul has been vexed by God.  
The enquiry is, first, is not God just in vexing my soul? Listen. Some of you have long vexed Him—you have grieved His Holy Spirit for years! Why, my dear Man, God called you when you were but a boy! Or very gently He drew you while you were yet a young man. You almost yielded to the importunity of a dying friend who is now in Heaven. Those were all gentle strokes, but you heeded them not—you would not return unto the Lord. And now, if He should see fit to lay His hand very heavily upon you and vex you in His hot displeasure, have you not first vexed Him? Have you not ill-used Him? If you would not come to Him in the light, it is very gracious of Him if He permits you to come in the dark. I do not wonder if He whips you to Himself, seeing that you would not come when, like a father beckoning a little child, He smiled at you and wooed you to Him.  
I might say to others, if God brings you to Himself by a rough road, you must not wonder, for have not you many a time vexed your godly wife? When seeing friends who come to join the Church, I am often struck with the way in which converts have to confess that, in former days, they made it very hard for their families. There are some men who cannot speak without swearing—at the very name of Christ they begin to curse and to swear! They seem as if they hated their children for being good—and could not be too hard upon their wives because they try to be righteous in the sight of God. Well, if you vex God’s people, you must not be surprised if He vexes you! He will give you a hard time of it, it may be, but if it ends in your salvation, I shall not need to pity you, however hard it may be for you! There is one thing more you may say to yourself, and that is, “It is much better to get to Heaven by a rough road than to go singing down to Hell. O my God, tear me in pieces, but save me!

et my conscience drive me to the very borders of despair if You will but give me the blood of Christ to quiet it. Only make sure work of my eternal salvation and I will not mind what I have to suffer!” I shall bless God for you, dear Friend, and you will bless God for yourself, too, if you are but brought to Him, even though you have to say, “The Almighty has vexed my soul.”  
Another point of enquiry is this—What can be God’s design in vexing your soul? Surely He has a kind design in it all. God is never anything but good. Rest assured that He takes no delight in your miseries—it is no pleasure to Him that you should sit, and sigh, and groan and cry. I mean that such an experience, in itself, affords Him no pleasure, but He has a design in it. What can that design be? May it not be, first, to make you think of Him? You forgot Him when the bread was plentiful upon the table, so He is going to try what a hungry belly will do for you when you would gladly fill it with the husks that the swine eat. You forgot Him when everything went merry as a marriage peal—it may be that you will remember Him, now that your children are dying, or your father is taken away! These trials are sent to remind you that there is a God. There are some men who go on by the space of 40 years, together, and whether there is a God or not, is a question which they do not care to answer. At least they live as if there were no God—they are practically atheists. This stroke has come that you may say, “Yes, there is a God, for I feel the rod that He holds in His hand. He is crushing me, He is grinding me to powder. I must think of Him.”  
It may be, too, that He is sending this trial to let you know that He thinks of you. “Ah,” you say, “I did not suppose that He thought of me. I thought that surely He had forgotten such an one as I am.” But He does think of you. He has been thinking of you for many a day and calling and inviting you to Him—but you would neither listen nor obey—and now that He has come, He means to make you see that He loves you too well to let you be lost! You are having His blows right and left, to let you know that He thinks of you and will not let you perish. When God does not care for a man, He flings the reins onto His neck and says, “There! Let him go!” Now see how the horses tear away—you need not lash them— they will go as though they had wings and could fly! Leave a man to himself and his lusts drag him, post haste, to Hell. He pants to destroy himself! But when God loves a man, He pulls him up as you might pull your horse on to his haunches. He shall not do as he wills—the eternal God, in infinite mercy, will not let him! He tugs at the reins and makes the man feel that there is a mightier than he who will not let him ruin himself,  
But who will restrain him from rushing to his destruction? Am I speaking to any who are in this plight? Let them not kick against God, but rather be grateful that He condescends thus to meddle with their sinful souls and check them in their mad career! I have spoken lately with some who were about to join this Church, who, if friends had said, five or six months ago, that they would have been sitting on that chair talking to me about their souls, would have cursed them to their faces! Yet they were obliged to come. The Lord had hold of them—they tried to break away, but He had them too firmly! They were caught by my Lord and Master as a good fisherman will catch a salmon, if once it takes his bait—he lets it run for a while and then pulls it up a bit, and then lets it go again. But he brings it to land at last—and I have had the pleasure of seeing many sinners thus safely caught by Christ! It may be, dear Friend, that the Almighty is vexing you to let you see that He loves you!  
May it not be also for another reason—that He may wean you entirely from the world? He is making you loathe it. “Oh,” you used to say, “I am a young man and I must see life!” Well, you have seen it, have you not? And do you not think that it is wonderfully like death and corruption? That which is called, “London life,” is a foul, loathsome, crawling thing, fit only for the dunghill! Well, you have seen it, and you have had enough of it, have you not? Perhaps your very bones can tell what you gained by that kind of life. “Oh,” you said, “but I must try the intoxicating cup!” Well, what did you think of it the morning after you tried it? “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contention? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine—they that go to seek mixed wine.” I saw a man of that kind in the street, the other day. Once he was a most respectable man who could consort with others and be esteemed by them. Now he is dreadfully down at the heel. I think I saw a toe through each of his shoes and he looked like the wretched being that he is. He shuffled from place to place as if he did not wish to be seen—and he did not lift himself up until he got into the gin palace to take another draught of Hell-water— and then he seemed, for a minute, to be drawn straight again by that which made him crooked!  
You know the man—is he here tonight? Dear Sir, have you not had sufficient strong drink? God has let you have enough of it that you may hate it from this hour and flee away from it, never to desire to go back to it again! I heard, at Boulogne, the story of a Frenchman who had been drinking heavily, and who threw himself into the harbor. Some sailors plunged in and rescued him. The man was on the deck of a ship, but in a minute he broke away from his keepers and jumped in again. It was not pleasant to be trying to save a madman, again and again, yet they did get him out and took him down below. But he rushed on deck and jumped in a third time. A man there said, “You leave him to me.” So he jumped overboard and seized hold of him, put his head under the water and held him there. When he managed to get his head up, his rescuer gave him another ducking, and then another, till he just about filled him up with water. He said to himself, “I will sicken him of it, so that he will never jump in here again.” He just diluted the eau-de-vie the man had taken and then he dragged him on board ship—and there was no fear of his jumping overboard any more! And I believe that, sometimes, the Lord acts like that with men. He did so with me—He made sin to be exceedingly bitter to my soul, till I loathed it—and it has often given me a trembling even to think of those sins that then were pleasurable to me. It is a blessed thing to be plucked out of the water and saved, once and for all, but a little of that sailor’s style of sousing the drunkard—a little of those terrors and alarms that some of us felt is not lost! And when the Lord thus deals with sinners, it is with the design that they may never want to go back to those sins again. They have had their full of them and henceforth they will keep clear of them. It may be that the Almighty vexed some of you for this cause, that you might, from then on, hate sin with a perfect hatred.  
Do you say, my Friend, that I have not been describing you? You are still a gentleman, an excellent well-to-do man? You have done nothing wrong in the way of vice, but still you cannot rest? No, and God grant that you never may rest till you come humbly to the Savior’s feet, confess your sin and look to Him alone for salvation! Then you shall rest with that deep “peace which passes all understanding,” which shall, “keep your heart and mind by Christ Jesus” forever and ever.  
I think I hear someone say (and with that I will finish), “As the Almighty has vexed my soul; what had I better do? I thought, Sir, when I came in here that I was a castaway, but I see that I am the man you are looking after. I thought that I was too wretched to be saved, but now I perceive that it is to the wretched that you are preaching. It is for the mourning, the melancholy and the desponding. What had I better do?” Do? Go home and shut your door, and have an hour alone with yourself and God! You can afford that time—it is Sunday night and you do not need the time for anything else. That hour alone with God may be the crisis of your whole life—try it!  
“And when I am alone with God, what had I better do?” Well, first, tell Him all your grief. Then tell Him all your sin—all you can remember. Hide nothing from Him! Lay it all, naked and bare, before Him. Then ask Him to blot it all out, once and for all, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Tell Him that you can never rest till you are at peace with Him. Tell Him that you accept His way of making peace, namely, by the blood of the Cross. Tell Him that you are now willing to trust His dear Son for everything and to accept salvation freely as the gift of Sovereign Grace. If you do so, you will rise from your knees a happy man and, what is more, a renewed man! I will stand bondsman for God about this matter. If there is this honest confession, this hearty prayer and this simple acceptance of Christ as your Savior, the days of your mourning are ended, the daylight of your spirit shall be beginning and I should not wonder if many of your present troubles come to an end! Certainly your heart-ache shall be ended and ended at once. Oh, that you would accept my Savior!  
Sometimes, when I am thinking about my Hearers and my work, I seem to take God’s part instead of yours, and to say, “O God, I have preached Christ to them. I have told them about Your dear Son and how Your fatherly heart parted with Him that He might die that men might live—yet they do not care for Him! They will not have Your Son. They will not accept the pardon that Jesus bought.” If the Lord were to say to me, “Then never go and say another word to them, they have so insulted Me in refusing such a gift,” I have at times felt as if I would say, “Lord, that is quite right. I do not want to have anything more to do with them as they treat You so shamefully.” But we have not reached that point yet, so once more I put it to you—have you not delayed long enough? Have you not questioned long enough? Have you not turned away from the Savior long enough? And now that the arrows of God are sticking in you, will you not ask Him to draw them out? Will you not plead that the precious blood of Christ may be balm to heal your wounds?  
Oh, come to Him! In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I beseech you, come! By amazing love and amazing pity, by wondrous Grace that abounds over sin, come and welcome! Jesus said, “He that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” Then come to Him and come now! Blessed Spirit, draw them! Draw them now, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOB 27**

Remember that Job’s friends had accused him of having committed some great sin which would account for his great sorrows. The good man is naturally very indignant and he uses the strongest possible language to cast away from himself with horror the charges which they brought against him in the day of his grief.

Verses 1-4. Moreover Job continued his parable and said, As God lives, who has taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who has vexed my soul; all the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. He felt that it would be wicked for him to confess to what he had never done—it would be deceit for him to acknowledge crimes which he had never committed. Therefore he most solemnly declares, by the living God, that he never will permit the lie to pass his lips. He had not transgressed against God in the way his friends insinuated and he would not admit that he had.

5 *.*God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove my integrity from me. We are bound to keep to the truth. No man is permitted, with mock humility, to make himself out to be what he is not. Job was right, so far in standing up for the integrity of his character, for he was a man of such uprightness that even the devil could not find fault with him. He was such a holy man that God could say to Satan, “Have you considered My servant, Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God and eschews evil?” And all that the devil could do was to insinuate that he had a selfish motive for his goodness. “Have not You made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand, now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face.” Job was upright, yet we are never so right but what there is a mixture of wrong with our right! A man may very easily become selfrighteous when he is defending his own character. There may be a 1ack of admissions of faults unperceived. There may be a blindness to faults that ought to have been perceived—and something of that imperfection, doubtless, was in the Patriarch.

6 *.*My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live. There he went too far, for he had not yet seen God as he afterwards saw Him. Before man, there was nothing with which he needed to reproach himself. But how he changed his tone when God drew near to him! Then he said, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” If we knew more of God, we would think less of ourselves. If those who consider themselves perfect, had any idea of what perfection is, their comeliness would be turned in them to corruption!

7, 8. Let my enemy be as the wicked, and he that rises up against me as the unrighteous. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul? That is a very solemn, searching question. If a man tries to play fast and loose with God, if he is a hypocrite, and if he should gain by his hypocrisy all that he tries to gain, namely, repute among men, “what is his hope when God takes away his soul?” Then, his hope is turned to horror, for he has to stand before Him who cannot be deceived, but who reads him through and through, and casts him away because he has dared to insult his Maker by attempting to deceive Omniscience. Oh, may you and I never play the hypocrite’s part! There cannot be a more foolish thing and there cannot be a more wicked thing.

9 *.*Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him? That is one of the tests of the hypocrite—“Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him?” Will the hypocrite cry to God at all? Will he not give up even his profession of religion when he loses his prosperity? And if he does cry, will God hear the double-tongued man?

10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God? These questions, while they condemn those who are hypocrites, are comforting to many a sincere heart. Dear Friend, do you delight yourself in God? Do you really admire Him, love Him and seek to glorify Him? Then you are no hypocrite, for no hypocrite ever found delight in religion and especially no hypocrite ever found delight in God Himself!

“Will he always call upon God?” No, there are certain times when he will cease to pray. Pleasure enchants him and he will not pray. Or, perhaps, he is so discouraged and despairing that he cannot pray. There are times when the hypocrite gives up praying, but the Christian cannot give it up—it is his vital breath—he must pray. No sorrow is so deep as to take him off it! No joy is so fascinating as to seduce him from prayer. But as for the hypocrite, “Will he always call upon God?” No, you may rest assured that he will not.

11. I will teach you by the hand of God. Or, better, as the margin runs, “I will teach you being in the hand of God.” Being himself chastened and experiencing the teaching of God, Job says to his friends, “I will teach you.”

11-14. That which is with the Almighty will I not conceal. Behold, all you yourselves have seen it; why then are you thus altogether vain? This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty. If his children are multiplied, it is for the sword: and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. If God does not visit the hypocrite with punishment in his own person, it will certainly fall upon the next generation.

15-18. Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep. Though he heaps up silver as the dust, and prepares raiment as the day; he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver. He builds his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper makes. “He builds his house as a moth,” which makes its home in the cloth and the servant’s brush knocks it all out and destroys the moth’s children, too. “And as a booth that the keeper makes.” The hypocrite’s house is no better than that little shanty which the keeper of a vineyard puts up with a few boughs or mats, to sit under it from the heat of the sun. God save us from being such poor builders as this! May we build a house that is founded on the Rock!

19. The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered: he opens his eyes, and he is not. He has grown rich by oppression, he has become great in the land by his hypocrisy, but he speedily goes down to the grave. God looks at him and he is gone.

20. Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest steals him away in the night. This is a parallel passage to that word of our Lord, “But he that hears, and does not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.”

21. The east wind carries him away, and he departs and as a storm hurls him out of his place. These are your great ones, your proud ones, your strong men that accomplish nothing and would insure their own lives to a certainty for the next 20 years! Look how they go! Shadows are not more evanescent! A poor moth is not more easily crushed.

22. For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would gladly flee out of His hand. The man would escape from God if he could. It was Job’s glory, as we read just now, that he was in God’s hand. But the hypocrite would gladly flee out of God’s hand, yet that is altogether impossible.

23. Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place. Such ignominy shall be poured upon the hypocrite at the last, that all mankind shall endorse the sentence of God which condemns him! And shame and everlasting contempt shall be his portion. The Lord save all of us from such an awful doom, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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÷Job 28.7

THE WAY OF WISDOM  
NO. 2862

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1903.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“There is a path which no fowl knows, and which the vulture’s eyes have not seen; the lion’s whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.”  
Job 28:7, 8.**

IN this chapter Job is speaking of the hidden treasures that are to be found deep down in the bowels of the earth. The keen eyes of the vultures, though they see their prey afar off, have never seen the gold, silver and other precious metals which lie in the dark places of the earth. And the lions, especially the young lions hungering for their prey, though they will lie in wait in their lairs in the dens and caves of the earth, have never been able to descend into places as deep as those that are opened up by men who seek after gold and silver.

Yet further on in the chapter we notice that Job refers to the search after wisdom and that he seems to say that though men should explore the deep places of the earth with all the diligence of miners seeking gold and silver, though they should exert all their mental force as miners use all their muscular vigor—and though they should employ all the machinery within their reach, as men do who pierce through the rocks in search of precious treasure—yet it is not within the range of human labor and skill to attain unto wisdom. That can only be found by another and a higher method. It must come to us by Revelation from God, for we cannot find it by our own efforts. I believe, therefore, that I am justified in using the expressions which are found in my text in a spiritual sense, for I think that Job meant to teach us not only what is true of the treasures hidden in the earth, but also something concerning the path of wisdom which is altogether beyond the understanding of the most piercing eyes of reason or imagination.

I shall use the language of our text, first, in reference to the way of God which is, in the highest sense, the way of wisdom. And then, secondly, in reference to the path of the truly wise which is also, secondarily, the path of wisdom as far as mortal man can be wise—as far as he who is born of a woman can walk in the way of wisdom.

I. First, then, IN REFERENCE TO THE WAY OF GOD. His way in dealing with men is past our power to find out.  
Think, first of all, of the way of God in relation to predestination and free agency. Many have failed to understand how everything, from the smallest event to the greatest, can be ordained and fixed—and yet how it can be equally true that man is a responsible being and that he acts freely, choosing the evil and rejecting the good. Many have tried to reconcile these two things and various schemes of theology have been formulated with the objective of bringing them into harmony. I do not believe that they are two parallel lines which can never meet, but I do believe that for all practical purposes, they are so nearly parallel that we might regard them as being so. They do meet, but only in the Infinite mind of God is there a converging point where they melt into one! As a matter of practical, everyday experience with each one of us, they continually melt into one, but, as far as all finite understanding goes, I do not believe that any created intellect can find where they meet! Only the Uncreated as yet knows this.  
It would be a very simple thing to understand the predestination of God if men were clay in the hands of the potter and nothing more. That figure is rightly used in the Scriptures because it reveals one side of the Truth of God—if it contained the whole Truth, the difficulty that puzzles so many would entirely cease. But man is not only clay, he is a great deal more than that, for God has made him an intelligent being and given him understanding and judgment and, above all, will. Fallen and depraved, but still not destroyed, are our judgment, our understanding and our power to will. They are all under bondage, but they are still within us. If we were simply blocks of wood, like the beams and timbers in this building, it would be easy to understand how God could prearrange where we should be put and what purpose we should serve. But it is not easy. No, it is difficult! I venture to say that it is impossible for us to understand how predestination should come true in every jot and tittle, fix everything and yet that there should never be in the whole history of mankind a single violation of the will or a single use of constraint—other than fit and proper constraint—upon man so that he acts according to his own will, just as if there were no predestination whatever and yet, at the same time, the will of God is, in all respects, being carried out!  
In order to get rid of this difficulty, there are some who deny either the one Truth or the other. Some seem to believe in a kind of free agency which virtually dethrones God, while others run to the opposite extreme by believing in a sort of fatalism which practically exonerates man from all blame. Both of these views are utterly false and I scarcely know which of the two is the more to be deprecated. We are bound to believe both sides of the Truth revealed in the Scriptures, so I admit that when a Calvinist says that all things happen according to the predestination of God, he speaks the Truth of God—and I am willing to be called a Calvinist. But when an Arminian says that when a man sins, the sin is his own, and that if he continues in sin and perishes, his eternal damnation will lie entirely at his own door, I believe that he, also, speaks the Truth of God—though I am not willing to be called an Arminian! The fact is, there is some Truth in both these systems of theology—the mischief is that, in order to make a human system appear to be complete, men ignore a certain Truth, which they do not know how to put into the scheme which they have formed and, very often, that very Truth, which they ignore, proves to be like the stone which the builders rejected—one of the headstones of the corner—and their building suffers serious damage through its omission.  
Now, Brothers and Sisters, if I could fully understand these two Truths of God and could clearly expound them to you. If I could prove to you that they are perfectly consistent with one another, I would be glad to do so and to escape the censures which some people constantly pour upon those who are trying to preach the whole of revealed Truth. But it is more than my soul is worth for me to attempt to alter and trim God’s Truth so as to make it pleasing to men! I preach it as I find it in God’s Word. I am not responsible for what is in the Book—I am only responsible for telling out what I find there, as it is taught to me by the Holy Spirit. But mark this—to the mind of God there is no difficulty concerning these two Truths, though there is, to us, so much mystery and perplexity! It is all simple enough to Him. He is Omnipotent in the world of mind as well as in the world of matter and He is Omniscient—He knows everything, He foresees everything—so that there are no difficulties to Him. I suppose that if it will add to our happiness in Heaven for us to understand this way of God, which as yet the vulture’s eyes have never seen, He will reveal it to us. Yet it may be that even there it will be of no practical use for us to understand it, but it will be better for us, even throughout eternity, to still continue as little children at our Heavenly Father’s feet, believing a great deal which, even there, we cannot comprehend.  
Even in this life I am as pleased not to know what God does not tell me as I am to know what He reveals to me! At least, if I am not, I ought to be, for that is the condition of a true disciple of Christ—to be inquisitive up to the point in which His Lord is communicative, but to stop there and say—“If, my Master, You have anything to say to me, yet, in Your wisdom, You know that I cannot bear it now, my ears are closed while Your tongue is still, and my heart asks for no more when You tell me that You have revealed enough.” Believe me, Brothers and Sisters, there is a path which God takes which you cannot yet understand. You may look and look, and look as with eagle’s eyes, but you may blind those eyes by glaring at the sun. You may force your way, as with a lion’s heart, into the deep mysteries of God, but you must beware lest you perish in the pit of controversy, or be taken, as in a net, in difficulties which you cannot break through doubting and enquiring man! Be satisfied that God is infinitely above you and that you can no more comprehend Him than your hand can hold the ocean, or your fingers grip the sun! If there were no mysteries in our holy faith, we might well believe that it was devised by men like ourselves, for, if men could fully understand it, men might have invented it. But as it is far beyond the comprehension of the mightiest human intellect, we recognize that it is the work of the Infinite God. Infinite must His Gospel and His Truth be because He is, Himself, Infinite! And dark and mysterious must His pathway sometimes be, though He, Himself, dwells in light that is insufferable to mortal eyes. Finely does John Milton put this thought in his apostrophe to God—  
*“Dark with excessive bright Your skirts appear.”*  
Passing on to another illustration of the same great Truth, I remind you that God is equally beyond our understanding in the accomplishment of the designs of His Providence. There are ways of God, in dealing with the human race, which are very perplexing to the judgment of such poor mortals as we are. We try to study a piece of history and especially if it is a short piece of history, it appears to us all tangled and confused. A further research, over a longer period, will often explain what could not be understood in the shorter range of vision. But even history as a whole, from the Creation and the Fall until now, contains many strange puzzles to a man who believes that God is, through it all, working out His own Glory and that a part of His Glory will consist in producing the highest amount of good to the greatest number of His creatures.  
What a mass of mysteries meets us on the very threshold of human history! The serpent in the Garden—how and why came it to be there? And the devil in the serpent, why was there a devil at all? And the evil that made the angel into a devil, why was that permitted? And all the evil that has been since then—why has it not been destroyed? We cannot answer any of these queries. The Negro’s question to the missionary, “If God is stronger than Satan, why does not He kill him,” is another enquiry which we cannot answer. Depend upon it, if it were, on the whole, best that the devil should be killed, he would be killed. And if it had been, after all, most for God’s Glory that there should be no evil, there would have been none. We do not know how and why certain things have happened and we must be content not to know unless God reveals it to us.  
All through history God seems to be aiming at a certain mark, yet His arrow does not hit the target as far as you and I can judge. Often He appears to do as the rifleman does, who knows that if he sent the ball in a direct line to the target, he would miss it, so he makes allowance for certain deflections which will be caused by the force of attraction, by the wind and various other opposing influences, and aims accordingly. God often proves that the nearest way to attain His end is to go round about—so, when He means to cleanse a man, He sometimes allows Him to first get more foul! When He intends to clothe him, He first strips him naked. When He resolves to enrich him, He first makes him as poor as Lazarus at the rich man’s gate! And, strange to say, when He means to make him alive, He kills him. God’s modes of procedure, then, allow for deflection and every other kind of influence—and are not to be understood by us. If you take the whole range of history and look at it carefully, you will be obliged to feel that if God has been working there, as we are quite sure He has, ordering all things with consummate Wisdom, then His pathway through the world is one which no vulture’s eyes have ever seen and which no lion or lion’s whelp has ever traveled.  
It may be that some of you are, at the present moment, complaining of a certain Providential dealing of God with regard to you and that you are thinking and saying that it must be an evil Providence. Yet it is, all the while, one of the best things that has ever happened to you. That over which you are now mourning will give you good cause for singing in a little while. Probably that tribulation which fetches most tears from our eyes here, will be among the subjects of our choicest song in the eternal realms of joy! We need not know and we cannot know what God is doing, but we may be quite sure that He does all things well.  
Very much is this also the Truth in another respect, namely, in the methods of His Grace. God will certainly save His chosen people. He will bring Home all His lost children, but how strangely does He deal with some of them! His pathway in Grace no vulture’s eyes have ever seen and no lion or lion’s whelp has ever trodden. I have known Him allow a child of His to go into sin after sin before He has saved him. A godly mother has anxiously prayed that her boy might be converted, but he has not been. He has grown up to manhood and there has been much tender solicitude for him and many prayers on his behalf. Yet he has passed twenty, thirty, or 40 years in sin and has grown worse and worse. It did not seem as if all this could be according to God’s Grace, yet it was, for, in the mysterious Providence of God, this man was brought low by sin, humbled by the iniquity which carried him into the far country and led him to waste his substance in riotous living, and then—and not till then—did he come to God!  
His mother had gone to Heaven, doubting whether her prayers for him would ever be heard. Others who were anxious about him slept amidst the gods of the valley, not knowing, except by faith, that their supplications for him would be heard. And that man, because he had gone so far in sin, became the greater monument of the power of Sovereign Grace, was the better able to tell others what God had done, was the more firmly bound to Christ, was the more ardent in Christ’s service through the gratitude he felt and became, for God’s purposes, a better instrument than he would have been if he had been brought in sooner!  
John Bunyan, if he had not been among the chief of sinners, might never have been among the chief of saints. Had he never been what he was—one of the worst men in the village—he might never have preached as he did about “Jerusalem Sinners Saved,” and might never have so boldly declared that the biggest sinners should receive the greatest mercy, and that God should be most glorified in their salvation!  
I know that some people have turned this great Truth to an evil purpose, for he who looks at God’s way and sees the greatness of His Grace, may, if he is wicked enough, draw the inference that he may continue in sin that Grace may abound. Paul tells us plainly what the doom of such men will be—“whose damnation is just.” A child of God draws no such evil inference as that from God’s mercy, but he says, “After such love as that, how can I sin against the Lord?” So, in saving men, God traverses a path which no fowl knows, which the vulture’s eyes have not seen, and the lion or the lion’s whelp has not trodden. God knows best how to time His gift of Grace or His postponement of Grace—He knows why He chooses this man at this time and that man at that time—so let Him do as seems good in His sight, for He always does right and unto His name be praise forever and ever!  
Now, Beloved, I am persuaded that this Truth may also be applied to the great things of God which are yet to come, in the latter days, and in the eternity of Glory. I do not often preach upon the Book of Revelation, nor upon the marvels that are to occur during the millennial period, or at the time of the ingathering of the Jews and so on. I will tell you the reason why I do not and I think it is a sufficient one, namely, that I do not understand these things. If I do not have clear views about these things, I will leave them alone until I have. I have often studied them and I have never found anything as easy as the refuting of every view I have heard or read about the future—nor anything so difficult as to invent a view which somebody else could not refute! There are some great Truths of God about the future that are clearly revealed, such as the Second Coming of Christ, the flooding of the world with the Gospel so that all flesh shall see the salvation of God, the ingathering of the Jews to Christ, if not to their own land, and so on. But as to the order of the various events and the putting together of the various pieces of the puzzle, I believe that my text is true that “there is a path which no fowl knows, and which the vulture’s eyes have not seen; the lion’s whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.”  
It is not easy to tell what Paul means in that wonderful passage, “Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God even the Father...that God may be all in all.” What new worlds may yet be created, what revolts there may be among fresh orders of creatures, how many orders of creatures there may yet be in the universe and how great and comprehensive the vast dominions of Jehovah may be, we do not, at present, know—but we shall know all that we need to know in due time! It is enough for us to now know that our Bible is true, that Jesus Christ is our Savior and that we shall be with Him where He is and behold His Glory forever and ever!  
Why is there all this mystery? Is it not because God is so great? We can never gauge His greatness by our measuring line or plummet. We get utterly lost whenever we begin to estimate God’s unsearchable greatness! Some of you have, perhaps, studied a little astronomy. You have begun to hear or read about the millions and millions of miles which some of the fixed stars are away from us and yet, far beyond those, there may be others from which we are so distant that we are, comparatively speaking, quite near to those that now seem so far away! In trying to realize these wonders in the heavens, one feels as though the brain needed fresh faculties to enable it to grasp even that which the telescope reveals, yet all the starry worlds which human eyes have gazed upon through the most powerful glass yet made, may only be like some tiny cove or bay upon the seashore of a universe which to us must be utterly boundless. Yet that universe, which we conceive to be boundless, is all known to the God who created and sustains it! We are utterly lost in the contemplation of the greatness of God’s works—then how can we imagine that we can ever understand God who is infinitely greater than the greatest of the works of His hands?  
Then, next, are not all these things mysteries to us because we are so little? I do not merely mean those of us who are feeble and poor, and ignorant—but I mean the great divines, the doctors of the Sorbonne, the members of our Royal Societies, our D.D.’s, LL.D.’s, and all our most learned men! All are fools compared with the wisdom of the Omniscient! All are feeble compared with the Almighty. I do not know how much a gnat understands, but I feel sure that a gnat understands a far larger proportion of what I know, than I can comprehend of what God knows. A fly on the dome of St. Paul’s has a very imperfect idea of the greatness and glories of the cathedral, a still more incomplete idea of London and a far more inadequate idea of England. Even if the fly knew England thoroughly, he would need to learn much more to enable him to understand the world! And then there would be the sun and the sun itself is only like a tiny point of light compared with the greater worlds in God’s universe. If

he fly could comprehend all those worlds, he would still be no appreciable way towards understanding God!  
If you knew all that was to be known about a number of marbles that I had given to my sons to play with, that would not prove that you knew all about me—so, if we could understand everything about all the worlds that God has made, it would not prove that we could understand God Himself! He is infinitely above our loftiest conception and we are just nothing at all in comparison with Him. You talk very loudly about your opinion, your thoughts and your conclusions. Ah, poor Souls, the chattering of sparrows in the street is as much worthy to be called wisdom as the predilections of the most learned men among you apart from anything that they have been taught by God the Holy Spirit! All the wisdom that they have which they have learned by themselves is but varnished folly and nothing more!  
Moreover, dear Friends, the powers we possess are absolutely insignificant compared with God’s. In trying to comprehend the Almighty, we are like a child with a thimble, seeking to tell the size of the sea. We cannot, at our utmost, hold more than a thimbleful and, besides that, our thimble leaks! The powers that we have are warped and spoiled by sin and sinful influence. When we come into this world, our powers are very far from being fully developed and, as they are being developed, somebody or other comes along and warps us with prejudice in our early youth. And as we grow older, we make other prejudices of our own so that what we might know, we sometimes do not care to know. Also, our scales in which we try to weigh God are not accurate. Instead of being true, they are all out of gear and utterly unreliable as well as inadequate to such a task! Our faculties are so disordered and disarranged by all manner of surrounding circumstances that we cannot comprehend much about Him who is incomprehensible even to the loftiest created intelligence. And, besides this, we have such a little time in which to learn about God. A child, going to school for five minutes, knows as much about Greek as we do about God in 70 years, apart from what He pleases to teach us by His Spirit!  
Even with regard to God’s dealings with His people, what mistakes they make in their judgments! No doubt, Protestantism in England was, upon the whole, greatly strengthened and more deeply rooted by the persecutions under cruel Queen Mary. Foxe’s “Book of Martyrs,” (which could not have been written had not the martyrs suffered and died), is still, next to the Bible, the great master-gun of Protestantism. Yet many of the Protestants who lived in Mary’s day must have felt that God had made an awful mistake in allowing that woman to sit upon the throne and to do so much towards putting down the Gospel of Christ by fire, sword and imprisonment! Yet they made a great mistake in judging by the few years of Mary’s reign. God was judging more justly by the whole history of the land for hundreds of years to come! There is not much more wisdom in man’s judgment of God than in the flies’ fabled judgment of an elephant. It is said that a senate of flies once determined to form a judgment concerning an elephant, so one of them settled on the great creature’s ear and walked all round it and then said that an elephant was a long flabby mass of flesh of a certain shape. Another fly had settled on one of the huge legs of the animal and he said that an elephant was a tall column, something like the trunk of a cedar. One lit somewhere on the back and he said that an elephant was a great moving plain, a sort of animal table-land.  
The flies could not agree upon any theory of what the creature was like. The fact was that none of them had any clear idea of the whole elephant, but only a partial notion concerning the portion that they could manage to see. So, all that we can do, if we have 50 years in which to study the Scriptures, is to get some imperfect idea of a part of the great Truth of God. Yet some talk as if they knew all about it—like a man who says that he knows all about the Continent because he once landed at Boulogne for a few minutes and then crossed the Channel again! Suppose that we have landed on the shores of knowledge and that we have been there for 50 years—what is that compared with eternity?  
What shall I further say before I leave this point? First, let none of us despond because we do not know everything. Let no one say, “I am not God’s child because my knowledge is so limited.” A grain of Divine Grace is worth more than a ton of knowledge! If you have but a spark of true faith in Jesus Christ, it is better than a whole volcano full of worldly wisdom! Do not say, “I cannot be saved because I cannot understand all mysteries.” Who but God can understand them? Be thankful that the way of salvation is not a mystery! It is this—“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Are you puzzled about the Doctrine of Election? Do not ever fall into the mistake of imagining that nobody goes to Heaven but those who understand that great Truth! There are many there who disbelieved it while they were here below, though I think they rejoice in it now. It is not essential to salvation that you should understand that or any other difficult Doctrine of the Scriptures. Do you believe in Jesus as your Savior? Then go your way and rest assured that you will, in due time, find yourself in Heaven!  
Again, let us never arraign God before our bar. It is a horrible thing for any man ever to say, “Well, if God acts like that, I do not see the justice of it.” How dare you even hint that the Judge of all the earth is not just? He has said, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” so do not you say, “It cannot be so.” Is it so written in God’s Word? Then it is so just because it is there! If God has said anything, it is not right for you to ask for an explanation of His reason for saying it, or to summon Him to your judgment seat. What impertinence this is! He must always do right—He cannot do wrong!  
Some have staggered over the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment because they could not see how that could be consistent with God’s goodness. I have only one question to ask concerning that or any other Doctrine. Does God reveal it in the Scriptures? Then I believe it and leave to Him the vindication of His own consistency! I am sure that He will not inflict a pain upon any creature which that creature does not deserve, that He will never cause any sorrow or misery which is not absolutely necessary and that He will glorify Himself by doing the right, the loving, the kind thing in the end. If we do not see it to be so, it will be none the less so because we are blind! The finger on the lips is the right attitude for us in the presence of things revealed by God, or worked by God! As David said, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because You did it.” If You did it, O Lord, there is no question about the rightness of it, for You are supreme and You ought to be supreme! There is none like You for goodness, for love, for wisdom. Your will ought to be, so let it be done on earth, as it is Heaven, let it be done everywhere, for what You do is always best!  
II. I have not much time left for the second part of my discourse which is IN REFERENCE TO THE TRULY WISE, that is, to those who are wise according to Job’s declaration in the 28th verse of this Chapter—“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.” Concerning their path, we may truly say that no fowl knows it, no vulture’s eyes have seen it, no lion or lion’s whelp has trodden it.  
First, the entrance of the Christian into that path is beyond human knowledge. Who can explain what it is to be born-again? The very figure used by our Savior implies a mystery. Our introduction into this world is shrouded in mystery—so is our introduction into the spiritual world, the world of Divine Grace. You will never be able to explain, even though you have experienced it, how the Spirit of God creates a living soul, as it were, within the ribs of death. How He breathes into our soul the breath of spiritual life so that we who were enemies to God, become the newborn children in His family. This secret cannot be told by mortal man, for he does not know it—it is known only to God.  
And, next, the walk of the Christian along that path as equally beyond human understanding. How shall I tell you what it is to walk by faith? I have sometimes had, before my mind’s eye, as it were, a vision. I thought I saw a great staircase made of light. There appeared to be nothing solid or earthly about it. I was called to ascend this staircase. Beneath my feet there seemed to be nothing. Each step I stood upon appeared to be the last, yet I went on, on, on—up, up, up, till I was at a dizzy height and I thought that a voice said to me, “Look up.” I could see no other step, but, as fast as I ascended one tier, I was told to go on—and fresh steps of light revealed themselves beneath my ascending feet. I trod upon the clouds and found them to be granite. It seemed to be thin air and mist—to mortal men it was nothing. They laughed at me for trusting to it, but, each time my foot went down upon the stair, I found it to be like the eternal hills that are never to be moved. When, in my vision, I had climbed, and climbed, and climbed till I seemed to look down upon the stars, I still climbed on and I understood that this is walking by faith—going ever upward, seeing Him who is invisible, depending upon Him whom no mortal eye can see, but who is clearly recognized by our spiritual senses— grasped by the hand of faith, seen by the eye of faith, heard by the ear of faith—walking through a desert where there is no corn growing, yet daily gathering full supplies of heavenly manna—standing by a rock in which there is no water, yet seeing the living floods leap forth to refresh the weary soul. This is walking by faith and it is a great mystery.  
I have known some, with eyes like a vulture’s, who have said that they could live by reason. They always did that which they perceived to be best. They would never venture a step beyond where logic would lead them. Ah, Sirs, your bleared eyes which you think to be so keen, can never see the path of the Christian! Others have fancied that to work themselves up into a high state of excitement and enthusiasm is to lead a Christian life. Believe me, Sirs, your vulture eyes have not seen this God-made path! Faith is reasonable, in the highest sense, for it reasons upon the real Truth of God, whereas mere human reason only reasons upon the semblance of truth. Some, who have no more spiritual knowledge than a lion’s whelps, have said, “All you have to do is to persuade yourself that you are one of God’s elect and it is so.” Ah, they know not the path of faith and they who follow their lead will go down to destruction!  
Another says, “I feel much that is good within myself and I believe that I have strength enough and wisdom enough to find my way to Heaven.” Ah, you may be strong as a fierce lion, but you know not the way of wisdom! That is the very opposite way to yours. We who walk by faith have nothing in ourselves to lean upon! Our very weakness is our strength because it drives us to the Almighty! We have nothing to rely upon except this—that it is written that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and we depend on Him and upon the oath and Covenant of God, the Covenant that has been sealed with the precious blood of Jesus—there we rest! There are many imitations of this faith, but the genuine article is as different from all the imitations of it as the true coin of the realm is from the counterfeit of the forger!  
Once more, the Believer’s trials are things which unrenewed men cannot comprehend. If some of us were to begin to tell the ungodly all about our spiritual conflicts, they would think us fools. If we were to describe to them our despair and our hope, our rejoicing and our depression, they would say, “You must be mad to have such experiences!” Just so—“there is a path which no fowl knows”—and no fool knows and no unsaved soul knows! Our desires, too, are beyond men’s sight, and so are our struggles with doubt and our temptations and trials. Many a Believer has been another Hercules, slaying a dragon and cleansing the Augean stables, yet it is all unrecognized except by God—and by those who are themselves spiritual, for the path of Christian victory is one that the lion’s whelp treads not.  
So is it also with the Christian’s joys. O Brothers and Sisters, I wish I had time to talk about them! I could not get to the end of that theme, for there are joys that we have in which our spirit is as cool and composed as at any other moment of our life, yet those joys fill us with holy rapture and sacred ecstasy till we feel that, whether in the body or out of the body, we cannot tell—only God knows! Then the head leans on the bosom of the Savior and the lips of Christ are set to our soul’s lips and He kisses us with the kisses of His mouth and His love is better than wine! I know that worldly men say, “Give us gold and silver in abundance! Fill our barns and let our wine vats burst with new wine! Give us all the good things of earth and we will be content.” It is so, I know, but as for the Christian, he says, “Whom have I in Heaven but You and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.” When we have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us, we get into a way of joy which is as far above all human joy as the path of the eagle, soaring among the Alps is above that of the mole burrowing in the ground!  
There are many other equally high things about the way of a Christian which I have not time to mention. I will just refer to two other things. One is the path of communion with Christ. We who believe in Jesus know what it is to walk with God. Yes, to walk with God, though He is a consuming fire! To walk with Christ though He is the Judge of the quick and the dead. I have been as conscious of the Presence of God as ever I have been of the presence of my child or of my friend. I have been as sure that I spoke with Christ and emptied out my soul into His soul, and then received His heart’s love into my heart, as I have been sure of any event in my whole history! I know what it is to receive sympathy from Christian men, but I also know what it is to have the sympathy of my Lord! I speak not now of things that are only occasional and out of the ordinary course of our lives. To some of us, it has become a blessed habit to speak with Christ—to speak, not merely into His ear, but right down into His heart and to know that we have done so! And to act in a certain way because we have done so and to have no other motive for the action than the fact that we have put the case before the Lord and asked whether it was our duty to do this—and when we knew that it was, have risked everything because we were sure that God had bid us take the step! Oh, the blessedness of living with God! You cannot imitate it. You cannot get near it—it is unapproachable to unrenewed men! It “is a path which no fowl knows, and which the vulture’s eyes have not seen.”  
And it is so, lastly, with regard to many a Christian’s death. In this matter, also, “there is a path which the vulture’s eyes have not seen.” There are some of you who have heard with your ears, and seen with your eyes, the wondrous manifestations at the deaths of some who were dear to you in life and precious in death. Some of these have seen, in their departing moments, what no unaided human eye could ever have seen. And they have told us that they have heard words which it would not have been lawful for them to utter. And that they have enjoyed what it was impossible for human language ever to express. And while they have spoken, we have known that they spoke the truth, for the flash of their eye was supernatural and the calm of their spirit, amidst racking pain which naturally would depress, has been something sublime. We have felt, with regard to their deathbed, as Moses did with regard to the burning bush—humble was the pallet and humble was the patient who lay upon it—but, as the bush glowed with heavenly fire, that bed seemed to be bright with the Presence of Deity, for God was there with His children and Christ was there succoring the members of His mystical body! And we have marvelled, been astonished and have felt that we should take off our shoes, for the place whereon we stood was holy ground!  
Those of us whose calling makes us familiar with the departure of Believers, have often felt that there was a path for dying saints which biographers could not describe, which language could not picture and of which memory has left but faint traces upon the tablets of our soul—but which, in itself, was something indescribable, unutterable, Divine! May God grant to all of us the Grace to know all this for ourselves! We can only know it by the illumination of the Divine Spirit, but that blessed Spirit illuminates all the souls that look to Jesus! Indeed, their looking to Jesus is one effect of the Divine Illumination which they have already in part received. Oh, that each heart here may “lay hold on eternal life” by laying hold on the Savior by faith, for then He will reveal to you the great mystery that the unsaved cannot comprehend—and He will say to you, as He said to Peter, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven.” The Lord bless you, Beloved Friends! For Christ’s sake! Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #51 New Park Street Pulpit 1

÷Job 29.2

COMFORT FOR THE DESPONDING  
NO. 51

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 25, 1855, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“Oh that I were as in months past.”  
Job 29:2.**

FOR the most part, the gracious Shepherd leads His people beside the still waters and makes them to lie down in green pastures. But at times they wander through a wilderness where there is no water and they find no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul faints within them and they cry unto the Lord in their trouble. Though many of His people live in almost constant joy and find that religion’s ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, yet there are many who pass through fire and through water—men ride over their heads—they endure all manner of trouble and sorrow. The duty of the minister is to preach to different characters. Sometimes we admonish the confident, lest they should become presumptuous. Oftentimes we stir up the slumbering, lest they should sleep the sleep of death. Frequently we comfort the desponding and this is our duty this morning—or if not to comfort them, to give them some exhortation which may, by God’s help, be the means of bringing them out of the sad condition into which they have fallen, so that they may not be obliged to cry out forever—“Oh that I were as in months past!”

At once to the subject. A complaint—its cause and cure. And then close up with an exhortation to stir up your pure minds, if you are in such a position.

I. First, there is a COMPLAINT. How many a Christian looks on the past with pleasure, on the future with dread and on the present with sorrow! There are many who look back upon the days that they have passed in the fear of the Lord as being the sweetest and the best they have ever had But as to the present, it is clad in a sable garb of gloom and dreariness. They could wish for their young days over, again, that they might live near to Jesus—for now they feel that they have wandered from Him, or that He has hidden His face from them and they cry out, “Oh that I were as in months past!”

1. Let us take distinct cases, one by one. The first is the case of a man who has lost the brightness of his evidences and is crying out, “Oh that I were as in months past!” Hear his soliloquy—“Oh that my past days could be recalled! Then I had no doubt of my salvation. If any man had asked for the reason of the hope that was in me, I could have answered with meekness and with fear. No doubt distressed me, no fear harassed me. I could say with Paul, ‘I know whom I have believed,’ and with Job, ‘I know that my Redeemer lives—

*My steady soul did fear no more  
Than solid rocks when billows roar.’*

“I felt myself to be standing on the rock, Christ Jesus. I said— *‘Let cares like a wild deluge come,  
And storms of sorrow fall!  
Surely I shall safely reach my home,  
My God, my Heaven, my All.’*

“But ah, how changed it is, now! Where there was no cloud it is all cloud! Where I could read my ‘title clear,’ I tremble to read my damnation quite as clearly. I hoped that I trusted in Christ, but now the dark thought rises up that I was a hypocrite and had deceived myself and others. The most I can attain to, is—‘I think I will hope in Him still. And if I may not be refreshed with the light of His Countenance, still, I will trust in the shadow of His wings. I feel that if I depart from Him, there is no other Savior. But oh, what thick darkness surrounds me! Like Paul of old, there have been days and nights wherein neither sun, nor moon nor stars have appeared. I have lost my roll in the Arbor of Ease. I cannot, now, take it out of my breast and read it to console me on my journey. And I fear that when I get to the end of the way, they will deny me entrance! I feel I came not in by the door to receive His Grace and know His love, but have been deceived. I have taken carnal fancies for the workings of the Spirit and have imputed what was but natural conviction to the work of God the Holy Spirit.”

This is one phase and a very common one. You will meet many who are crying out like that—“Oh that I were as in months past!”  
2. Another phase of this great complaint, which it also very frequent, is one under which we are lamenting—not so much because our evidences are withered as because we do not enjoy a perpetual peace of mind as to other matters. “Oh,” says one, “Oh that I were as in months past. For then whatever troubles and trials came upon me were less than nothing. I had learned to sing—  
*‘Father, I wait Your daily will,  
You shall divide my portion still.  
Give me on earth what seems to You best, Till death and Heaven reveal the rest.’*  
“I felt that I could give up everything for Him—that if He had taken away every mercy, I would have said—  
*‘Yes, if You take them all away,  
Yet will I not repine!  
Before they were possessed by me,  
They were entirely Thine.’*  
“I knew no fear for the future. Like a child on its mother’s breast, I slept securely. I said, ‘Jehovah-Jireh, my God, will provide.’ I put my business into His hands. I went to my daily labor like the little bird that wakes up in the morning and knows not where its breakfast is to come from, but sits on the branch, singing—  
*‘Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow  
God provides for the morrow.’*  
“I could have trusted Him with my very life—with wife, with children— with everything! I could give all into His hands and say each morning, ‘Lord, I have not a will of my own, or if I have one, still, Your will be done. Your wish shall be my wish. Your desire shall be my desire.’ Oh that I were as in months past! How changed am I now! I begin fretting about my business. And if I lose now but a five pound note, I am incessantly worried, whereas if it were a thousand, before, I could have thanked the God who took it away as easily as I could the God that gave it to me! How the least thing disturbs me. The least shadow of a doubt as to some calamity that may befall me rests on my soul like a thick cloud. I am perpetually self-willed, desiring always to have just what I wish. I cannot say I can resign all into His hands. There is a certain something I could not give up. Twined round my heart there is an evil plant, called, self-love. It has twisted its roots within the very nerves and sinews of my soul! There is something I love above my God. I cannot give up all, now. But, oh that I were as in months past! For then my mercies were real mercies, because they were God’s mercies. Oh,” he says, “that I were as in months past—I would not have to bear such trouble as I now have, for though the burden might have pressed heavily, I would have cast it on the Lord! Oh that I knew the heavenly science of taking the burdens off my own shoulders and laying them on the Rock that supports them all! Oh if I knew how to pour out my griefs and sorrows as I once did! I have been a fool, an arrant fool, a very fool, that I should have run away from that sweet confidence I once had in the Savior! I used to, then, go to His ear and tell Him all my griefs—  
*‘My sorrows and my griefs I poured  
Into the bosom of my God.  
He helped me in the trying hour,  
He helped me bear the heavy load!’*  
“But now, I foolishly carry them, myself, and bear them in my own breast, Ah,—  
*‘What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!’*  
“Would that they would return to me.”  
3. Another individual, perhaps, is speaking thus concerning his enjoyment in the House of God and the means of Grace. “Oh,” says one, “in months past, when I went up to the House of God, how sweetly did I hear! Why, I sat with my ears open to catch the words as if it were an angel speaking. And when I listened, how at times did the tears come rolling down my cheeks! And how my eyes flashed when some brilliant utterance, full of joy to the Christian, awakened my soul! Oh how I would awake on the Sabbath morning and sing,  
*‘Welcome, sweet day of rest,  
That saw the Lord arise!  
Welcome to this reviving breast,  
And these rejoicing eyes!’*  
“And when they sang in the House of God, whose voice was so fond as mine? When I retired from worship, it was with a light dread. I went to tell my friends and my neighbors what glorious news I had heard in the sanctuary. Those were sweet Sabbaths. And when the Prayer Meetings came round, how was I found in my places and the prayers were prayers, indeed, to my spirit! Whoever I heard preach, provided it was the Gospel, how did my soul feed and fatten under it! For I sat at a very banquet of joy! When I read the Scriptures, they were always illuminated and the Glory of God did gild the sacred page whenever I turned it over! When I bent my knees in prayer, I could pour my soul out before God and I loved the exercise! I felt that I could not be happy unless I spent my time upon my knees. I loved my God and my God loved me. But oh, now how changed! Oh that I were as in months past! I go up to God’s House. It is the same voice that speaks, the same man I love so much, still addresses me. But I have no tears to shed. My heart has become hardened even under his ministry! I have few emotions of joy. I enter the House of God as a boy goes to school, without much love to it—and I go away without having my soul stirred. When I kneel down in secret prayer, the wheels are taken off my chariot and it drags very heavily. When I strive to sing, all I can say is, ‘I would, but cannot.’ Oh that I were as in months past!— when the candle of the Lord shone round about me!”  
I trust there are not many of you who can join in this. For I know you love to come up to the House of God. I love to preach to a people who feel the Word, who give signs of assent to it—men and women who can afford a tear, now and then, in a sermon—people whose blood seems to boil within them when they hear the Gospel! I don’t think you understand much of the phase I am describing. But still, you may understand a little of it. The Word may not be quite as sweet and pleasant to you as it used to be. And then you may cry out—“Oh that I were as in months past!”  
4. But I will tell you one point which perhaps may escape you. There are some of us who extremely lament that our conscience is not as tender as it used to be. And, therefore, does our soul cry in bitterness, “Oh that I were as in months past!” “When I first knew the Lord,” you say, “I was almost afraid to put one foot before another, lest I should go astray. I always looked before I leaped. If there was a suspicion of sin about anything, I faithfully avoided it. It there was the slightest trace of the trail of the serpent on it, I turned from it at once! People called me a Puritan. I watched everything. I was afraid to speak and some practices that were really allowable, I utterly condemned. My conscience was so tender, I was like a sensitive plant. If touched by the hand of sin, my leaves curled up in a moment! I was so tender, I could not bear to be touched—it was like I had wounds all over me! And if anyone brushed against me, I cried out. I was afraid to do anything, lest I should sin against God. If I heard an oath, my bones shook within me. If I saw a man break the Sabbath, I trembled and was afraid. Wherever I went, the least whisper of sin startled me. It was like the voice of a demon when I heard a temptation and I said with violence, ‘Get you behind me, Satan!’ I could not endure sin. I ran away from it as from a serpent! I could not taste a drop of it. But oh that I were as in months past. It is true, by His Grace, I have not forsaken His ways. I have not quite forgotten His Law. It is true, I have not disgraced my character, I have not openly sinned before men and none but God knows my sin. But oh, my conscience is not what it once was! It did thunder, once, but it does not now. O Conscience! Conscience! You are gone too much to sleep! I have drugged you with a tincture of opium and you are slumbering when you ought to be speaking! You are a watchman. But you do not tell the hours of the night as you once did. O Conscience! Sometimes I heard your rattle in my ears and it startled me—now you sleep—and I go on to sin. It is but a little I have done—still, that little shows the way. Straws tell which way the wind blows. And I feel that my having committed one little sin evidences in what way my soul is inclined. Oh that I had a tender conscience again! Oh that I had not this rhinoceros conscience which is covered over with tough hide through which the bullets of the Law cannot pierce! Oh that I had a conscience such as I used to have! Oh that I were as in months past!”  
5. One more form of this sad condition. There are some of us, dearly Beloved, who have not as much zeal for the Glory of God and the salvation of men as we used to have. Months ago, if we saw a soul going to destruction, our eyes were filled with tears in a moment! If we did but see a man inclined to sin, we rushed before him with tears in our eyes and wished to sacrifice ourselves to save him! We could not walk the street, but we must be giving somebody a tract, or reproving someone. We thought we must be forever speaking of the Lord Jesus. If there were any good to be done, we were always first and foremost in it—we desired by all means to save some and we did think at that time that we could give up ourselves to death—if we might but snatch a soul from Hell! So deep, so ardent was our love to our fellow men, that for the love we bore Christ’s name, we would have been content to be scoffed at, hissed at and persecuted by the whole world if we might have done any good in it! Our soul was burning with intense longing for souls and we considered all things else to be mean and worthless. But ah, now souls may be damned and there is not a tear! Sinners may sink into the scalding pit of Hell and not a groan. Thousands may be swept away each day and sink into bottomless woe and yet not an emotion! We can preach without tears. We can pray for them without our hearts. We can speak to them without feeling their necessities. We pass by the haunts of infamy—we wish the inmates better and that is all. Even our compassion has died out. Once we stood near the brink of Hell and we thought each day that we heard the yells and howls of the doomed spirits ringing in our ears. And then we said, “O God, help me to save my fellow men from going down to the pit of Hell!” But now we forget it all. We have little love to men. We have not half the zeal and energy we once had. Oh, if that is your state, dearly Beloved—if you can join in that, as your poor minister, alas, can do in some measure—then may we well say, “Oh that I were as in months past!”  
II. But now we are about to take these different characters and tell you the CAUSE AND CURE.  
1. One of the causes of this mournful state of things is defect in prayer. And of course the cure lies somewhere next door to the cause! You are saying, “Oh that I were as in months past!” Come, my Brothers and Sisters. We are going into the very root of the matter. One reason why it is not with you as in months past is this—you do not pray as you once did! Nothing brings such leanness into a man’s soul as lack of prayer. It is well said that a neglected closet is the birthplace of all evil. All good is born in the closet—all good springs from it. There the Christian gets it. But if he neglects his closet, then all evil comes of it. No man can progress in Grace if he forsakes his closet. I care not how strong he may be in faith. It is said that fat men may, for a time, live on the flesh they have acquired. But there is not a Christian so full of flesh that he can live on old Grace! If he grows fat, he kicks, but he cannot live upon his fat. Those who are strong and mighty in themselves cannot exist without prayer! If a man should have the spiritual might of 50 of God’s choicest Christians in himself, he must die if he did not continue to pray! My Brothers and Sisters, can you look back and say, “Three or four months ago my prayers were more regular, more constant, more earnest than they are now—now they are feeble, they are not sincere, they are not fervent, they are not earnest”? O Brothers and Sisters, do not ask anybody what is the cause of your grief! It is as plain as possible. You need not ask a question about it. There is the cause! And where is the remedy? Why, in more prayer! Beloved, it was little prayer that brought you down. It is great prayer that will lift you up! It was lack of prayer that brought you into poverty. It must be increase of prayer that will bring you again into riches! Where no oxen are, the crib is clean. There is nothing for men to eat where there are no oxen to plow. And where there are no prayers to plow the soil, you have little to feed upon. We must be more earnest in prayer! Oh, Beloved, might not the beam out of the wall cry against us? Our dusty closets might bear witness to our neglect of secret devotion. And that is the reason why it is not with us as in months past. My Friends—if you were to compare the Christian to a steam engine, you must make his prayers, fed by the Holy Spirit, to be the very fire which sustains his motion! Prayer is God’s chosen vehicle of Grace and he is unwise who neglects it. Let me be doubly serious on this matter and let me give a home-thrust to some. Dear Friend, do you mean what you say and do you believe what you say—that neglect of prayer will bring your soul into a most hazardous condition? If so, I will say no more to you. For you will easily guess the remedy for your lamentable cry, “Oh that I were as in months past!” A certain merchant wishes that he were as rich as he used to be—he is desirous to send his ships over to the gold country—to bring him home cargoes of gold. But lately never a ship has been out of port and, therefore, can he wonder that he has had no cargo of gold? So when a man prays, he sends a ship to Heaven and it comes back laden with gold! But if he leaves off supplication, then his ship is weather-bound and stays at home—and no wonder he comes to be a poor man!  
2. Perhaps, again, you are saying, “Oh that I were as in months past!” Not so much from your own fault as from the fault of your minister. There is such a thing, my dear Friends, as our getting into a terribly bad condition through the ministry that we attend. Can it be expected that men should grow in Grace when they are never watered with the streams that make glad the city of our God? Can they be supposed to grow strong in the Lord Jesus when they do not feed on spiritual food? We know some who grumble, Sabbath after Sabbath, and say they cannot hear suchand-such a minister. Why don’t you buy an ear-trumpet, then? “Ah, but I mean that I can’t hear him to my soul’s profit.” Then do not go to hear him, if you have tried for a long while and don’t get any profit! I always think that a man who grumbles as he goes out of Chapel ought not to be pitied, but whipped—for he can stay away if he likes and go where he will be pleased! There are plenty of places where the sheep may feed in their own manner—and everyone is bound to go where he gets the pasture most suited to his soul. But you are not bound to run away, directly, if your minister dies, as many of you did before you came here. You should not run away from the ship as directly the storm comes and the captain is gone and you find her not exactly seaworthy. Stand by her, begin caulking her—God will send you a captain—there will be fine weather, by-and-by, and all will be right. But very frequently a bad minister starves God’s people into walking skeletons, so that you can see all their bones. And who wonders that they starve out their

minister, when they get no food and no nutriment from his ministrations? This is a second reason why men frequently cry out, “Oh that I were as in months past!”  
3. But there is still a better reason that will come more home to some of you. It is not so much the badness of the food, as the seldomness that you come to eat it. You know, my dear Friends, we find, every now and then, that there is a man who came twice a day to the House of God on the Sabbath. On the Monday night he was busy at work. But his apron was rolled up and if he could not be present all the while, he would come in at the end. On the Thursday evening he would, if possible, come to the sanctuary to hear a sermon from some Gospel minister and would sit up late at night and get up early in the morning to make up the time he had spent in these religious exercises. But by-and-by he thought, “I am working too hard. This is tiring. It is too far to walk.” And so he gives up, first, one service and then another—and then begins to cry out, “Oh that I were as in months past!” Why, Brothers and Sisters you need not be amazing at it! The man does not eat so much as he used to do! Little and often is the way children should be fed, though I have given you a great deal this morning. Still, little and often is a very good rule. I do think, when people give up weekday services, unless it is utterly impracticable for them to attend them, farewell to religion! “Farewell to practical godliness,” says Whitfield, “when men do not worship God on the weekday!” Weekday services are frequently the cream of all. God gives His people pails full of milk on the Sabbath, but He often skims off the cream for the weekday! If they stay away, is it any wonder that they have to say, “Oh, that I were as in months past”? I do not blame you, Beloved. I only wish to “stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.” A very plain fellow that is—is he not? Yes, he always tells you what he means and always intends to do so! Stand to your colors, my men! Keep close to the standard if you would win the battle! And when there seems to be the slightest defection, it is simply our duty to exhort you, lest by any measure you depart from the soundness of your faith!  
4. But frequently this complaint arises from idolatry. Many have given their hearts to something else besides God and have set their affections upon the things of earth instead of the things in Heaven. It is hard to love the world and love Christ. It is impossible—that is all. And it is hard not to love the creature. It is hard not to give yourself to earth. I had almost said, it is impossible not to do that. It is difficult and only God can enable us! He, alone, can keep us with our hearts fully set on Him. But mark—whenever we make a golden calf to worship—sooner or later it will come to this—we shall get our golden calf ground up and put into our water for us to drink and then we shall have to say, “He has made me drunk with wormwood.” Never a man makes an idol for himself to worship, but it tumbles down on him and breaks some of his bones! There was never a man, yet, who departed to broken cisterns to find water, but instead, thereof, he found loathsome creatures therein and was bitterly deceived! God will have His people live on Him and on none else! If they live on anything else but Him, He will take care to give them of the waters of Mara, to embitter their drink and drive them to the Rock of purest streams. Oh, Beloved, let us take care that our hearts are wholly His, only Christ’s, solely Christ’s! If they are so, we shall not have to cry out, “Oh that I were as in months past!”  
5. We scarcely need, however, detail any more reasons. We will add but one more and that is the most common one of all. We have, perhaps, become self-confident and self-righteous. If so, that is a reason why it is not with us as in months past. Ah, my Friends, that old rascal, selfrighteousness—you will never get rid of him as long as you live! The devil was well pictured under the form of a serpent because a serpent can creep in anywhere, though the smallest crevice. Self-righteousness is a serpent—for it will enter anywhere. If you try to serve your God, “What a fine fellow you are,” says the devil. “Ah, don’t you serve your God well! You are always preaching. You are a noble fellow.” If you go to a Prayer Meeting, God gives you a little gift and you are able to pour out your heart. Presently there is a pat on the back from Satan. “Did not you pray sweetly? I know the Brethren will love you1 You are growing in Grace very much.” If a temptation comes and you are able to resist it, “Ah,” he says at once, “you are a true soldier of the Cross. Look at the enemy you have knocked down! You will have a bright crown, by-and-by. You are a brave fellow!” You go on trusting God implicitly. Satan says, “Your faith is very strong—no trial can overcome you—there is a weak Brother, he is not half as strong as you are!” Away you go and scold your weak Brother because he is not as big as you! And all the while, Satan is cheering you up and saying, “What a mighty warrior you are! So faithful—always trusting in God—you have not any self-righteousness.” The minister preaches to the Pharisee—but the Pharisee is not fifty-ninth cousin to you! You are not at all self-righteous in your own opinion—but all the while you are the most self-righteous creature in existence! Ah, Beloved, just when we think ourselves humble, we are sure to be proud! And when we are groaning over our pride, we are generally the most humble! You may just read your own estimate backwards. Just when we imagine we are the worst, we are often the best. And when we conceive ourselves the best, we are often the worst. It is that vile self-righteousness who creeps into our souls and makes us murmur, “Oh that I were as in months past!” Your candle has got the wick of self-righteousness upon it. You need to have that replaced, and then you will burn all right. You are soaring too high! You require something that will bring you down, again, to the feet of the Savior as a poor lost and guilty sinner—nothing at all. Then you will not cry any longer, “Oh that I were as in months past!”  
III. And now, the closing up is to be an EXHORTATION.  
An exhortation, first of all, to consolation. One is saying, “Oh, I shall never be happy again, I have lost the light of His Countenance. He has clean gone away from me and I shall perish.” You remember in John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, the description of the man shut up in the iron cage? One said to him, “Will you never come out of this cage?” “No, never.” “Are you condemned forever?” “Yes, I am.” “Why was this?” “Why I grieved the Spirit and He is gone. I once thought I loved Him, but I have treated Him lightly and He has departed. I went from the paths of righteousness, but now I am locked up here and cannot get out.” Yes, but does John Bunyan tell you that the man never did get out? There have been some in that iron cage that have come out. There may be one here, this morning, who has been for a long while sitting in that iron cage, rattling the bars, trying to break them, trying to file them through with his own little might and strength. Oh, dear Friend, you will never file through the iron bars of that terrible cage! You will never escape by yourself. What must you do? You must begin to sing like the bird in the cage does. Then the kind Master will come and let you out. Cry to Him to deliver you! And though you cry and shout and He shuts out your prayer, He will hear you, by-and-by. And like Jonah, you shall exclaim in days to come, “Out of the belly of Hell I cried unto the Lord and He heard me.” You will find the roll under the settle, although you have dropped it down the Hill of Difficulty. And when you have it, you will put it in your bosom, again, and hold it all the more tightly because you have lost it for a little season—  
*“Return, O wanderer, return,  
And seek an injured Father’s face.  
Those warm desires that in you burn  
Were kindled by reclaiming Grace!”*  
And now another exhortation, not so much to console you as to stir you up more and more to seek to be what you ought to be. O Christian men and women, my Brothers and Sisters in the faith of Jesus Christ! How many there are of you who are content just to be saved and merely to enter Heaven. How many do we find who are saying, “Oh, if I can but just get in at the door—if I can simply be a child of God!” And they literally carry out their desires, for they are as little Christian as possible! They would have moderation in religion! But what is moderation in religion? It is a lie! It is a farce! Does a wife ask her husband to be moderately loving? Does a parent expect his child to be moderately obedient? Do you seek to have your servants moderately honest? No! Then how can you talk about being moderately religious? To be moderately religious is to be irreligious. To have a religion that does not enter into the very heart and influence the life is virtually to have no religion at all! I tremble, sometimes, when I think of some of you who are mere professors. You are content, you whitewashed sepulchers, because you are beautifully whitened! You rest satisfied, without looking at the morgue beneath! How many of you make clean the outside of the cup and platter. And because the Church can lay nothing to your charge and the world cannot accuse you, you think the outside of the cup will be sufficient. Take heed! Take heed! The Judge will look at the inside of the cup and platter one day. And if it is full of wickedness, He will break that platter and the fragments shall forever be cast about in the pit of Hell! Oh, may God give you Grace to desire to be real Christians! Waxen-winged professors! You can fly very well, here. But when, like Icarus, you fly upwards, the mighty Sun of Jesus Christ shall melt your wings and you shall fall into the pit of destruction! Ah, gilded Christians, beautifully painted, varnished, polished— what will you do when you shall be found, at last, to have been worthless metal? When the wood, hay and stubble shall be buried and consumed, what will you do if you are not the genuine coin of Heaven? If you have not been molten in the furnace, if you have not been minted from on high? If you are not real gold, how shall you stand the fire in that “great and terrible Day of the Lord”? Ah, and there are some of you who can stand the fire, I trust. You are the children of God. But, Beloved, do I charge you wrongfully when I say that many of us know that we are the children of God, but we are content to be as little dwarf children. We are always crying out, “Oh that I were as in months past!” That is a mark of dwarfishness. If we are to do great things in the world, we must not often utter this cry! We must often be singing—  
*“I the chief of sinners am. But Jesus died for me,”*and with cheerful countenance we must be able to say that we “know whom we have believed.” Do you wish to be useful? Do you desire to honor your Master? Do you long to carry a heavy crown to Heaven, that you may put it on the Savior’s head? If you do—and I know you do—then seek above all things, that your soul may prosper and be in health—that your inner man may not be simply in a living state, but that you may be a tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth your fruit in your season, your leaf never withering and whatever you do, prospering! Ah, do you want to go to Heaven and wear a starless crown there—a crown that shall be a real crown, but that shall have no star upon it because no soul has been saved by you? Do you wish to sit in Heaven with garments of Christ’s, but without one single jewel that God has given you for your wages here, below? Ah, no! I think you wish to go to Heaven in full dress and to enter into the fullness of the joy of the Lord! Five talents well improved, five cities. And let no man be satisfied with merely his one talent, but let him seek to put it out at interest. “For unto him that has, shall be given, and he shall have abundance.”  
And finally, to many of you what I have preached about has no interest whatever. Perhaps you may say, “Oh that I were as in months past! For then I was quite well and I was a jolly fellow! Then I could drink with the deepest drinker anywhere! Then I could run merrily into sin, but now I cannot. I have hurt my body. I have injured my mind. It is not with me as it used to be—I have spent all my money. I wish I were as I used to be!” Ah, poor Sinner, you have good reason to say, “Oh that I were as in months past!” But wait four or five months and then you will say it more emphatically and think even today better than that day! And the further you go on, the more you will wish to go back again. For the path to Hell is down, down, down, down—always down—and you will be always saying, “Oh that I were as in months past!” You will look back to the time when a mother’s prayer blessed you and a father’s reproof warned you— when you went to a Sunday school and sat upon your mother’s knee, to hear her tell you of a Savior. And the longer the retrospect of goodness, the more that goodness will pain you! Ah, my Friends, you have need to go back, some of you. Remember how far you have fallen—how much you have departed. But oh, you need not turn back! Instead of looking back and crying, “Oh that I were as in months past,” say something different! Say, “Oh that I were a new man in Christ Jesus!” It would not do for you to begin again in your present state. You would soon be as bad as you now are. But say, “Oh that I were a new man in Christ Jesus! Oh that I might begin a new life!” Some of you would like to begin a new life—some of you reprobates, who have gone far away! Well, poor mortal, you may! “How?” you say? Why, if you are a new man in Christ Jesus you will begin again! A Christian is as much a new man as if he had been no man at all, before! The old creature is dethroned. He is a new creature, bornagain and starting on a new existence! Poor Soul! God can make you a new man! God, the Holy Spirit, can build a new house out of you, with neither stick nor stone of the old man in it! And He can give you a new heart, a new spirit, new pleasures, new happiness, new prospects and, at last, give you a new Heaven! “But,” says one “I feel that I need these things, but may I have them?” Guess whether you may have them, when I tell you—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” It does not say it is worthy of some acceptation, but it is worthy of all the acceptation you will ever give it! If you now say, “Jesus came into the world so save sinners, I believe He did! I know He did! He came to save me,” you will find it, “worthy of all acceptation.” You still say, “But will He save me?” I will give you another passage—“Whoever comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” “Ah, but I do not know whether I may come!” “Whoever,” it says. “Him that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” “Whoever will, let him come,” it is written. Do you will? I only speak to such as will, who know their need of a Savior. Do you will? Then God, the Holy Spirit says, “Whoever will, let him come and take the Water of Life freely”— *“The feeble, the guilty, the weak, the forlorn, In coming to Jesus, shall not meet with scorn! But He will receive them and bless them and save From death and destruction, from Hell and the grave.”*And He will lift them up to His Kingdom of glory. God so grant it! For His name’s sake. Amen

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1011 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

JOB’S REGRET AND OUR OWN  
NO. 1011

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 17, 1871, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness. As I was in the days of my youth,  
when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle.”**

**Job 29:2, 3, 4.**

IF Job here refers to the temporal prosperity which he had lost, we cannot condemn him for his complaint, neither can we commend him. It is but the expression of a natural regret which would be felt by any man who had experienced such great reverses. But there is everywhere in the expressions which he uses such a strain of spirituality that we are inclined to believe that he had more reference to the condition of his heart than to the state of his property. His soul was depressed. He had lost the Light of God’s countenance. His inward comforts were declining, his joy in the Lord was at a low ebb—this he regretted far more than anything besides. No doubt he deplored the departure of those prosperous days when, as he states it, his root was spread out by the waters and the dew lay all night upon his branch. But much more did he bemoan that the Lamp of the Lord no more shone upon his head, and the secret of God was not upon his tabernacle.

As his spiritual regrets are far more instructive to us than his natural ones, we will turn all our attention to them. We may, without violence, appropriate Job’s words to ourselves. I fear that many of us can, with great propriety, take up our wailing and mourn for the days of our espousals—the happy days of our first love. I shall have to trouble you with many divisions this morning. But I shall be brief upon each one, and I hope that our thoughts may be led onward, and rendered practically serviceable to us, by the blessing of God’s Spirit.

I. Let us begin by saying that regrets such as those expressed in the text are, and ought to be, very BITTER. If it is the loss of spiritual things that we regret, then may we say from the bottom of our hearts, “Oh that I were as in months past.” It is a great thing for a man to be near to God. It is a very choice privilege to be admitted into the inner circle of communion and to become God’s familiar friend. Great as the privilege is, so great is the loss of it. No darkness is so dark as that which falls on eyes accustomed to the Light. The poor man who was always poor is scarcely poor— but he who has fallen from the summit of greatness into the depths of poverty is poor, indeed.

The man who has never enjoyed communion with God knows nothing of what it must be to lose it. But he who has once been pressed upon the Savior’s bosom will mourn, as long as he lives, if he is deprived of the sacred enjoyment. The mercies which Job deplored in our text are no little ones. First, he complains that he had lost the consciousness of Divine

preservation . He says, “Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me.” There are days with Christians when they can see God’s hand all around them, checking them in the first approaches of sin, and setting a hedge about all their ways. Their conscience is tender and the Spirit of God is obeyed by them. They are, therefore, kept in all their ways—the angels of God watching over them—lest they dash their foot against a stone.

But when they fall into laxity of spirit and walk at a distance from God, they are not so preserved. Though kept from final and total apostasy, yet they are not kept from very grievous sin, and, like Peter who followed afar off, they may be left to deny their Master, even with oaths and curses. If we have lost that conscious preservation of God which once covered us from every fiery dart—if we no longer abide under the shadow of the Almighty, and feel no longer that His Truth is our shield and buckler—we have lost a joy worth worlds, and we may well deplore it with anguish of heart.

Job had also lost Divine consolation, for he looks back with lamentation to the time when God’s candle shone upon his head, when the sun of God’s love was, as it were, in its zenith and cast no shadow—when he rejoiced without ceasing, and triumphed from morning to night in the God of his salvation. The joy of the Lord is our strength, the joy of the Lord is Israel’s excellency. It is the Heaven of Heaven, it is Heaven even upon earth. And consequently, to lose it is a calamity indeed.

Once a person has been satisfied with favor and is full of the blessing of the Lord, will he be content to go into the dry and thirsty land and live far off from God? Will he not rather cry out with David, “My soul thirsts for God. When shall I come and appear before God?” Surely his agonizing prayer will be, “Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your free Spirit.” Love to God will never be content if His face is hidden. Until the curtain is drawn aside and the King’s face is seen through the lattices, the true spouse will spend her life in sighing—mourning like a dove bereaved of its mate.

Moreover, Job deplored the loss of Divine illumination. “By His light,” he says, “I walked through darkness.” That is to say, perplexity ceased to be perplexity. God shed such a light upon the mysteries of Providence that where others missed their path, Job, made wise by Heaven, could find it. There have been times when, to our patient faith, all things have been plain. “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.” But if we walk far off from God, then, straightway, even the precious Truth of God is no more clear to us, and the dealings of God with us in Providence appear to be like a maze. He is wise as Solomon who walks with God—but he is a very fool who trusts his own understanding.

All the wit that we have gathered by observation and experience will not supply us with sufficiency of common sense if we turn away from God. Israel, without consulting God, made a league with her enemies. She thought the case most plain when she entered into hasty alliance with the Gibeonites. But she was duped by cunning because she asked not counsel of the Lord. In the simplest business we shall err if we seek not direction from the Lord. Yet, where matters are most complicated, we shall walk wisely if we wait for a voice from the oracle, and seek the good Shepherd’s guidance.

We may bitterly lament, therefore, if we have lost the Holy Spirit’s Light. If now the Lord answers us not, neither by His Word, nor by His Providence—if we wander alone, crying, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him”—we are in an evil case, and may well sigh for the days, when by His Light, we walked through darkness. Moreover, Job had lost Divine communion—so it seems, for he mourned the days of his youth—when the secret of God was upon his tabernacle. Who shall tell to another what the secret of God is?

Believing hearts know it, but they cannot frame to pronounce aright the words that could explain it, nor can they convey by language what the secret is. The Lord manifests Himself unto His people as He does not unto the world. We could not tell the love passages that there are between Believers and their Lord. Even when they are set to such sweet music as the Song of Solomon, carnal minds cannot discern their delights. They cannot plow with our heifer, and therefore they read not our riddle. As Paul in Heaven saw things which it were unlawful for a man to utter, so the Believer sees and enjoys, in communion with Christ, what it would not only be unlawful but impossible for him to tell to carnal men. Such pearls are not for swine. The spiritual discerns all things, but he, himself, is discerned of no man.

Now it is a high privilege, beyond all privileges to enter into familiar communion with the Most High. And the man who has once possessed it, and has lost it, has a more bitter cause for regret than if, being rich, he had lost his wealth. Or being famous, he had lost esteem. Or being in health, he were suddenly brought to the bed of languishing. No loss can equal the loss of You, my God! No eclipse is so black as the hiding of Your face! No storm is so fierce as the letting forth of Your indignation! It is grief upon grief to find that You are not with me as in the days of old!

Wherever, then, these regrets do exist, if the men’s hearts are as they should be, they are not mere hypocritical or superficial expressions but they express the most bitter experiences of our human existence. “Oh that I were as in months past” is no sentimental sigh, but the voice of the innermost spirit in anguish, as one who has lost his first-born.

II. But, secondly, let me remind you that these regrets are NOT INEVITABLE. That is to say, it is not absolutely necessary that a Christian should ever feel them, or be compelled to express them. It has grown to be a tradition among us that every Christian must backslide in a measure, and that growth in Grace cannot be unbrokenly sustained. It is regarded by many as a law of Nature, that our first love must grow cold, and our early zeal must necessarily decline. I do not believe it for a moment!

“The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day.” And were we watchful and careful to live near to God, there is no reason why our spiritual life should not continuously make progress both in strength and beauty. There is no inherent necessity in the Divine life, itself, compelling it to decline, for is it not written, “It shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life”? “Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Grace is a living and incorruptible seed that lives and abides forever, and there is nowhere impressed upon the Divine life a law of pining and decay. If we do falter and

faint in the onward path, it is our sin, and it is doubly sinful to forge excuses for it. It is not to be laid upon the back of some mysterious necessity of the new nature that it should be so, but it is to be brought as a charge against ourselves.

Nor do outward circumstances ever furnish a justification to us if we decline in Grace—for, under the worst conditions, Believers have grown in Grace. Deprived of the joys of Christian fellowship, and denied the comforts of the means of Grace, Believers have, nevertheless, been known to attain to a high-degree of likeness to Christ Jesus. Thrown into the midst of wicked companions, and forced to hear, like righteous Lot, the filthy conversation of the ungodly, yet Christians have shone all the brighter for the surrounding darkness and have been able to escape from a wicked and perverse generation. Certain is it that a man may be an eminent Christian and be among the poorest of the poor—poverty need not, therefore, make us depart from God.

And it is equally certain that a man may be rich, and for all that may walk with God and be distinguished for great Grace. There is no lawful position of which we may say, “It compels a man to decline in Grace.” And, Brethren, there is no period of our life in which it is necessary for us to go back. The young Christian, with all the strength of his natural passions, can, by Grace, be strong and overcome the Wicked One. The Christian in middle life, surrounded with the world’s cares, can prove that “this is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith.” The man immersed in business may still be baptized of the Holy Spirit. Assuredly, old age offers no excuse for decline—“they shall still bring forth fruit in old age. They shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright.”

No, Brethren, as Christ said to His disciples when they would gladly have sent the multitude away to buy meat, “they need not depart,” so would He say to the whole company of the Lord’s people, “you need not depart.” There is no compulsion for decline in Grace. Your sun need not stand still, your moon need not wane. If you cannot add a cubit to your spiritual stature, at any rate, it need not decrease. There are no reasons written in the book of your spiritual nature why you, as a Believer, should lose fellowship with God. And if you do so, take blame and shame to yourself—but do not ascribe it to necessity. Do not gratify your corruptions by supposing that they are licensed to prevail occasionally—neither vex your Graces by conceiving that they are doomed to inevitable defeat at a certain season. The spirit that is in us lusts to evil, but the Holy Spirit is able to subdue it, and will subdue it, if we yield ourselves to Him.

III. But, now, I am compelled to say that the regrets expressed in our test are exceedingly COMMON, and it is only here and there that we meet with a Believer who has not had cause to use them. It ought not to be so, but it is so. How grievously often will the pastor hear this among the bleating of the sheep—“Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me.”—

*“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still.  
But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill.”*

The commonness of this lamentation may be somewhat accounted for by the universal tendency to undervalue the present and exaggerate the excellence of the past. Have you ever noticed this in natural things? We are prone to cast a partial eye upon some imaginary “good old times.” It is gone, and therefore it was good. It is here, and therefore it is dubious. In the middle of the summer we feel that the heat is so taxing that a frost would be the most delightful thing conceivable. We love, we say, the bracing air of winter. We are sure it is much healthier for us—yet, usually, when winter arrives, and the extreme cold sets in—we are all most anxious for the advent of spring, and we feel that somehow or other the frost is more trying to us than the heat.

Personally, I met with an illustration of this tendency the other day. I went down a steep cliff to the sea shore, and during the descent every step tried my weak knees and I felt that going down hill was the most difficult traveling in the world. Soon I had to return from the sands, and climb the steep path again. And, when I began to pant and puff with the difficult ascent, I changed my opinion and felt that I would a great deal sooner go down than come up! The fact is that whatever is with us we think to be the worse, and whatever was with us we conceive to be the better. We may, therefore, take some discount from our regrets. Perhaps were we more conscious of the benefit of the present state, and did we make less prominent the difficulty of it, we should not sigh to be as we were in months past.

Then, again, regrets may, in some cases, arise from a holy jealousy. The Christian, in whatever state he is, feels his own imperfection much, and laments his conscious shortcomings. Looking back, he observes with joy the work of Grace in his soul and does not, perhaps, so readily remember the then existing deficiencies of nature. Therefore he comes to think that the past was better than the present. He is afraid of backsliding and therefore he jealously fears that he is so. He is so anxious to live nearer to God, so dissatisfied with his present attainments—that he dares not believe that he advances—but fears that he has lost ground.

I know this in my own experience, for when lying sick I have frequently lamented that pain has distracted my mind and taken my attention off the Word of God. And I have longed for those seasons of health when I could read, meditate, and study with pleasure. But now that I have risen up from the sick bed, and am growing strong again, I frequently look back to the long nights and quiet days spent in my sick chamber and think that it was better with me then than now—for now I am apt to be cumbered with much serving—and then I was shut in with God. Many a man is really strong in Christ, but because he does not feel all the juvenile vivacity of his early days, he fears that ritual decrepitude has come upon him.

He is now far more solid and steadfast, if not quite so quick and impulsive. But, the good man, in his holy jealousy, marks most the excellencies of his juvenile piety and forgets that there were grave deficiencies in it! While in his present state, he notes the deficiencies and fears to hope that he possesses any excellencies. We are poor judges of our own condition, and usually err on one side or the other. All Graces may not flourish at the same time, and faults in one direction may be more than balanced by advantages in another. We may be deeper in humility if we are not higher in delight. We may not glitter so much, and yet there may be more real

gold in us. The leaf may not be so green, but the fruit may be more ripe. The way may be rougher, and yet be nearer Heaven. Godly anxiety, then, may be the cause of many regrets which are, nevertheless, not warranted by any serious declension.

And, let me add that very often these regrets of ours about the past are not wise. It is impossible to draw a fair comparison between the various stages of Christian experience so as to give a judicious preference to one above another. Consider, as in a parable, the seasons of the year. There are many persons who, in the midst of the beauties of spring, say, “Ah, but how fitful is the weather! These March winds and April showers come and go by such fits and starts that nothing is to be depended upon. Give me the safer glories of summer.” Yet, when they feel the heat of summer, and wipe the sweat from their brows, they say, “After all, with all the fullblow of beauty around us, we admire more the freshness, verdure, and vivacity of spring. The snowflake and the crocus coming forth as the advance guard of the army of flowers, have a superior charm about them.”

Now it is idle to compare spring with summer. They differ and have each its beauties. We are in autumn now, and very likely, instead of prizing the peculiar treasures of autumn, some will despise the peaceful Sunday of the year, and mournfully compare yon fading leaves to funeral sermons replete with sadness. Some will contrast summer and autumn, and exalt one above another. Now, whoever shall claim precedence for any season shall have me for an opponent! They are all beautiful in their season, and each excels after its kind. Even thus it is wrong to compare the early zeal of the young Christian with the mature and mellow experience of the older Believer and make preferences. Each is beautiful according to its time.

You, dear young Friend, with your intense zeal, are to be commended and imitated. But very much of your fire I am afraid arises from novelty and you are not so strong as you are earnest. Like a newborn river, you are swift in current, but neither deep nor broad. And you, my more advanced Friend, who are much tried and buffeted—to you it is not easy to hold on your way under great inward struggles and severe depressions. But your deeper sense of weakness, your firmer grasp of Truth, your more intense fellowship with the Lord Jesus in His sufferings, your patience, and your steadfastness—are all lovely in the eyes of the Lord your God. Be thankful, each of you, for what you have, for by the Grace of God you are what you are.

After making all these deductions, however, I cannot conceive that they altogether account for the prevalence of these regrets. I am afraid the fact arises from the sad truth that many of us have actually deteriorated in Grace, have decayed in spirit, and degenerated in heart. Alas, in many cases old corruptions have fought desperately, and for awhile caused a partial relapse. Grace has become weak and sin has seized the occasion for attack so that for a time the battle is turned, and Israel’s banner is trailed in the mire. With many professors, I am afraid, prayer is neglected, worldliness is uppermost, sin has come to the front, nature leads the van, and Grace and holiness are in the background. It should not be so, but I am afraid, ah, sadly afraid, it is.

IV. I will more fully speak upon this matter under the fourth head. Since these regrets are exceedingly common, it is to be feared that in some cases they are very sadly NEEDFUL. Now, let the blast of the winnowing fan be felt through the congregation. Behold, the Lord Himself winnows this heap. Are there not many among us who once walked humbly with God, and near to Him, who have fallen into carnal security? Have we not taken it for granted that all is well with us, and are we not settled upon our lees like Moab of old? How little of heart-searching and selfexamination are practiced nowadays! How little inquiry as to whether the root of the matter is really in us! Woe unto those who take their safety for granted and sit down in God’s House and say, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we.”

Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion! Of all enemies, one of the most to be dreaded is presumption. To be secure in Christ is a blessing—to be secure in ourselves is a curse. Where carnal security reigns, the Spirit of God withdraws. He is with the humble and contrite, but He is not with the proud and self-sufficient. My Brethren, are we all clear in this respect? Do not many of God’s people also need to bemoan their worldliness? Once Christ was all with you, Brethren—is it so now? Once you despised the world, and despised alike its pleasures and its frowns. But now, my Brethren, are not the chains of worldly custom upon you? Are you not, many of you, enslaved by fashion, and eaten up with frivolity?

Do you not, some of you, run as greedily as worldlings after the questionable enjoyments of this present life? Ought these things be? Can they remain so and your souls enjoy the Lord’s smile? “You cannot serve God and Mammon.” “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” You cannot be Christ’s disciples, and be in fellowship with the ungodly. Come out from among them! Be you separate! Touch not the unclean thing! Then shall you know right joyfully that the Lord is a Father to you, and that you are His sons and daughters.

But, Brethren, have you gone unto Jesus without the camp, and do you abide there with Him? Is the line of your separation visible—yes, is it existing? Is there any separation at all? Is it not often the case that the professed people of God are mixed up with the sons of men so that you cannot discern the one from the other? If it is so with anyone of us, let him humble himself, and let him cry in bitterness, “Oh that I were as in months past.” Brothers and Sisters, feel you the breath of the winnowing fan again? How is it with you as to private prayer? Are there not Believers, and we hope true Believers, too, who are lax in devotion? The morning prayer is brief, but alas, it is not fervent. The evening prayer is too often sleepy—cries to the Lord are few and far between—communion with Heaven is distant, suspended, almost non-existent in many cases.

Look into this, my Brethren. Let each man commune with his own heart and be still. Think not of others just now, but let each one consider his ways. How is it with your love to the souls of sinners? There was a time when you would have done anything to bring a man to Christ—when any exertion you could have put forth would have been made spontaneously—without the need of incessant exhortations. Are you as ready to speak for Jesus now as you once were? Do you watch to bring souls to Him? Does the tear tremble in your eye, now, as it once did for lost souls perishing without Christ? Alas, upon how many has a hardening influence operated!

Ah, and this is true even of us ministers. We have grown professional in our service, and now we preach like automatons, wound up for a sermon to run down when the discourse is over. We have little more care for the souls of men than if they were so much dirt. Trifles of criticism, fancies of speculation, or fopperies of oratory fascinate too many who should be wise to win smiles. God forgive us if we have fallen into so deplorable a state. Ah, and how many of God’s people must confess that their conscience is not so tender now as it used be? The time was when if you said half a word amiss, you would hide away to weep over it. When, in business, if there had been a little mistake, and anything that might be construed as a want of integrity you would have felt ashamed for a week that such a thing had happened.

But now! Ah, professors hear this—some of you can be dishonest and speak words that border on lasciviousness, and be as others are, yet your heart does not smite you—instead you come to the Communion Table and feel you have a right to be there! You listen to the Word of God and take comfort from it—when you should be ashamed and confounded! Let me enquire whether there are not many of us whose zeal is almost gone? We once loved the Savior intensely, and His cause we eagerly sought to serve. But now we take matters easily and do not travail in birth for souls. Some rich men were likely to give most freely to the cause of God, but now covetousness has palsied the hand of generosity. Even poor Christians are not always so ready with their two mites as they were in better days.

You were likely to labor, too, but that Sunday school class sees you no longer. No street preaching now. No tract distributing now—all forms of Christ’s service you have renounced—you fancy you have done enough. Alas, poor Sluggard! Has the sun shone long enough? Has God given you your daily bread long enough? Oh, cease not working, Brethren, till God ceases to be merciful to you! “On, on, on!” “Forward, forward, forward,” is the very motto of the Christian life. Let none of us talk of finality for we have not yet attained. Till life is over our zeal should still glow, and our labors for Christ should multiply.

Are there but other signs of declension that some of us might, with but a very slight examination, discover in ourselves? Is not brotherly love in many Christians very questionable? Have they not forgotten, altogether, the family ties which bind all Christians to one another? And with brotherly love has not love to the Gospel gone, too, so that now, with many, one doctrine is almost as good as another? If a man can talk well, and is an orator, they enjoy his ministry whether he advocates Truth or error. Once they could go to the little meeting house where Christianity was preached faithfully, though in an uncouth style. But now they must have the help of organs or they cannot praise God. And there must be millinery and genuflections or else they cannot pray to Him. And they must listen to oratory and elocution or else they cannot accept God’s Word.

He is sickly who cannot dine without made dishes and spiced meats, but he is a healthy man of God who can eat Heaven’s bread and Heaven’s meat even when it is not served on a lordly dish. Might not many of us blush if we were to think how low our Graces are, how weak our faith, how few our good works and our gracious words with which we should bear testimony to His name? Yes, in thousands of cases Christians need not be stopped if they were to commence this mournful cry, “Oh that I were as in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle.”

V. But, I must pass on to observe that these regrets, BY THEMSELVES, ARE USELESS. It is unprofitable to read these words of Job and say, “Just so, that is how I feel,” and then continue in the same way. If a man has neglected his business, and so has lost his trade, it may mark a turn in his affairs when he says, “I wish I had been more industrious.” But if he abides in the same sloth as before, of what use is his regret? If he shall fold his arms and say, “Oh that I had dug that plot of land! Oh that I had sown that field”—no harvest will come because of his lamentations!

Up, Man, up and labor or you will have the sluggard’s reward—rags and poverty will still be your portion! If a man is in declining health. If drunkenness and riot have broken down his constitution, it may mark a salutary reform in his history if he confesses his former folly. But if his regrets end in mere expressions, will these heal him? I think not. So neither will a man affected by spiritual decline be restored by the mere fact of his knowing himself to be so. Let him go to the Beloved Physician, drink of the Waters of Life again, and receive the leaves of the tree which are for the healing of the nations. Inactive regrets are insincere. If a man really did lament that he had lost communion with God, he would seek to regain it. If he does not seek to be restored, he is adding to all his former sins that of lying before God in uttering regrets that he does not feel in his soul.

I have known some, I fear, who even satisfied themselves with expressions of regrets. “Ah,” they say, “I am a deeply experienced man, I can go where Job went. I can mourn and lament as Job did.” Remember, many have been on Job’s dunghill who knew nothing of Job’s God—many have imitated David in his sins who never followed him in his repentance. They have gone from their sin into Hell by the way of presumption, whereas David went from it to Heaven by the road of repentance and forgiveness. Never let us merely, because we feel some uneasiness within, conclude that this suffices. If in the dead of the night you should hear thieves in your house, you would not congratulate yourself because you were awake to hear them. You would waive all such comfortable reflections till the rogues were driven out and your property was safe.

And so, when you know things are amiss with you, do not say, “I am satisfied, because I know it is so.” Up, Men, and with all the strength that God’s Holy Spirit can give you, strive to drive out these traitors from your bosom—for they are robbing your soul of her best treasures!

VI. Brothers and Sisters, these regrets, when they are necessary, are very HUMBLING. Meditate now for a minute. Think, Beloved, what was your position in your happiest times, in those days that are now past? Had you any love to spare, then? You were zealous—were you too zealous? You were gracious—were you too gracious? No, in our best estate we were very far short of what we ought to be, and yet we have gone back from even that! It was a poor attainment at the best—have we fallen even from that?  
During the time we have been going back, we ought to have gone forward. What enjoyments we have lost by our wanderings! What progress we have missed! As John Bunyan well puts it, when Christian fell asleep and lost his roll he had to go back for it. And he found it very hard going back, and, moreover, he had to go on again so that he had to traverse three times the road he needed only to have traveled once. And then he came in late at the gates of the palace Beautiful and was afraid of the lions, of which he would have had no fear had not the darkness set in. We know not what we lose, when we lose growth in Grace.

Alas, how much the Church has lost through us, for if the Christian becomes poor in Grace, he lessens the Church’s wealth of Grace. We have a common treasury as a Church, and everyone who takes away his proportion from it robs the whole. Dear Brethren, how accountable are many of us for the low tone of religion in the world, especially those of us who occupy the foremost ranks! If Grace is at a low ebb with us, others say, “Well, look at So-and-So. I am as good as he.” So much in the Church do we take the cue from one another that each one of us is in a measure responsible for the low state of the whole. Some of us are very quick to see the faults of others—may it not be that these faults are our own children?

Those who have little love to others generally discover that there is little love in the Church, and I notice that those who complain of the inconsistencies of others are usually the most inconsistent persons themselves. Shall I be a robber of my fellow Christians? Shall I be an injury to the cause of Christ? Shall I be a comfort unto sinners in their sin? Shall I rob Christ of His Glory—I, who was saved from such depths of sin—I, who have been favored with such enjoyments of His Presence—I, that have been on Tabor’s top with Him, and seen Him transfigured—I, that have been in His banqueting house, and have drunk out of the flagons of His love—shall I be so devoid of Grace that I shall even injure His children and make His enemies to blaspheme? Wretch that I am, to do this!

Smite your breast, my Brothers and Sisters, if such has been your sin! Go home and smite your breast again and ask God to smite it, till, with a broken heart, you cry repentantly for restoration! And then again go forth as a burning and a shining light to serve your Master better than before.

VII. These regrets, then, are humbling, and they may be made very PROFITABLE in many other ways. First, they show us what human nature is. Have we gone back so far? O, Brethren, we might have gone back to perdition! We would have done so if it had not been for the Grace of God. What a marvel it is that God has borne with our ill manners, when He might justly have laid the reins on our necks and suffered us to rush on in the road which we so often hankered after. See you not, dear Brethren, what a body of death we carry with us, and what a terrible power it possesses? When you see the mischief that corruption has already done, never trust yourself, but look for new Grace every day. Learn again to prize what spiritual blessings yet remain.

If you have such bitter regrets for what you have lost, hold fast what is still yours. Slip back no further, for if these slips have cost you so much, take heed that they do not ruin you. To continue presumptuous may be a proof that our profession is rotten throughout—only a holy jealousy can remove the suspicion of insincerity. Let your previous failings teach you to walk cautiously in the future. Be jealous, for you serve a jealous God. Since gray hairs may come upon you, here and there, and you may not know it, search, watch, try yourself day by day lest you relapse yet more. This should teach us to live by faith, since our best attainments fail us. We rejoice today, but we may mourn tomorrow.

What a mercy it is that our salvation does not depend on what we are or what we feel! Christ has finished our salvation—no man can destroy what He has completed. Our life is hid with Christ in God, and is safe there! None can pluck us out of Jehovah’s hands. Since we so frequently run aground it is clear that we would be wrecked altogether if we went to sea in a legal vessel with Self for our pilot. Let us keep to the good ship of Free Grace, steered by immutable faithfulness—for none other can bring us to the desired haven. But oh, let that Free Grace fill us with ardent gratitude!

Since Christ has kept us, though we could not keep ourselves, let us bless His name, and, overwhelmed with obligations, let us rise with a solemn determination that we will serve Him better than we have ever done before. And may His blessed Spirit help us to make the determination a fact.

VIII. So, to close. These regrets OUGHT NOT TO BE CONTINUAL. They ought to be removed—decidedly removed—by an earnest effort, made in God’s strength, to get back to the position which we occupied before, and to attain something better still. Dear Brothers and Sisters, if any of you desire now to come into the higher life, and to feel anew your first love, what shall I say to you? Go back to where you started! Do not stay discussing whether you are a Christian or not. Go to Christ as a poor guilty sinner. When the door to Heaven seems shut to me as a saint, I will get through it as a sinner, trusting in the precious blood of Jesus.

Come and stand again, as though all your sins were still on you, at the foot of the Cross, where still may be seen the dropping blood of the infinitely precious Atonement. Savior, I trust You again—guilty, more guilty than I was before, a sinful child of God, I trust You—“wash me thoroughly from my iniquities, and purge me from my sin.” You will never have your Graces revived unless you go to the Cross. Begin life again. The best air for a man to breathe when he is sickly is said to be that of his birthplace— it was at Calvary we were born! It is only at Calvary we can be restored when we are declining.

Do the first works. As a sinner, repair to the Savior and ask to be restored. Then, as a further means of health, search out the cause of your declension. Probably it was a neglect of private prayer. Where the disease began, there must the remedy be applied. Pray more earnestly, more frequently, more importunately. Or was it a neglect of hearing the Word? Were you enticed by novelty or cleverness away from a really searching and instructive ministry? Go back and feed on wholesome food again— perhaps that may cure the disease. Or have you been too grasping after the world? Brother, you loved God when you had but one shop! You have two, now, and are giving all your time and thoughts to business—and your soul is getting lean. Man alive! Strike off some of that business, for it is a bad business that makes your soul poor.

I would not check industry or enterprise for a single moment. Let a man do all he can, but not at the expense of his soul! Push, but do not push down your soul. You may buy gold too dear, and may attain a high position in this world at a cost which you may have to rue all your days. Where the mischief began, there apply the remedy. And oh, I urge upon you, and most of all upon myself, do not make excuses for yourselves! Do not mitigate your faults—do not say it must be so. Do not compare yourselves among yourselves, or you will be unwise.

But to the perfect image of Christ let your hearts aspire! To the ardor of your Divine Redeemer who loved not Himself, but loved you. To the intense fervor of His Apostles who laid themselves upon the altar of God for His sake. For Christ’s sake, and for yours, aspire to this, and may we as a Church live near to God, and grow in Grace! Then shall the Lord add to us daily of such as shall be saved.

There are some here who will say, “I do not comprehend this sermon—I have no cause to look back with regret. I have always been much the same as I am. I know nothing of religion.” The day shall come when you will envy the least and most trembling Believer. To you careless, Christless sinners, the day shall come when you will cry to the rocks for mercy, and beg them to conceal you from the eyes of Him whom now you dare despise. I beseech you be not high minded, lift not up your horn on high, speak not so exceeding proud! Bow before the Christ of God, and ask Him to give you the new life. For even if that new life has declined and become sickly, it is better than the death in which you dwell. Go and seek Grace of Him who alone can give it, and He will grant it to you this day, for His infinite mercy’s sake. Amen.

infinite mercy’s sake. Amen.

**6.**

MR. SPURGEON takes occasion to inform his weekly readers that the funds in hand for sustaining the orphans under his care at Stockwell are gradually diminishing and assistance will be very seasonable. About 200 fatherless boys are in the Orphanage.

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÷Job 29.20

FRESHNESS  
NO. 1649

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 16, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand.” Job 29:20.  
“I shall be anointed with fresh oil.”  
Psalm 92:10.**

THE first text tells us of the renown of Job and of the way in which the Providence of God continued to maintain the glory of his estate, his bodily health and his prosperity. He was for many days, months, years, continuously prospered of God. Everything to which he set his hand succeeded. God had set a hedge about him and all that he had, so that none broke through to molest him. He grew richer, he grew more influential, he had more honor in the sight of his fellow men each morning that he walked to the gate. In every way he was advanced from day to day and that throughout a long stretch of years. His glory was fresh in him. He did not achieve a hasty fame and then suddenly become forgotten. He did not blaze out like a meteor and then vanish into darkness, but he seemed to be continually fresh, vigorous, strong, energetic and successful.

He says that his bow was renewed in his hand, whereas a bow usually loses its force by use and is less able to shoot arrows after a little while and needs to lie still with a slack string—but it was by no means so with Job. He could send one arrow and then another and then another—and the bow seemed to gather strength by use! That is to say, he never seemed to be worn out in mind or body. Whatever he commenced was commenced with as great a freshness and zest as the last thing which he had accomplished and that had been commenced with the same energy as the first enterprise of his youth. However, this did not always last, for Job, in this chapter, is telling us of something that used to be—something that, the loss of, he very sorrowfully deplored—“my glory was fresh in me.” He found himself suddenly stripped of riches and of honor and put last in the list instead of first, while his purposes and aims seemed all to miss their way—and he had no strength and no glory left in him. Now he had reached the winter of his discontent and those who, before, did him homage, became his assailants. So far as glory was concerned, he was forgotten as a dead man out of mind.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, this gives us a lesson that we must not put our trust in the stability of earthly things. It is said of the world that God has founded it upon the floods. How, then, can we expect it to be substantial? Beneath yon moon, continually changing, what can we discover that abides the same? Where the very light of Heaven is waxing and waning, what is there but mutability? Change is written upon the face of all things. If, then, you have built your nest on high, reckon not too surely that you shall die in your nest—for the axe may fell the tree and bring it down at an untimely date. If your children are round about you in good health, be not too sure of them, for they may be carried to an early grave—and the parent may yet be childless.

If up to now you have been great in the esteem of men, think less than nothing of that, for the breath of popular applause is more fleeting than a vapor! It scarcely comes before it goes, and they who, yesterday, cried, “Hosanna,” in the streets at your coming, may, before tomorrow’s sun is set, be crying, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” They did that to the Master— marvel not if they do it to the servants! This is the respect that makes all mortal things inconsiderable to a wise man—he scarcely will put them among his treasures—for they melt before they are fairly counted, like a coinage of ice. They are but as the counters that a child plays with, having only an imaginary value. The things which are seen are shadows—the things invisible are the only substances. Reckon, then, at their fit price, this transient glory of wealth, health, or fame. Lay up treasure, “where neither moth nor rust does corrupt,” and seek for stability in other things than these. Get the feet of yours joy upon the Rock of Ages and reckon all else to be but sand at its very best.

David, in the second text is talking, I think, about spiritual things, and he tells us with great joy that he should be anointed with fresh oil. He did not expect that his glory would depart, but he expected that it should be renewed. He did not reckon that the bow would lose its force in his hand, but that God would increase his strength from day to day. And if any of you, here, who are God’s people have any fears about the future as to your soul matters—if you are alarmed with the fear that you will share the same lot which Job shared as to his temporal glory—I would remind you that Job, even in temporals, received at last twice as much as he had in his best. We must remember that God can turn His hand one way as well as another and brighten your prospects as well as darken them! Predict delight rather than despair. Even the lower springs shall continue to flow till you are beyond the need of them!

Just now it is about spiritual matters that I want to speak—and if you have a fear that you must necessarily decline in these—I would remind you of the words of David, “I shall be anointed with fresh oil” and, yet further on, of his other words, “They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright.” Never fall into the notion that a spiritual falling off is inevitable—there need be nothing of the kind—you may be fresh as the dew even unto the end! The subject, tonight, will run in this way—First, the excellency of freshness—“My glory was fresh in me.” Secondly, the fear of ill-departure. And, thirdly, the hope of is continuance, which hope is greatly encouraged by the words of our text—“I shall be anointed with fresh oil.”

I. First, then, notice THE EXCELLENCY OF FRESHNESS. “I shall be anointed with fresh oil.” David had been anointed, while still a youth, to be king over Israel. He was anointed, yet again, when he came to the kingdom. That outward anointing with actual oil was the testimony of God’s choice and the emblem of David’s authorization. Oftentimes, when his throne seemed precarious, God confirmed him in it and subdued the people under him. When his dominion became weak, God strengthened him and his servants and gave them great victories, so that, as a king, David was frequently anointed with fresh oil. David’s royal brow was crowned with fresh laurels again and again and his throne was settled and established by the hands of the Lord.

It was established, not with the same old stale anointing—a repetition of that which had lost its force—but with oil freshly pressed from the green olive, namely, with a new blessing and a fresh blessing from God’s right hand, as I trust, you and I may be! Freshness is a most delightful thing if you see it in another. It is a charm in Nature. The other day, when the wind blew cold, someone said to me, “Yes, but how fresh the air is and how refreshing—how different from that heavy, muggy atmosphere in which we were half drowned and almost entirely suffocated but a few days ago.” We need something fresh, and when we get it, we are freshened ourselves! How pleasant to go into the garden and see the spring flowers just peeping up. How agreeable to mark the rills, with their fresh water leaping down the hills after showers of rain. The young lambs in the meadows and larks in the sky are delightful because of their freshness. Everything that is fresh seems to have a charm about it to our minds.

But, dear Friends, spiritual freshness has a double charm! Sometimes we know what it is to have a freshness of soul, which is the dew from the Lord. You remember when first your flesh was as that of a new-born child? I mean when you were newly born again and first knew the Lord. How fresh everything was to you! The pardon of sin—how it sparkled! The righteousness of Christ—how brilliant! The idea of being a child of God— how novel and how delightful! To be joint-heir with Christ—how it almost startled you—it was such a new idea to your spirit! And oftentimes since then, when your soul has been in a lively condition, everything has been bright, charming, exhilarating—nothing flat, stale, unprofitable.

Even though you heard the same things said again and again, yet, because your soul was fresh, they came to you with unusual power. Your spiritual food, if you are healthy, is always fresh to you, like the manna in the wilderness which was never stored a single night except for the Sabbath—but fresh and fresh it fell—and Israel gathered it and fed upon it then and there. Oh, it is a blessed thing to have your soul in a fresh state, filled with the ever-flowing Living Water! It is glorious to find everything about you fresh and new through the teaching of the blessed Spirit, so that you go from strength to strength and, like a roe or a young hart, leap from hill to hill! If we are now in the possession of it, may we always keep that freshness of soul and never lose it.

How that freshness is seen in a man’s devotions. Oh, I have heard some prayers that are really musty! I have heard them so often that I dread the old familiar sounds! Some hackneyed expressions I remember hearing when I was a boy. I even now hear the vain repetitions—old, worn-out, good-for-nothing rubbish expressions they were then—but they are still brought out by regular prayer-makers! Even where the words are new and original, you will hear men pray in such a style as to make you say to yourself, “That prayer came out of Noah’s Ark.” As far as that man is concerned, there is nothing at all in it of life, sap, or savor. It has been dead long ago and hung up to dry till not a particle of juice remains in it.

But, on the other hand, you hear a man pray who does pray—whose soul is fully in communion with God—and what life and freshness is there! It may be that his expressions are somewhat rough, but they touch you because they come from his heart. Some of the confessions and petitions are strange to you, perhaps, and yet you feel that they are such strangers as it behooves you to be joyous at once! You are glad that such words and thoughts have passed through your spirit and blessed you! You feel that you can pray with such persons. Their prayers will go to Heaven, for they came from Heaven! God has inspired them and their originality is a part of the manual of the Spirit. I like to hear a Brother even stop and stammer because he cannot go on—his heart is too full and he cannot find words. Oh, but it is blessed to get a little freshness, even if it comes through a breakdown!

I suppose that those dear Friends who pray by the book of Common Prayer, somehow or other manage to put freshness into their prayers. I am always glad that they do, for it shows the vigor of their piety. As for me, I am such a poor, weak thing, that after I have repeated the same words about half-a-dozen times, they do me no good. I must use words that suit the time and suit the state of my heart—and suit my desires and suit my depressions or my joys—and suit my thankful or mournful heart! One seems to need in prayer something fresh, but when the prayer is old and worn—and seems to have been brushed and turned and very little made of it, after all—why, then it does not strike us, or impress us, or help us! I like to feel freshness even in singing a hymn. It may be that we know the words, but then we must put fresh heart into them and feel them over again as much as if we were the authors of them! Then they become a grand vehicle for our praises! How sweet to sing, as it were, a new song! It is a blessed thing to have a freshness about our devotions, be they private or public, exultant or repentant.

And so, dear Friends, it is well to have a freshness about our feelings. I know that we do not hope to be saved by our feelings—neither do we put feeling side by side with faith—yet I should be very sorry to be trusting and yet never feeling. Surely it would be a dead faith! It would be a strange thing to be a living child of God and to have no feelings. I will tell you about feelings as they strike me. Sometimes I have deplored the condition of my heart before God and thought my feelings to be the worst that could be. But what a foolish judge I have been, for in a week’s time I have needed to have those despised feelings over, again, and thought that now, at last, I had fallen into a worse state than before. I am persuaded that we are very poor judges of the value of our own inward feelings, and, perhaps, when we are lowest in our own esteem we are really highest in the sight of God.

And when we feel as if we did not pray, we are praying, and the heart may be wrestling with God more when it fears that it does not pray than when you come down complacently out of yours closet and say, “I know that I have had a good time, for I feel perfectly self-satisfied.” I long for the Truth of God in the inward parts and wisdom in the secret places of the soul. Anything is good which rids us of pretense! Oh to be broken into splinters by the hand of God! And for every grain of dust to cry out to Him! I believe this mode of praying often prospers beyond any other. At any rate, give me not stereotyped pretension to feeling, but fresh feeling. Whether it is joy or sorrow, let it be living feeling, fresh from the deep fountains of the heart! Whether it is exultation or depression, let it be true and not superficial or simulated! I hate the excitement which needs to be pumped up. There is a something delightful, to my mind, in coming to the Throne of Grace, weeping—a something delightful in coming to the Lord’s Supper full of joy and gladness—to come to either place cold and dead is horrible! There is something delicious in knowing that what you feel is true and comes up from the very bottom of your soul. That it has a point and edge about it which proves how sincere it is. God keep us from stale feelings and may He give us freshness of emotion!

I believe, dear Friends, that there is a very great beauty and excellence in freshness of utterance. Do not hinder yourself from that. How I long for it as a preacher! When one has, day after day, to stand before the same assembly and to talk of the things of God, one dreads lest he should be so monotonous and full of repetition that even the things of God should come to be a weariness to God’s own people! I have often thought that if some Brothers who are very careful to speak exceedingly well what they say, should be a little more careless and speak as it comes—letting their heart flow over at their lips spontaneously—then there would be a far greater freshness about their utterance than there is when every sentence smells of the lamp and reeks of midnight oil!

God forbid that we should say a word against the deep study and the profound research of God’s Word, but still, we may get to be so much students that we scarcely speak like practical men who live among the people! By aiming at a very superior style, we may fall into a thoroughly inferior one and all our freshness may be gone. I like, for my part, the wild bird’s note. Men get the bullfinch and teach it to sing a few notes—and then the piping bullfinch is greatly prized. But I have finches outside my window, any one of which will beat any finch in the world that only pipes a note or two, for they pipe much more melodiously, though they were never taught except by God and Nature! There is a range of sweetness about their wild notes that a tutored bird cannot reach. Nature, pure and unsophisticated, is the best instrument for Divine Grace.

I like to hear men speak of God as they have known Him, every man in his own order, and with his own voice. Coming fresh, perhaps, from the very haunts of sin, out of which free Grace has fetched them, let them speak like Israelites fresh from the brick kilns! Coming from the plow-tail or from the forge with all the equipment of their trade about them and speaking just as they are. Without pretending to be anything else than they are and telling of God’s amazing love to them—not quoting the experience of others, but giving out their own—this will be their wisdom and strength! Oh, there is a freshness about that and a great power to catch the ear and to move the heart when God, the Holy Spirit, is present to bless it!

Now, you that have lately been converted, do not go and learn all the pretty phrases that we are accustomed to use. Do not go and sit down at the feet of your dear teacher in the class and feel that you must talk just like he. Strike out your own course. Be yourself! “But I would be odd,” you say. All right—so is your pastor! You need not mind that. You will not be the only odd body about. Be encouraged by that! I think that a little of what people call oddness is just, after all, leaving God’s work alone. All the trees that God makes are odd. The Dutchmen clip them round or make them into peacocks, but that style of gardening is not to our mind.

But some people say, “What a lovely tree!” I say, “What a horribly ugly thing it is.” Why not let the tree grow as God would have it? Do not clip yourselves round or square, but keep your freshness! There will be no two Christians exactly alike if they do that. There should be a freshness, dear Friends, about our labor. We ought to serve the Lord, to-day, with just as much novelty in it as there was 10 years ago. I may even venture to say 30 years ago! Oh, I remember the seriousness with which I went out to preach the first half-dozen sermons I ever preached—and what a burden it was from the Lord! And how I did go at it with all my might? Very clumsily, but still with all my soul and spirit!

And do you remember when you began to teach the class, or began to take your tract district? Did you not pray over it? It seemed almost too good to be true that you should be trusted with doing anything for your Lord and Master! And you did it, oh, so intensely and, therefore, you had God’s blessing! You did it well, though you blundered a good deal, for all your heart was in it, your motive was pure and your faith was childlike. You blundered the right way, for you blundered with your heart and so blundered into other men’s hearts! Your heart was serving God, even in the mistakes you made.

And now, perhaps, you can go round the district and you are pretty well half-asleep over it. And you can teach the class, but there is not the vigor, the force, the energy, the intense desire, the burden that there once was—perhaps not all the joy. You can stand up and preach, dear Brother, and you have got pretty well accustomed to it—and the people have got accustomed to it, too—and they can nearly go to sleep! And you can, too— preach asleep! It is an easy thing to do, if you once learn the wretched art. There is a kind of sleep-walking in preachers—they can talk in their sleep in a very precise way—much more wonderful than walking! You cannot say, “I sleep, but my heart wakes.” The fact is that it is the other way around—“I wake, but my heart sleeps”—and it is a great pity when it comes to be so.

We should pray to God that we may do everything fresh, just as if we had never done it before, only doing it with all the improvements which experience will bring to us! Pray with your children, tonight, as if it were your first prayer with them! Speak with them about their souls as if you had never mentioned the subject before. Talk of Jesus as if you were telling new news! Why, aren’t you? Is it not always glad tidings? Always news fresh from Heaven? May God grant us Grace that, when we come to be gray and when we totter with our staff for very age—we may still tell out the story, if with feebleness of utterance, yet with juvenility of heart— feeling that we are bringing forth fruit even to old age, for the Lord still anoints us with fresh oil!

So much for the beauty and excellence of freshness. It ought to run into everything.

II. Now, dear Friends, in the second place, I will dwell upon the fear of losing it—THE FEAR OF ITS DEPARTURE. I have heard some express the thought that perhaps the things of God might lose their freshness to us by our familiarity with them. I think that the very reverse will turn out to be the case if the familiarity is that of a sanctified heart. In other things, “familiarity breeds contempt,” but in the things of God, familiarity breeds adoration. The man who does not read his Bible much is the man who has a scant esteem of it. But he that studies it both day and night is the very man who will be impressed by its infinitude of meaning till he will be ready to cry, like Jerome, “I adore the infinity of Scripture.”

I know that he that prays most loves prayer most and he that is most occupied with the praises of God is the very person who wishes that he could praise God day and night without ceasing. These things grow on you. Hence I would have no man fear that familiarity with holy things can take away from their freshness and their beauty! You may drink at other wells till you are no longer thirsty, but, strange to say, this all thirstquenching water, nevertheless, produces a much deeper thirst after its own self. He that eats of the Bread of Heaven shall hunger for no other, but shall grow ravenous for it. His capacity for feeding upon it shall be increased by that which he has fed upon. And, whereas at first, the crumbs from under the table might have satisfied him when he knew himself to be but a dog, at last, when he knows himself to be a child of God, he wishes for everything that is set upon the table!—

*“Less than Yourself will not suffice*

*My comfort to restore.”*  
He must have all that is to be had! Such is his desire. Dismiss, then, any fear from your minds about that.

When we first commenced to break bread on every first day of the week, I heard some say that they thought that the coming so often to the Table might take away the impressiveness of the holy feast. Well, I have scarcely ever missed a Sabbath, now, these 20 years, and I never was so impressed with the solemnity and the sweetness of the Master’s Supper as I am now! I feel it to be fresher every time. When it was once a month, I had not half the enjoyment in it, and I think that where friends have the communion once a quarter, or once a year, as in some Churches, they really do not give the ordinance a fair opportunity to edify them. They do not fairly test the value of an ordinance which they so grossly neglect, as it seems to me. No, you may have more, and more, and more, and more of everything that Christ has instituted and ordained, especially more and more of Himself— and the more you have, the more freshness there will be!

“Yes, but we have had a fear, sometimes, that there will be a lack of freshness about ourselves.” Well, that fear is a very natural one. Let me tell you some points on which, I fear, we have good ground of alarm, for we do our best to rob ourselves of all life and freshness. Christian people can lose the freshness of themselves by imitating one another. By adopting as our model some one form of the Christian life other than that which is embodied in the Person of our Lord, we shall soon manufacture a set of paste gems, but the diamond flash and glory will be unknown. Many godly people have a very deep sense of their corruption and inward sin and this, together with sorrowful spirit, combines to make them a rather gloomy race. Often deeply taught in other respects, they fail to rejoice in the Lord.

Certain of these have formed a school and they have set up a standard and judge everybody to be a deceiver or a mere babe in Grace who cannot groan as deep down as they can. This is not wise. If you do that, you will lose your freshness, for you will forever be scattering your dust and ashes over all the joys of your life. Why should the children of the bride-chamber mourn while the Bridegroom is with them? Let us be happy while we may! There is another set of Brethren who are always glad and happy, for they are healthy and competently provided for. They think they are out of the way of temptation and so they believe that they are perfect—they also set up a standard and cut down everybody who cannot sing right up into the alto notes as high as they can! Well, you will get stale, too, Brothers and Sisters, whoever you may be, for self-laudation never keeps fresh long!

When we have heard about half-a-dozen brethren boasting that they are nearly perfect, it is about as much as some of us can stomach! I cannot stand above two of them without feeling my boxing propensities set in motion! Poor fools, how have they persuaded themselves to hope that selfpraise will be thought to be the height of piety? It is nauseous, even, to those of us who are prepared to make a measure of excuse for the fervid imaginations of the brethren! Drop into one particular groove and run in it—take up one line of things and stick to it—and you will very soon find yourself as far from freshness as a bit of leather which has been worked on an engine to revolve forever and ever in the same course! The beauty of real life lies much in its variety.

A Brother comes to me on Sunday morning sighing. Thank you, Brother, for that! I am glad that you are in that state, for that is where I am! And we can sympathize with each other. Perhaps tomorrow I meet this same friend and he is full of joy and delight, and I say, “Thank you, Brother, I am glad to meet with somebody who is rejoicing in the Lord. You give me a lift. Now shall I be helped to rejoice in Him, too.” Sometimes, in this pilgrimage to the Celestial City, I join company with a Brother worker who laments that he has many difficulties in dealing with poor sinners. I say to him, “I am glad of that, for I have more difficulties than you, but I see that I am not alone in my anxieties.” Another I meet with says that he has been so happy in meeting with souls that have found the Lord and I reply, “Yes, and I am glad to see you, for I am happy, too, for I have met with many who have just found the Savior.”

These changes and ups and downs are like the delicious variations of the seasons—they are not always autumn, not always spring, not always winter, not always, even, the plenitude of summer. So with our souls, we are never so long in one place as to find monotony in life. No, the monotony is in death—the freshness is in life! These changes and varieties create a splendid freshness which we might not hope to have if we tied ourselves to one man’s chariot and resolved that our experience should be uniformly like his. Another way of spoiling your freshness is by repression. The feebler sort of Christians dare not say, feel, or do, until they have asked their leader’s permission. I have known a little village chapel in which, when the preacher had delivered a sermon, the people did not know whether he was sound or not till they had asked the principal deacon! Or they waited till they got outside and consulted a little knot of good old men and women who had to act as tasters for all the others and give a verdict as to the orthodoxy of the performance! A few good souls thought the sermon to be very sweet—the man seemed to be preaching the Gospel—but they did not like to commit themselves to the tune till they had got the key note. And when they had seen the Brother that led them all, then they knew! If he said that it was all right, why, then it was all right!

Now, dear Friend, if you feel that God is blessing you in any religious exercise, mind that you are blessed and let other people who do not like to be blessed go without it if they must. But as for you, be blessed when you can! Do not be ashamed to enjoy that which others despise. Sit down and quietly feast on the kernel while others are breaking their teeth over the shells. If you feel that you must sing, sing without stint! Why not? In the kitchen—in the parlor—sing! Never mind if remarks are made. Do not worldlings sing to their own liking—why shouldn’t you? If sometimes you feel that you cannot sing, well, then, do not sing! Be yourself and be natural as Divine Grace makes you natural—that is the thing. Let your mind have freedom and do not feel as if you went about in fetters, bound to this and pledged to that!

In the living kingdom of the living God there is no rule that you groan at eight o’clock in the morning and sing at noon; that you sigh at half-past three and get the plenitude of the Spirit at a quarter past seven! Nothing of the kind! It is a free Spirit under whose power we dwell and He comes like the wind and goes like the wind—and acts according to His own pleasure. Lord, uphold me with “Your free Spirit.” Do not repress Him. “Quench not the Spirit.” Yield yourselves to His influences and if you feel inclined to shout, be brave enough to do so—and give the praise to God! This is a successful way of keeping up freshness—to be rid of repression and to be free before God.

If we want to keep up our freshness, however, the main thing is never to fall into neglect about our souls. Do you know what state the man is generally in when you are charmed by his freshness? Is he not in fine health? Some of my dear friends were known to call and see me when I was laid up some time ago—and I am afraid that they did not find much freshness about me, then! On the contrary, they heard much the same old story—weary nights and painful days. I hope I did not display much impatience, but still, the tendency is to give a good deal of telling of what one has to endure! There is not much freshness about that.

But a man is fresh, generally, when he is well and everything is going right within his internal economy. Then he thinks fresh thoughts and uses fresh words, for all around him life is in its flowery age and sparkles like the morning! I am sure that it is so with the soul. When the soul is healthy—when you are feeding on the Bread of Heaven; when you are living near to God; when you are believing the promises and embracing them; when you are getting into the very sunlight of the Lord’s fellowship—oh, it is then that fresh words and striking words not often heard will drop from you! Pearls will fall from your lips if those lips have been with Jesus, and He has kissed you with the kisses of His mouth! Do not neglect yourself, then! Let the fountain of the heart be right and then the freshness will speedily be seen.

I have shown you the things by which a man may lose his freshness— avoid them carefully. Those of you who are workers for God may have a fear that you will lose the freshness of yours utterances—a fear which haunts a good many of us. Now, that may happen to us by our own fault if there is a need of searching the Word of God; if there is a need of fresh acquisitions of sacred knowledge. And it may happen to us, again, if we are always gathering the thoughts of others and do not think, ourselves. Then we shall lose freshness and become mere dealers in second-hand observations. Many thoughtful Brothers and Sisters are afraid that they may lose it through age. It does happen to men, as they grow old, that much of the vivacity of youth departs. And we all know ministers who have lost much of their power to edify because their freshness and variety have gone. It is a sad thing that it should have to be so with any of us, but what a blessed thing it is if we can fall back upon that assurance, “I shall be anointed with fresh oil.”

Nature decays, but Grace shall thrive. The Holy Spirit will renew our youth. The Grace of God can give us freshness after Nature has ceased to yield it. And it shall be a better freshness—not the dew of our youth, but the dew of the Spirit of the Lord! If Jesus Christ is preached, age becomes an important help in bearing testimony to His faithfulness and power to bless. I can imagine it to be the duty of the aged minister to retire from the prominent sphere where he has long been the preacher—and I hope in my own case I shall not occupy this pulpit an hour too long! But the man of God can find another pulpit—and when he has found it, I can suppose him often beginning his youth, again, as he tells out the story of the Cross and talks of Jesus—and proclaims the Doctrines of Grace again! He can begin in his country sphere much in the same way as he set out at the first. At any rate, he has always this to fall back upon,” I shall be anointed with fresh oil.” The Holy Spirit will abide with him continually and give him an anointing of freshness.

And so with you, dear Friends. You think, when you have done addressing the class, “Well, I am pretty well spun out. I shall never be able to get another address.” Shall you not? Read that— “I shall be anointed with fresh oil.” And you that go out preaching in the villages and often cry, “I do not know what I shall do for a sermon next Sunday,” think of this and be consoled—“I shall be anointed with fresh oil.” Fall back on that! If you are called to speak to the same people for any length of time, it will make the promise all the more dear to you, as you can plead it before God, “Lord, anoint Your servant with fresh oil.” I pray that all of us in heart, soul, life, utterance and labor may always be kept fresh and may God grant that we do not backslide, for that would kill our freshness and put in the place of its sweet smell the foul odors of sin!

Oh to be holy, sweet and vigorous to the end! The Lord grant that we may make large drafts upon Himself for greater faith, greater love, and greater joy—then shall we have greater freshness! May we also be sustained from within by His blessed Spirit and so may our freshness continue to our dying day.

III. I close with the third point, which is this precious Word of God which gives us HOPE OF ITS RENEWAL. Let us not think that we must grow stale and heavenly things grow old with us, for, first, our God in whom we trust renews the face of the year. He is beginning His work, again, in the fair processes of Nature. The dreary winter has passed away. The time of the singing of birds is coming on and the sweet flowers are peeping out from their graves, enjoying a resurrection of’ glory and beauty.

Now, this is the God whom we serve, and if we have been passing through our wintertime, let us look for our spring. If any of you have been growing cold of late—if any of you have grown stale and mechanical and have fallen into ruts—come, look up! Look up and pray the great Renewer to visit you—

*“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,  
With all Your quickening powers.”*  
“He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” It will not take the Lord long to restore you. “His word runs very swiftly.” He speaks even to ice and frost and by His word they pass

away. He has but to will it and all the genial days of spring and summer come hastening on and the banner of harvest is waving. “Awake you that sleeps and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.” Be hopeful! Be joyful! There are better days for you. Put your trust in God, who renews the face of the earth, and look for His Spirit to revive you.

Moreover, there is an excellent reason why you may expect to have all your freshness coming back—it is because Christ dwells in you! Do you not know it? Christ is formed in you the hope of Glory and, if so, your glory will be fresh about you, for He never grows stale. It is God that said of Him, “You have the dew of Your youth.” Oh, the doctrine of the indwelling of Christ in the Believer—let us never forget it! As long as that is a Truth of God, there is always a hope for us. Then there is the other grand doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He dwells in you! If your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, shall He not always be to you a fountain of new life—a spring of fresh delights? Why, it must be so! The Holy Spirit is not exhausted. His power is not lessened in any degree whatever. He can make your face shine, again, and your tongue sing again! He can make your heart leap, again, with unspeakable joy!

Come, you that sit in the dust, begin to rejoice, for God the Spirit is still with you and shall be with you—the Comforter whom Christ has given— never to be taken away! Rejoice in Him and ask Him, now, in His mercy, to restore your soul, and He will do it! Oh, what a blessing it is to get right deep down into God’s Word, for that Word is always new and the source of new thoughts in those who feed upon it! This is the Book of yesterday, today and forever—the Book which, though many of its verses were written thousands of years ago, is as new as though it were only written yesterday! From the mouth of God come the promises, at this moment, full of life and freshness and power! Come to it! It is all yours—every acre of this blessed land of Canaan is yours and will yield you corn and wine and oil!

There is not a star in the great firmament of Scripture but shines for you! There is not a text in all this mighty treasury of God but you may take it and spend it and live upon the produce! Therefore, while the Word of the Lord is so fresh and so full, it cannot be that you shall be stale in thought and conversation. You shall be anointed with fresh oil! God Himself is with you and He is always full! God Himself is with you and He is always living! God Himself is with you and He is always fresh—and He shall refresh your spirit! Why stay away? Come from all that is stale and flat and from all the dead past—and enter into eternal life where flowers forever bloom, fruits forever ripen—and the fresh springs forever flow!

Come and eat the new corn of the land and drink the new wine of the kingdom! And may the Lord make you glad in His House of Prayer for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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÷Job 30.23

CONCERNING DEATH

NO. 1922

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1886, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For I know that You will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.”  
Job 30:23.**

JOB suffered from a terrible sickness which filled him with pain both day and night. It is supposed that, in addition to his grievous eruptions upon the skin, he endured great difficulty in breathing. He says in the 18th verse, “By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it binds me about as the collar of my coat.” His clothes were soiled and clung to him. His skin was blackened and seemed to be tightened. He was like a man whose tunic strangles him—the collar of his garment seemed to be fast bound about his throat. Those who have suffered from it, know what distress is occasioned by this complaint, especially when they are also compelled to cry, “My bones are pierced in me in the night season: and my sinews take no rest.” At such a time Job thought of death and, surely, if at any period in our lives we should consider our latter end, it is when the frail tent of our body begins to tremble because the cords are loosened and the curtain is torn!

It is the general custom with sick people to talk about “getting well” and those who visit them, even when they are gracious people, will see the tokens of death upon them and yet will speak as if they were hopeful of their recovery. I remember a father asking me when I prayed with a consumptive girl to be sure not to mention death. In such cases it would be far more sensible for the sick man to turn his thoughts towards eternity and stand prepared for the great change. When our God, by our affliction, calls upon us to number our days, let us not refuse to do so! I admire the wisdom of Job, that he does not shirk the subject of death, but dwells upon it as an appropriate topic, saying, “I know that You will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.”

Yet Job made a mistake in the hasty conclusion which he drew from his grievous affliction. Under depression of spirit he felt sure that he must very soon die. He feared that God would not relax the blows of His hands until his body became a ruin—and then he would have rest. But he did not die at that time. He was fully recovered and God gave him twice as much as he had before! A life of usefulness, happiness and honor lay before him and yet he had set up his own tombstone and reckoned himself a dead man. It is a pity for us to pretend to predict the future, for we certainly cannot see an inch before us. As it is idle with daydreams to fascinate the heart into a groundless expectation, so is it equally foolish to increase the evil of the day by forebodings of tomorrow. Who knows what is to be? Therefore why should I wish to lift up the corner of the curtain and peer into what God has hidden? Some of those who have been most sure that they would soon die, have lived longer than others. A Prophet once prayed to die and yet he never saw death. From the lips of Elijah, who was to be caught up by a whirlwind into Heaven, it was a strange prayer— “Take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.”

It is the part of a brave man and especially of a believing man, neither to dread death nor to sigh for it—neither to fear it nor to court it. Possessing his soul in patience, he should not despair of life when harshly pressed and he should be always more eager to run his race well than to reach its end. It is no work of men of faith to predict their own deaths. These things are with God. How long we shall live on earth, we know not and need not wish to know. We have not the choosing of short or long life and if we had such choice, it would be wise to refer it back to our God. “Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit,” is an admirable prayer for living as well as for dying saints. To wish to pry between the folded leaves of the Book of Destiny is to desire a questionable privilege—doubtless we live better because we cannot foresee the moment when this life shall reach its finis.

Job made a mistake as to the date of his death, but he made no mistake as to the fact itself. He spoke truly when he said, “I know that You will bring me to death.” Some day or other, the Lord will call us from our home above ground to the house appointed for all living. I invite you, this morning, to consider this unquestioned Truth of God. Do you start back? Why do you do so? Is it not greatly wise to talk about our last hours? “We want a cheerful theme.” Do you? Is not this a cheerful theme to you? It is solemn, but it ought also to be welcome to you! You say that you cannot stand the thought of death. Then you greatly need it! Your shrinking from it proves that you are not in a right state of mind, or else you would take it into due consideration without reluctance. That is a poor happiness which overlooks the most important of facts. I would not endure a peace which could only be maintained by thoughtlessness. You have something yet to learn if you are a Christian and yet are not prepared to die! You need to reach a higher state of Grace and attain to a firmer and more forceful faith. That you are as yet a babe in Grace is clear from your admission that to depart and be with Christ does not seem to be a better thing for you than to abide in the flesh!

Should it not be the business of this life to prepare for the next life and, in that respect, to prepare to die? But how can a man be prepared for that which he never thinks of? Do you mean to take a leap in the dark? If so, you are in an unhappy condition and I beseech you as you love your own soul to escape from such peril by the help of God’s Holy Spirit!

“Oh,” says one, “but I do not feel called upon to think of it.” Why, the very season of the year calls you to it. Each fading leaf admonishes you. You will most surely have to die—why not think upon the inevitable? It is said that the ostrich buries its head in the sand and fancies itself secure when it can no longer see the hunter. I can hardly fancy that even a bird can be quite so foolish! And I beseech you do not enact such madness. If I do not think of death, yet death will think of me! If I will not go to death by meditation and consideration, death will come to me! Let me, then, meet it like a man and, to that end, let me look it in the face! Death comes into our houses and steals away our loved ones. Seldom do I enter this pulpit without missing some accustomed face from its place. Never a week passes over this Church without some of our happy fellowship being caught away to the still happier fellowship above! This week a youthful member has melted away and her mourning parents are in our midst. We as a congregation are continually being summoned to remember our mortality and so, whether we will hear him or not, Death is preaching to us each time we assemble in this house! Does he come so often with God’s message and shall we refuse to hear? No, let us lend a willing ear and heart and hear what God, the Lord, would say to us at this time!

Oh, you that are youngest, you that are most full of health and strength, I lovingly invite you not to put away this subject from you! Remember, the youngest may be taken away. Early in the life of my boys I took them to the old churchyard of Wimbledon and bade them measure some of the little graves within that enclosure—and they found several green hillocks which were shorter than themselves. I tried thus to impress upon their young minds the uncertainty of life. I would have every child remember that he is not too young to die. Let others know that they are not too strong to die. The stoutest trees of the forest are often the first to fall beneath the destroyer’s axe. Paracelsus, the renowned physician of old time, prepared a medicine of which he said that if a man took it regularly, he would never die, except it were of extreme old age. Yet Paracelsus himself died a young man!

Those who think they have found the secret of immortality will yet learn that they are under a strong delusion. None of us can discover a spot where we are out of bow-shot of the last enemy and, therefore, it would be idiotic to refuse to think of it! A certain vainglorious French Duke forbade his attendants ever to mention death in his hearing and when his secretary read to him the words, “The late King of Spain,” he turned upon him with contemptuous indignation and asked him what he meant by it. The poor secretary could only stammer out, “It is a title which they take.” Yes, indeed, it is a title we shall all take and it will be well to note how it will befit us! The King of Terrors comes to kings, nor does he disdain to strip the pauper of his scanty flesh—to you, to me, to all he comes—let us all make ready for his sure approach.

I. First, then, very solemnly under the teaching of God’s Spirit, I call your attention to a piece of PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE—“I know that You will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.” A general Truth of God here receives a personal application.

Job knew that he should be brought to the grave because he perceived the universality of that fact in reference to others. He lived on the verge of an age when life was longer than now and yet the Patriarch had never known a person who had not, after a certain age, left this earthly stage. Cast your eyes over every land, glance from the pole to the equator and along to the other pole, and see if this is not the universal law, that man must be dissolved in death. “It is appointed unto men once to die.” Only two men entered the next world without seeing death, but those two exceptions prove the rule. Another great exception is yet to come which I would never overlook. Perhaps the Lord Jesus Christ may personally come before we see death—and when He comes, we that are alive and remain shall not fall asleep—but even then “we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

This is the great exception to the rule and we cheerfully allow it to dwell upon our minds, but if the Master tarries, we, ourselves, shall not be exempt from the common rule. We must all die. Dust to dust, ashes to ashes must be the last word for us among the sons of men. I hope nobody here is so foolish as to suppose that he shall live on and never be gathered with the great assembly in the house appointed for all living. Last week one poor fanatic who taught that she, herself, would never see corruption, was taken from the midst of her dupes to be laid in the sepulcher. A clergyman whom I well knew, lectured upon his having found the means of living here forever—but he, too, has gone over to the great majority. That we can avoid the grave is a dream, an idle dream, not worthy of a moment’s controversy! All flesh shall see corruption in due time, if it is not changed at the Lord’s coming. “What man is he that lives and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?” In their myriads, the races of the past have subsided into the earth. In one endless harvest, death has reaped down all born of woman. Job knew that he, himself, should be brought to death because all others had been brought there.

He knew it, also, because he had considered the origin of mankind. In our text, the Hebrew expression would run somewhat thus—“I know that You will bring me to death.” He had never died before, yet the expression is constantly used, as in the following passage—“You turn man to destruction and say, Return, you children of men.” We were never in the grave before—how then can we return? Was it not said to Adam, “Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return?” We were taken out of the earth and it is only by a prolonged miracle that this dust of ours is kept from going back to its kindred—the day will come when our earth shall embrace its mother and so the body shall return to its original. If we had come from Heaven, we might dream that we should not die. If we had been cast in some celestial mold, as angels are, we might fancy that the grave would never encase us. But being of the earth, earthy, we must go back to earth! Job says, “I have said to corruption, You are my father: to the worm, You are my mother and my sister.” Thus we have affinities which call us back to the dust. Job knew this and, therefore, seeing from where men came, he inferred—and inferred correctly—that he, himself, would return to the earth.

Further, Job had a recollection of man’s sin and knew that all men are under condemnation on account of it. Does he not say that the grave is a “house appointed for all living?” It is appointed simply because of the penal sentence passed upon our first parent and, in him, upon the whole race. “Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return,” was not for father Adam only, but for all the innumerable sons that come of his loins. “Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” “In Adam all die.” Our babes, who have not personally sinned, yet feel the blight of Adam’s sin and wither in the bud. Our dear children who are nearing manhood and womanhood are cut down and gathered in their beauty. We, also, in the prime and flower of life, bow our heads before the killing wind of death. As for our Sires bending, each man, upon his staff, their posture salutes the tomb towards which they bend. A common fall and a common sin have brought on us universal death. Look on our vast cemeteries and say, “Who slew all these?” The only answer is, “Death came by sin and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

Once more, Job arrived at this personal knowledge through his own bodily feebleness. Perhaps he had not always said, “I know that You will bring me to death,” but now, as he sits upon the dunghill and scrapes himself with the potsherd and writhes in anguish and is depressed in spirit, he realizes his own mortality. When the tent pole quivers in the storm and the covering flaps to and fro in the wind—and the whole structure threatens to dissolve in the tempest—then the tenant of the habitation, chilled to his marrow, needs not to be instructed that his home is frail. He knows it well enough. We need many touches of the rod of affliction before we really learn the undeniable truth of our mortality. Every man, woman and child in this place should unite with me in saying, “I know that You will bring me to death.” And yet it is highly probable that a large number of us do not know this to be so.

“It is a commonplace matter of fact which we all admit,” cries one. I know it is so and yet in the very commonness of the truth there lies a temptation to overlook its personal application. We know this as though we knew it not! To many, it is not taken into the reckoning and it is not a factor in their being. They do not number their days so as to apply their hearts unto wisdom. That poet was half inspired who said, “All men count all men mortal but themselves.” Is it not so with us? We do not really expect to die. We reckon that we shall live a very considerable time. Even those who are very aged still think that as a few others have lived to an extreme old age, so may they! I am afraid there are few who could say with a gracious soldier, “I thank God I fear not death. These 30 years together I never rose from my bed in the morning and reckoned upon living till night.”

Those who die daily will die easily. Those who make themselves familiar with the tomb will find it transfigured into a bed—the morgue will become a couch. The man who rejoices in the Covenant of Grace is cheered by the fact that even death, itself, is comprehended among the things which belong to the Believer. I would to God we had learned this lesson. We should not, then, put death aside among the lumber, nor set it upon the shelf among the things which we never intend to use. Let us live as dying men among dying men and then we shall truly live! This will not make us unhappy, for surely no heir of Heaven will fret because he is not doomed to live here forever. It were a sad sentence if we were bound over to dwell in this poor world forever! Who among us would wish to realize in his own person the fabled life of the Wandering Jew, or even of Prester John? Who desires to go up and down among the sons of men for twice a thousand years?

If the Supreme should say, “Live here forever,” it were a malediction rather than a benediction! To grow ripe and to be carried home like shocks of corn in their season—is not this a fit and fair thing? To labor through a blessed day and then, at nightfall, to go home and to receive the wages of Grace—is there anything dark and dismal about that? God forgive you that you ever thought so! If you are the Lord’s own child, I invite you to look this Home-going in the face until you change your thought and see no more in it gloom and dread, but a very Heaven of hope and glory!

Suffer not my text to be a dirge, but turn it into a golden Psalm, as you say, “I know that You will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.”

II. Having thus discoursed upon a piece of personal knowledge, I now beg you to see in my text the shining of HOLY INTELLIGENCE. Perhaps, when I read the words in your hearing, you did not notice all they contain. Let me then point out to you certain hidden jewels. Job, even in his anguish, does not, for a moment, forget his God. He speaks of Him, here—“I know that You will bring me to death.” He perceives that he will not die apart from God. He does not say his sore boils or his strangulation will bring him to death, but, “You will bring me to death.” He does not trace his approaching death to chance, or to fate, or to second causes—no, he sees only the hand of the Lord! To Him belong both life and death. Say not that the wasting consumption took away your darling! Complain not that a fierce fever slew your father, but feel that the Lord, Himself, has done it! “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems Him good.” Blame not the accident, neither complain of the pestilence, for Jehovah, Himself, gathers Home His own. He only will remove you and me. “I know that You will bring me to death.” There is, to my heart, much delicious comfort in the language before us!

I love that old-fashioned verse—  
*“Plagues and deaths around me fly.  
Till He bids I cannot die—  
Not a single shaft can hit  
Till the God of Love thinks fit.”*

In the midst of malaria and pestilence, we are safe with God. “Because you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation; there shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling.” Beneath the shadow of Jehovah’s wings we need not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flies by day, nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness. We are immortal till our work is done! Be you, therefore, quiet in the day of evil. Rest peacefully in the day of destruction—all things are ordered by wisdom and precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. No forces in the world are outside of His control. God suffers no foes to trespass on the domain of Providence. All things are ordained of God and specially are our deaths under the peculiar oversight of our exalted Lord and Savior! He lives and was dead— and bears the keys of death at His belt. He Himself shall guide us through death’s iron gate. Surely what the Lord wills and what He, Himself, works, cannot be otherwise than acceptable to His chosen! Let us rejoice that in life and death we are in the Lord’s hands.

The text seems to me to cover another sweet and comforting thought, namely, that God will be with us in death. “I know that You will bring me to death.” He will bring us on our journey till He brings us to the journey’s end—He, Himself, our Escort and our Leader. We shall have the Lord’s company even to our dying hour—“You will bring me to death.” He leads me even to those still waters which men so much fear. “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” Beloved, we live with God, do we not? Shall we not die with Him? Our life is one long holiday when the Lord Jesus keeps us company—will He leave us at the end? Because God is with us, we go forth with joy and are led forth with peace! The mountains and the hills break forth before us into singing and all the trees of the field clap their hands. Will they not be equally glad when we rise to our eternal reward? It is not living that is happiness, but living with God—it is not dying that will be wretchedness, but dying without God!

The child has to go to bed, but it does not cry if mother is going upstairs with it. It is quite dark, but what of that? The mother’s eyes are lamps to the child. It is very lonely and still. Not so—the mother’s arms are the child’s company and her voice is its music. O Lord, when the hour comes for me to go to bed, I know that You will take me there and speak lovingly into my ear—therefore I cannot fear, but will even look forward to that hour of Your manifested love! You had not thought of that, had you? You have been afraid of death, but you cannot be so any longer if your Lord will bring you there in His arms of love. Dismiss all fear and calmly proceed on your way, though the shades thicken around you, for the Lord is your light and your salvation!

It may not be in the text, but it naturally follows from it, that if God brings us to death, He will bring us up again. Job, in another passage, declared that he was sure that God would vindicate His cause—“I know,” he says, “that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” Certain wise men who would expunge the very idea of a resurrection out of the Old Testament have tried to make out that Job expected to be restored and vindicated in this life, but he evidently did not expect any such thing, for, according to the text, it is clear that he feared he would die at once! We gather from this verse, by a negative process of reasoning, that the living Redeemer and the vindication which was to be brought to him by that living Redeemer were matters of hope in another life after death!

O Beloved, you and I know this Truth of God from many declarations of our Lord in His Divine Book. Though we die in one sense, yet in another we shall not die, but live! Though our bodies shall, for a little while, sleep in their lowly resting places, our souls shall be forever with the Lord. We shall spend an interval as unclothed spirits in the company of Him to whom we are united by vital bonds—and then the trumpet of the archangel shall summon our bodies from their sleeping places to be reunited with our souls! These bodies, the comrades of our warfare, shall be companions of our victory! “This mortal must put on immortality.”

He who raised up Jesus shall also raise us up! We shall come forth from the land of the enemy in fullness of joy. Therefore we ought to take great comfort from the words of our text and be of good courage. We shall die—there is no discharge in this war. We shall die—let us not sit down like cowards and weep tears bitter with despair. We sorrow not as those that are without hope! Let us view our departure in the soft and mellow light which is shed upon it by the words, “You shall bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.”

III. I pass on to notice the QUIET EXPECTATION which breathes in this text. It is my prayer that we may enjoy the same restfulness. My dear Brothers and Sisters, the text is full of a calm stillness of hope. Job speaks of his death as a certainty, but speaks of it without regret. No, more than that, if you read the connection—it is with a smile of desire, with a flush of expectancy—“I know that You will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.” Many men are unable to regard death with composure—they are disturbed and alarmed by the very hint of it.

I want to reason with those disciples of our Lord Jesus who are in bondage from fear of death. What are the times when men are able to speak of death quietly and happily? Sometimes they do so in periods of great bodily suffering. I have, on several occasions, felt everything like fear of dying taken from me simply by the process of weariness, for I could not wish to live any longer in such pain as I then endured—and I have no doubt that such an experience is common among sufferers from acute disorders. The sons and daughters of affliction are not only trained to wait the Lord’s will, but they are even driven to desire to depart—they would sooner rest from so stern a struggle than continue the fierce conflict.

It is well that pain and anguish should cut the ropes which moor us to these earthly shores, that we may spread our sails for a voyage to the Better Land! Oh, what a place Heaven must be to those whose bones have worn through their skin through long lying upon the bed of anguish! What a change from the workhouse or the infirmary to the New Jerusalem! I have stood at the bedside of suffering saints where I could not but weep at the sight of their pains—what a transition from such agony to bliss! Track the glorious flight of the chosen one from yon weary couch to the crown, the harp, the palm branch and the King in His beauty! The bitter suffering of the body helps the Believer to look upon his translation as a thing to be desired.

The growing infirmities of age work in the same way . Yonder venerable Sister has, at length, become quite deaf. Her great delight was to attend the House of God and she still comes, but the service is a dumb show to her—she cannot hear her pastor’s voice which was once so sweet in her ears. Her eyes, after being helped with more powerful glasses, are, at length, unable to read that dear old Bible which remained her sole solace when she could not hear. Her existence, now, is but half life—she cannot walk far—even in crossing the room, her limbs tremble. She is already half gone. Do you not think that she will now feel happy to quit life, even as a ripe apple easily leaves the tree? At any rate, there will be little strength with which to resist the plucking of Death’s hands. It will be well when the spirit breaks away from the dilapidated hovel of the time-worn body and rises to the building of God—the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens! Many of God’s aged servants who have been spared to advanced years have come to look out for the setting of earth’s sun without a fear of darkness. While they have seemed to have one foot in the grave, they have really had one foot in Heaven!

Beloved, without either falling into sickness, or aging into infirmity, we can reach this state of mind in another way—by being filled with an entire submission to the will of God. When the decree of God is our delight, we feel no abhorrence to anything which He appoints, either in life or in death. If we are living as Christians ought to live, we have denied our selfwill and we have accepted the Lord to be the Arbiter of all events, the absolute Ruler of our being. If your soul is truly married to Christ, you find your supreme bliss in the Bridegroom’s will. Your cry is, “Your will be done!” This should be our ordinary condition in daily life and it is an admirable preparation for thinking of death with composure. Let me live, if God will be with me in life! Let me die, if He will be with me in death! So long as we are, “forever with the Lord,” what matters where else we are? We will not further ask when or where—our when is “forever”—our where is “with the Lord.” Delight in God is the cure for dread of death!

Next, I believe that great holiness sets us free from the love of this world and makes us ready to depart. By great holiness, I mean great horror of sin and great longing after perfect purity. When a man feels sin within him, he hates it and longs to be delivered from it. He loathes the sin that is around him and cries, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” Have you ever been cast in the midst of blasphemers? I am sure you have then sighed to be in Heaven. If you have been sickened by the drunkenness and debauchery of this city, you have cried, “Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest.” Did you not wish as much last year when the lid was being lifted from the reeking caldron of London’s unnatural lust? I am sure I did. I sighed for a lodge in some vast wilderness where rumor of such villainy might never reach me again. In the midst of human sin, if the trumpet were sounded, “up and away,” you would be glad to hear it so that you might speed to the fair land where sin and sorrow will never assail you again!

Another thing that will make us look at death with complacency is when we have a full assurance that we are in Christ and that, come what may, nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Doubt your salvation and you may well be afraid to die. Let even a shadow of doubt fall on the clear mirror in which you see your loving Lord and you will be disquieted. If you can say, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day,” you cannot fear! What reason can you have for alarm? A Christian should go to his bed at night without an anxious care as to whether he shall wake up in this world or in the next. He should so live that nothing would need to be altered if his last hour should strike.

Let us imitate Mr. Wesley’s calm anticipation of his end. A lady once asked Dr. Wesley, “Suppose that you knew you were to die at twelve o’clock tomorrow night, how would you spend the intervening time?” “How, Madam?” he replied, “why just as I intend to spend it now. I should preach this evening at Gloucester and again at five tomorrow morning. After that I should ride to Tewkesbury, preach in the afternoon and meet the society in the evening. I should then repair to friend Martin’s house, who expects to entertain me, converse and pray with the family as usual, retire to my room at ten o’clock, commend myself to my heavenly Father, lie down to rest and wake up in Glory!”

Live in such a way that any day would make a suitable top stone for life! Live so that you need not change your mode of living, even if your sudden departure were immediately predicted to you! When you so live, you will look upon death without fear. We usually fear because we have cause for fear—when all is right we shall bid farewell to terror!

Let me add that there are times when our joys run high, when the big waves come rolling in from the Pacific of eternal bliss! Then we see the King in His beauty by the eye of faith and though it is but a dim vision, we are so charmed with it that our love of Him makes us impatient to behold Him face to face. Have you not sometimes felt that you could sit in this congregation and sing yourself away to everlasting bliss? These high days and holidays are not always with us. All the days of the week are not Sabbaths and all our halting places are not Elim. Brothers and Sisters, when we do play upon the high-sounding cymbals, then we are for joining the angelic chorus! When we feel Heaven within us and stand like the cherubim above the Mercy Seat with outstretched wings, then we do not dread the thought of speedy flight! “Now, Lord, why do I wait? My hope is in You.” Yes, we even cry with Simeon, “Now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word.” Brethren, we shall soon be on the wing! Then will we rise and sing and sing as we rise! We will ascend yon blue sky and, within the jeweled portal, we will spend eternity in praise!

I hope some of you are getting up, a bit, out of your notion that to think of death is gloomy work. I trust you will begin to view it with hope and confidence.

IV. I conclude by saying that this subject affords us SACRED INSTRUCTION. “I know that You will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.” Brothers and Sisters, I shall not always have the privilege of coming here on the Sabbath to speak with you. Perhaps, before long, another voice will invite your attention and I shall be silent in the grave. Neither will you mingle in this throng which so happily gathers here—not much longer will you sit among those who frequent these lower courts. What then?

Let us prepare for death . Let us cleave to the Lord Jesus who is our All. Make your calling and election sure. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and believe intensely. Repent of sin and fly from it earnestly and with your whole heart.

Live diligently . Live while you live. Let every moment be spent as you will wish to have spent it when you survey life from your last pillow. Let us live unto God in Christ by the Holy Spirit. May the Lord quicken our pace by the thought that it is but a little while! A short day will not allow loitering. Do we not live too much as if we played at living? A man will preach a poor sermon if he thinks, “I shall preach for another 20 years.” We must preach as though we never might preach again. You will teach that class very badly, this afternoon, if you have a notion that you can afford to be a little slovenly since you can make up, in the future, for the neglects of the present. Drop no stitches. Do all your work at your best. Do a day’s work in a day and have no balance of debt to carry over to tomorrow’s account. Soon shall you and I stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ to give an account of the things done in the body—therefore let us live as in the light of that day of days, doing work which may bear that fierce light which beats about the Great White Throne.

Next to that, let us learn from the general assembly in the house appointed for all living to walk very humbly. A common tomb must accommodate us all in the end, therefore let us despise all pride of birth, rank, or wealth. There are no distinctions in the last Meeting House—the rich and the poor meet together and the slave is free from his master. I hate that pride which makes persons carry themselves as if they were more than mortal. “I have said, you are gods; but you shall die like men.” A voice from the tombs proclaims a grim equality in death—

*“Princes, this clay must be your bed,  
In spite of all your towers;  
The tall, the wise, the reverend head  
Must lie as low as ours.”*

Therefore speak no more so exceedingly proud. It is madness for dying men to boast! When Saladin lay a-dying he bade them take his winding sheet and carry it upon a lance through the camp, with the proclamation, “This is all that remains of the mighty Saladin, the conqueror of nations!” A lingerer in the graveyard will take up your skull, one day, and moralize upon it, little knowing how wise a man you were! None will then do you reverence. Therefore, be humble.

Be prompt , for life is brief. If your children are to be trained up in God’s fear, begin with them today. If you are to win souls, continue at the holy labor without pause. You will soon be gone from all opportunity of doing good, therefore, whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. When the Eastern emperors were crowned at Constantinople, it is said to have been a custom for the royal mason to set before his majesty a certain number of marble slabs, one of which he was to choose to be his tombstone. It was well for him to remember his funeral at his coronation! I bring before you, now, the unwritten marbles of life! Which will you have, holiness or sin, Christ or self? When you have chosen, you will begin to write the inscription upon it, for your life’s works will be your memorial. God help us to be diligent in His business, for it is not long that we can be at it!

Men and women, project yourselves into eternity—get away from time— for you must soon be driven away from it. You are birds with wings, sit not on these boughs forever blinking in the dark like owls. Bestir yourselves and mount like eagles. Rise to the heights above the present. Life is a short day at its longest and when its sun goes down, it leaves you in eternity. Eternal woe or eternal joy will fill your undying spirit. Your indestructible self must swim in endless bliss or sink in fathomless misery! If you mean to be lost, count the cost and know what you are doing. If you have set your mind on sin and its consequences, do the deed deliberately and do not make a sport of it. Oh, Sirs, some of you will, one of these days, wake up as from an awful dream. Oh that you could foresee the scene which awaits you!

Those were strong words, but they were the words of Jesus—“And in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.” These words reveal none of that pretty nonsense which some prattle about—“a larger hope”—yet Jesus spoke them and His hope was of the largest. He that loved you better than these philosophers love you, also said, “Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed so that they which would pass from there to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from there.” Our Lord put it very strongly. If you mean to dare the infernal terrors, I can do no less than ask you to know what you are doing. If you have chosen sin, you have chosen ruin! Begin to consider it and see whether it is worth while.

But if you have chosen Christ, mercy and eternal life and, if by faith these are yours, begin to enjoy them now! Rehearse the music of the skies. Taste the delights of fellowship with God even here! Rejoice in the victory which now overcomes the world, even our faith. You will be in the Glory Land before long and some of you much sooner than you think. So, as the sermon ends, under a sense of my own frailty, I bid you a sincere adieu. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away—fare you well.

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÷Job 30.25

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY  
NO. 479

**A SERMON FOR THE LANCASHIRE DISTRESS DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 9, 1862,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?”  
Job 30:25.**

IN endeavoring to justify the ways of God, Job’s three friends came to the harsh conclusion that he would not have been so severely afflicted if he had not been such a great sinner. Among other accusations against the afflicted Patriarch, Eliphaz, the Temanite, had the cruelty to lay this at his door, “You have not given water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry.”

Such a slander we may describe as “speaking wickedly for God,” for in his ignorance of the great laws of Providence towards the saints in this life, the Temanite had uttered falsehood in order to account for the Divine procedure. God’s own testimony of Job is that he was, “a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil.” And certainly he could never have earned the character of “perfect” if he had been devoid of pity for the poor.

Richly did the three miserable comforters deserve the burning rebuke of their slandered friend, “You are forgers of lies, you are physicians of no value. O that you would altogether hold your peace, and it shall be your wisdom.” Job, in his great indignation at the shameful accusation of unkindness to the needy, pours forth the following very solemn imprecation—“If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail. Or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless have not eaten thereof.

“If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering. If his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep. If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate: then let my arms fall from my shoulder blades, and my arm be broken from the bone.” Thus vehemently making a tremendous appeal to Heaven, he shakes off the slander into the fire as Paul shook the viper from his hand.

I trust there are many present who, if the like charges should be laid to their door, might as boldly deny it. Not in the same form of imprecation, for that is forbidden to the Christian man, but with all the positiveness which can dwell in the, “Yes, yes, no, no” of the followers of Jesus. I trust that many of you can, in your measure, use the language of the man of Uz and say, “When the ear heard me, then it blessed me. And when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow’s heart

to sing for joy.”

In the two questions of my text, Job claims something more than merely having helped the poor with gifts. He declares that he wept and grieved for them. His charity was of the heart. He considered their case, laid their sorrows to his own soul, and lent his eyes to weep, and his heart to mourn. “Did I not weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?”

Human sympathy is the subject of our present meditation, and I shall labor to excite in you those emotions which are the genuine result of sympathy when it is truly felt. Practical sympathy is my aim. I trust your liberality, at the end of the sermon, will prove that I have hit the center of my target. Human sympathy, then—its commendations, its hindrances, its sure fruits, and its special application to the case in hand this morning.

I. HUMAN SYMPATHY, ITS COMMENDATIONS:  
1. We may say of it, first, that even nature dictates that man should feel a sympathy for his kind. Humanity, had it remained in its unfallen estate, would have been one delightful household of brothers and sisters. If our first parents had never sinned, we should have been one unbroken family, the home of peace, the abode of love. The fact that, “God has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth,” would then have been a realized and established truth. No nationalities would have divided, or personal interests separated us.  
Having one common Father, one loving God, one blissful Paradise, our lives would have been one long Heaven on earth of sweetly intermingled peace, love, joy, fellowship and purity. One can hardly indulge a conception of such a happy world without an intense regret that the Fall has made it all a dream—yet let us dream a moment of a world without a soldier, without a sword, or spear, or shield—a world without a prison, a magistrate, or a chain. A society in which none will wrong his fellow man, but each is anxious for the well-being of all. A race needing no exhortation to virtue, for virtue is its very life.  
Let us dream of a land where love has knit all natures into unity, and breathed one soul into a thousand bodies! Alas, for us, when Adam fell, he not only violated his Maker’s laws, but in the Fall he broke the unity of the race. And now we are isolated particles of manhood, instead of being what we should have been—members of one body—moved by one and the same spirit. The dream may vanish but we lose not our argument, for even in fallen humanity there are some palpitations of the one heart, some signs of the, “one blood.” Flesh and blood are able to make the revelation that we were not made to live unto ourselves.  
Fallen and debased as man is, and this pulpit is not prone to flatter human nature, yet we cannot but recognize the generous feeling towards the poor and suffering which exists in many an unregenerate heart. We have known men who have forgotten God, but who, nevertheless, do not forget the poor. Who despise their Maker’s Laws, but yet have a heart that melts at a tale of woe. It were folly to dispute that some who deny the God that made them, have yet exhibited hearts of compassion to the poor and needy. When even publicans and harlots can exhibit sympathy, how much more should it burn in the Christian heart? We should do more than others, or else we shall hear the Master say, “What thanks have you? For sinners also do even the same.”  
Called with a nobler calling, let us exhibit, as the result of our regenerate nature, a loftier compassion for the suffering sons of men. Many interesting incidents have been recorded by naturalists of sympathy among animals. The “dumb driven cattle” of our pastures, and the dogs of our streets have manifested commiseration towards a suffering one of their own species. And we are less than men, we are worse than brute beasts, if we can enjoy abundance without sharing our bread with the starving. Woe to us if we can be wrapped in comfort and refuse a garment to the shivering poor, or rest in our ceiled houses and yield no shelter to the homeless wanderer.  
Brothers and Sisters, if Nature herself teaches you, why should I say more? You are not unnatural. You achieve already more than mere nature can demand. You do the greater, you will not fail in the less.  
2. Further, we may remark that the absence of sympathy has always been thought of, in all countries and in all ages, as one of the most abominable of vices.  
In old classic history, who are the men held up to everlasting curses? Are they not those who had no mercy on the poor? Each land has its legend of the proud noble who hoarded up his corn in the day of famine, and bade the perishing multitudes curse and die. And down to this day the name of such a wretch is quoted as a word of infamy. A man without a heart would be a beast more worthy of being hunted down than a tiger or a wolf. Men with little hearts and grasping ungenerous spirits—how heartily are they despised! If they wear the Christian garb they disgrace it!  
The ordinary disciples of morality are ashamed of them, and I may add that even vice and immorality shun their company. The grinding, hardhearted man may gain the approbation of those who are like himself, and therefore applaud him for his prudence and discretion, but the big heart of the world has ever been sound enough on this matter to understand that there is no genuine virtue without liberality. One of the most damning of all vices which stamps a man as being thoroughly rotten to the core is that vice of selfishness which makes the wretch live and care only for his own personal aggrandizement and offer only a stony heart to the woes of his fellows. Brethren, I entertain no fear that you will ever win the badge of infamy which hangs about the neck of churls.  
3. But I have better arguments to use with you. Sympathy is especially a Christian’s duty. Consider what the Christian is, and you will say that if every other man were selfish, he would be disinterested. If there were nowhere else a heart that had sympathy for the needy, there would be one found in every Christian breast. The Christian is a king. It becomes not a king to be merely caring for himself. Was Alexander ever more royal than when his troops were suffering from thirst? A soldier offered him a bowl full of the precious liquid—he put it aside and said it was not fitting for a king to drink while his subjects were thirsty—and that he would share the sorrow with them.  
O, Christian, whom God has made kings and princes, reign royally over your own selfishness, and act with the honorable liberality which becomes the royal seed of the universe! You are sent into the world to be saviors of others, but how shall you be so if you care only for yourselves? It is yours to be lights, and does not a light consume itself while it scatters its rays into the thick darkness? Is it not your office and privilege to have it said of you as of your Master—“He saved others, himself he cannot save?”  
The Christian’s sympathy should ever be of the widest character because he serves a God of infinite love. When the precious stone of love is thrown by Divine Grace into the crystal pool of a renewed heart, it stirs the transparent life floods into ever widening circles of sympathy—the first ring has no very wide circumference. We love our own household. For he that cares not for his own household is worse than a heathen man and a publican. But mark the next concentric ring. We love the household of faith. “We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the Brethren.”  
Look once more, for the ever-widening ring has reached the very limits of the lake, and included all men in its area! “Supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks are to be made for all men.” If any man shall think that we are not, “born for the universe,” and should narrow our souls, I can only say that I have not so learned Christ and hope never to confine to a few the sympathy which I believe to be meant for mankind. To me, a follower of Jesus means a friend of man. A Christian is a philanthropist by profession, and generous by force of Grace. Wide as the reign of sorrow is the stretch of his love—and where he cannot help—he still pities.  
4. Beloved, will you remember the blessed example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? For this, surely, will teach you not to live for self. “For you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty might be rich.” His heart is made of tenderness, His heart melts with love. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. Since the day when He became flesh of our flesh, He has never hidden Himself from our sufferings. Our glorious Head is moved with all the sorrows which distress the members.  
Crowned though He now is, He forgets not the thorns which once He wore. Amid the splendors of His regal state in Paradise, He is not unmindful of His children here below. Still is He persecuted when Saul persecutes the saints. Still are His Brethren as the apple of His eye and very near His heart. If you can find in Christ a grain of selfishness, consecrate yourselves unto your lusts and let Mammon be your God. If you can find in Christ a solitary atom of hardness of heart, or callousness of spirit, then justify yourselves, your thick hearts are as stones to the wailing of the desolate.  
But if you profess to be followers of the Man of Nazareth, be full of compassion. He feeds the hungry lest they faint by the way. He binds up the broken in heart and heals all their wounds. He hears the cry of the needy, and precious shall their blood be in His sight. Therefore be also tender-hearted and also very affectionate the one toward the other.  
5. Dear Friends, though this last reason will certainly be to a Christian heart the very best that can be urged, yet permit me to suggest another. Sympathy is essential to our usefulness. I know that a man in the ministry who cannot feel, ought to resign his office. We have heard some hold forth the Doctrines of Grace as if they were nauseous medicine and men were to be forced to drink them by hard words and violent abuse. We have always thought that such men did more harm than good, for while seeking to vindicate the letter, they evidently missed the spirit of the faith once delivered unto the saints.  
Cold and impassive are some of our Divines—they utter the Truth of God as though it were no concern of theirs whether men received it or not. To such men, Heaven and Hell, death and eternity, are mere themes for oratory—not subjects for emotion. The man who will do good must throw himself into his words. He must put his whole being into intense communion which the Truth of God which he utters. God’s true minister cannot preach a sermon upon the ruin of man without feeling a deep amazement in his own spirit, because of the burden of the Lord. He cannot, on the other hand, unfold the joys of pardon and the love of Jesus without a leaping heart and rejoicing tongue.  
The man who is devoid of love will be devoid of power, for sympathies are golden chains by which Christian orators draw men’s ears and hearts to themselves and the truths they teach. “I preached,” said one, “when I spoke of condemnation, as though I wore the chains about my own arm and heard them clanking in my ears.” “And I,” another might have said, “I preached of pardon bought with blood, as though I had myself just come up from the sacred fountain, having left my foulness all behind, and being girt about with the white linen which is the righteousness of the saints.” If our hearers perceive that we do not really long for their good, that our preaching is but a matter of mere routine to be got through as so much irksome “duty,” can we hope to win their hearts?  
But when they feel that there is a roving heart within the preacher, then they give the more earnest heed to the things whereof we speak. You Sunday school teachers, you must have warm hearts or you will be of little use to your children. You street preachers, City Missionaries, Bible women, and tract distributors—you who in any way seek to serve our Lord—a heart, a heart, a heart, a tender heart, a flaming heart, a heart saturated with intense sympathy—when sanctified by the Holy Spirit, will give you success in your endeavors.  
Name the men the wide world over who have been the most successful in bending multitudes to their own will, and they are the men who have the largest hearts. For good or evil, heart power is real power. The men whose hearts move with mighty pulsations like the piston of a steam engine, will soon move the wheels and drag along the ponderous load. We must have within us the engine of the heart throbbing mightily and continually. And then shall we draw the hearts of men with irresistible force. 6. Here I must supplement that thought with another: sympathy may often be the direct means of conversion. How do the Romanists craftily avail themselves of this! The loaves and fishes have always been used at Rome as an attraction to the multitude. Still the Sister of Mercy, with her basket on her arm, goes to the poor, or devotes herself to the sick—and in this we praise them. Were it the Gospel they had to teach, they could scarcely have found a wiser method for its propagation. And

be it what it may which they have to disseminate, they certainly have not failed for lack of wisdom.  
I would that we who have a purer faith could remember a little more the intimate connection between the body and the soul. Go to the poor man and tell him of the bread of Heaven, but first give him the bread of earth, for how shall he hear you with a starving body? Talk to him of the robe of Jesus’ righteousness, but you will do it all the better when you have provided a garment with which he may cover his nakedness. It seems an idle tale to a poor man if you talk to him of spiritual things and cruelly refuse him help as to temporals. Sympathy, thus expressed, may be a mighty instrument for good.  
And even without this, if you are too poor to be able to carry out the pecuniary part of benevolence, a kind word, a look, a sentence or two of sympathy in trouble, a little loving advice, or an exhortation to your neighbor to cast his burden on the Lord, may do much spiritual service. I do not know, but I think if all our Church members were full of love, and would always deal kindly, there would be very few hearts that would long hold out, at least from hearing the Word. You ask a person to hear your preacher. But he knows that you are crotchety, short-tempered, illiberal— and he is not likely to think much of the Word which, as he thinks, has made you what you are.  
But if, on the other hand, he sees your compassionate spirit, he will first be attracted to you, then next to what you have to say, and then you may lead him as with a thread and bring him to listen to the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. And who can tell but thus, through the sympathy of your tender heart, you may be the means of bringing him to Christ?  
7. And I shall say here, that this sympathy is sure to be a great blessing to yourselves. If you want joy—joy that you may think upon at nights and live upon day after day, next to the joy of the Lord—which is our strength—is the joy of doing good. The selfish man thinks that he has the most enjoyment in laying out his wealth upon himself. Poor fool! His interest is vastly small compared with the immense return which generosity and liberality and sympathy bring to the man who exercises them. Be assured that we can know as much joy in another’s joy as in our own joy.  
Then, beside the joy it brings, there is experience. Experimental knowledge may be gained by it. I would not, of course, declare that a man can get experience without having trouble, himself. But the next best thing to it, is to bear other people’s troubles. We may never have known what it is to want bread—but to see a saint who has been brought to the door of starvation—and yet has had his bread given, and his water sure, may be almost as useful.  
You and I may not be tortured with the pangs of sickness or the weakness of decay. But to climb some three pairs of stairs to a miserable back room, and watch a child of God patient in his tribulation—and to put ourselves by sympathy upon his bed, and suffer and smart with him—that may give us the next best thing to the experience, itself. I do think, Brethren, that some men may live twenty lives, and get the experience of twenty men—and the information and real good of twenty men’s troubles—by having large hearts which can hold the sorrows of others. Oh, we cannot tell how much blessedness we might receive if we were more free to aid our fellows! “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”  
Ask any man who has been to visit the sick, the poor and the needy, whether he has not come home more resigned to his own trials, and more satisfied with his own lot. We gave a shilling and received a casket of pearls, which dropped from the lips of the poor suffering one while he told of God’s faithfulness, and the preciousness of the love of Christ. We are great losers when we know not these rich poor saints. If we would but trade with them, it were a blessed barter for us. Coral and pearl—let no mention be made of them in comparison with the priceless gems which we might receive if we had greater sympathy and fuller communion with the suffering sons and daughters of Jerusalem.  
Thus have I said as much as may be fitting this morning in commendation of Christian sympathy.  
II. We speak now of THE HINDRANCES TO CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY. Some say that there is very little Christian sympathy abroad. I do not believe them, except as regards themselves. I dare say they have measured other men’s corn with their own bushels. When any say, “O, there is no love in the Church,” I have always noticed that, without exception, they have no love themselves. On the other hand, we have heard others say, “What a blessed unity there is in the Church. When we come to the Tabernacle it does us good to get such hearty shakes of the hand and to see such love in every Brother’s eye.” When they speak thus, I know the reason is that they carry fire in their own hearts, and then they think the Church warm, while the others carry lumps of ice in their hearts and they imagine that everybody must be cold.  
1. One of the great impediments to Christian sympathy is our own intense selfishness. We are all selfish by nature, and it is a work of Divine Grace to break this thoroughly down, until we live to Christ, and not to self any longer. How often is the rich man tempted to think that his riches are his own. A certain lady being accosted by a beggar, asked charity of her. She gave him a shilling, saying, “Take that shilling. It is more than God ever gave me.” The beggar said, “O, Madam but God has given you all your abundance.” “No,” she said, “I am right. God has only lent me what I have. All I have is a loan.”  
I would that all who are entrusted with this world’s substance felt that it was only loaned out to them, and that they were stewards. Now, a steward, when he has orders to give a poor man a large sum of money, does not say, “Dear me, that will make me poor!” He never considered that which was entrusted to him, belonged to him, and so he gives it freely enough. So, remember, you have nothing of your own—especially you Christian men and women who have been bought with a price—you are in a double sense stewards unto God, and should act as such. Living to God, we should devote ourselves to the good of the race for Jesus’ sake.  
2. Another hindrance lies in the customs of our country. We still have among us too much of caste and custom. The exclusiveness of rank is not readily overcome. It is not so, I thank God, in this place of worship, but I have known many places of worship where there are tiers of Christian people. Layer on layer, who never associate with each other. In some places of worship they put up in conspicuous letters, “FREE SEATS FOR THE POOR.” That is abominable! Then you have another class— respectable tradesmen, and though they sit at the same table with the Dons, and My Lord This or That, they never think for a moment of speaking to them.  
When people come out of Church, what a gradation there is! Have I not seen in many a country village how, first of all, the squire goes out, and then the bailiff follows? And then all the poor people curtsey and bow to show their abject servitude and serfdom. And all this in a Christian land! In our Dissenting places of worship what stiffness there is! What rustling of the silks up one aisle, and what quietude of the cottons in another! When the members come together Lady So-and-So, who sits yonder, or Miss This, who sits there, will hardly recognize Nancy That, or Betsy Soand-So!  
Now I feel as much pleased in associating with the poorest of God’s saints as with those who are of a higher degree in this world, for I believe the happy fusion of all will promote the interests of all. It would vex my heart to see you grow into the stuck-up respectability of some of our fine congregations. Away forever with these castes and divisions! Let us maintain the family feeling and suffer nothing to violate it.  
3. Much want of sympathy is produced by our ignorance of one another. We do not know the sufferings of our fellows. If I had brought the newspaper here today, and I had half a mind to do so, and had read you some extracts about the sufferings in Preston and Wigan and the various towns in Lancashire, you would have known much more about the distress than you do now. Or if, which would do as well, you were to go next Monday with some City Missionary to the least East end, or St. Giles’s, or some poor district this side of the water, you would say, “Dear me, I did not know that people really did suffer at this rate. I had no idea of it or I would have given more to the poor.”  
We need to be educated into the knowledge of our national poverty. We need to be taught and trained, to know more of what our fellow men can, and do suffer. Oh, if the Christian Church knew the immorality of London, she would cry aloud to God! If but for one night you could see the harlotry and infamy, if you could but once see the rascality of London gathered into one mass—your hearts would melt with woe and bitterness. And you would bow yourselves before God, and cry unto Him for this city as one that mourns for his only son, even for his first-born.  
4. No doubt the abounding deception which exists among those who seek our help has checked much liberality. I think I can tell the moment a man opens his mouth to address me, when a man wants to beg of me. There is such a particular whine, and a sanctified unction, that the moment you hear it, you think, “I will give that man nothing. He is an old established beggar, and gets his living by it.” Seeing, as I have, not scores, but hundreds of these beings, there is a tendency to get one’s heart hard and callous and to say, “Oh, they are all deceivers.”  
But they are not all such. There is a vast amount of real distress of a private character, a suffering which will not cry nor moan. And I take it that it ought to be your business, and mine, to seek out these cases. Not to stop till they come to us, but to go to them. We must avoid, with a stern discretion, those ill cases which do but prey upon Christian charity. But we must also seek out the genuine sufferers and give them relief. Let none of these things, great obstacles though they are, hinder your sympathy today, for none of them exist in the matter which we shall have to plead this morning.  
III. A few minutes upon THE FRUITS OF CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY:  
1. The fruit of Christian sympathy will be seen in a kindly association with all Christians—we shall not shun them nor pass them by.  
2. It will be seen next, in a kindly encouragement of those who want aid, constantly being ready to give a word of good advice, and good cheer to the heart which is ready to faint. Dear Christian Friends, I think our experience is not so available as it might be for the good of others. In the olden times, they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard. You will find your Brethren often distressed in mind. You have passed through the same stage—conversation with them will help them to escape as you have done.  
More especially is this conversation very valuable under the pangs of conviction. When a young man or woman has been awakened under the ministry, I charge you each, before God, you that have found peace in Christ, to watch the throes and agonies of the new birth and be at hand to take the little child and nurse it for Christ. The senior members of every Christian Church should consider themselves, as called by their very position, to look after the young. We have some such here. We want a few more. We want you mothers in Israel, especially, to be so sympathetic that you may no sooner hear that a soul is in distress than you are in distress, too, till you can have poured in the oil and the wine into their wounds.  
I think this sympathy should be especially shown to any that backslide. There is a tendency to cut such off from the Church Book and then leave them. This should not be. We must look after that which is out of the way. The shepherd must leave the ninety and nine sheep to go after the one which has gone astray. If you see one vacillating, be most careful there. If you detect in any a growing coldness, be the more anxious to foster that which remains, which is ready to die. Let a holy discipline and watchfulness be maintained over the entire Church, by the care and forethought of everyone for his next friend. Thus can you practically allow your Christian sympathy.

3. Show it, also, whenever you hear the good name of any called into doubt. Stand up for your Brethren. It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest, but there are some such birds. The moment they hear a word or a whisper against a Christian man, though a member of the same Church, “Report it! Report it!” they say—always pretending that they are very sorry—but all the while sucking it as a dainty morsel. The old proverb, you know, was, “We have done dinner. Clear the things away, and now let us sit down and wreck other men’s characters.”

I fear there are even some professing Christians who do that. This is not sympathy, but the malice of Satan—may God deliver you from it! Stand up for all that are your fellow soldiers—be jealous of the honor of the regiment in which you have enlisted.

4. But still there is no Christian sympathy in all this if it does not, when needed, prove itself by real gifts of our substance. Zealous words will not warm the cold. Delicate words will not feed the hungry. The most free speech will not set free the captive, or visit him in prison. The most adorned words will not clothe the naked. And the words that are most full of unction will not pour oil and wine into the wounds of the sick. Words! Words! Words! Chaff! Chaff!! Chaff!!! If there is no act there is no sympathy. “Whoso has this world’s goods, and sees his brother has need, and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?”

Perhaps some of my hearers this morning will say that the text and the subject are appropriate to the occasion—but that they want some spiritual food. Well, you get that often, I trust, here. But I am persuaded that there are times when, if Christ were upon earth, He would dwell mainly upon these themes of practical Christianity. I read my Master’s Sermon on the Mount, and what doctrine is there in it? It is all precept from beginning to end. And so shall my sermon be this morning. Not doctrine, but precept. For this I know—we want to see in the Christian world more of the practical carrying out of the loving benevolence of the Savior.

What do I care about the doctrines for which you fight, unless they produce in you the spirit of Christ? What do I care for your forms of faith, and your ceremonies, if all the while you are a Nabal, wickedly saying in your heart, “Shall I take my bread, and my water to give it unto these strangers?” Oh, let your faith be a living faith, lest, while you have the form of godliness, you deny the power thereof.

Time was, whenever a man met a Christian, he met a helper. “I shall starve!” said he, until he saw a Christian’s face, and then he said, “Now shall I be aided.” But some have thrown benevolence aside and imagine that these are old duties of a legal character. Legal, then, will I be, when, in my Master’s name, again I say, “To do good and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices, God is well-pleased.”

IV. I now conclude with an appeal for a special collection this morning. I ASK YOUR AID FOR THESE NEEDY ONES IN LANCASHIRE.  
1. Remember, first, that their poverty is no fault of their own. They are not brought to it by excess of meats or drinks. They are not reduced to it by riot or disorder. It is not idleness. It is not a willful strike against the masters. It is utterly unavoidable. And here, therefore, is the right place for benevolence to display itself. The Egyptian hieroglyph for charity is very suggestive. It is a naked child giving honey to a bee which has lost its wings. Notice, it is a child—we should give in meekness. It is a naked child—we should give from pure motives and not for show.  
It is a child feeding a bee. Not a drone, but one that will work. A bee that has lost its wings—one, therefore, which has lost its power to supply itself—a picture before you of those martyrs and confessors of industry whose cause I plead today. A bee that has lost its wings makes its appeal for a little honey to every childlike heart here today, and they who are true to God will not refuse their aid.  
2. Remember, too, that the cause of this suffering is a national sin—the sin of slavery. We have not yet passed the third generation, and upon a nation God visits sin to the third and fourth generation. We have rid ourselves, at last, of this accursed stain so far as our present Government is concerned—we are therefore delivered from any fear in the future on that ground. But still, if slavery is now in America, we must remember that it would not have been there if it had not been carried there—and we are partners in guilt.  
Moreover, there has been too much winking at slavery among the merchants of Manchester and Liverpool. There has not been that abhorrence of the evil which should have been, and therefore it is just in the Providence of God that when America is cut with the sword, we should be made to smart with the rod. If the Lord is pleased to smite our nation in one particular place, yet we must remember that it is meant for us all. Let us all bear the infliction as our tribulation, and let us cheerfully take up the burden, for it is but a little one compared with what our sins might have brought upon us.  
Better far for us to have famine than war. From all civil war and all the desperate wickedness which it involves, good Lord deliver us. And if You smite us as You have done, it is better to fall into the hand of God than into the hand of man.  
3. I must also refresh your memories, though you know it well, with the fact of the patient endurance of those who have been called to suffer. You have read of no burning of mills, no breaking open of baker’s shops. You have heard no accusations brought against the aristocracy. You have heard of no great political movement for the upsetting of our institutions. There was never upon earth a nobler spectacle than that of these men suffering so frightfully with their wives and children, and yet enduring it so patiently.  
They deserve to be helped. If ever there was a case in which human ears must be opened to hear the cry of woe, this is it. If you and I had our wives and children at home starving, and had nothing but the charity of the parish and the little relief of the committees, making only some oneand-fourpence or one-and-sixpence a head to live upon for a week, I am afraid we should begin to think that we could readjust the machinery of Government. Or it might happen that if we saw bread, and could not get it, we might break the window, or do some unrighteous act to take away another man’s property sooner than see our children starve. They suffer well. They suffer well, Brethren. And we do not well unless we help them.  
4. Moreover, remember how widely spread is this distress. I know too many of my dear Hearers are often brought to as great poverty as the operatives in Lancashire—but then you have a little help. Sometimes the Church can give it. At other times some friend, not quite so badly off as you are, will help you. But there, if a poor man wants a loaf, he cannot get it of the tradesman even on credit, for the tradesman has no power to give him credit. Nor can these people borrow from their neighbors, for where all are equally destitute, one cannot help the other. Even the Churches fail to do what they would wish to do.  
In the case of one dear Brother, late a student in our college, to whom we constantly send supplies week by week, and who maintains a class of some forty young women—in answer to the cry of faith has found all the means, I hope to aid him by this collection of today. The distress is not only with the poor, now, but with those a little above them. And God only knows to what extent it must go unless in His gracious Providence He by some means or other, brings a supply of cotton that they may once again be at work.  
5. Why need I urge you, my Hearers? I feel that you are ready now to assist these suffering ones. Let your own gratitude to God move you. Blessed be God that you have not this famine and lack of bread. Thank the Master that though times may be hard, and some may now and then complain, yet we have not to walk through our streets and see our factories shut up and miss the smoke which marks the daily toil that brings food to hungry mouths. We have not to know every habitation is a Bochim because the strong man bows down for lack of bread, and the faces of the children are wan, and the mothers weep, and even the breasts refuse the infant child its needed nourishment.  
Give as God has prospered you. He that gives to the poor lends to the Lord, and the Lord shall remember him in his time of trouble. He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life freely given him. Let him, therefore, freely give, even as he has freely received.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #3283 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 32.7

THE VOICES OF OUR DAYS  
NO. 3283

A NEW YEAR’S SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 1912. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“I said, Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom.” Job 32:7.

In the discussion between Job and his three friends, Elihu was present, but though by far the wisest man, he remained quiet. Sometimes a still tongue proves a wise head. In our text he gives his reason for refraining from speech. He felt inclined to deliver his mind, but being the younger man he modestly said, “These gray-headed men ought to know better than I. Perhaps if I speak, I shall display my ignorance and they will say, “Be silent, boy, and let your fathers teach you.” Therefore he said to himself, “Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom.”

Elihu had, however, been disappointed. His words plainly say that he had heard but little wisdom from the three ancients. And he added, “Great men are not always wise; neither do the aged understand judgment.” He was not the only man who had been disappointed when looking to his seniors for wisdom, for it is a sorrowful truth that the lapse of years, apart from the Grace of God, will not make us wise. Though with the teaching of the Holy Spirit, every year’s experience will make the Christian riper, yet without that teaching it is possible that each year may make a Christian not more ripe, but more rotten. Among all sinners the worst are those who have been longest at the trade and among saints he is not always the best who has lived long enough to grow cold. We have known some exhibit ripeness of experience in their very youth through Divine teaching and by growing on the sunny side of the wall of fellowship—while others who have been far longer on the tree are still sour because they hang out of the blessed sunlight of the Divine Presence in the cool shade of worldliness. You cannot measure a man’s wisdom by the baldness of his head, or the grayness of his hair—and yet, if the Spirit of God were with us to sanctify each day’s experience, it ought to be so—“Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom.”

This, then, is our New Year’s theme—the teaching of our years as they pass over our heads. What are we learning from them?  
I. Our first remark shall be that DAYS HAVE A VOICE. Elihu said, “Days should speak.” Every day, as a day, has its own lesson. “Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge.” The sun never breaks upon the earth without light of a superior order for those who have intelligence—especially for those who have the Holy Spirit. For instance, the mere fact of our beginning another day teaches us to adore the mercy which kept us alive when the image of death was on our faces during the night—an extraordinary mercy, indeed—for sleep is near akin to death, and waking is a rehearsal of the resurrection! When the day begins, it tells us that God has already provided us with mercies, for there are our garments ready to put on and there, too, is the morning meal. Each day in its freshness seems to hint that the Lord would have us attempt something new for Him, or push forward with that which we have already commenced, or draw nearer to Him than we have ever been before. The Lord calls us to learn more of Him, to become more like He, to drink more fully into His love and to show forth that love more clearly. Every hour of the day teaches us its own lesson and till the shadows fall, the voices speak to us if we have ears to hear. Night, too, has its teaching. Does it not bid us pray the Lord to draw a curtain over the day and hide the sin of it, even as He draws the curtain across the sky and makes it more easy for us to fall asleep? Do we not delight, as we go to our beds, to ask to be unclothed of all our sins, even as we are stripped of our garments? And should we not pray to be prepared to fall asleep and lie in our last bedchamber, till the everlasting morning breaks upon us and we put on our Glory robes? Did we but exercise sanctified thought, each day would bring its precious power of wisdom and make us better acquainted with the Lord.  
What a message do our Sabbaths bring to us! To those who toil all the week long, the light of the Lord’s-Day seems fairer and fresher than that of any other day. A person at Newcastle who had a house to let, took an applicant for it to the top of his house. He spoke of the distant prospect and added, “We can see Durham Cathedral on a Sunday.” “On Sunday,” said the listener, “and pray why not on a Monday?” “Why,” he said, “because on the weekdays great furnaces and pits are pouring forth their smoke and we cannot see as far—indeed, we can scarcely see at all! But when the fires are out, our view is wide.” Is not this a true symbol of our Sabbaths when we are in the Spirit? The smoke of the world no more clouds the heavens and we see almost up to the golden gates! Such days do speak, indeed, and tell of the rest which remains. They sing in our ears with soft and gentle voices and tell us that we shall not always need to bow like galley slaves, tugging at the oar of this world’s work, but may even now look up to the place where our Home awaits us and the weary are at rest! These peaceful Lord’s-Days call us away to the top of Shenir and Hermon, where we may view the land of our inheritance! They cry to us, “Come up higher!” They beckon us to commune with Him “whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory.” All days speak, but Sabbaths speak best—they are orators for God! These resurrection days, these days of the Son of Man—these have angel voices. “He that has ears to hear, let him hear.”  
While each day speaks, some days have peculiar voices. Days of joy speak and bid us bless the Lord, and magnify His name. Days of sorrow speak and cry, “Arise and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted.” Days of communion with God speak saying, “Abide with Me,” and days of lost communion cry in warning, “Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you?” Days of health say, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” And days of sickness say, “In the day of adversity, consider.” Each day, whether bright or dim, clear or cloudy, festive or desolate, has its own tone and modulation and speaks its own message. Some of these days are great preachers and from them we have learned more than in months before. Solemn days of decision when sins have been abandoned. Joyous days of manifestation when Christ has been precious. Triumphant days of victory in which God has been exalted—these speak, indeed—and like Prophets claim a hearing in the name of the Lord. Whether common or special, each day is to us a new page of sacred history, a new window into the Truth of God, another rest stop in the march to the Celestial City!  
Here let us add that all our days have had a voice to us. There were youthful days and we thought they said, “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth”—and we listened all too eagerly—yet we misunderstood those voices. Had we hearkened to the end of their sermon, we would have heard them say, “But know you that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.” To some of us, our youthful days were full of blessed teaching, for they called us to seek Him early in whom we have rejoiced and found our All-in-All. Days of middle life have a voice which we hear as we buckle on our harness for stern fight and find but little space for rest—and none for self-congratulation. What do these days say to us but “Work while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work”? Those gray hairs scattered upon our brows warn us that our sun will not remain at noon for long. I hear a voice which cries to me, “Quick! Quick! Quick! The night comes!” As to those later days, to which our text more pointedly alludes, they say to you, dear Brothers and Sisters who have reached them, “Make sure work for eternity. Hold time loosely. Lay hold on eternal life.” The declining strength, the teeth long gone, the limbs trembling, the eyes needing glasses to aid them, the hair snowy with many winters—all these are messages of which the purport is—“Be you also ready, for the Bridegroom comes.” Knowing our frailty, each day sounds in my ear the trumpet call, “Boot and saddle! Up and away! Linger no longer. Press on to the battle!”  
One of the loveliest sights in the world is an aged Believer waiting for the summons to depart. There is a lovely freshness in the green blade. The bloom upon the ripening corn is also fair to look upon, but best of all we delight in the gold ears drooping down from the very weight of ripeness, expectant of the sickle and the harvest home! We have some among us who are so lovely in their lives and heavenly in their conversation that they seem like shining ones who have lingered here a little late—they ought to be in Heaven, but in mercy to us they tarry here to let us see what the glorified are like! I have heard of stray sunbeams and these are such. It is well when our old age is such a voice from Heaven! But with the unconverted man or woman, how different are all things! To them we must tenderly but faithfully give warning. “You must soon die. The young may die, but you must—you know you must. Be wise, therefore, and prepare to meet your God.” The eleventh hour with iron tongue calls to you— give heed to it, or you will have to hear it sound your condemnation forever!  
*“Hasten, Sinner, to be wise,  
Stay not for the morrow’s sun—  
Longer wisdom you despise,  
Harder is she to be won.  
Hasten mercy to implore.  
Stay not for the morrow’s sun  
Lest your season should be over  
Ere this evening’s stage is run!  
Hasten, Sinner, to return,  
Stay not for the morrow’s sun  
Lest your lamp should fail to burn  
Ere salvation’s work is done!  
Hasten, Sinner, to be blest,  
Stay not for the morrow’s sun  
Lest perdition you arrest  
Ere the morrow is begun.”*  
Our days all have a voice and those which mark the different stages of our life and the flight of time have voices which demand special attention. Birthdays, as often as they come, have a chiding voice if we are lingering and loitering—and they also have a voice appealing to us for gratitude for years of mercy past. They have a voice calling to us for more strenuous exertions and bidding us draw nearer to God than before. There is always a buoyancy and gladness about the first days of the year—they speak of thankfulness and call us to devote ourselves anew to God—and ask for new Grace to make the coming year more holy than the rest. The dying hours of the last day of the year are well kept as a watch, for by their fewness we see their precariousness. There are also last days to a life—and it will depend upon what that life is whether they will be rung out with joyous peals or knelled with despair.  
Let days speak, then, for they have much to say to us!  
II. The next thing in our text is that INCREASING YEARS SHOULD INCREASE OUR WISDOM—“multitude of years should teach wisdom.” A man ought not to be at this moment as foolish as he was 12 months ago. He should be at least a little wiser. Christians ought to learn several things by the lapse of years.  
We ought to learn to trust less to ourselves. Self-confidence is one of the most common faults of the young—they judge themselves to be better than their fathers and capable of great things. Untried strength always appears to be greater than it is. For a man to trust himself in the beginning of his Christian career is very unwise, for Scripture warns him against it! But for him to trust himself after he has been 20 or 30 years a Christian is surely insanity, itself—a sin against common sense! If we have spent only a few years in the Christian life, we ought to have learned from slips, follies, failures, ignorance and mistakes that we are less than nothing! The college of experience has done nothing by way of instructing us if it has not taught us that we are weakness, itself. To rest upon yourself, or upon any particular virtue which you possess or upon any resolution which you have formed is vanity itself! Brothers and Sisters, has the spider’s thread already failed you so many times and do you still call it a cable? Has reed after reed broken beneath you and do you still rest on them as though they were bars of iron? Are you an aged Christian and yet self-confident? Surely this cannot be!  
Age should teach every man to place less and less confidence in his fellow men. I do not mean that we are to lose that legitimate confidence which we should place in our fellow Christians and in the moral integrity of those we have tried and proved. I refer to that carnal confidence which makes flesh its arm—this should be cured by age. When we begin the Christian life, we are like feeble plants needing a support. We cling to our minister and everything he says is Gospel, or we follow some superior person and place our admiring confidence in him. Alas, it often happened that helpers fail—and unless we have, in the meantime, learned to do without them, the consequences may be very serious! In the course of time, I think most Christians find their idols among men broken before their eyes. They at one time said, “If such a man were to fall, I should think that there was no truth in Christianity.” But they have now learned better! God will not have us make idols of His saints or ministers—and years prove to us that those are cursed who trust in man—but he is blessed that trusts in the Lord!  
We ought to learn, again, that there is no depending upon appearances. Have you not found, as far as you have now gone, that the direst calamity that ever overtook you was your greatest mercy? And have you not found that what you thought would have been a choice blessing had really been a terrible danger to you if it had been bestowed? You have judged the Lord according to your folly—by the outward manifestation of His Providence! Have you not now learned to believe in His tried fidelity and to trust Him at all times, let Him do what He may? In this, age should instruct us. We ought not to be afraid because the day is cloudy but remember that if there were no clouds, there would be no rain—and if no rain, no harvests! Surely it is time that we had done judging each inch of time by itself and began to see things upon a broader scale! We would neither be too much depressed nor too exultant because of our immediate present condition if we knew that things are not what they seem.  
Years should also teach us greater reliance upon the Divine faithfulness. It ought every day to be easier for a Christian to trust in God. The young Believer is like a young swimmer who, for the first time feels his feet off the bottom and scarcely knows what will become of him. But the old swimmer feels like a fish in its native element—he is not afraid of drowning. The little waves which in his boyhood he thought would swamp him, he takes no notice of whatever! And even if huge billows roll, he mounts them like a sea bird! Oh, it is a grand thing to be established in the faith, grounded and settled, so as to be able to say, “Therefore will we not fear, though the earth is removed.” So it ought to be with us— “Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom.”  
And truly, dear Friends, we ought to attain a deeper insight into the things of God as every year rolls over our heads. The conversation of mature Christians is always very delightful. Young Christians sparkle, but old Christians are diamonds of the first water! You may get good fruit from a young and earnest Christian, but it lacks the mellowness and full flavor of the ripe Believer. I love to talk with aged Christians even when they are uneducated people. Many holy women may be met with among the poor of the Church who know a world of sound Divinity—and if you will but listen to them, you will be surprised. They do not deal in theories—they tell you matters of fact. They do not explain points like the schoolmen, but they illustrate their experience! They have been instructed by living near to God, by feeding upon His Truth, by lying in Jesus’ bosom like the poor man’s ewe lamb which did eat of his bread and drink of his cup—this makes men wise unto salvation and, in such cases, years sanctified by Divine Grace teach them wisdom!  
I shall have to speak a long time if I have to show in what respects Christians ought to grow wiser. They ought to grow wiser with regard to themselves, to be more watchful against their besetting sins, more intent in that particular department of service for which they find themselves most qualified. They ought to be wiser towards Satan—more aware of his devices and of the times when he is likely to assail them. They ought to learn how to work better with others, to manage more easily people with odd tempers, to get on better with those who are under them, or with them, or above them. They should be learning how to deal with trembling sinners, with hard hearts and with tender consciences—with backsliders, with mourners and the like. In fact, in all things every year we ought to be more fully equipped and, under the blessing of God’s Spirit, years should teach us wisdom!  
Brothers and Sisters, if we are Christians, we ought to learn if we remember who it is that has been teaching us. It is the Holy Spirit Himself! If your boy goes to a school two or three years and does not make progress, you do not feel satisfied with the master. Now, you cannot, in this case blame the Teacher—then let the pupil take much of the blame to himself. “Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom,” since the Holy Spirit dwells in us who are converted to God! Let us remember how sweetly He has taught us by means of the choicest mercies. They used to teach their children the alphabet, in the olden times, by giving them A B C on pieces of gingerbread—and when the boy knew his letters, he ate the gingerbread for a reward! That is very much like the way in which we have been taught Doctrine—it has been sweet to us and we have learned it by feasting upon it! I know it has been so with me. The mercy of God has been a Divine Instructor to my soul. “Your gentleness,” says one of old, “has made me great.” With such sweet teaching, kind teaching—loving teaching, forbearing teaching—we ought to have learned something in all these years!  
And then, sometimes, how sharply the Holy Spirit has taught us. I have heard say that boys do not learn so well now because the rod is so little used. I should not wonder, for in God’s school the rod has never been put aside! Some of us do not go long without a stroke or two—if you have been very much tried and troubled, and yet have not learned, my dear Brother, my dear Sister—what can be done with you? What? With this smarting, with all this sickness, with all these losses and crosses and yet no profiting? O vine, with all this pruning, are there so few clusters? O land, with all this plowing and harrowing, is there so slender a harvest? Let us mourn before God that it should be so!  
And let us remember, again, how much teaching we have had from the ministry under the blessing of God’s Holy Spirit. I should not wonder if some Christians do not profit—their Sabbaths are very dreadful days to them. All the week they are hard at work and on Sunday there is nothing to feed upon in what they hear, so they come home from public worship dissatisfied and troubled. Now, if your souls have been fed—if you have often said, “Surely God was in this place and I knew it,” and you have gone home with your souls fed with the finest of the wheat—should there not be some wisdom to show for it? Consider the position which some of you occupy as teachers of others, as heads of families and instructors. If you do not learn, how are you to teach? And if there is no learning with you, you cannot wonder if your scholars make no progress under your instructions! With God as our Teacher, if we do not learn, we cannot blame others if they do not learn from us who are but men and women! May God grant that instead of wasting time in frivolities, or “killing time,” as the worldling calls it, we may seek to increase in the knowledge of God and in likeness to Jesus, so that every day we may be better heirs of Heaven!—

*“So let our lips and lives express The holy Gospel we profess!*

***So let our works and virtues shine To prove the Doctrine all Divine! Thus shall we best proclaim abroad***

*The honors of our Savior God,  
When His salvation reigns within,  
And Grace subdues the power of sin!”*

III. My last word shall be a short one. And it is this—according to my text, THOSE WHO HAVE WISDOM SHOULD COMMUNICATE IT TO OTHERS.

“I said, Days should speak”—not be silent—“and multitude of years should teach wisdom.” That is to say, those who have days and multitude of years should try to teach the younger folks what they know! Now, it is a fault with some of our Brothers and Sisters that they do not teach our young people enough. They are too quiet. I should not like them to die and go to Heaven without having told us all they knew. And yet, when a venerable saint is buried who has been very reticent in speech and has never used his pen, what a mint of teaching is buried with him! It always seems to me to be a pity that anything should be lost through the hand of death—it should rather be a gain! There are some of us who have told people all we know and we are always repeating it, so that if we die, no secrets will sink into oblivion. But there are others of the opposite sort— a great deal goes into them—there must be a deal of wisdom in them for none ever comes out! Doubtless many Believers have been walking with God and enjoying the means of Grace for so long a time that they are quite able to teach others—but they are of small service to us because they are so retiring. I never like to see a Christian like an old-fashioned moneybox into which you put the money, but from which you cannot get it out again unless you break it! It ought not to be so. Does not our Savior tell us that the well of water in us is to become rivers of water streaming out from us? As we receive, we should give! The more we learn, the more we should teach—and if God teaches us, it is because He expects us to instruct others.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I presume to speak to those who are older than I am. Try and teach somebody! Ask yourselves how did you learn what you know? You were taught. Return the blessing by teaching somebody else. You were taught. Did your mother teach you? Are you a mother? Then teach your children. Did you learn from your father? Then, Father, be not ungenerous to your family. Hand on the inheritance—what your faith gave you, pass on to your sons, that they may teach the same to their heirs! Or did you learn from a Sunday school teacher? Be a Sunday school teacher, yourself, and teach the rising generation. Remember that according as you have ability, you are a debtor to the Church of God by whose means you received the Truth of God—and to the Church of God pay back, in the shape of instrumentality, the teaching which you have received by teaching those around you!

Note, next, that you are bound to do it, for without this, the Truth of God cannot be propagated in the land. There is not a tree that stands at this moment leafless and bare in the winter’s blast but has within itself preparation for casting its seed into the earth next year. Take off a bud and you will find concealed within it the flower and everything preparatory for the creation of another tree like itself when the fullness of time shall come! The violet and the foxglove in the hills are waiting for the time to cast seed abroad, that the species may be continued on the face of the earth, each after its kind. In like fashion should each Believer, by having known the Truth of God, secure a succession of the faithful among men. Are those of ripe years among us attending to this as they should?

Again, remember that the devil is always teaching and his servants are always busy! When the sons of Belial invent some new blasphemy, their lips ache to tell it! Let but a loose song be sung in any music hall in London and before many hours it will have a thousand voices occupied with it. The devil has his missionaries ready to teach iniquity wherever they go—and they neither lack for zeal nor courage! And shall Satan have such busy servants and Christ’s cause languish for want of agents? God forbid! If you have learned a great Truth, go and tell it! If you have found out something that is fresh to you concerning the Lord and His love, do not wait till the morning light, but tell it at once! If you have found the Savior, tell about Him! Tell about Him! Tell about Him with all your might whenever you have opportunity! And spread abroad the gladsome news of His salvation! Remember that to tell others what you have known is often the very best way of deepening and increasing your own knowledge. Holy occupation is one of the most important things for our spiritual health. If you see a church sinking low, the last persons to leave that church are the Sunday school teachers and others who are practically occupied with serving God—and the first to go are those fluffy professors who are neither useful nor ornaments, but cling to a church like dust to your coat! Very largely will you find that in proportion as you serve Christ, Christ will serve you—therefore seek you to feed His lambs—and He will feed you!

At the beginning of this year I would urge each one of you to say, “Cannot I make this year better than the last? Can I not pray more, believe more, love more, work more, give more and be more like Christ?” Was last year an improvement upon the previous one? Whether it was so or not, let this year be an advance upon last year! It ought to be, for it is a year which lies somewhat nearer Heaven than its predecessors! If you have lived up till now without a Savior—end that dangerous state! Listen to the Gospel message, “Believe and live.” Ere New Year’s Day is over, look unto Jesus Christ and be saved! He will have Glory and you shall have happiness—and thus shall you begin aright another year of our Lord—and His Holy Spirit will make it to you a year of Divine Grace!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **EXODUS 13:21, 22; 14.**

We are going to read once more the familiar story of how the Lord relieved His people from the power of Egypt after He had brought them out of the house of bondage.

Exodus 13:21-22. And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way: and by night, in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night from before the people.

Exodus 14:1-2 And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi Hahiroth between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal Zephon: before it you shall encamp by the sea. It might have been sufficient for the pillar of cloud to move that way, but it was really such an extraordinary thing for the Lord to lead the people right down to the sea that He gave a special command as well as the movement of the cloud! That Moses himself might not be staggered by what would seem to him to be such strange guidance, the Lord tells him what to say to the people and then gives him this explanation—

3, 4. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh, and over all his host, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord. And they did so. Those four words, “And they did so,” though they are very short and very simple words, express a great deal! Oh, that it might always be said of all of us whenever God commands us to do anything, “And they did so.”

5. And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? Nothing but the Grace of God will truly humble men! These Egyptians had been crushed by terrible plagues into a false kind of humility, but they were soon as proud as ever! Nothing but the Omnipotent Grace of God can really subdue a proud and stubborn heart.

6-8. And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand. They were resolute and brave as long as they realized that God was with them! And the Egyptians behind them were bold and proud although God was not with them! There were two high hands that day—the high hand of the proud, puny Pharaoh—and the high hand of the ever-blessed Omnipotent Jehovah!

9, 10. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon and when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sorely afraid. Forgetting what God had done for them and promised to them, they became timid at the sight of their old masters! They knew the cruelty of the Egyptians in time of war, and their hearts failed them.

10. And the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. Ah, dear Friends, if they had cried to the Lord in true believing prayer, they would have been worthy of commendation—but they did not do so! They cried out unto the Lord in an unbelieving complaint, as the next verse plainly shows—

11, 12. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell you in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness. What cowards they were, and how fainthearted! Were these the people that were to conquer Canaan? Were these God’s chosen people? Ah, judge them not, for you and I have often been quite as faint-hearted and quite as fickle as they were! May God forgive us as He again and again forgave them!

13-15. And Moses said unto the people, Fear you not, stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you today: for the Egyptians, whom you have seen today, you shall see them again no more forever. The LORD shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, Why do you cry unto Me? Speak unto the child

ren of Israel, that they go forward. [See Sermon #548, Volume 10—FORWARD! FORWARD! FORWARD!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Moses was no doubt praying in his heart, though it is not recorded that he uttered any words in prayer—but it was not the time for prayer—it was the time for action! When people sometimes say, when they know their duty, “We will make it a matter of prayer,” they generally mean that they will try to find some excuse for not doing it! You need not pray about any matter when you know what you ought to do— go and do it!

16-20. But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get Me honor over Pharaoh, and over all his host, over his chariots, and over his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten Me honor over Pharaoh, over his chariots, and over his horsemen. And the Angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them: and the pillar of the cloud went before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night. God was like a wall of fire between them and their enemies—so that they had no cause for fear even though the Egyptians were so near!

21-25. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea: and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians. And took of their chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians. They were now in the midst of the sea between the two high walls of water, and before they could flee see what happened to them—

26-31. And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its full depth when the morning appeared, and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the water returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the hosts of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptian dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the Lord, and His servant Moses. And well they might! Yet how soon they murmured both against the Lord and against Moses!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2453 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 33.14

A HARD CASE  
NO. 2453

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1896.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 18, 1886.

**“For God speaks once, yes twice, yet man perceives it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds; then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.”  
Job 33:14-18.**

HOW persevering is Divine love! “God speaks once.” I have heard many a father say to his child, “Do not let me have to speak to you again.” But the great Father has to speak again and when it is written, “God speaks once, yes twice, yet man perceives it not,” we see how great is the stubbornness of the human heart! And we also see the gentleness of Divine love. When Elihu said, “God speaks once, yes twice,” he meant that the Lord speaks repeatedly. Divine loving kindness has many voices. God often speaks to us in our childhood. Some of us hardly remember when first our Lord called us, as He called Samuel, saying, “Samuel, Samuel,” and each for himself answered, “Here am I.” We cannot forget the voices of our youth and boyhood—the messages that the Lord sent to us through loving parents and kind-hearted teachers, or the direct admonitions of the Holy Spirit. God spoke to us and spoke to us again, and spoke to us yet again—but we regarded not His voice. There are none so deaf as those who will not hear—and we were among those who would not hear even that voice to which Heaven and earth attend—that voice which even the dead will one day hear—when they that hear shall live!

Do we not admire the great patience of God with us? I am sure we ought to and if we do, it will make us repent of our negligence of the Divine voice, so that, henceforth, we shall say with David, “When you said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You.” Note that, “my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek.” Oh, for the quick ear to catch the faintest sound of the Divine voice! Oh, for a ready heart, waiting for those tender condescending admonitions which the Lord is waiting to speak to us!

But God has voices which He uses in such a way that men must and shall hear. There is not only the patience of love, but there is also the Omnipotence of love. God does not merely attempt to make men hear, but He succeeds in doing it. When the splendor of His love makes bare His holy arm and He puts forth all His force, the unwilling heart is made willing in the day of His power—the rebel spirit is led in chains of love a willing captive to His conquering Lord!

I am now going to speak somewhat of that matter and, keeping to our text, I want to say, first, that man is very hard to influence for good. His ear has to be opened. His heart has to be broken off from its evil purposes. His pride has to be conquered. There are many things to be done before men are fully influenced to their eternal salvation. Then, secondly, God knows how to come at them. By day or by night, by voices heard when they are in the midst of their business, or, “in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds; then He opens the ears of men and seals their instruction.” Thirdly, thus the Lord accomplishes great purposes for men—“That He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.”

I. So, then, first, let us begin with what is a very humbling consideration, namely, that MAN IS VERY HARD TO INFLUENCE FOR GOOD.  
This is true, now, and it always has been true since sin entered the world, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good that are accustomed to do evil.” Still is the Savior’s sad complaint most true of very many, “You will not come to Me, that you might have life.” The noblest, the most tender, the most potent forces spend themselves in vain upon the heart of man! It is hard as the nether millstone. It is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” It does not seem, by nature, to be more amenable to heavenly influences than is the deaf adder to the voice of the charmers, for it will not listen, charm them ever so wisely.  
According to the text, before God, Himself, can save men, He has to open their ears—“Then He opens the ears of men.” What? Are men’s ears stopped up?” Perhaps not their outward ears—there are comparatively few persons who are very deaf. The most of us can hear—we can hear the guineas jingle and are after them very soon! We can hear a complaint against our fellow men and repeat it very rapidly! We have very quick ears for some things that are not worth hearing. But towards God, men’s ears are often stopped up! They are as if they had a film over them. As there is a veil over the heart and scales over the eyes, so is there a plug in the ear and none of us who preach the Word of the Lord can take out that plug, or get through man’s ear to his heart! It is very sad that we should wear our lives away in constant thought of how to get and win men’s attention. And yet, though we may succeed in exciting an apparent attention for the moment, what we have said has not penetrated the heart. We have hurled our javelin at behemoth and his scales have turned aside the shaft! We have done our best to awaken the conscience and to fix the Truth of God in the heart, but, if the arm of the Lord is not revealed, we have to go back and cry with the Chief of the whole College of Preachers, “Who has believed our report?”  
What is this plug that gets into men’s ears? It is, of course, first of all, original sin—that taint of the blood which has spoiled every human faculty and has closed the ears from hearing even the voice of God, Himself. Man does not hear God’s voice because he does not want to hear it. His will, his mind, his nature is altogether estranged from God.  
This original sin engenders in men great carelessness about Divine things. How quickly they are awakened by talk about politics! With what attention they will listen to a lecture upon matters relating to their health, or upon the fastest method of making money! But when it comes to the soul and its eternal destiny in Heaven or Hell—when it is concerning the bleeding Savior and the loving Father and the gentle wooing Spirit—men think we are doting, talking fancies, telling dreams, and they pooh-pooh it all and cast it behind their backs! If it is a matter of any worth to them, they will possibly think of it tomorrow, but they scarcely imagine it is worth while to trouble themselves about it now. Their ears are stopped up by carelessness.  
Often, too, there is another form of plug which is very hard to get out of the ear—that is, worldliness. “I am too busy to attend to religion! I am so engaged that I cannot spare time to hear about it. You do not know how fully my time is occupied. Why, even on Sunday I must look into my books and balance my accounts!” With such men the world is in their heart—it has filled it and taken possession of all their thoughts. God is not in all their thoughts because the world is there. I have been told that you can scarcely hear the great clock at St. Paul’s strike in the middle of the day—the noise of the traffic is so great that many persons who live near have not known when it was noon. And I do not wonder at it. But you can hear the warning bell at dead of night—far away sounds the note that marks the hour because then the traffic is hushed. Alas, many men never get into that hush—they live in a noisy, clamorous, trafficking world—and this dulls and stops up their ears so that even though God, Himself, speaks, they do not hear His voice!  
In some cases, the ear is stopped up by prejudice. Men do not hear the Gospel because they do not want to hear it—nor will they bring themselves to hear it. There is the preacher, for instance. They have heard such strange stories concerning him that they will not listen to him. The very people, too, who profess to love godliness—well, those who are prejudiced see faults in them—as if that were a reason why they should not, themselves, listen to the Gospel! But any excuse will suffice when you are not in earnest about anything. Yet it is a thousand pities that a man should be prejudiced against the salvation of his own soul! It would be a foolish thing for a man to prejudice himself into rage and beggary, but it is far worse when a man prejudices himself out of eternal life into everlasting woe! There are tens of thousands, yes, millions, who, from their education and surroundings and often from want of candor, would not listen to the Gospel though the angels themselves preached it! For some reason or other, they are prejudiced against angelic preaching and they would not listen to it, let it be what it might! It seems impossible, sometimes, to get a hearing with some men, even for our Lord, Himself. They have resolved, before they listen to Him, that He cannot be the Son of God. Nathanael’s question, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” is on their lips in a moment! “Is it possible that we should derive any benefit from listening to the carpenter’s Son?” So, in one way or another, their ear does not fulfill its true purpose, for it is stopped up by prejudice.  
With a great many more, the ear seems to be doubly sealed up by unbelief. They will not believe that which God, Himself, has spoken. If they do not go the full length of renouncing belief in the Inspiration of Scripture, yet they might as well, for they do not read what the Scripture says! Or, if they do read, they read only to question and to cavil, to impose their own meaning upon the plain Words of God and so, in very truth, their ear is hermetically sealed with unbelief! Even HE—you know whom I mean—even He who was known to heal with a touch or a word, all who came to Him, could not do many mighty works in His own country because of the unbelief of the people—with such an evil power is unbelief girded! Oh, that God would save men from it! If they are to be saved, He must do it, for we cannot. When the ear is stopped up by unbelief, it matters not how wisely and how earnestly you proclaim the Truth of God—it will not affect the heart of the hearers.  
So, Brothers and Sisters, I have shown you various ways in which the ear of man gets stopped up. It may also be stopped up by self-sufficiency. When a man has enough in himself to satisfy him, he wants nothing of Christ. When he fancies he can do everything himself, why does he need to cry to the strong for strength? Sometimes the ear gets stopped up with the love of sin. Our Lord Jesus said to the Jews who sought to slay Him, “How can you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?” And I may say to others, “How can you who love the drunk’s cup believe in Christ? How can you believe in Christ, you who are unfaithful to your wives, or you young men who follow after evil and wantonness in these polluted streets of ours?” How is it to be expected that the pure Gospel should be in favor with men who are given to uncleanness?  
These things stop up men’s ears so they say to the preacher, “If we attended to this Gospel, we could not go on in our sins and we would be disturbed in our conscience—therefore we will hear you another day concerning this matter.” When the days of their dalliance are over and they have drained the cup of the world’s pleasure and lust. When their bones are full of rottenness and their sins are dragging them fast to Hell—then, perhaps, they will turn to their God—but not now! Their ears are sealed with the love of sin and with a hardness of heart which makes them impenitent for their iniquities. O Sirs, do you not see how difficult it is to get at man’s heart when you cannot even get through the gate that leads to it? Ear-gate is blocked up with mud and all the King’s captains will fail to break a way through it unless the Prince Immanuel, Himself, shall come with the irresistible battering ram of His almighty Grace and break down that gate by the sheer force of His Omnipotent love!  
Then there is another difficulty. If we get through the ear and the man is influenced to listen, his heart does not retain that which is good—he soon forgets it. Hence the text says of the Lord, “He opens the ears of men and seals their instruction.” Oh, what defeats we have had! I mean we who are teachers and preachers from the pulpit, or you who give your instruction in the Sunday school class. Ah, we think the child, the man, the woman has learned that Truth of God at last, but it is as much as if we had written it on a blackboard—it is soon wiped out. “Oh, yes,” we thought to ourselves, “we have put it so plainly, we have illustrated it so deftly, we have pressed it home so patiently and so earnestly that they can never forget it!” Alas, what we tried to write upon their minds is as if it were written upon water, or like the marks that a child makes upon the sand by the seashore which the next wave washes out!  
How shall men be saved? We cannot impress them or, if we do impress them, how often it ends in nothing! See them stream into the Enquiry Room! Note their tears! Listen to the story of their repentance! Hear their confessions and declarations that they have found the Savior! Read the report in the papers—so many saved! But, within six months, where are they? Are they to be found in our churches? Are they working with the people of God? Some of them, for whom God be thanked, but, oh, how large a proportion have gone back, like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire! Would I not, therefore, have these special efforts to reach the unsaved? Of course I would— all the same, even, for what I have said. Whatever comes of it, our duty is one thing, the result of it is quite another! That which comes of it is often so disappointing that we are made to realize our own utter inability—and then we are made to rely alone upon God’s all-sufficient ability! Unless He opens the ear, it is never opened! And unless He seals the instruction upon the heart, burning it into the conscience as with a hot iron, setting His own instruction manual upon the innermost core of the being—all that is done is soon undone and nothing is really done effectually!  
Another difficulty must be noticed. That is, the purpose of so many men. Indeed, the secret purpose of all men—and from this purpose men have to be withdrawn. The purpose of most men is to seek after happiness. And their notion is that they will find it by having their own way. They have not found it yet—their own way has led them into much sorrow. They purposed to change, especially in one particular direction, but still to follow their own way in another fashion. They were, perhaps, too coarse—they will now be more polite. They were really outrageous in their sin—they will now be more decorous. They were, perhaps, going at too fast a pace—they will go a little slower, but in the same direction, still seeking the pleasures of the world, still desiring to please self. But to bow before God and confess their sin—they will have none of that! To turn from all their evil ways and to seek after perfect holiness—they will have none of that! To come to Christ and, in that coming, to be obedient to His supremacy and seek to follow His example, even as they hope to find pardon through His precious blood—they will not have that!  
Their purpose is—well, perhaps, just at the last, when they cannot make any more out of the world, they will come in and cheat the devil in a mean and beggarly way—and try to sneak into Heaven by some back door if they can find one. After having given their lives to Satan, they will give their deaths to the Savior. That prayer of the meanest man mentioned in the whole Bible is one which I have often heard quoted with commendation. That wicked wretch of a Balaam, after hating God’s people, doing them all the evil he could, and taking the reward for it, then prays, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!” What an abominable request! For the man who had lived such a life as that to ask that he might die the death of the righteous was atrocious and showed the awful blackness of his wicked heart! O Sirs, one day you will have to come to Christ and yield yourselves to His sway! If you do not bow before the scepter of His mercy, you will be broken in pieces by the rod of His wrath!  
The difficulty is to bring men to this submission, now, before it is too late. They have their own purpose and their own hope, and their own scheme—how can we get them away from them? He that will not be healed, who can heal him? He that is resolved to be sick, who can make him whole? He that will die, who shall keep him alive? The man that will not eat, how can you feed him? He that will not drink, how can you slake his thirst? O Sirs, this makes the difficulty of getting at men, that they are bent on mischief, they have set their faces like a flint, as if determined to go down to Hell!  
Yes, and there is one more thing which is, perhaps, the greatest barrier of all. It is not merely their deafness of ear, their stubbornness of spirit and their resoluteness of purpose, but it is their pride of heart. Oh, this is like granite! Where shall we find the diamond that can cut a thing so hard as man’s pride? God can “hide pride from man,” but we cannot! Man is so proud that he says that he has not sinned! Or, if he has sinned, he could not help it, poor creature that he is. Even if he has done wrong, he is no worse than his neighbors—and there are some beautiful traits of character about him—and these will furnish a sufficient covering for him! If he is told that he must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he greatly prefers to believe in himself! He will not come, as the publican did, and cry, “God, be merciful to me

a sinner.” Why should he? He is not such a sinner as the publican was! He would be washed, but he does not feel that he is foul enough. He would be purified from sin, but then he is not quite certain that he has any sin from which he needs to be purified! And so, while the sick find the Good Physician and are healed, these who fancy themselves to be in health die in their sins!  
We can overcome almost anything but man’s pride. You know the old story of dear Mr. Hervey who said to the godly farmer, “Ah, John, it is wonderful when God overcomes sinful self!” “Yes, Mr. Hervey,” answered the farmer, “but it is a greater wonder when He overcomes righteous self.” And so it is. It is easy for the Lord to save a sinner, but it is impossible for a self-righteous man to be saved until he is brought down from his fatal pride. I have heard of a lady who used to say that she could not bear to hear a certain style of preaching. “Why,” she said, “according to that teaching, I have no advantage over the girls in the street! And there is no better Heaven for a lady like me than there is for one of them!” So they shut themselves out with a sin which is as great as the sin which they condemn—for he that sets up his rags in preference to the robes of Christ—he that prefers his own righteousness to the precious blood of the Only-Begotten—has insulted his God with an arrogance so terrible that no sin can equal it in blackness! God save us from that sin! It needs God to do so, for only He can “hide pride from man.”  
II. Now, secondly, though man is hard to influence, GOD KNOWS HOW TO COME AT HIM and He does it in many ways.  
According to the text, He sometimes does it, “in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men while slumbering on their beds.” I have no doubt that many, many times, men’s sleeping thoughts have been the beginnings of better things for them. You see, reason holds the helm of the vessel when we are awake and, as a consequence, it keeps conscience down in the hold and will not let him speak. But in our dreams, reason has left the helm and then, sometimes, conscience comes up and in his own wild way he begins to sound such an alarm that the man starts up in the night! His very hair stands on end with fear—a fear which might begin in a dream, but which was not, itself, a dream, for there was something real and substantial at the back of it. Did you ever notice how God awakened Nebuchadnezzar, that greatest man, perhaps, of his age? Why, in a dream! Then Nebuchadnezzar trembles and he sends for someone to interpret his dream. Many and many a man has dreamed of death, or dreamed of judgement—did you never have such a dream yourself? We do not attach any importance to dreams as prognostications or signs of our spiritual condition, but there can be no doubt that, frequently, conscience has been awake when the rest of the person has been asleep—and men have been startled in such a way that, when they did awake, they could not shake off the impression of their dreams.  
God gets at other men in a different way, namely, by affliction, or by the death of others. What messengers of mercy afflictions have often been! The man has lost a dear baby on whom his heart’s affection was set. Or, more often, still, some blessed little child who talked of Jesus and sang sweet hymns—and died with Heaven on its face—has been the means of getting at an ungodly father and an impenitent mother! No sermon reached them, but the little child-preacher touched them wondrously and, for months, perhaps for years, they could not shake off the impression. Some of you may remember other deaths. I will not harrow your feelings, but these death scenes have spoken loudly to you and you have not been able to forget them. God has opened your ear and I trust, also, that He has sealed His instruction upon your heart and that He has hidden pride from you and turned you from an evil purpose by means of personal afflictions or bereavements!  
So have I known men awakened by strange Providences—by a fire, for instance, or by being in peril on board ship. Oh, how many have fallen on their knees when the vessel has begun to go down and before the lifeboat has been noticed! Bodily hunger, too, has brought some to hunger for Christ. And the result of their sin, when they have been in poverty, forlorn and lonely, and when nobody would associate with them because of their sin—perhaps even the plank bed and the hardiness of prison fare have brought them to seek their Savior and their God. God can get at men. Even the great leviathan, though no man can pierce him with a sword, has a weak place somewhere, where God can reach him. There is no sinner’s heart so stout and stubborn but that, if God shall thrust at him, he shall soon find his heart melt like wax in the midst of his breast. The eternal God never yet came into contact with men, either in the way of Divine Grace or vengeance, but He made them feel that He was not a man like themselves, with whom they could wrestle and contend, but that He was infinitely greater than the very strongest of them.  
If God does not come at men by strange Providences, how often He does it by singular words from the preacher! Oh, sometimes we have to say things which we never intended to say. They come to us and we do not know where they are going—and some who are not in the secret, ask, “Why did the preacher say that?” Sirs, if he studied mere propriety and wished to please all his hearers, he would not have said it! But he has said it and God has blessed it. Awkwardly as it was put, it was put in the right shape, according to God’s own way of looking at things—and sinners were saved and God was glorified!  
Then God has a way of coming to men’s hearts by personal visitations, without dream, without speech, without voice. I have often heard one say, “It was many years since I had been to a place of worship, but when I rose in the morning, I felt a singular softness of spirit coming over me and I said, ‘I think I shall go, today, to hear such-and-such a man, and see if there will not be a word for me.’” Another has said, “I was at my work and I cannot tell how it was, but I felt that I must stop a bit and go aside and begin to pray.” I remember one who is, I believe, at this moment a member of this Church. He said, “I leaned against some iron railings, for I could hardly hold myself up. I never remember having any conviction of sin before, but I was suddenly struck with a sense of sin, I know not how nor why.” God can bring men to Himself, so let us never despair of any!  
When you are praying for people, believe that there are other agencies than yours at the back of all that you can say, or I can say, and the books can say, and Bibles can say! There is the Holy Spirit and it is a part of our creed of which we ought often to think—“I believe in the Holy Spirit.” Bring the sinner in prayer to the Holy Spirit and rest in this Truth of God, that God can come at him by some means or other. Perhaps He will reach him through you—can you not speak to him tonight? Try and get a word with some stranger here, in the Tabernacle. Speak an earnest, loving word about the Savior—and who knows?—the appointed time, the day of salvation for that soul may have come. God grant it!  
III. My time has gone. I shall, therefore, ask you to listen to the outline of what I would have said upon the third point, and that is, WHEN GOD DOES GET AT MEN, HE ACCOMPLISHES GREAT PURPOSES.  
His purpose is, first, to withdraw man from his own purpose. We have often admired the drawings of God—let us also admire the withdrawings of God—“That He may withdraw man from his purpose.” Sometimes a man has purposed at a certain moment to commit a sin and God stops him from doing it. Perhaps if he had committed that one sin, the current of his life might have been turned so as never to be altered again. But God stopped him then and there. “Up to this point,” He says, “you have gone, but you shall go no further. That is your last oath, your last bout of drunkenness, your last act of uncleanness. Stop!” It is the Lord who does this! He did it with some of us—He withdrew us from our purpose.  
He also withdraws men from their general purpose of continuing in sin. They purpose to procrastinate, but God purposes that they shall postpone the acceptance of Grace no longer. They purpose that they will go a little further in sin, but God stops them then and there.  
I find the translation may be that God withdraws man from his work, from that which has been his life-work—from the whole run and tenor of his conversation, God withdraws him! A man goes out after having received the Word of the Lord and he is a different man from that hour. I remember one who kept a low public house and who heard the Word of God. He had no sooner heard it than when he reached home he smashed up his signboard with the first axe he could find and shut up the house, resolving that he would have no more to do with the evil traffic! There is many a man who has been just as decided and earnest as that. God has stopped him and withdrawn him from his purpose. Oh, there are some whose lives have been spent in infamy and, in an instant, God has made them forsake it all—and they have loathed themselves! The change has been so sudden, as well as so radical, that all about them have gazed, admired and wondered at what the Grace of God has worked! When the Lord visits a man’s heart, He withdraws him from his purpose.  
I have it impressed upon me to believe that there is some soul here that is to be withdrawn from his purpose at once. I do not know what purpose you had upon your heart this afternoon, nor what your purpose is about where you are going to spend tonight, but I beseech you, if it was a purpose of sin, stop at once! Heed the word of warning—go no further. If you have resolved tomorrow, or at any time during the week, that you will commit this or that sin, O Love Divine, turn the man and he shall be turned! Deal with him this moment, O God, according to Your glorious Godhead, not according to the fickleness of his will, but according to Your Almighty Grace! Change the lion into a lamb, the raven to a dove! Thus the Lord withdraws man from his purpose.  
Then what else does God do? He hides pride from man. That is a very strange expression, certainly, to, “hide pride from man.” Did none of you ever hide away a knife from a child? Have you never hidden away fruit from your little children when they have had enough and they would have eaten more if they could find it? God often hides pride from men because if man can find anything to be proud of, he will be! Look at him, he is proud of his fine form! Look at that woman, how proud she is of her clothes, poor thing! One is proud of his ability, proud of his success, proud of his job, proud of his youth, proud of his old age, proud of what he never did, proud of what he did do but could not help doing! There is no one of us who has even a pennyworth of stuff to be proud of, whatever we may be! But unless God hides it all away, we go and find something and come strutting out just like our little children, when they say, “See my pretty coat?! See my new shoes?!”  
Some of you mothers, in teaching your children to say that, bring them up to habits of pride. Well, they will only be like yourself—and that is the way with us all—we will be proud and he who has the least to be proud of is often prouder than all the rest! My Lord Mayor is not more proud of his badge and chain than many a crossing sweeper is of his ragged trousers! Pride can live upon a dunghill as well as upon a throne! But God will hide pride from us, till, if we look about, we cannot find it and cannot see any reason for being proud. I pray God to hide from all of us, self-righteous pride, and self-seeking pride, and self-glorifying pride— to lay us low at the foot of the Cross. Whenever I find anybody saying, “I have attained to a perfectly sanctified life, I have no sinful propensities, I, I, I, I.”—Ah, yes, if God had really dealt with you, He would have clipped your I’s down! They will not be half so straight in the back, and so tall, when God takes you in hand!  
He hides pride from men. Some of the Lord’s workers have grown so big that the least thing offends them—everything must be according to their own way, or they will have nothing to do with it. Oh, it will not do, Brothers and Sisters! If God is with us, He will hide pride from man. There is nothing He dislikes more than pride! What does He say of it? “The proud He knows afar off.” That is as much as to say that He will not touch them with a pair of tongs! He knows enough of them at a distance, He does not want them near Him! When He deals with us in the way of Grace, He hides pride from man.  
Then, lastly, He thus secures man’s salvation from destruction. “He keeps back his soul from the Pit and his life from perishing by the sword.” How wonderfully has God kept some of us back from what would have been our destruction if we had gone on! Perhaps I speak to some here who have had many hairbreadth escapes—should not they live to God? I recollect with what solemn awe I spoke to an officer who rode in the famous charge at Balaclava. It must be 20 years ago or more, I think, since I was with him, and he was telling me of that terrible ride when the saddles were emptying on every side, and he rode on, and rode back unharmed. I could not but lay my hand upon him with great earnestness and say, “Are you not God’s man since He spared you so? Will you not live to His Glory and give your heart to Him?”  
And I would say that to all of you who have been often in fevers, or who have been near the gates of death. If you have been preserved, for what purpose was it? Surely, that you might yield yourselves to God, for He has interposed on purpose that your life should not go down to the Pit! I hope, also, that He has the higher design that you, yourselves, with your truest life, should never go down into that Pit from which there is no escape. Oh, that He would deliver every man, woman and child, here, from the wrath to come! For, believe me, there is a wrath to come, a fire that burns and shall never be quenched! Oh, for that visitation of God that shall hide pride from us, and reveal a Savior to us, that shall withdraw us from our own purpose, to fulfill in us the Divine purpose! Then shall we be saved from going down into the Pit. The Lord enable us to believe in His dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**JOB 33:6-33.**

This is part of the speech of young Elihu, who had listened with much patience, but also with great indignation, to the harsh speeches of Job’s three friends and to Job’s self-righteous answers.

Verses 6, 7. Behold, I am according to your wish in God’s stead; I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make you afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon you. Job had wished that he could argue his case with the Lord, Himself. If God would only withdraw the terror of His Presence from him, he would like to come even to His seat, and plead with Him. “Oh!” he said, “that there were one who would stand between me and God, that I might plead with Him!” “Here am I,” answered Elihu, “I am the man you need. God has sent me. Now come and plead with me. There is no terror in me to make you afraid—neither have I a heavy hand to crush you.”

8-10. Surely you have spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the voice of your words, saying I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. Behold, He finds occasions against me, He counts me for His enemy. Elihu puts the case very plainly. “There, Job, you have said that you are perfectly innocent and yet you are made to suffer. You have brought a charge against God, that He seeks occasion against you and treats you, who have always been His faithful friend, as though you were His enemy. You said”—

11, 12. He puts my feet in the stocks, He marks all my paths. Behold, in this you are not just: I will answer you, that God is greater than man. Here is the core of the whole matter. Whenever you and I begin to impugn the Justice of God, we ought to remember who we are and what He is! There is no comparison between us and the great God Over All, blessed forever! And for us to begin to charge Him with injustice, or unkindness is a desperately wicked action, of that we may be quite sure at the very outset.

13. Why do you strive against Him? For He gives not account of any of His matters. It is not for us to summon God to appear before us, as if He were our servant and we were His master, or to arraign Him before our judgment seat, and to sit there as if the Holy One of Israel were a felon who must answer for His crimes! It is high treason and blasphemy against the Most High for us to think of sitting in judgment upon Him! This was Paul’s way of putting the matter when someone raised a question about the Divine Decree. Paul did not answer the objector, except by saying, “No, but, O man, who are you that replies against God?” Let the moth contend with the flame, let the wax fight with the fire, let the stubble strive with the whirlwind, but as for us who are less than nothing, let us have no disputes with God! The fact is, God’s dealings with us have an objective—He treats us, sometimes, with stern severity for our own good. We cannot always see the end from the beginning, but God has an end, and a gracious end, too, in all His dealings with His people.

14-22. For God speaks once, yes twice, yet man perceives it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men while slumbering on their beds; then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. He is also chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: so that his life abhors bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yes, his soul draws near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. Yet in all this God is dealing with man in love and mercy! Man is a strange creature. He will not go in the right way by being drawn, so full often he must be driven. There is a whip for a horse, a bridle for an ass, a rod for a fool’s back—and we are such fools that we must often feel that rod and, sometimes, to a very painful extent till our soul draws near unto the grave and our life to the destroyers.

23, 24. If there is a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand to show unto man His uprightness then He is gracious to him, and says, Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom. Oh, what precious words! There is One with God, One of a thousand, the Chief among ten thousand, the Messenger of the Covenant, the Mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus! When He comes in and makes man to see God’s wondrous mingling of justice and mercy, then God turns in Infinite Grace upon the starving, dying sinner and says, “Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom.”

25-28. His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s: he shall return to the days of his youth: he shall pray unto God, and He will be favorable unto him: and he shall see His face with joy: for He will render unto man His righteousness. He looks upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it prompted me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the Pit, and his life shall see the light. Some Thursday nights ago, there strayed into this place one who had long hated God and who had openly expressed his hatred of Him. He was much prayed for by friends, but he was desperate in his wickedness. He little dreamed, when he left his home, that he would come into this place. But so he did and here in this house God met with him and renewed his heart and made him to rejoice in the God he once despised! Here was a fulfillment of this text and I pray that it may be fulfilled again, tonight!

29-33. Lo, all these things works God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the Pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living. Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold your peace and I will speak. If you have anything to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify you. If not, hearken unto me: hold your peace, and I shall teach you wisdom.

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÷Job 33.23

FOOTSTEPS OF MERCY  
NO. 905

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

**“If there is a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto men His uprightness: Then He is gracious unto him and says, Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom.”  
Job 33:23, 24.**

**WHEN God has distinct and definite purposes of mercy towards an individual, He often begins with stern discipline and brings him low by affliction and sorrow. As the good farmer cuts down the trees and makes a clearance of the soil before he sows the grain and prepares for a harvest, so does our God cut down all our goodly cedars, our pleasures, and our pride in order that the heart may be afterwards plowed, broken, harrowed and made ready to receive the good seed of the Word. Elihu describes this preparatory breaking-up process as being brought about by sickness. It is often so—I doubt not that a sickbed is one of God’s best orators to the sons of men.**

**But God is by no means restricted to any uniform method, nor is the experience of the redeemed precisely similar in its details though, notwithstanding all its diversities, it leads to one and the same result. Sometimes a storm at sea has brought men to their senses and aroused their conscience and so they have cried to the Lord in their trouble. At other times serious losses in business have brought men into such distress of mind that they have been driven to seek riches more enduring than silver and gold—a competence more to be relied on than the profits of trade or the stability of banks— and comfort more genuine and lasting than wealth.**

**Yes, and without either of these the Holy Spirit has not infrequently been pleased to convince men of their sin and reduce them to utter self-despondency and abject self-abhorrence. This He has effected in such a way as neither sickness nor poverty could have done of themselves. He has brought the man very low, even to the gates of Hell. In his own apprehension the man has been lost and then it is that Mercy has commenced her work, her blessed work that shall open to him the gates of righteousness and bring the soul up to Heaven itself!**

**I hope there are some here present whom God has been preparing for His Divine Grace—to such there will be good tidings in the sermon! I shall not delay you, but proceed at once to deal with the text in the natural order it suggests, as the welcome facts are marshaled before us. Does it not tell of *a messenger—a message—a gracious disposition—a great deliverance—and an amazing ransom?***

I. **When God has thus, in the way of Providence, prepared any human heart for a work of Divine Grace, one of the first means of blessing the chosen man is TO SEND HIM A MESSENGER. I suppose the passage before us may be primarily referred to Christian ministers, who become, through God the Holy Spirit, interpreters to men’s souls. They should be men of a thousand, well taught. They should have high moral and spiritual qualifications. In fact, they should be the pick of mankind. When God sends a faithful Gospel messenger to a man, it is a sign of great love to that man’s soul.**

**I ask no honor for ministers as *men*, but this I do ask, that when they preach to you the Gospel of Jesus Christ they shall be accepted as God’s messengers and that their message, at least, shall be treated with the respect which God’s Word demands. But I prefer to believe, with many expositors, that the full meaning of these words will never be found in ministers of mortal race. We must rather refer it to the Great Messenger of the Covenant, the Great Interpreter between God and man whose Presence to the sin-sick soul is a sure prophecy of mercy. Where God the Father sends His beloved Son to a man—where Christ comes to the man’s conscience and talks with him, showing the credentials of a Savior and constraining the faith of the sinner—there it is that salvation is obviously intended by the Lord and will be effectually perfected in that man unto everlasting life.**

**With this view I proceed, regarding our Lord Jesus Christ as the herald of mercy. Mark well the titles, a Messenger, an Interpreter, One Among a Thousand. Is there any other than Jesus to whom they so fitly belong? Let us contemplate Him as a Messenger. That is just what Jesus Christ is. Now, a messenger comes not in his own name. He must be sent and it is a great comfort to know that Jesus Christ did not come to save men merely on His own account, but He came commissioned by the Father. He was sent of God. God has appointed Christ to be the Savior. Those who accept Christ and trust in Him accept the very Person God, Himself, has ordained. Christ is no amateur Savior, who comes without a commission. In His hands He bears the royal stamp of the Divine authority. O trembling Sinner! Trust Him whom God has trusted! Lay hold of Him whom God has appointed!**

**Another description that belongs to Him, as I believe, is an Interpreter. Jesus Christ is, indeed, a blessed Interpreter. An interpreter must understand two languages. Our Lord Jesus understands the language of God. Whatever are the great Truths of Divine intelligence and infinite wisdom—too high and mysterious for us to comprehend or even to discern, Christ fully understands them all! He knows how to speak with God as the fellow of God, co-equal and co-eternal with Him. His prayers are in God’s language. He speaks to God’s heart. He can make out the sighs and cries and tears of a poor sinner and He can take up the meaning and interpret them all to God. He understands the Divine language and thus He can communicate with God.**

**Moreover, Jesus understands *our* language, for He is a Man like ourselves, touched with a feeling of our infirmities and smarting under our sicknesses. He can read whatever is in the heart of man, and so He can tell God the language of man and speak to man in the language of man what God would say to him. How happy we ought to be that there is so blessed a Daysman to put His hand upon us both—that He can be equal with God and yet can be Brother with poor simple men! The best of it is that our Lord is such an Interpreter that He can not only interpret to the ear but also to the *heart* and this is a great point.**

**I, perhaps, might be enabled to interpret a Scripture to your ears, but, O Beloved, when you have heard the letter you may miss the correct, heavenly and *spiritual* meaning. But our Lord can bring the Word home to your soul! He can tell you of God’s mercy, not in words only, but with a sweet sense of mercy shed abroad in your heart. He can make the sinner *feel* the way of salvation as well as *know* it. He can make him rejoice in it as well as listen to it. He can lead him to accept it as well as to understand it. Oh, blessed Interpreter! You are mighty with God, so that the heart of God is affected with the woes and griefs of men! You are mighty with men so that the great love of God, which is an ocean without a bottom or a shore, is made intelligible to us! Our poor stony hearts are softened and the adamant is made to run like wax while the Divine Interpreter talks to our inmost souls!**

**This Messenger, then, this Interpreter, is He not “ *One Among a Thousand*”? O peerless Jesus! Who among the sons of the mighty can be compared with You? Elihu may well be supposed to use a definite number when an indefinite is intended! What is one of a thousand, or one of ten thousand, when surely there is never the like of Christ between Heaven and Hell? All the range of the universe cannot find His equal—His equal as a Savior, as a Messenger—as an Interpreter! Oh, but those who know Him will tell you that no words can ever set forth His worth! Disciples of Jesus who have followed Him and held communion with Him for the space of 20 years and more will tell you that His preciousness grows upon them by acquaintance.**

**Whereas they thought Him sweet at first, they think Him sweetest and best of all now, the loveliest of all the lovely, the fairest of all the fair, the chief among 10,000, yes, and the altogether lovely! I tell you that if there were a thousand Saviors, I would have none but Christ! If the gods of the heathen and the saints of the papists could help them. If the ceremonies of our modern papists could save their souls instead of enslaving them, yet would we repudiate them! We would have nothing to do with them in whole or in part! We would still cling to Him who is the one Mediator between God and men, for He is the chief among 10,000 to our souls.**

**He is such a Savior that there is no other who can vie with Him. All rivalry must prove abortive, seeing that other foundation can no man lay. He is the door of Heaven, all the rest is hard wall and there is no passing through—a light from God and all other lights are darkness—very God come down to us in our flesh to save us and where shall you find the match of this? O cherubim and seraphim, what Savior could you devise that should emulate the only-begotten Son of God? O you angels, fairest among the goodly throng that salute Jehovah day and night with your *ceaseless* music, whom will you laud and magnify but Jesus in your jubilant worshipful songs?**

**As you survey the glorious company of the Apostles, the noble army of the martyrs and the radiant fellowship of the Church redeemed, will you chant any other name? Is He not in your esteem the chief among a thousand, the sole heritor of all blessing and praise? Accept Him, Sinner! Receive Him joyfully into your spirit for no one will ever woo you as this precious One, the chosen of God! Who, save Jesus, then, should be chosen and precious to your soul? It is a great sign of mercy whenever Christ comes to any sinner.**

**But how, you ask, can He come to a sinner? I will tell you. He has come to you now, to every one of you. Jesus comes in the preaching of the Gospel. There is never a Gospel sermon preached but it is, in fact, Jesus coming with open arms of love to receive the sinner. He comes to you in these Bibles and New Testaments of yours. Every one of those volumes that lie in your house is a standing token of Christ’s mission, whispering to him that has ears to hear that He is still ready to receive the sinner. And I trust He comes to some of you now, in the motions of the Holy Spirit upon your heart, saying to you, “Close in with Him. Reject Him no longer. Bow down your ear and listen to Him.”**

**Lift up your eyes and look to Him, concerning whom we sang so truly just now—***“There is life for a look at the Crucified One,  
There is life at this moment for you.”*

**This is the first stage.**

II. **Now, secondly, wherever this Divine messenger comes, according to the text, HE REVEALS GOD’S UPRIGHTNESS. A lesson, let me assure you, of deep interest and paramount importance. The occasion on which it is taught is peculiarly impressive. You remember Elihu has been describing a man greatly afflicted, chastened with pain, wasted with disease, reduced to a skeleton and brought near to death. We have shown you that before the Lord Jesus Christ comes in mercy to deal with a soul, such tribulation is dealt out by God to break up the fallow ground of the heart. No marvel that the sufferer is appalled with tokens of judgment.**

**What message, then, can the Divine messenger bring more suitable or more refreshing than that which reveals to man the uprightness of God in having afflicted him? You think, perhaps, that God has been very hard with you. In your distraction you say, “How long I have been ill! How long I have been out of work and how long my wife has been afflicted! How many of my dear children have died? What strokes God has laid upon me without intermission!” Now shall new views spring up and comfortable thoughts arise. But who shall bridge the interval? When Christ comes to you as an Interpreter He will make you discern the wisdom and the love, and cause you to feel the pity and the tenderness of Him, who, as a Father rebukes you not in anger but in His dear Covenant love.**

**Instead of kicking against the pricks, you will say, “Ah, Lord, it is of Your mercy I am not consumed! I can see there is a hand of love in this. God would not let me go on in sin and wander into endless woe—You are blocking up my road—You are putting massive chains across the broad way to stop me. You are digging pits in my path that I may come to a pause and so I will turn back from this.” Depend upon it, there is nothing more dreadful than a life that is happy in the commission of sin! If you have prosperity and all that your heart can wish while pursuing an evil course, tremble, for it is likely enough that God will give you up—you are having your portion in *this* life! O you Unconverted! Are any of you tried and troubled, vexed and disquieted? While I am sorry for your troubles, I hope God has designs of love towards you. If you look to Christ He will explain to you the heavenly moral of these earthly trials and show you the uprightness of God in dealing thus severely with His rebellious child.**

**Further than this, the Gospel of Christ explains to the sinner the uprightness of God in the doom of the impenitent, *even if He sends him down to Hell.* Oh, a man may find fault with Hell and say, “Will God consign men to the devouring fire? Will He destroy their souls? Will He damn men for their offenses?” But if once the Great Interpreter comes to you, you will wonder not that God should destroy men for sin, but that He has not destroyed *you* long ago! Oh, I could have argued with a bold front against eternal punishment till I knew what sin meant! And then I gave in at once and I wish that some of my Brothers and Sisters who seem to speak dubiously about the wrath of God, could feel, as some of us have felt, the horror of great darkness that sin brings across a soul when it is made to feel the righteous ire that encompasses it!**

**There is no quibbling, then! The only cry is, “O my God, deliver me, for I deserve all Your wrath can bring upon me, and if You should strike me to destruction You will be justified when You judge and clear when you condemn.” Mark you, it is a blessed thing when Christ brings a sinner to plead guilty—when he is quite willing to plead guilty and when, instead of railing at the justice of the sentence, he stands dumb with silence—feeling that God is upright and would not be upright if He did not thus condemn. There is hope, there is *more* than hope! There is confidence in our heart towards any sinner who is convinced of the uprightness of God in his present affliction, or in any other that God may please to send upon him—either in this life or in the life to come!**

**Ah, but this is learning to some profit for a man to see the uprightness of God in everything and then by contrast to bewail his own ignorance and foolishness! Mercy is surely come to you when you can think of God’s holiness with reverence and upbraid yourself with bitter reproach for what an unholy creature you halve been. It is a rough wind, that north wind, but, O my Brothers and Sisters, what a healthy wind it is! It sweeps away the fevers of our pride and drives away the mists of our self-righteousness. Self-righteous, indeed! Such wretches as we are, such offenders against God and Truth as we have been—for us to talk of goodness when we are altogether vile, for us to boast of something hopeful in us when the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint—this is sheer insanity!**

**When the Blessed Interpreter comes and deals graciously with the spirit, we confess that God is upright, but as for ourselves we have gone astray like lost sheep. We have done the things which we ought not to have done. We have left undone the things which we ought to have done and there is no health in us. Oh, those visions of God, how humiliating they are! Job, himself, made confession, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear. But now my eyes see You. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” This supplies us with the second stage in the experience of Divine mercy—Christ is recognized, the uprightness of God is revealed and understood.**

III. **The third stage is this—“THEN HE IS GRACIOUS UNTO HIM.” God deals with convinced sinners in a way of Grace. Every word here is weighty. “Then He is gracious unto him.” *Mark the time—then!* God is gracious to a man when Christ, having come to him as a Messenger and an Interpreter. He is led to discern his own sin and God’s uprightness. When he is humble, then God shows Himself to be gracious. No debts are pronounced forgiven by the Great Master of All till they are *acknowledged* and no release from the pains of bankruptcy are granted until we feel that we have nothing with which to pay.**

**When a soul pleads total insolvency and is truly penniless, then there is free forgiveness. When men admit the justice of God if He should punish them, *then,* not till then, mercy comes in and the punishment is put away. It is not consistent with the holiness of God to pardon a sinner while he denies his guilt, or invents excuses to justify his crimes. Nor is it reasonable for a sinner to expect remission while he vaunts his self-righteousness. How shall the hardness of a man’s heart move the compassion of his judge? Come, poor Soul, fall on your knees! Confess that God is upright and *then* He will be gracious to you. The *way* as well as the time demands your notice. It is through the Messenger that God is gracious!**

***Then—* that is when the Messenger comes. When Jesus interposes, then God is gracious. You shall never taste of Divine Grace except out of the golden cup of Christ’s *Atonement*. It is into that golden cup that God has poured the infinity of His Grace. Drink of it, Sinner, by simply trusting in Christ. You cannot drink it in any other way. Narrowly observe what the text says, “Then *He is gracious* unto him.” All salvation comes by way of Grace. The word “Grace” as used by us in its Latin form explains its own meaning. We speak of “Gratis”—a thing free from cost—like the prescription of a physician if given without fee, or the medicine supplied at the dispensary without charge.**

**All God’s mercy to a sinner is Gratis. He never sells, He always gives. He asks no payment. He acts from no motives raised or suggested by anything in us—but because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. Dear Heart, it is a blessing for you when you can see that nothing but Christ can serve your turn! When you have done with appealing to justice and all your knocks are at Mercy’s door. O Sinner, you cannot be saved except by Divine Grace in the beginning, Divine Grace in the middle and Divine Grace in the end! What but Grace can pardon sins such as yours and mine? What but Grace could take such as we are and make us God’s children? What but Grace could snatch us from Hell and lift us up to Heaven?**

**When the man is humbled and Christ is revealed to him, then it is that God deals graciously with the man and then it is that the man knows he has found Divine Grace in the eyes of the Lord. And I like the thought that it does not say God ever leaves off being gracious to that man. Where we do not read that God ceases, we may believe that He continues! Does He once deal graciously with a sinner? He will *always*** be gracious to that sinner! Never will He change. That sinner once blessed, shall be blessed through life and blessed in death and blessed in eternity through the sovereign, overflowing, immutable Grace which is in Jesus Christ our Lord!

Well, we have come a long way. We have found the sinner sick and near to death. The Interpreter has come. He has shown him the uprightness of God, and given him an assurance of God’s gracious disposition—now the sinner knows that Christ, alone, can save him.

IV. Let us proceed to the next stage—GOD DELIVERS THE SINNER. He says, “Deliver him from going down into the Pit.” What shall we understand by this? Does it refer to “the *grave,*” which is dug like a pit? Well, such an interpretation may harmonize with Elihu’s discourse as he describes the man whose soul draws near to the grave and his life to the Destroyer. But when delivered from going down into the pit, his flesh shall be fresher than a child’s, he shall return to the days of his youth. So the Psalmist celebrates the loving kindness of the Lord—“O Lord, You have brought up my soul from the grave. You have kept me that I should not go down into the pit.”

What more shall we understand by the pit from which the soul is delivered? The pit is often used in Scripture as the emblem of great distress and misery. Captives in the East were frequently shut up in pits all night. So Isaiah says, “They shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit and shall be shut up in the prison” ([Isa. 24:22](tw://bible.*?id=23.24.22|_AUTODETECT_|)). And again, in another place, “The captive exile hastens that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail” ([Isa. 51:14](tw://bible.*?id=23.51.14|_AUTODETECT_|)). There is a bondage of soul which involves depression of spirits and failing of heart that may well be likened to confinement in a pit from which there appears no way of escape.

But may we not understand still more by the pit? Alas, then, dear Friends, we sometimes read of the pit, when the word is pregnant with deeper meaning, even of the Pit that is bottomless, that place of torment prepared for devils and lost souls! Oh, if there were time, what a picture we have before us! The Pit, the bottomless Pit—an awful representation, a horrible vision of the future wrath of God! The Pit—black, dark, descending down which the soul slips and slides and falls headlong! Going down into the Pit—what a dreadful expression! Not going down as miners do to seek for ore, but being hurled by the strong hand of the avenging angel downwards into the abyss!

There, on the verge of the precipice *you* are! Though not falling down that abyss yet, your feet have almost gone! Your steps have well-near slipped. At such a crisis the Mercy of God comes to the sinner’s aid and cries in thrilling tones, “Deliver him!” It is not a mere shout of warning, it is a voice that has *power* in it. It is the clear silvery note of *rescue* and the man is delivered just as he is about to sink to rise no more! Kings and emperors, when they have condemned men to die, can exercise the prerogative of mercy. Let the royal mandate issue concerning a prisoner, “Deliver him,” then the prison doors are opened, for the king’s pardon has been given.

Just such a thing does God with condemned sinners when they bow down before Him and confess the righteousness of the sentence. Through Jesus Christ, the heavenly Messenger, He says, “Deliver him! Deliver him!” There is a legal pardon. The man is set free from the bonds of the jailer, instead of being given over to the hands of the executioner. Therefore he shall live in peace and joy. “Deliver him!” Perhaps the three significations of the pit I have alluded to may be combined in one dark picture. Sickness brings the sinner to the immediate prospect, not of death only, but of his endless doom. The sorrows and remorse of his soul produce, as it were, a foretaste of that anguish which knows no abatement. And soon Hell does yawn at his feet “a universe of death”—“worse than fables yet have reigned, or fear conceived.”

How many witnesses we might call to speak to the truth of all this! Why, Elihu said, “Lo, all these things works God oftentimes with man.” The anguish is real and the joy of rescue is real, likewise. Did not Hezekiah feel them both? The message came to him, “Thus says the Lord, set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.” Then he prayed vehemently and he wept sorely. Afterwards the Word of the Lord came to him that his prayer was heard, that his tears were seen and that his life should be spared. And this is what he said—“*Behold,* for peace I had great bitterness. But You have in love to my soul *delivered it from the Pit of corruption,* for You have cast all my sins behind Your back.”

What a shout of joy is that of David when he says, “ *He* brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings”! In like manner Jonah speaks, “You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God.” Very memorable, too, is the sweet promise of God to the daughter of Zion, by the mouth of the Prophet Zechariah, “As for You, also, by the blood of Your Covenant I have sent forth Your prisoners out of the pit wherein is at water.” Yes, my dear Friends, and I feel bound to say for myself, to the praise of my God—

“ *Your love was great, Your mercy free,   
Which from the Pit delivered me.”*

Well do I remember when the sentence went forth to my soul, “Deliver him!” The time did, indeed, seem long at first. I was years and years upon the brink of Hell—I mean in my own feeling. I was unhappy, I was desponding, I was despairing. I *dreamed* of Hell. My life was full of sorrow and wretchedness, believing that I was lost. But oh, the blessed Gospel of the God of Grace came to me at length with that soft voice, “*Look* unto *Me* and be you saved, all you ends of the earth!” With it came a Sovereign Word, “*Deliver* him!” and I who was but a minute before as wretched as a soul could be, could have danced for very merriment of heart! And as the snow fell on my road home from the little house of prayer I thought every snowflake talked with me and told of the pardon I had found! I was white as the driven snow through the Grace of God.

Oh, that word, “Deliver him!” It so restrains the temptations of Satan and quells the strivings of conscience, that the poor soul has instantaneous liberty and rejoices with joy unspeakable! Mark you, my dear Friend, if ever you should look to Christ by simple faith and God should say, “*Deliver* him,” that, “*Deliver* him” will last forever! God does not play fast and loose with sinners! If He pardons today He will not condemn tomorrow. He does not loose and then bind again. He opens and no man shuts. Once He says, “*Deliver* him,” you may walk through all the earth and who shall lay anything to your charge? For who is he that can arrest you and cast you into prison against this, “*Deliver him*”?

There may have come into this place some great offender. It is impossible for me to discriminate among you, or single out any one of these thousands, but there may be here one of the very blackest class of sinners. To you Christ’s Gospel has come! I hope you have been led to feel that you are guilty, to confess your sin*,* and to admit that you can only be saved through God’s Grace and mercy. Well now, if you will but trust my Savior, the Lord Jesus, who once died on Calvary’s Cross and now lives enthroned in Glory. If you will but trust Him *now*, the sentence shall come from the Truth of God, “Deliver him,” or, “Deliver *her* from going down into the Pit.”

Oh, there have been many outcasts in these very aisles who have found Grace and obtained remission of their sins! The harlot has heard the word, “Deliver her from going down to the Pit.” The thief and the drunkard, too, though in their own conscience on the very brink of Hell, and all but sliding in, have heard it and they are here among the happy worshippers that praise God! Some of us who never fell into those fouler vices, though as depraved in our hearts as they, have heard that blessed sound and we are here to express our soul’s desire that you all knew it! O that you all trusted Christ! O that you were all saved by that blessed mandate, “Deliver him from going down into the Pit”!

V. The last thing is that GOD EXPLAINS TO THE SINNER WHOM HE DELIVERS THE REASON OF HIS DELIVERANCE. “Deliver him from going down into the Pit: I have found a ransom.” “I have found a ransom”—a covering. Catch the thought. There are your sins like a putrid slough, reeking with corruption. They are black. Like a huge pool of blood they are scarlet. It is abhorrent to the pure eyes of God to look upon the heart that is a very reservoir of pollution. He must strike you if He looks at it. Listen—“I have found a covering.” Christ comes in and covers it all. “Blessed is that man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

As the Mercy Seat covered the Law and was called a covering, so does the Atonement of Christ cover the perfect Law of God—and it puts out of God’s sight every sin of all those who trust in Christ. But take the word as we get it in the English version—a *ransom—*that means a *price*. When a man was in debt, he used to be, according to the old law, put into prison. Well, how did he get his discharge? He came out if the debt was paid, of course, at once. So God says, “Deliver him: I have found a price, I have found a recompense, I have found a Substitute, I have found a ransom.” The Lord Jesus Christ has suffered for us what God’s wrath demanded of us—

*“He bore, that we might never bear,   
His Father’s righteous ire.”*

Christ stood in our place that we might go free! I have told you this grand old tale so many times in this house that sometimes as I am coming here I think to myself—“I can find no new metaphor to illustrate it and no new words to rouse the languid attention. They will tell me that I am always harping on the same string.” Still, still, I must continue to expound and enforce this substitutionary suffering of Christ! I cannot help it. It is as much as my soul is worth to keep it back, for I am persuaded that it is the very *essence* of the Gospel—the vicarious suffering of Christ. At any rate, I have no Gospel to preach to you but this—that God has punished Christ instead of you that will believe on Christ and therefore He cannot punish you—you are clear. Christ has paid your debts! The receipt is given! You are liberated!

God has no claims upon you from His justice now—they are all discharged. Christ has discharged all your liabilities! “By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses.” Never listen, I entreat you, my dear Hearers, to the derisive sneer of the scorner as he attempts to cast discredit upon the righteousness of God in the imputation of your sins to the great Redeemer. I know that it is not in the power of skeptic, rationalist, Socinian, or infidel to bring forth one argument that can refute the plain testimony which abounds in the Scriptures. But they can and they do ask if our moral sense of rectitude is not shocked at inflicting punishment on the Innocent and bestowing rewards as well as pardon on the guilty.

Do they object to you that it were unjust on the part of God to make one Man suffer personally for another man’s sin? Tell them if they better understood the doctrine, they would see that instead of outraging the morality of men, it manifests the righteousness of God! Tell them, as one of our most famous Puritans did, that the Redeemer and redeemed have such an intimate relation that what one does or suffers, the other may be accounted to do or suffer. It is no unrighteousness if the hands offend, for the head to be struck. Christ is our Head and we are His members. Tell them that He who suffered, the Just for the unjust, had power to lay down His life and power to take it again. His submission, therefore, was voluntary.

Tell them that He who bore our sins in His own body on the tree agreed and stipulated to bear our iniquities—the whole matter was settled in Covenant between the Father and the Son. Tell them once more that our Lord Jesus Christ counted the cost and estimated the recompense when He, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross. He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied—with honor and glory shall He be crowned. Because He humbled Himself, God also has highly exalted Him. And because He made Himself of no reputation, to Him is given a name which is above every name. Tell them His mediatorial Glory surpasses thought! Bid them cease their pitiless clamor and leave us to our joys. It is the sweetest music out of Heaven and it is the source of the music of Heaven. “I have found a ransom.”

Christ’s ransom for enslaved sinners is the world’s good news. Tell it, then, and as you hear it let your hearts rejoice! You notice these words, “I have found a ransom.” You did not find it for yourselves. You could not ever have discovered it, much less have brought it into the world. But God found it. The infinite wisdom of God was needed to find the way of salvation by a Substitute. “I have found a ransom.” Now, since God has found it and God is satisfied with it, let me, chief of sinners though I am, find rest in this Divine satisfaction! Conscience says to me, “Well, but how can your sins be forgiven?” Again Conscience thunders, “Recollect such a day, such a night, such an act, such a blasphemy. Do you think Christ can wash such a devil as you?” I answer, “Well, if God is satisfied, I am sure I will be.”

If you owe a debt, and your creditor takes the money of another and he is quite easy about it, why, Man, do not be uneasy about it! If he is satisfied you may be, and if God is content with Christ, so, poor Sinner, let you and I be satisfied, and let us begin to sing—

*“I will praise You every day!   
Now Your anger’s turned away,   
Comfortable thoughts arise   
From the bleeding Sacrifice.   
Jesus is become at length   
My salvation and my strength   
And His praises shall prolong,   
While I live, my pleasant song.”*

O bless the dear name of Him who suffered in your place! O take His ransom price! Look at it! Turn over every sacred drop of it in your memory and your gratitude! Be satisfied and more than satisfied! Rejoice and be exceedingly glad to be delivered from going down into the Pit! God has found an all-sufficient and a most blessed Ransom for your souls and therefore you are delivered!

What more can I say to you, my dear Hearers! I have told you the way of mercy and I have described to you the footsteps of mercy in the experience of those who have proved its saving efficacy. But I cannot bring Christ to your souls, or when Christ comes near unto you, as He does now in the ministry of His Gospel, I cannot *make* you open the doors of your hearts to receive Him. O you who do not believe and are yet in your sins, what more can I do for you than thus to cry aloud in your ears and proclaim to you the path of life?

This one thing I can do—I can stand here and break my heart to think that you refuse Him. But no, I cannot take leave of you thus. I must again beseech and entreat and implore you as you love your souls, turn not away from the Divine Messenger, from Jesus Christ the Friend of sinners! He asks no great thing of you! He bids you not pass through ceremonies that will take you days and months, but NOW, one believing glance at yonder Cross! One glance at Him who died there for sinners and it is done! Christ is honored! God is satisfied! You are saved!

Go your way and tell your friends what great things He has done for you, and God bless you. Amen. Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.

÷Job 33.24

DELIVERANCE FROM THE PIT  
NO. 2505

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1897. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 21, 1885.

**“Then He is gracious unto him, and says, Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom.” Job 33:24.**

LET it never be forgotten that in all that God does, He acts from good reasons. You observe that the text, speaking of the sick man, represents God as saying, “Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom.” If I understand the passage as relating solely to a sick man and take the words just on the natural common level where some place them, I would still say that the Lord, here, gives a reason why He suspends the operations of pain and disease and raises up the sufferer—“I have found a ransom.” There is always a reason for every act of Grace which God performs for man. He acts sovereignly and, therefore, He is not bound to give any reason for His actions, but He always acts wisely and, therefore, He has a reason for so acting. Writing to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul says that God “works all things after the counsel of His own will.” It is not an arbitrary will, but a will arising out of the wisdom and holiness of His Character. So God has a reason for raising men up from their sickness, but that reason is not found in them, but in Himself. The sick man does not give God a reason for restoring him, but God finds it, Himself. “I have found a ransom.” Possibly, the man does not even know the reason for his restoration—he may be so blind of heart that he does not care to think whether there is any reason for it or not—but God finds a reason for His mercy and finds it entirely in Himself. He is gracious to whom He will be gracious and He has compassion on whom He will have compassion. So let each one of us think, “If I have been raised from sickness. If my life, which was almost gone, has been spared, I may not know why God has done it, but certainly He has done it in infinite wisdom and compassion. And it is only right for me to feel that a life which has been so remarkably prolonged ought to be entirely dedicated unto Him who has prolonged it.”

Having begun my sermon with that thought, I shall take a deep dive and go to another and a fuller meaning of our text, if not more true than this which I have first mentioned. Beloved Friends, there is a higher restoration than recovery from bodily sickness! There is such a thing as sickness of the soul which is, in God’s esteem, far worse than disease of body and, blessed be His name, there is such a thing as recovery from soul-sickness even to those who are so far gone that they appear to be going down into the Pit! God can deal with sinners when they are on the very brink of Hell! He can deal in love with them when the soil slips from under their feet and they, themselves, are about to dash into that Pit that is bottomless. He can come in, even then, and rescue them to the praise of the glory of His Grace!

I. Now, coming to our text, I shall ask you, first, to look with me upon A MAN IN GREAT PERIL. That man is here tonight—let him look to himself and may God help him to see himself as a man in great peril! This is his peril—he is “going down to the Pit.” That phrase describes his whole life—going down, down, down—and the end of that going down, unless the Lord shall deliver him, will be that, before long, he will go finally down into the Pit of destruction!

Notice, first, that this is a daily and common danger. In some respects this man in peril is a representative of each one of us. If we are unconverted, if we are unrenewed by Divine Grace, every one of us is in danger of going down into the Pit of woe! Think of it, there may be, my Friend, but a step between you and death! Only the other morning there was one, well known to many of us, who spoke with his Friends apparently in health. He retired from the room for a moment and they wondered where he was as he did not come back. They sought him out and found that he was dead! He was gone, as in a moment. Blessed be God, we have a sure and certain hope that though he has gone down into the grave—he could go no lower, for his soul was at once with his Savior—and out of that grave his body shall arise at the sounding of the last trumpet! But as for unconverted men and women, they may be in Hell before the clock ticks again! It is a terrible reflection, my unsaved Friend, to think how little there is between you and eternity. How thin is the wall! “Wall?”—Did I call it a wall? Rather let me say, how thin the gauze! “Gauze”—did I call it? There is no word in our own or any other language that can adequately express the nearness of eternity! We are here—and we are gone— gone into the Presence of God in a single instant! Gone to render to the Judge of All our last account! You are going, Friend, you are going down to the Pit unless Sovereign Mercy shall step in and prevent it!

Further, there are some who, of set purpose, are going down to the Pit. In this chapter, Elihu said of some that God sends sickness to them that He may withdraw them from their purpose. Some seem to be desperately bent on mischief, as if they were determined to ruin themselves. How often do we see it in the case of a young man who has been well brought up, when he comes into possession of his money and gets what he calls his liberty—nothing that he has learned in his youth appears to restrain him! No tearful admonitions are any check upon him—he appears to be resolved to destroy himself! We have known some cases of that kind and we know others now. Oh, if they were as determined to be right as they are resolved to be wrong, they might greatly help to turn the world upside down! But, alas, they seem to spare no expense to ensure their own destruction—they are in a dreadful hurry to be rid of all their property, to bring their body into a state of disease—and to bring their soul into a state of damnation! They cannot do enough to secure their own destruction! They even lay violent hands upon their own characters, as if they were insatiably at enmity with their own souls. Many of you know such people as I am describing and you know that they are going down to the Pit. By what are called amusements, by what are said to be pleasures— but which are really only groveling degradations of the soul to the worst purposes of the flesh—all these men are going down to the Pit. It is a dreadful state for anyone to be in, yet I am even now addressing some who are in just such a condition—I feel sure that I am. May the description, brief as it is, be complete enough to let the sinner see himself as he really is—in imminent peril of going down into the Pit!

There are some, also, who are going down to the Pit through their pride. They are not doing anything positively vicious, but they are so good in their own estimation, or so indifferent to the claims of God, that they do not want to hear about salvation. They stand entirely in their own strength and they seem to defy the humbling Gospel of the Grace of God—they will not hear it—they say by their actions, if not in so many words, “Who is God that we should servo Him? What is death that we should have any fear concerning it? What is eternity that we should ever let our spirit be depressed at the thought of it?” If I were just now to try to describe the Day of Judgment and to picture the Great White Throne with the Judge of All sitting upon it, there are many in such a condition of heart that they would merely smile at it all and continue in their sin! A sinner may perish through pride just as easily as through any other sin. A man may, in his pride, hang himself on a gallows as high as that of Haman. And he will perish as surely as another who casts himself down into the Pit by some groveling loathsome sin.

There are others who feel some present apprehension of coming judgment. They are not your merry men and women who count it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away, for they are eaten up with care. They feel that they are going down to the Pit—I do not say that all have felt this apprehension as I did—but this is how it came to me. I knew that I was guilty. I knew that I had offended God. I knew that I had transgressed against light and knowledge and I did not know when God might call me to account. But I did know this—when I awoke in the morning, the first thought I had was that I had to deal with a justly angry God who might suddenly require my soul of me! Often, during the day, when I had a little time for quiet meditation, a great depression of spirit would come upon me because I felt that sin, sin, SIN had outlawed me from my God! I wondered that the earth bore up such a sinner as I was and that the heavens did not fall and crush me—and the stars in their courses did not fight against such a wretch as I felt myself to be. Then, indeed, did I seem as if I should go down to the Pit! If I fell asleep, I dreamt of that Pit, and if I woke, I seemed to wake only to endure the tortures of the never-dying worm of conscience that was perpetually gnawing at my heart!

I went to the House of God and heard what I supposed was the Gospel, but it was no Gospel to me. My soul abhorred all manner of meat—I could not lay hold upon a promise, or indulge a hope—and I felt that I was going down to the Pit. If anyone had asked me what would become of me, I would have answered, “I am going down to the Pit.” If anyone had entreated me to hope that mercy might come to me, I would have refused to entertain such a hope, for I felt that I was going down to the Pit! Well, dear Friends, it was while I was in that dreadful state of mind that Infinite Mercy met with me and saved me! And I wish that I had, in my present congregation, many wounded, broken spirits. Many weary, heavyladen souls, for it is sweet work to preach the Gospel to such people!—

*“A sinner is a sacred thing,  
The Holy Spirit has made him so”  
—*that is, a really convicted sinner, not a sham sinner, but one who acknowledges that the title belongs to him and says, “Put that label upon me, for that is what I am! I deserve the wrath of God and I feel as if the first spattering drops of the fiery tempest have already fallen upon me.”

This is the man who sees a true description of himself in the words of our text, “going down to the Pit.”

If you add to all this the fact that the man, as Elihu describes him, was suffering from a fatal sickness, so that he dreaded the actual nearness of death, you have, indeed, an unhappy case before you. See that young woman whom consumption has marked for its victim—it is not with her the thought that she shall go down to the Pit in 20 years’ time, but her feet are already far on the road! Or, look at that young man who cannot delude himself with the idea that he will go down to the Pit at the end of threes-core years and ten, but who fears that he may not even live three-score days! He has a mortal malady within him that is dragging him down from all hope and joy—this dread fear has settled like a vampire upon his soul—that he is going down to the Pit! This is the man whom I want to point out, for he is somewhere in this building. God help him to listen while I say some words which, perhaps, will bring comfort to him in this state of peril in which he is at present found!

II. Now let us notice, in the second place, A NEW PRINCIPLE IN ACTION—“Then He is gracious unto him.” What does that expression mean? That word, “gracious,” has more music in it than all the oratorios of Handel, though they are the chief of earthly music.

“Then He is gracious unto him.” What does that mean? Well, “gracious” means, first, free favor. It means that when this man is as full of sin as an egg is full of meat. When he is as black with iniquity as a foul chimney which hangs festooned with soot—it means even then God’s favor shall come to him and look upon him just as he is in all his defilement and ill-desert—and God shall be gracious to him! Our text does not say, “God shall deal with him in justice. He shall charge, accuse, condemn and punish him.” No, the message is, “He is gracious unto him.” The Lord comes to this poor lost wretch and says, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.” The Lord comes to such guilty souls and just when they think that His next words will be, “Depart, you cursed,” He says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Now this is not what the man deserves—it is the very opposite of his deserts! He has no natural right to such treatment as this—it is the gift of Divine Sovereignty, not the purchase of man’s merit. “He is gracious unto him.” The prisoner is justly condemned to death, but the King is gracious and gives him a free pardon! The prisoner is ready to be executed, but there comes to him undeserved deliverance from all punishment, for the King’s own Son has borne the penalty of all his iniquities! Does not this Truth of God make your mouths water, you who feel that you are going down to the Pit? I am sure it does, if you have ever known the bitterness of sin! “Oh,” you say, “is there such a God as this?” Yes, there is! A God, “merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” “He delights in mercy.” His compassions fail not, therefore we are not consumed!

That is the first meaning of Grace, that free and undeserved favor of God which forgives and blots out sin and iniquity.  
But Grace has another meaning in Holy Scripture—it means saving interference— a certain Divine operation by which God works upon the wills and affections of men so as to change and renew them! When God is gracious to a man, He does something to that man as well as for that man. The Lord comes in the power of His Grace and takes out of the sinner’s heart, the stone that was there, and makes tender that heart which once was hard as the northern iron and steel. He comes and takes the iron sinew out of the neck and makes the obstinate man to be yielding and pliable. He comes and changes the affections so that the man hates what he once loved, and loves what he once hated. In a word, where the Grace of God comes, it makes a man to be born-again even when he is old, so that, spiritually speaking, his flesh becomes fresher than that of a little child. He begins life anew, for he is a new creature in Christ Jesus! All his past sin is blotted out and his future is brightening up into the full blaze of eternal glory!  
Yet this is the very man whom I described just now as going down to the Pit! But the Lord has been gracious to him. He has said to him, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” The Lord has said to him, “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you. Go, and sin no more.” Is not this a most comforting message? Note that the text says, “then.” In the very extremity of his going down to the Pit, “then,” when he has come almost to the last step down to that fearful gulf and a cruel hand seems pushing him down to eternal destruction, “then,” at that moment, the Lord is gracious to him! Infinite pleasure flashes into his face, for the almighty loving kindness of God pulls him back from the Pit and sets his feet on a new track towards the land of Glory and the face of God above!  
III. This brings me to my third point, which is concerning how this Grace operates. It operates by A WORD OF POWER.  
This man was going down to the Pit, but God said, “Deliver him.” To whom is this command spoken? It appears to be addressed to the messengers of Divine Justice. They have grasped the guilty man, they have bound him, they are taking him off to the place of death and well does he deserve to die—but the great King upon the Throne says to His ministers of justice, “Deliver him, let him go, deliver him from going down to the Pit.” And, in an instant, his chains are snapped, his bonds drop off and the man is free—freed by the word of the King, Himself. No sheriff’s officer can arrest him, now. None of all the police of the universe can lay a finger on him, now, for God has said to all of them, “Let him go. Deliver him from going down to the Pit.” Here is a clean jail delivery for the prisoners of hope—they are set free by the mandate of the eternal God!  
More than that, the man was not only bound by justice, but he was fettered by his sin. His sins held him captive and they were dragging him down to the Pit. There was drunkenness, for instance, which held him as in a vice, so that he could not stir hand or foot to set himself free. His thirst followed his drinking and his drinking followed his thirst—and then his thirst returned after his drinking till he brought himself to a delirium from which he could not possibly escape by his own power! Perhaps it was the foul-mouthed demon of blasphemy that held him in bondage, or the black demon of vice and licentiousness, but, whatever was the band by which the man was held, every hour kept putting about him a fresh and a stronger rope till he was bound, like Samson of old, to make sport for those who had him in captivity! But just as he seemed about to be dragged down to Hell, a voice came from the excellent Glory, “Deliver him from going down to the Pit”—and Infinite Mercy dragged off his evil habits, snapped his bands and set him free! Now the man no longer loved the lusts of the flesh and the passions of his body, but he was God’s free man seeking to do only his Lord’s will! And if God shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed! It is a grand thing to get rid of drunkenness—with all my heart I advise you to try total abstinence—but it is a better thing to get rid of all sin at once! I mean, the reigning power of every sin by yielding yourself up to the supreme Grace of God who is able to work in you at such a rate that all sin shall be made detestable to you and you shall rise above it to the praise of the glory of His Grace.  
Brothers and Sisters, I see this same man, in later life, attacked by his old sins. There is a certain, “Cutthroat Lane” on the way to Heaven. I have been down it, myself, and I am afraid I may have to go down it yet again. It is a place where the hedges meet and it is very dark—and it is also very miry and muddy—and when a man is slipping about and can hardly see his own hand, there are certain villains that come pouncing upon him, not with the highwayman’s cry, “Your money or your life,” but they seek to seize his treasure, his life and all that he has! At such a moment as that, it sometimes happens that the man puts his hand to his side to draw his sword, but he finds that it is gone! He determines to fight as best he can, but what can he do against such terrible odds when he is alone and unarmed? But oh, what a blessed thing it is for him, just then, to hear, as Bunyan says, the sound of a horse’s hoof and to know that there is a patrol going down the King’s Highway! And he cannot only hear the ring of His horse’s hoofs, but he can hear the King’s own voice, crying out from the Throne, itself, “Deliver him! Deliver him! Deliver him from going down to the Pit.”  
That voice you shall always hear, if you are a child of God, when you get into a fix, when you are brought into peril and trouble. God has given commandment to save you and you shall be saved—saved from yourself and from all the attacks of your old sins! Saved from the devil! Saved from evil company, for God has said it, “Deliver him from going down to the Pit.” That deliverance of God is an eternal one, nor shall the infernal lion ever be able to rend one sheep or lamb that the Great Shepherd deigns to keep!  
Now to come back to my own story. I remember when I felt that I was going down to the Pit and I cannot forget one blessed, blessed day. The snow-flakes fell thick and heavy that morning and I was going, according to my habit, to a certain very respectable place of worship where I should hear a very respectable minister who might have left me in my misery to this day. But it was too cold and the snow was too deep for me to go so far. So I turned into the little Primitive Methodist Chapel in Colchester and sat there feeling that I was going down to the Pit, although I was sitting in the House of God to hear the Gospel. The clock of mercy struck in Heaven the hour and moment of my deliverance, for the time had come! Thus had the eternal purpose of Jehovah decreed it! And when the preacher opened the Book and gave out his text, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else,” and when he began to cry in simple terms, “Look! It is all you have to do! Look out of yourself and away from yourself, and look to Christ! Not to forms and ceremonies, or works, or feelings, but look to what Christ has done!” I did look and in that moment went out this word, “Deliver him from going down to the Pit,” and I was delivered! For, as the moment before there was none more wretched than I was, so, within that second, there was none more joyous! It took no longer time than does the lightning-flash! It was done and never has it been undone! I looked and lived and leaped in joyful liberty as I beheld sin punished upon the great Substitute and put away forever from all those who will only trust Him!  
That is what looking to Christ means—trusting in His One Great Sacrifice! O dear Friends, I do pray the Lord to speak in great Grace concerning some of you and to say, “Deliver him from going down to the Pit.” You may think that when I speak like this, there is some of the excitement of enthusiasm about my language, but I reckon that I talk cold icicles about a thing that is hotter than the furnace! Oh, the blessedness, the joy, the exquisite peace, the overflowing happiness of believing in Christ! If you know anything about the darkness, you are the very person to know something about the Light of God! If you know anything of sorrow for sin, you are the very man or woman to understand the joy of sin being put away! And it will be all done for you if you will but look to Jesus—if you will simply trust Him!  
III. I finish by noticing that in this case God supplies us with His reason for delivering a soul and it is AN ARGUMENT OF LOVE—“Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom.”  
This is the only reason why any man shall be delivered from going down to the Pit—because God has found a ransom. There is no way of salvation but by the Ransom—all who are ever saved are saved by the Ransom. And if you, dear Friend, would be saved, it must be by the Ransom—and there is but one.  
Observe that the text says, “I have found a ransom.” This ransom is an invention of Divine Wisdom. I do not think it would ever have occurred to any mind but the mind of God, Himself, to save sinners by the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ. The most astonishing novelty under Heaven is the old, old story of the Cross of Christ! That ever God should take upon Himself the sin of His own creatures, that, in order to be able to justly forgive, God, Himself, should bear the punishment which He must inflict for the creatures’ sin—this is something marvelous to the last degree! The rebel sins and the King Himself suffers the penalty for the rebellion! The offender commits the trespass and the Judge bears the punishment! Such a plan was never heard of in human courts of law—or if it has ever been spoken of there, it was because, first of all, both the ears of him who heard it had been made to tingle while God revealed it out of His own heart. “I have found a ransom.” Nobody would have thought of that way of the deliverance of a sinner from the pit of Hell through a ransom if God had not thought of it!  
Notice, next, that God has not only invented a way of deliverance, but he has found a ransom. So that it is a gift of Divine Love. “Deliver him from going down to the Pit”—it does not say, “because there is a ransom,” or, “I will accept one if he finds it, and brings it”—but the Lord, Himself, says, “I have found a ransom.” It is the man who sinned, but it is God who found the ransom! It is the man who is going down to the Pit, but it is God who finds a ransom! Surely, if you have sold yourself to sin and Satan, you must find the ransom to get yourself set free, must you not? “No,” says Sovereign Grace, “the man has sold himself into slavery, but I have found a ransom. I have broken the bonds from his neck and set him free by an immense price which I, Myself, have found—found it in My own bosom where My only-begotten and well-beloved Son was lying. I found it in Myself, for I have given up Myself to bleed and die for mortal men.” Oh, this is wonderful Grace, indeed—that God should deliver and should deliver through a ransom—and should deliver through a ransom that He has, Himself, found!  
And is there not something very wonderful in the assurance of this Truth of God? “Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.” God does not say “There may be a ransom for the poor soul. Possibly I may find a ransom somewhere.” No, He says, “I have found a ransom.” Now, if a slave were in the bitterest of bondage, yet if his master said to him, “I have the ransom for you,” that man must feel certain of his liberty because if he who held him in bondage has found a ransom, he certainly will hold him in bondage no longer! Sinner, do not doubt your deliverance, for God has said it—“I have found a ransom.” If you had only heard this sentence uttered by a mortal man, you might have questioned the truth of it, but when God Himself proclaims concerning him who is going down to the Pit, “I have found a ransom,” then is the deliverance certain! Indeed, it is already accomplished! Therefore, go you free and rejoice in the liberty that God has given you!  
To my mind, and with this thought I will finish, there is the ring of heavenly music in this message. “Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom.” I suppose you never heard a man who had found a treasure cry out to let everyone know what he had found. Perhaps he would not mention it to anyone but his wife. When he wished to make her heart glad by sharing the fortune with her, he said to her, “I have found a treasure.” But you may have heard a mother say, when her child had been lost in the woods, perhaps, and had been sought for by many, when at last she has discovered him, “I have found my boy!” Oh, it is wonderful, the joy of a mother’s heart when she has found her child! But to me there is the sound of bells, there is the music of a marriage peal in this verse as God, looking on a sinner slipping down to Hell, says, “Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom.” Almighty love seems to sing out with all her might and rocks, hills, and valleys suffice not to repeat the echo of the strain, “I have found, I have found, I have found a ransom!” This is God’s “Eureka!” “I have found a ransom. I did not look for a ransom among the angels, for I knew they were too weak to furnish it. I looked not for it among the sons of men, for I knew it was not to be found there—they were too fallen and guilty. The sea said, ‘It is not in me.’ All creation cried, ‘It is not in me.’ But I looked on my Well-Beloved and I heard Him say, ‘Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart.’ I saw Him descend to earth and hide Himself in an Infant’s form; I saw Him toiling on in holy servitude to My perfect Law; I saw Him give His hands to the nails, and His side to the spear. I heard Him cry, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ I bowed the ear of My Glory and I drank in His conquering cry, ‘It is finished,’ and then I, the Infinite, the Eternal, the Ever-Blessed, the Just, the Gracious, said, ‘I have found a Ransom.’” Thus, the Lord rejoices over you and over me with singing as He cries, “I have found a Ransom!” How greatly did He rejoice over the finished work of His well-beloved Son! Therefore, sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth, for the Lord, Himself, delights in the message He delivers to us, “I have found a Ransom!”  
Now, dear Hearts, if God has found a Ransom and speaks thus joyously about it, I do pray you to accept it. “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.” Receive Christ and you have the proof that God has received you. Only take Him—you have nothing else to do! Put out that empty hand of yours, black though it is, and receive in it the Pearl of Great Price, even the Christ of God, Himself! Receive Him, accept Him, believe Him, trust Him! That is all you have to do. Oh, will you not trust Him? Can you doubt Him? If God takes upon Himself our nature and in that nature, dies, I cannot only trust Him with my soul, but if I had all your souls within my body, and all the souls of the millions of London all gathered beneath this breast—and if I had besides that the souls of all the sinners who have ever lived, all compressed within this one frame—I could believe that the dying Christ could blot out all that mass of sin! I believe it and so confide in Him—will not you? Verily, if you will not believe, neither shall you be established! But he that believes shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end! May God add His own blessing, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**JOB 33.**

This is a speech of young Elihu who had sat quietly listening to the taunting words of the three “candid Friends” of Job—and to the somewhat exasperated replies of the Patriarch. At last, the young man breaks the silence and, with some dignity, and quite sufficient self-content, he thus addresses himself to Job.

Verse 1. Therefore, Job, I pray you, hear my speeches and listen to all my words. “I am but a young man, but I speak because I cannot be quiet. An impulse moves me. I am as a vessel needing vent. I desire to speak impartially and, therefore, hear me, but hear all that I have to say. Do not listen merely here and there to a part of my speech, but hearken to all my words.” Sometimes, it is very necessary to beg our hearers not to run away with only one sentence, or even with one sentiment. “Hear my speeches and listen to all my words,” for there is a proportion in truth, and one truth has to be balanced with all the others. A statement may be all the better for being unguarded and more forcible because it stands alone—and yet it may need that another statement should be heard with it lest it should be misunderstood. Therefore the preacher also says to his hearer, “I pray you, hear my speeches and listen to all my words.”

2. Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue has spoken in my mouth. That is to say, “I speak with much solemnity, not as one who chatters without sense, or without due consideration, but I have opened my mouth deliberately, as one who has something to say—and I speak with my best powers of speech, as one who wishes to persuade those who hear him.”

3. My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly. What a lesson this is to those of us who preach to others—that we speak out of the uprightness of our heart and feel that, however others may judge us, we are sincere before God in what we say! How necessary, also, is it, especially in these days, that we should speak plainly, so as to be easily understood! Some men never think clearly and, therefore, they never speak clearly. And, oftentimes, the darkness of a man’s speech is only the result of the darkness of his mind—he has no clearly-defined notion of what he has to say. Let every young man who has to teach others resolve that this utterance of Elihu shall also be his, “My lips shall utter knowledge clearly.”

4. The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty has given me life. That is to say, “I am as much the creature of God as these three old gentlemen are, these three wise Friends who have spoken so tartly. I am as much endowed with the Spirit of God as you are, O Job, and, therefore, I speak to you in His name.” Should not this be a lesson to every one of us to try and do all that we can for God? Every Christian may say, “‘The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty has given me life.’ Therefore let me use my very existence, the life that is breathed into me, for that Almighty Creator who has made me what I am.”

5. If you can answer me, set your words in order before me, stand up. He who speaks reason is ready to hear reason. It is only the unreasonable talker who will not allow others to have a word to say in reply. “If you can answer me,” says Elihu to Job, “set your words in order before me, stand up.”

6. Behold, I am, according to your wish, in God’s place: I also am formed out of the day. Job had wished that someone would stand up and speak for God, someone without the terror that seemed inseparable from the Infinite, someone without the power of Omnipotence, someone who would be more nearly his equal, with whom he could debate the questions which perplexed him. So Elihu says, “I am, according to your wish, in God’s place: I also am formed out of the day.”

7-11. Behold, my terror shall not make you afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon you. Surely you have spoken in my hearing and I have heard the voice of your words, saying, I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. Behold, He finds occasions against me, He counts me for His enemy, He puts my feet in the stocks, He marks all my paths. Elihu did not make this excuse for Job because he had been slandered by his Friends and that his statement of innocence was not so much absolute towards God as it was defensive towards men. Still, there is no doubt that Job had gone too far in this direction. Perhaps for this very reason his troubles had come upon him, because he was, in a measure, self-righteous. In some small degree, at any rate, he may have prided himself upon his personal excellence. Elihu does well, therefore, in all faithfulness, to point out the blot in what Job had said.

12, 13. Behold, in this you are not just: I will answer you, that God is greater than man. Why do you strive against Him? For He gives not account of any of His matters. This man seems to have the very Spirit that rested upon the Apostle Paul when he was arguing with an objector against the Lord’s way of working, “No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have You made me thus?” The greatness and grandeur of the Eternal should prevent our raising objections against anything that He does. Who are we, the moths of a moment, the creatures of an hour, that we should interrogate the Infinite and question our Maker? What He does must of necessity be right—though we cannot understand how it is so, we must believe it and meekly bow to the will of the Lord!

14-17. For God speaks once, yes twice, yet man perceives it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, in slumbering upon the bed; then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose and hide pride from man. It is always one great object of the Divine dealings to make and keep us humble. It is strange that creatures so insignificant as we are should be perpetually infected with the foul disease of pride—this form of mental scarlet fever continually breaks out in puny man and, therefore, God deals with him that He may “hide pride from man.”

18, 19. He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed and the multitude of his bones with strong pain. Pain of body is usually looked upon as a great evil and, doubtless, it is so in some respects, but it wraps up within itself great mercy. There are some who can scarcely be taught at all except through physical pain. And if it were possible to abolish sickness and suffering, where would men go in the wantonness of their strength? Does not this very affliction often chide man and bid him think—and cause him to return to his Maker, when, otherwise, he would be as thoughtless as the beasts that perish?

20-24. So that his life abhors bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen, stick out. Yes, his soul draws near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there is a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man His uprightness: then He is gracious unto him, and says, Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom. Happy is the messenger who comes with such a message as that! Such was the Prophet Isaiah to Hezekiah when the king was sick unto death. Such is the minister of God’s Word when he comes with glad tidings of redemption and God, through him, says of the spiritually sick man, “Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.”

25-28. His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s: he shall return to the days of his youth: he shall pray unto God and He will be favorable unto him: and he shall see His face with joy: for He will render unto man His righteousness. He looks upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the Pit, and his life shall see the light. See the easy terms of God’s love and mercy? The man does but confess that he has sinned— he admits that he has perverted the right, he confesses that he has gained no profit thereby—and God, seeing him in such a state of heart as this, delivers his soul from going down to the Pit, and his life shall see the light! What a gracious God we serve! How cruel to continue to offend Him when He is so ready to forgive!

29, 30. Lo, all these things works God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the Pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living. The chastisement of sickness and the flagellation of pain whip the sinner back to Him, who alone can save him! These are the black dogs of the Great Shepherd wherewith He brings back wandering sheep till they come again under His crook and He leads them into green pastures.

31-33. Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold your peace, and I will speak. If you have anything to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify you. If not, listen to me: hold your peace, and I shall teach you wisdom. May the Lord graciously apply to all our hearts this instructive portion of Old Testament Scripture! There is a message in it to each of us as well as to the Patriarch, Job, to whom it was specially addressed.

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÷Job 33.29

AN OLD-FASHIONED CONVERSION  
NO. 1101

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 16, 1873, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Lo, all these things works God oftentimes with man, To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.” Job 33:29, 30.**

SOME people are wonderfully enamored of anything that is old. An old coin, an old picture, an old book, or even a piece of antique rubbish they will almost worship. The jingle of a rusty medal is music to them, and “auld nick-nackets” are as precious as diamonds. It is wonderful what a little mold and a few worm-holes will do in the way of increasing values! I confess I do not very greatly share in the feeling, at least it is no craze of mine but, nevertheless, all things being equal, antiquity has its charms. Old, old stories of the days far past, when time was young, have a special interest. They are as windows which permit us to gaze down the dim aisles of ages long gone by—we look through them with mingled curiosity and awe.

I am about, this morning, to speak to you concerning an old conversion. We shall rehearse an ancient story of the renewal and salvation of a soul. In our day we meet with professors who cry down everything of the present and cry up everything of the former days, which they call the good old times. Such persons talk much about old-fashioned conversions and hold in great admiration the lives of Believers of the old school. I shall, this morning, introduce you to an old-fashioned conversion and explain the way in which men were brought to God not only hundreds, but thousands of years ago. I suppose that Elihu delivered this description of conversion about the time of Moses, or at the period when Israel was in Egypt, for almost general consent appropriates one of those dates to the Book of Job.

The record we shall read this morning, and study carefully, refers to the very, very oldest of times. Let this fact give additional interest to our meditation—and if it does I am sure that we shall not lack for earnest attention, for the subject is of great intrinsic value. Kindly keep your Bibles open. We have already read the chapter, but it will be necessary to refer to it verse by verse.

I. The matter in hand is to compare an old-fashioned conversion with those of the present time. And the first note we shall strike is this—it is quite certain from the description given in this 33rd chapter of Job that THE SUBJECTS OF CONVERSION WERE SIMILAR and men in the far gone ages were precisely like men in these times. The passage tells us nothing about the stature of men’s’ bodies, but as far as they were concerned spiritually the photograph which Elihu took is the portrait of many of those who are brought to Jesus now.  
Reading the passage over, we find that men in those times needed converting, for they were deaf to God’s voice (verse 14). They were obstinate in evil purposes (verse 17) and puffed up with pride. They needed chastening to arouse them to thought and required sore distress to make them cry out for mercy (verses 19-22). They were very slow to say, “I have sinned,” and were not at all inclined to prayer. Nothing but sharp discipline could bring them to their senses and even then they needed to be born-again. Men in those days were sinful and yet proud—sinful self and righteous self were both in power—it was one part of conversion to withdraw them from their purposes of sin and another part of their conversion to “hide pride” from them.

Though they were sinful, they thought that they were righteous, and though they were condemned by the Law of God they still entertained the fond hope that they should, by their own merits, obtain the favor of the Most High. They were then, as they are now, poor as poverty and yet proud of their wealth. They were Publicans in sin, and yet Pharisees in boasting. It appears that in those days God was accustomed to speak to men and to be disregarded by them. We are told that God spoke “once, yes, twice,” and men perceived Him not. Their presumptuous slumbers were too deep to be broken by the call of love. Samuel said, “Here am I, for You did call me,” but they slept on in defiance of the Lord.

O, how frequently does the Lord speak now to deaf ears! He calls and men refuse. He stretches out His hands and men do not regard Him. But they are desperately set upon their sins and sod in carnal security, therefore they do despite to His Grace and ruin their own souls! In those ancient times, when a man was converted, the Lord Himself must turn him—Omnipotence itself was necessary to divide man from his folly. God’s speaking to the ear was not enough unless He followed it up with a powerful application to the heart. Man was too far gone to be healed by remedies less than Divine—he was utterly past hope unless Almighty love would come to the rescue!

Verily, the case is the same at this day and each man repeats his fellow. As the fish still bites at the bait, as the bird still flies into the snare, as the beast is still taken in the pit, so is man still the dupe of his sins and only the Lord can save him! Salvation was only worked by the gracious influences of God’s Spirit in the days of Job—and it is only so accomplished at this present hour! Men were lost then as now! Men thought they were not lost then, and they are equally conceited now! Into the house of the Divine Physician the same class of persons enter as were welcomed and healed by Him ages ago. He has the same blind eyes and deaf ears to open—hearts still require to be transformed from stone to flesh—and leprosies to be exchanged for health by His Sovereign touch.

The Spirit from the four winds breathed on a valley covered with dry bones in the days of the fathers and He comes forth, still, to work upon the like scene of death. Man has not outgrown his sins! As it was in the beginning it is now and so it ever will be while that which is born of the flesh is flesh. As were the sires such are their sons, and such will our sons be in their turn—so that the process of conversion needs to be the same— and “all these things God works oftentimes with man.”

II. The second note we shall strike is this, that in those olden times THE WORKER OF CONVERSION WAS THE SAME—“all these things God works.” The whole process is by Elihu ascribed to God and every Christian can bear witness that the Lord is the great Worker now. He turns us and we are turned. We read in verse 14 that, at first, the Lord worked upon men by speaking to them, once, yes, twice—He also brought Truth home to their minds and instructed them and so changed their purposes and humbled their hearts. In the same manner the Lord works now.

Conversion is a change which concerns the mind, the affections, the spirit—it is not a physical manipulation as some foolish persons fancy— who appear to think that God converts men by force and turns them over as a man would roll a stone. The Lord operates upon men as men, not as blocks of wood! God speaks to them, instructs them, reveals Truth to them, encourages them to hope and graciously influences them for good. Man is left free, for, “God speaks once, yes, twice, yet man perceives it not,” and yet in God’s own wise and suitable manner, he is at length led to cry, “I have sinned and perverted that which is right and it profited me not.”

But in those times, as now, it was necessary that God should do more than speak to the outer ear. He, therefore, came still nearer and by His Holy Spirit led men to really hear what He spoke. He did not leave men to their wills, neither did He trust their conversion to the eloquence of preachers, or to the cogency of arguments. But He Himself came and opened men’s ears and pressed the Truth of God home upon their understandings and made it operative upon their entire nature. Man was so proud that no one else could humble him but God—and he was so willful, that no one could withdraw him from his purpose but the Lord, alone!

And the Lord, in condescension, did the deed and made the man obedient and humble. Indeed, the Lord is described in this chapter as the main cause of all the work accomplished. Whereas a ransom was needed to deliver men from going down to the pit, it is the Lord’s voice which cried, “I have found a Ransom.” Whereas, even when the Ransom was found, men did not know it and would not receive it, it was God who sent a messenger, one of a thousand, to show unto man His uprightness and to proclaim the great provision made for restoring man to his primeval state. It is the Lord who delivers the soul from the pit, that man’s life may see the light.

In this chapter it is God that visits, that speaks, chastens, instructs, enlightens, consoles, renews and saves—from first to last—God works all in all. Salvation is of the Lord, it is not of man, neither by man. Neither is it of the will of man, nor of the flesh, nor of blood, nor of birth, but of the will of God. The purpose of God and the power of God work salvation from first to last. What a blessing this is for us, for, if salvation were of ourselves, who among us would be saved? But He has “laid help upon One that is mighty.” God is also our strength and our song, for He Himself has become our salvation. He who has begun the good work will carry it on. Christ is the Alpha. Christ is the Omega. Christ is the “Author and the Finisher of our faith.”

So we have two points in this ancient conversion in which it was just like our own—the same men to be operated upon and the same God to work the miracles of Grace.

III. The most interesting point to you will probably be the third—THE MEANS USED TO WORK CONVERSION IN THOSE DISTANT AGES WERE VERY MUCH THE SAME AS THOSE EMPLOYED NOW. There were differences in outward agencies, but the inward modus operandi was the same. There was a difference in the instruments, but the way of working was the same. Kindly turn to the chapter, at the 15th verse. You find there that God, first of all, spoke to men, but they regarded Him not, and then He spoke to them effectually by means of a dream—“In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, in slumbering upon the bed.”

Now, this was an extraordinary means of Grace, seldom used now. In this the distant ages differ from the present. A dream, though it is, in itself, but the mirage of sleep, may be employed by God to arouse the mind towards eternal things. Dreams of death and judgment to come have frequently had a very alarming effect upon the conscience, while visions of celestial Glory have impressed the heart with desires after infinite bliss. As Dryden says of some men—

*“In sleep they fearful precipices tread*

*Or, shipwrecked, labor to some distant shore,”*so others have in their slumbers shivered at the gates of Hell, or even been tossed upon its fiery waves—and the thoughts consequent upon such dreams have, by God’s Grace, occasionally been rendered permanently useful, though I fear it is not often so.

In the days of Elihu, however, dreams were much more frequently the way in which God spoke, for there were few messengers from God to interpret His mind—no openly declared Gospel and few assemblies for instruction by hearing the Word. And what is more, there was then no written Word of God. In those early times they had no Inspired books at all, so that, lacking the Bible and lacking the frequent ministrations of God’s servants, the Lord was pleased to supply their deficiencies by speaking to men in the visions of the night. I say again, we must not expect the Lord to return to the general use of so feeble an agency now that He employs others which are far more effectual. It is much more profitable for you to have the Word in your houses which you can read at all times and to have God’s ministers to proclaim clearly the Gospel of Jesus than it would be to be dependent upon visions of the night!

The means, therefore, outwardly, may have changed, but still, whether it is by the dream at night, or by the sermon on Sunday, the power is just the same—namely, the Word of God. God may speak to men in dreams and if so, He speaks to them nothing more and nothing different from what He speaks in the written Word. If any come to you and say, “I have dreamed this or that,” and it is not in the Scriptures, away with their dreams! If anything should occur in your own mind in vision which is not already revealed in the Book of God, put it away, it is an idle fancy not to be regarded. Woe to that man whose religion is the baseless fabric of dreams—he will one day wake up to find that nothing short of realities can save him!

We have the more sure word of testimony unto which we do well if you take heed as unto a light that shines in a dark place. Conversions, then, in the old times, used to be by the Word of God. It came in a different way, but it was the same Word and the same Truth. At this time faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God—and at bottom that was precisely the way in which faith came to men in those distant periods. Now, observe, that in addition to the external coming of the Word, it seems from the chapter before us in the 16th verse, that men were converted by having their ears opened by God. Alas, men’s ears are still stopped up!

An old Puritan has mentioned seven forms of what he calls, “ear stoppers,” which need to be taken out of the human ear. They are frequently blocked up by ignorance—they know not the importance and value of the Truth of God and, therefore they refuse to give earnest heed to it. Judging it to be an idle tale, they go their way to their farms and to their merchandise. Some ears are stopped up by unbelief—they have heard the glad tidings of salvation but they have not received it as an Infallible Revelation from Heaven, a message backed by Divine authority. Skepticism and philosophy, falsely so called, barricade Eargate against the assaults of Emmanuel’s captains so that even the great battering rams of the Gospel prove powerless to force an entrance. “He could not do many mighty works then because of their unbelief!”

Others ears are stopped up by impenitence—the hardness of the heart causes a deadness of the ear. You may discharge the great cannons of the Law in the ears of some men, but they will not stir. The thunders of God startle the wild beasts of the wood but impenitence is not moved thereby. The Gospel, itself, sounds upon such ears with no more effect than upon a marble statue—the groans of Calvary are nothing to them. Some ears are stopped by prejudice—they have made up their minds as to what the Gospel ought to be and they will not hear it as it is. They have set up for themselves a standard of what the Truth of God should be and that standard is a false one, for they have put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness.

Prejudices against the preacher, or against the denomination are but forms of the same evil—they make men to be as Ulysses was when his ears were sealed with wax, for they are even as deaf men. The entrance into many ears is also effectually barred by the love of sin. He who loves vice will not hear of repentance—the lover of pleasure detests holy mourning. The licentious think holiness to be another name for slavery. The man who finds delight in sin is a deaf adder whom the wisest charmer cannot charm—the poison of asps is under his tongue and he cannot renounce his deadly hate of a Gospel which rebukes his evil ways. It would be vain to teach cleanliness to the sow which wallows in the mire—it loves uncleanness and after uncleanness will it go.

Some ears are stopped through pride—the plain, unflattering, humbling Gospel of the sinner’s Savior is not to their taste. The Gospel for lost sinners, they think, is not addressed to them, for they are almost good enough and are by no means worthy of any great blame, or in danger of any great punishment. When they acknowledge their sinnership in words they feel it not in their hearts, therefore they hear not the Truth of God in the love of it. If the Gospel-pipe could be tuned to notes of flattery, to

praise the dignity of man, they would attend to its music—but a Gospel for vulgar sinners! How can their noble souls endure it? With their fine feathers all ruffled in disdain, they turn away in a rage.

Alas, how many ears are stopped through worldliness? If you stand in a street where the traffic is abundant—where the constant thunder of rumbling wheels creates a din—it would be difficult to preach so as to command an audience, for the abundant sound would prevent all hearing. And, to a great extent, the mass of mankind are just in that position as to the joyful sound of the Gospel—the rumbling of the wheels of commerce, the noise of trade and the cries of competition, the whirl of cares and the riot of pleasures—all these drown the persuasive voice of heavenly love so that men hear no more of it than they would hear a pin fall in the midst of a hurricane at sea. Only when God unstops the ear is the still small voice of Truth heard in the chambers of the heart.

Now it is clear to every thoughtful person that all these ear-stoppers existed in the olden times as well as now and therefore the same work of opening the passage to the heart was necessarily performed. Dreams did not convert sinners of the Patriarchal age, however vivid they might be. Nor did prophetic warnings by themselves arouse them—the hand of Him who created the ear was needed to cleanse and circumcise it before the Truth of God could find admission. Note the next sentence, He “seals their instruction.” That was the means of conversion in the olden times. God brought the Truth down upon the soul as you press a seal upon wax—you bear upon the seal to make the impression and even thus the power of God pressed home the Word.

Truth is heard by men, but they forget it unless the Holy Spirit takes the Truth and puts it home and lays His force upon it and then it makes a stamp upon the conscience, upon the memory, and upon the entire manhood. Perhaps, also, by sealing here is meant confirming. A thing is sealed when it is established by testimony and witness—under hand and seal, as we say. Now the Holy Spirit has a way of making Truth to become manifest to men and cogent upon their minds by bearing His witness with it, so that they cannot help feeling that it is true. He sets it in such a light that they cannot dispute it, but yield full consent to it, their conscience being overwhelmingly convinced.

Dear Friends, I pray God the Holy Spirit in this sense to seal home the Word we speak to each one of you, that from Hearers you may grow into Believers. I know you will remain Hearers, only, unless that sacred sealing shall take place, but let that come upon you and your soul will have the Gospel stamped into its very texture, never more to be effaced. If the Spirit of God thus seals you, you will be sealed, indeed! By sealing is also sometimes meant preserving and setting apart, as we seal up documents or treasures of great value that they may be secure. In this sense the Gospel needs sealing up in our hearts. We forget what we hear till God the Holy Spirit seals it in the soul and then it is pondered and treasured up in the heart—it becomes to us a goodly pearl, a Divine secret, a peculiar heritage.

This sealing is a main point in conversion. What thousands of sermons many of you have heard, but the instruction has never been sealed to you and, therefore, you remain unsaved! I cannot bear to think of your unhappy case and I beseech those who love the Lord to pray that our discourses, or the sermons of someone else, or the Bible itself, may be sealed of the Lord upon these, my unhappy Hearers, that they may be converted and saved! O for the Lord’s sealing hand upon men’s hearts! Send, Lord, by whomever You will send, and by Your servant, also! Give the hearing ear and then engrave your Gospel upon an understanding heart. You are able to do this and in faith we seek it at Your hands, O Lord God of our salvation! In this manner men were converted in the olden times—ears were opened and hearts were sealed.

It appears, also, that the Lord, in those days, employed Providence as a help towards conversion—and that Providence was often of a very gentle kind, for it preserved men from death. Read the 18th verse—“He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.” Many a man has had the current of his life entirely changed by an escape from imminent peril. Solemn thoughts have taken possession of his formerly careless mind and he has said to himself, “Has God preserved me from this danger? Then let me be grateful to Him. He must have had a purpose in my preservation. Let me find out what it is and thankfully endeavor to answer to it.”

Have any of you, my Hearers, escaped from shipwreck? Is there one here who has escaped from an accident upon the iron way? Are you one of a handful who were snatched from between the very jaws of death? Have you risen up from a fever which laid you very low? Are you now almost the only survivor of a family, all the members of which, except yourself, have been taken away by consumption, or some other hereditary disease? Are you a remarkable monument of sparing mercy? Then, I pray you, let the long-suffering of God lead you to repentance, for it has led many before you and it is intended that it should do the same for you!

Yield to the gentle pressure of loving kindness, even as the flowers that yield their perfumes to the sunshine do not need to be crushed and bruised like Oriental spice beneath the pestle. Tenderly does the Lord call you to Himself, and says, “I have spared you from the grave. I have also kept your guilty soul from going down to Hell. I have placed you, today, under the sound of the Gospel. I am, by My servant, calling upon you to turn unto Me and live. Will you not hear Me? You are still on praying ground and pleading terms with Me—will you not consider all this?” Thus God speaks now by actions, which speak more loudly than words, and it seems that in the same way He was known to speak to men in the days gone by, so that Providential circumstances were often the means of conversion.

But, further, it seems that, as Elihu puts it, sickness was a yet more effectual awakener in the common run of cases. Observe the 19th verse, “He is chastened, also, with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: so that his life abhors bread, and his soul dainty meat.” Severe pain destroyed appetite and brought on extreme lassitude and distaste of life—but all this was sent in mercy to fetch the wanderer home.

Yes, men get space for thought when they are shut up in the chamber of sickness. While the mill-wheel went on and on and on, they could not hear God speak, but when its hum is hushed the warning voice sounds forth clearly.

There in silence the patient tosses on the bed, wakeful at night and fearful by day. And then conscience lifts up its clamor and is heard—then, too, the Spirit of God seizes the opportunity to speak to an awakened conscience—and He convicts the man of sin. How much some of us owe to a bed of sickness! I do not desire for any unconverted person here that he should be ill, but if that would be the way to make him think, repent and believe, I could earnestly pray for it! I believe the Lord has often preached to men in hospitals who never heard Him in churches or chapels. Fever and cholera have been heard by those whom ministers could not reach.

If we could banish pain and sickness from the world, it may be we should be robbing Righteousness of two of her most impressive Evangelists. What Jonah was to Nineveh, sickness has been to many a man. Like Elijah, also, it has cried in the soul, “Choose you this day whom you will serve.” Disease has been a grim orator for God and with an eloquence not to be resisted, it has made the hearts of men to bow before its message. If there are any here who have lately been thus afflicted, I would ask them whether God has blessed it to their souls.

I earnestly pray that they may not be hardened by it, for in that case there is fear that God will say, “Why should you be smitten anymore, you will revolt more and more!” and He may add, “I will let them alone, they are given unto idols. I have smitten them till their whole head is sick and their whole heart is faint. I have made them to be so near death’s door, that from the crown of the head even to the foot they are all wounds and bruises through the chastening of My rod. I will give them up, and no more will I deal with them in a way of Grace.” Great God have pity, still, and make Your chastisements effectual to their souls!

Now, note well that we do not assert that all persons who are saved are awakened by sickness—far from it! All that we are now taught is that many are so aroused and that such was the case in the instance described by Elihu. In addition to this sickness, the person whom God saved was even brought to be apprehensive of death—“Yes, his soul draws near unto the grave, and his life to the Destroyer.” When a man is made to lie upon his bed on the brink of Hell and look into another world, that sight may be sacredly blessed to him. O, it is no small thing to peer into eternity and to make out, amid the horrid gloom, no shape of hope but ghastly forms of hideous woe! To have behind one the memory of a mixspent life, to have above one an angry God, to have within one the aches of the body and the pangs of remorse and to have beneath one the bottomless pit, yawning with its lurid fires—what can be worse?

This side of Hell, what can be worse than the tortures of an awakened conscience? This has sometimes made men wake up from a life-slumber and compelled them to cry, “What must we do to be saved?” I wish that every man here, who has remained unmoved by gentler means, might have some such an experience! It were better for you to be saved so as by fire than not to be saved at all. But, now, notice that all this did not lead the person into comfort. Although he was impressed by the dream and sickness, and so on, yet the ministry of some God-sent ambassador was needed.

“If there is a messenger with him,” that is a man sent of God—“an interpreter,” one who can open up obscure things and translate God’s mind into man’s language—“one among a thousand,” for a true preacher, expert in dealing with souls, “is a rare person” to show unto man his uprightness, “then He is gracious unto him.” God could save souls without ministers, but He does not often do it. He could bring men to Jesus without the call from the lips of His sent servants, but as a general rule, conversion in the olden times needed the messenger and the interpreter, and it needs them still—“How shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent?”

I pray that many of you, dear Brothers, who know the Lord, may become preachers to others. That you may be such successful messengers of mercy to poor broken hearts that you may be to them picked and choice men like one out of a thousand! I entreat you to pray for me, also, that I may have a share and a large share, in this blessed employment, and that to many God may say through me, “Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a Ransom.”

IV. Fourthly, and with too much brevity, THE OBJECTS AIMED AT IN THE OLD CONVERSIONS WERE JUST THE SAME as those that are aimed at now-a-days. Will you kindly look at the 17th verse? The first thing that God had to do with the man was to withdraw him from his purpose. He finds him set upon sin, upon rebellion, upon carnal pleasure, upon everything that is selfish and worldly—and conversion turns him away from such evil purposes—it was so then, it is so now. This turning of an obstinate will towards God and holiness is, however, no easy matter— to stay the sun in his course, or reverse the marches of the moon would not be a harder task.

The next object of the Divine work was to hide pride from man, for man will stick to self-righteousness as long as he can. Never does limpet adhere to its rock more firmly than a sinner to his own merits, although, indeed, he has none! Like the old Greek hero in the mythology, the natural man sits down upon the stone of self-esteem and Hercules, himself, cannot tear him from it. When he is vile even in outward character, he still fancies that there is some good thing in him and to that fancy he will tenaciously cling! So that it is a work of Divine power, an effort of the august Omnipotence of Heaven—to get a man away from his innate and desperate pride.

Beloved, another great object of conversion is to lead man to a confession of his sin. Hence we find it said in the 27th verse, “He looks upon man, and if any say I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, He will deliver his soul from going into the pit.” Man hates confession to his God, I mean humble, personal, hearty confession. He will go to a priest and answer all his filthy questions, but he will not confess to the Lord! He will gabble over words which he calls a “general confession,” but true, heart-felt confession he shrinks from—he will not come to the publican’s cry if he can help it. He will not say,

frankly, from his heart, “I have sinned.” He will not own or confess the perverseness of his nature and say, “I have perverted that which is right.” Nor can you get him to admit the folly and stupidity of his sin, so as to say, “it profited me not.”

But conversion brings him to his knees. Conversion pulls up the sluices of his soul and makes him pour out his confessions before the Most High. And when this is done, then salvation has come to the man’s soul, for God desires man to put himself into the place of condemnation in order that He may be able to say to him, “I forgive you freely.” The Lord shuts us up to hopelessness and helplessness in order that He may come as a God of Grace and display His abounding mercy. All our hope lies in Him and all other hopes are delusions. The great work in conversion is not to make people better, so that they may come to God on a good footing—it is to strip them completely and lay them low so that God may come to them when they are on a bad footing, or rather on no footing at all, but down in the dust at His feet.

The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost, but it needs God Himself to convince men that they are lost. And the Spirit’s work of soul-humbling is just this—to get man to feel so diseased that he will accept the Physician—to get him to feel so poor that he will accept the charity of Heaven. To get him to know that he is so stripped that he will no longer be proud of his fig leaves, but will be willing to take the robe of righteousness which Christ has worked out. Conviction is sent to kill the man, to break him in pieces, to bury him, to let him know his own corruption—and all this as a preliminary to his quickening and restoration.

We must see the bones in the valley to be dead and dry, or we shall not hear the Voice out of the excellent Glory, saying, “Thus says the Lord, ‘You dry bones live!’” May God in His mercy teach us what all this means and may we all experience an old-fashioned conversion!

V. Fifthly, the process of conversion in days of yore exactly resembled that which is worked in us now as to ITS SHADES. The shadowy side wore the same somber hues as now. First of all, the man refused to hear. God spoke once, yes twice, and man regarded Him not—here was obstinate rebellion. His heart was as an adamant stone. How true is that today! Then came the chastening till the man’s bones were made to ache and he was full of misery. It is often the same now. I acknowledge that I was brought to God by agony of soul. I have often said from this pulpit that no man ever steers his boat towards the port of peace till he is driven there by stress of weather.

We never come to Christ till we feel we cannot do without Him. We must feel our poverty before we shall ever come and beg at the door of His mercy for help. The shades are the same, for the same imminence of danger which Elihu spoke of comes upon every sinner’s consciousness, more or less, before he resorts to Jesus for refuge. The same bitter sense of sin still comes over men and the same wonder at their own folly in having continued in it. The same darkness still covers the sinner’s pathway and the same inability to procure the light for himself. The same need of light from above, the same need of help from Him who is mighty to save. If any of you are passing, just now, through great darkness of soul because you have not yet come to the light—and God is revealing yourselves to yourselves—be comforted, for the same dark road has been traversed by many of the saints before you and it is a safe pathway, leading to comfort in Jesus Christ!

VI. But now, sixthly and very briefly, again, THE LIGHTS ARE THE SAME, even as the shades were the same. You will note in Elihu’s description that the great source of all the light was this—“Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a Ransom.” There is not a gleam of light in the case till you come to that Divine Word—and is it not so now? Did you ever get any comfort for your troubled souls until you were led to see the ransom found by God in Jesus Christ? Did you ever know the value of the Ransom for yourselves till God spoke it home to you—“Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a Ransom!”

This is the central point of the sinner’s hope—a bleeding Savior paying our ransom price in drops of blood—the dying Son of God achieving our redemption by His own death! Oh, dear Souls, who are in the dark, if you want light, there is light nowhere but at the Cross! Do not look within for light—the only benefit of looking within is to be more and more convinced that all is dark as midnight apart front Jesus. Look within if you want to despair! But if you wish for hope, look yonder to Calvary’s mountain, where the Son of God lays down His life that sinners may not die! Hear from Heaven the Voice which says, “I have found a Ransom.” That is the only reason why God delivers you—not because He has seen any good thing in you, but because He has found a Ransom for you. Look where God looks and your comfort will begin.

Then this precious Gospel being announced to the sinner, the comfort of it enters his soul in the exercise of prayer—“He shall pray unto God, and he will be favorable unto Him.” O, you can pray when you get to the Cross! Our prayers, before we see Christ, are poor poor things, but when we get to Calvary and see the utmost Ransom paid and the full atonement made, then prayer becomes the utterance of a child to a father and we feel quite sure it will speed. Next, it appears that the soul obtains comfort because God gave it His righteousness—“for He will render unto man His righteousness.” That righteousness which God expected God bestows! That righteousness which man ought to have worked out but could not, Christ works out and God treats the believing man as if he were righteous, making him righteous in the righteousness of Christ! Here is another source of joy.

And then is the man led to a full confession of his sin. In the 27th verse the last cloud upon his spirit is blown away and he is at perfect peace. God was gracious to the man described by Elihu. God Himself became his light and his salvation and he came forth into joy and liberty. There is nothing more full of freshness and surprise than the joy of a new convert! Though thousands have felt it, yet each one, as he feels it, is himself amazed. I did really think, when God forgave me, that I was the most extraordinary instance of His Sovereign love that ever lived and that I should be bound even in Heaven, itself, to tell to others how God’s infinite mercy had pardoned, in my case, the biggest sinner that ever was forgiven. Now, every saved soul is led to feel just that and to exult and rejoice, and

magnify the Lord with extreme surprise because of His goodness!

It seems it was so in Job’s day and it is so now! The old conversions are the conversions of the period—the shades are the same and the lights are the same.

VII. And last of all, which is the seventh point, THE RESULTS ARE THE SAME, for I think I hardly know a better description of the result of regeneration than that which is given in the 25th verse—“His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s: he shall return to the days of his youth.” He who was an old wrinkled man in sin and looked yet older through his sorrow, becomes born-again! He starts upon a new career with a new life within him! The health which had departed from his soul comes back! The spring of spiritual juvenility wells up in him because God has begotten him afresh and made him a new creature—“Old things have passed away, behold all things are become new!”

And with this change comes back joy. See the 26th verse—“He shall see His face with joy; for He will render unto man His righteousness.” And the 30th verse—“To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.” So that the new spirit finds itself in a new world in which it goes forth with joy and is led forth with peace. The mountains and the hills break forth before it into singing and all the trees of the forest do clap their hands. It was so then—it is just the same now!

O that the same blessed thing may happen to many here present at this time! I have endeavored to give a description of conversion, that you may see what it is to be renewed in heart, but I shall have failed of my intention unless many a knee shall be bent to God with this prayer, “O Spirit of God, renew my nature, change my heart! Make my flesh to be fresher than a child’s! Make me a new creature in Christ Jesus.”

Time is passing—we are getting now almost one-fourth through another year and the year itself will soon fly away. I would speak to careless and thoughtless ones, again, and ask them, will it never be time to think upon these things? Will it never be time to consider your ways? Will it never be time to seek the Lord? You know not how near you are to the grave’s brink. Do consider, I beseech you, and remember that the Lord waits to be gracious—that He delights in mercy and if you seek Him He will be found of you!

And this great conversion and regeneration, of which we have spoken at such length, shall be yours, and you shall see the face of God with joy even as they did of old! The Lord grant it to you for the Redeemer’s sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Psalm 32; Job 33:14-30.  
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #737 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 34.29

GOD—ALL IN ALL

NO. 737

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 24, 1867, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble? And when He hides His face, who then can behold Him? Whether it is done against a nation, or against a man only.” Job 34:29.**

WE commenced our special services with a sermon of encouragement, by which we were reminded of the rapid answer which Daniel received to his prayer, [Sermon #734—The Dawn of Revival, Or Prayer Speedily Answered] and were led to hope that the Lord intended, at the very commencement of our supplications, to send forth a commandment of mercy. Since then, God has done great things for us, of which we are glad. Few of you, probably, are aware of the numerous conversions which God has worked in this place during the past two weeks. We are not fond of publishing numbers, nor of making estimates, but it suffices you to know, and us to say, that the Lord has made bare His arm and led forth captive souls from the bondage of sin.

Many fathers and mothers here have had to weep for joy because their children have declared themselves to be on the Lord’s side. Satan’s kingdom has been weakened, and the armies of the Lord have been increased. There has been joy among the angels this week, and joy in the heart of the great Father—for many lost ones have been found! Let us give unto the Lord the glory which is due unto His name. Let us rejoice and be glad in the Lord!

And now, halting in the midst of our career, like an army with uplifted banners, resting on the wing like a lark when mounting towards Heaven, let us give a tongue to our gratitude, and sing aloud unto God our Strength. We cheerfully confess that neither our own arm nor our own strength can give us the victory! Unto Jehovah be all glory! Let us hear the voice which says, “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord,” and let each Believer here prostrate himself in reverence before the Throne of the great King, and thank Him with heart and soul for all the mercy and goodness which He has made to pass before us! With one united heart let us ascribe unto the Lord honor and glory, and dominion and power.

This grateful waiting upon the Lord will renew our strength in such a manner that though we run, we shall not be weary, and though we walk, and the walk is long and the road is rough, we shall not faint. Waiting upon the Lord does not give us a merely spasmodic energy with which we may begin and continue for a little season, and then grow cold—but waiting upon the Lord gives a constant flow of vigor so that we go from strength to strength until in Zion we appear before God.  
This topic seemed to thrust itself upon me as most suitable for our consideration during our present special efforts. My intention is, as God shall help me, to magnify the name of the Lord our God by directing your devout attention to the fact that without the Lord there is nothing good, nothing strong, nothing effectual! But where He works nothing can stand against Him—no powers of evil can impede the workings of his royal hand. Our entire dependence upon God, who is our All in All—that is the thought of the morning—and that thought the text illustrates in two ways.

We are made to see the all-sufficiency of God to us, and our dependence upon Him—first, in His effectual working, “When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?” Secondly, in His Sovereign withdrawals, “When He hides His face, who then can behold Him?” And, thirdly, we are reminded that this is true not only upon the small scale of the individual, but upon the great scale of nations, “Whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only.”

I. First, then, the eye of Faith beholds the all-sufficiency of Jehovah, and our entire dependence upon Him, as she marks HIS EFFECTUAL WORKING. “When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?” This unanswerable question may be illustrated by the Lord’s works in Nature. The world was once a tumultuous chaos—fire and wind and vapor strove with one another—contention and confusion ruled the day. Who was there that could bring that heaving, foaming, boiling, raging mass into quietude and order? Who could transform that sea of molten lava into rock solid as granite, fit to become the foundations of a habitable globe?

Who could cool that boiling surface into an Eden where God might walk with man at the cool of the day? Who could calm that ocean of fire, lashed into terrific tempest by whirlwind and tornado, and make it into a terra firma, fixed and stable? The Holy Spirit brooded upon it, and by His mysterious energy before long He brought order out of confusion. And now this fair round world of ours, with all its matchless beauty of landscape and rolling flood, fixed and firm, has become a standing proof that when God gives quietness, none can disturb it!

Only let the great Preserver of men relax the command of quiet, and there are fierce forces in the interior of the earth sufficient to bring it back to its primeval chaos in an hour. But while His fiat is for peace, we fear no crash of matter and no wreck of worlds. Seed time and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat do not cease. The economy of man’s era remains beneath the calm radiance of sun and moon unmolested by the fear of returning chaos or the rebellion of terrific elements.

Passing on to the age of man we see the Lord in the day of His wrath pulling up the sluices of the great deep, and at the same moment bidding the clouds of Heaven discharge themselves so that the whole world became once again a colossal ruin. The proud waters went over the abodes of men and even the tops of the mountains were covered by the imperious billows! The Lord had but to will it, and the waters were eased from off the face of the earth and once again the dry land appeared while the world bloomed with joyous springs, blushed with fairest summers, and with glad ripening autumns, while over all, the Covenant bow was seen in the cloud—the token that the Lord had given quietness to the earth, and that none again should be able to disturb her.

Have the proud waters prevailed since that day? Has the sea dared to leave its appointed channel? Do not the waves in their greatest fury pause when they reach the boundary appointed by the Most High? Tempest and storm obey the voice of the Lord who sits upon the flood, the Lord who sits King forever. Further down in history the Red Sea asks of us the same question, “When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?” He led His people forth from Egypt’s bondage, but Pharaoh said, “I will pursue. I will overtake. I will divide the spoil.” He had, however, reckoned without the Lord of Hosts and when the pillar came between the two armies, turning its black dark side to Pharaoh’s horsemen, and its side of brightness and of comfort to Israel’s ranks, then there might have been heard a voice, “When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?”

When down into the depths of the sea the ransomed flock descended, the floods stood upright as a heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The rattling chariot was heard and the horse hoof sounded on the pebbly bed of the frightened sea. Will not Pharaoh break the peace of the chosen flock, and drive them back to slavery? Hark to the cracking of whips and the shouts of the horsemen! How is it now with Israel? Wait, O Unbelief, and see the salvation of God! When the mighty waters cover all the hosts of Egypt there comes up from the depths where sleep the proud warriors with the waves as their winding sheets, “When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?”

Glancing far on in history, and passing by a thousand cases which are all to the point, we only mention one more, namely, that of Sennacherib and his host. The marbles which are preserved to us, and have been excavated from the heaps of Nineveh, are more than sufficient proofs of the power and of the ferocity of the Assyrian monarch. He came even to Lachish, destroying the nations with fire and sword! And then he sent his Lieutenant, Rabshakeh, to Jerusalem, to overthrow it. Rabshakeh scarcely thought that little city to be worth the toils of battle! He thought to conquer it with his blasphemous tongue, and leave the sword in its scabbard. He thought to swallow it as a dog swallows his meat—to devour it as an ox eats grass. How scornfully, he asked: “Who is Jehovah?” How he boasted of the easy overthrow of the gods of the heathen.

“Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?” But the Lord had heard his blasphemies and answered the prayers of Hezekiah! And all the force of Assyria could not cast a single mound against Jerusalem, nor shoot an arrow there, but in the stillness of the night God put a hook into the enemy’s nose and thrust a bridle between his jaws, and sent him back with shame to the place from where he came. “When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?”—

*“There is a stream whose gentle flow*

***Supplies the city of our God,  
Life, love, and joy, still gliding through,  
And watering our secure abode.”***

“ Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: your eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down. Not one of the stakes there shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords there be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, where shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass there. For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, He will save us. Your tackling is loosed. They could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided: the lame take the prey.”

They that hoped to spoil Jerusalem are spoiled themselves, and the robbers who thought to destroy the peace of the Church of God have their own peace and their own lives taken from them. All history declares the Truth that when God determines to set a hedge around any people, it is not possible for any power, human or infernal, to break through that hedge. “I will be a wall of fire round about you, and a glory in your midst,” is a blessed promise, which ensures quietness to those who dwell within its glorious protection.

1. We shall reflect upon this Truth of God as it applies, first, to God’s people. My Beloved, if your gracious Lord shall give you quietness of mind, who, then, can cause you trouble? Some of us know what it is to walk in the light of Jehovah’s countenance. Let us now bear our experimental witness to this fact. You have had, my dearly Beloved in the Lord, stern tribulations. You have seen wave after wave rolling up and threatening to go over you. And all these billows have gone over your head. You have been deserted by friends—they have been unfaithful.

You have lost kindred—you have wept over their tombs. You have lost property—your gold and silver have taken to themselves wings and fled away. You have been broken in health, and you have been broken in spirit, too. But, when the Lord has lifted up the light of His countenance upon you, were you not of the same mind as Habakkuk, that, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls,” yet still you could rejoice in God? Beloved, a glimpse of our heavenly Father’s face even sweetens affliction*—*

*“The bitterest tears,  
If He smile but on them,  
Like dew in the sunshine,  
Grow diamond and gem.”*

We have found it sweet to be afflicted when we have enjoyed the Presence of God in it. And we have counted it all joy when we have fallen into many temptations because, in our hour of extremity and peril, the Savior has been unspeakably the more precious! In the absence of all other joys, the joy of the Lord has filled the soul to the brim. You know very well, dear Friends, that if the Lord is withdrawn, no comforts can make up for His absence. But if all earthly comforts are taken, you will not utter so much as a single murmuring word. If the Lord will but fill the vacuum with Himself, you will say, “Lord, I thank You that there was more room for You—more room for Your fullness—when the creature failed me.”

Added to this, when the Lord gives quietness, slander cannot give us trouble. It has ever been the lot of God’s people, the more they have served God the more falsely to be accused of men. And I doubt not, that when the dog is barking, he imagines that the good man who rides by is sorely troubled by the noise. And yet, if the Lord does but smile, it little matters though every tongue in the world should be set a-lying against us! And when every mouth should be black with curses, we may then say as David did—“They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city,” and then he adds, “Let them return, and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.”

So would the Christian give a license to those who slander him! If it were not for the sin of it on the part of his enemies, he could even rejoice to be evilly spoken of for Christ’s sake, and count it all joy when he was shamefully treated for his Master’s cause. The face of God sheds such a holy light into the soul that the clouds of slander cannot hide it. Yes, and at such times you may add to outward troubles and to the slanders of the wicked man, all the temptations of the devil. But if the Lord gives quietness, though there were as many devils to attack us as there are stones in the pavement of the streets of London, we would walk over all their heads in unabated confidence.

Let Satanic temptations come. Let them fly about as thick as hailstones! If God but lifts up the shield, they shall be but as hailstones that rattle on the roof while the man is safe beneath. Perhaps you think Luther’s expressions, when he speaks about the temptations of Satan, to be too highly drawn, and so they may be in your experience, but they were not in his. He stands as a monument, in his biography, of the power of the comforts of God to keep a man calm when all earth and all Hell are against him.

There was Luther. It did not matter that the enraged Pope issued a thousand bulls. That every priest gnashed his teeth at Luther. That most of men cried, “Away with him! It is not fit that he should live.” What cared Luther any more for all they said than for the chirping of so many grasshoppers in the field, or the croaking of so many frogs in the pond? Let them say what they will, “if God gives quietness, who then can make trouble?” I know that I am now touching the experience of many of God’s people, but I will go a little further. Even inbred sin, which is the worst of ills, will cause the Christian no trouble when the light of Jehovah’s Countenance is clearly seen.

“Oh,” says the soul, “I cried but yesterday, ‘O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ And there I stopped. But now my God has whispered in my ear, ‘You are Mine,’ and I will not stop at that verse any longer, but I will go on to the next! ‘I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord.’ ‘Thanks be unto God that gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ I will no longer look upon my enemies and say, ‘They are many and strong,’ but I will look to my strong Helper, ‘and in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.’ ”

“I am as a wonder unto many; but You are my strong refuge,” said David. And so will the Christian say! Beset with all sorts of temptations from within, yet he overcomes through the blood of the Lamb. And God gives such a quietness in resting in the finished work of Jesus, and in the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit that, imperfect as we are, we yet have power by His might to seize the crown of righteousness and to be raised up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, even before the day of glory shall dawn, and the shadows of mortality flee away.

2. Beloved Friends, I thank God that my text is equally true of the seeking sinner. If the Lord shall be pleased to give you, poor troubled Heart, quietness this day in Christ, none can make trouble in your soul. What a mercy it is for you that God can give you peace and quietness! Some of you have been, during the last fortnight, much troubled. The arrows of God are sticking fast in you. Your very flesh faints as though it could not much longer bear the strain of your spiritual griefs. Now the Lord can bind you up. He will bind up the broken in heart, and heal their wounds. He can do it effectually, so effectually that no wound ever bleeds afresh after He has bound it up.

“Ah,” you say, “but there is His Law, that dreadful Law of ten commands! I have broken that a thousand times.” But if the Savior leads you to the Cross He will show you that He fulfilled the Law on your behalf— that you are not yourself under the Law any longer, but under Grace! The law is a taskmaster, but the taskmaster can only rule his own slaves. And when you believe in Jesus, you are no more a slave, but a child, and the taskmaster has no further power over you from now on and forever! To see the Law fulfilled by Christ—what a sight is that! It is a vision which gives such joy and Grace that you could stand where the seer of Horeb stood, and need not say as he did, “I do exceedingly fear and quake,” but rather say, with our hymn-writer*—*

*“Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who at all to my charge can lay?  
Fully absolved through Christ I am  
From sin’s tremendous curse and blame.”*

“Yes, yes,” you say, “well, I thank God for that, but my conscience, my conscience will never let me be in quietness.” Oh, but my Master knows how to talk with your conscience. He can say to it, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins.” He can take His precious blood, which is better than the balm of Gilead, and He can apply it to the wounds of your conscience. And as soon as Conscience feels the power of the blood, all its wounds close up directly, and the heart rejoices, saying, “If Jesus paid my debts, then paid they are! If Jesus died for me, then God will never make me, die, and Jesus, too, for payment He will never demand twice—first at my bleeding Surety’s hands, and then at mine.”

When Conscience enters into the wounds of Christ, how happy it is! It is like the dove that dwells in the cleft of the rock, and builds its nest there and sits all day uttering its soft turtle notes for very joy and gladness. O poor Heart, Mr. Conscience and you will shake hands well enough if you will stand at the foot of the Cross and do it. Conscience is a dreadful thunderer to a sinner unreconciled—but to a sinner who has seen the great Atonement, and felt the power of the blood, Conscience becomes a generous friend! And let me say, dear Friend, if the Lord gives you quietness so the Law and Conscience will be at peace with you, so will that Book of God be.

Some of you, whenever you turn the Bible over, can find nothing but threats in it. Each page cries out against you, “I bear a curse for you.” Oh, but if you can only come to Jesus and rest in Him, then the page shall glisten with blessings, and glow with benedictions! You shall find that it utters peace to the men of peace, and good tidings of great joy to those who look alone to the Redeemer’s blood. Still I think I see you shake your head and say sorrowfully, “Oh, but I shall never get much quietness at home, for I have ungodly friends and they tell me I am religion-mad.”

Ah, my dear Friend, if the Lord gives you quietness, your ungodly friends will give you very little trouble, for you will have Grace to bear with them. If they shall revile you, you will turn their reviling into joy, thanking God that you are accounted worthy to be reviled for Jesus’ sake. And in the midst of it you will sometimes take an opportunity of speaking a good word for your Master, and so be thankful that you are placed where you are needed. We ought to be glad to be cast as a pound of salt amid the corruption which salt destroys—and we should be thankful that we are set as a light in a dark place—where a lamp is most required.

In this light the persecuted Believer may even look upon his painful position as a desirable one, for the practical usefulness which it puts in his way. If Jesus Christ is your Companion, you may walk unharmed through Vanity Fair, if your path should lie through it, and you need not care for all the fools that pluck at your garment. Through a shower of mud it is safe and blessed traveling if Jesus is our Companion. I hope you are not one of those who would choose to walk with Him in silver slippers, and who would leave Him if He came in poverty and shame! If so, you do not know the love of Jesus at all. Through briars and thorns lies the path of love, and yet that thorny road is Paradise if Jesus does but tread it with us and permit us to lean upon His arm.

The more severe the troubles of life become, the higher shall your comforts rise if Jesus is with you. Tried soul, rest in Jesus! Only cast yourself on Him, confide entirely in Him, and you shall find that the peace which He gives you none can take from you.

3. Now this text, which thus belongs to the saint and to the seeking sinner, I think is equally true, on the larger scale, to the Christian Church. I could not omit saying this out of thankfulness to God for the quietness which He has for years been pleased to give to us as a Christian community. During thirteen years and more we have been knit together as one man, while we have lived to see certain sects that were “the one and only church”—that railed almost with the mouth of a Sanbahat and Tobiah at all other Christians as worldly schematics, while they themselves were Scriptural, immaculate, the “Brethren,” the “Perfect Ones”— we have seen them torn to pieces till there is scarcely a remnant of them left, with all the elements within them of internal discord which will dash them yet more completely into shivers.

By the Grace of God we who, as a single Church, are almost as numerous as some of their parties, have been kept in holy peace and quietness, working incessantly for the cause of God without dissension and without strife. And though we are not free from ten thousand faults, yet I have often admired the goodness of God which has enabled us to hold with a hearty grip each other by the hand, and say, “We love each other for Jesus’ sake, and for the Truth’s sake, and hope each of us to live in each other’s love till we die, wishing, if it were possible, to be buried side by side.”

I do thank God for this, because I know there is more than enough of evil among us to plant a root of bitterness in our midst. We who bear office in the Church have the same nature as others, and therefore, naturally, every man of us would seek to have the supremacy, and every man, if left to himself, would also indulge an angry temper and find many reasons for differing from his Brother. We have all been offended often, and have as often offended others. We are as imperfect a band of men as might be found, but we are one.

We have each had to put up with the other, and to bear and forbear. And it does appear to me a wonder that so many imperfect people should get on so well for so long. I read over the door of our Tabernacle this text— “When the Lord gives quietness, who then can make trouble?” When some of our members were first taken into the Church, the pastor had a very suspicious character with them. It was said, “Well, if Mr. Spurgeon receives such a man who has been so great a trouble in our Church, then he will be the beginning of wars at the Tabernacle.” But those very persons who came with that doubtful character have become the most zealous of our working community, and instead of differing and disagreeing, have felt that there is so much to do that it would be a pity to spend one grain of strength in quarrelling with other children of God!

How good it is to use our swords upon the devil and his allies, and not to blunt their edges upon our fellow Christians! Possibly, my Brethren, many of you do not sufficiently prize the peace which reigns in our Church. Ah, you would value it if you lost it! Oh, how would you prize it if strife and schism should come in! You would look back upon these happy days we have had together with intense regret, and say, “Lord, knit us together in unity again. Send us love to each other once more.” In a Church, love is the essential element of happiness, and if any of you have violated it, or sinned against it, ask for Grace to repent of your mistake and let us “love one another with a pure heart fervently,” walking in love, “as Christ also has loved us and gave Himself for us.”

Let us have that fervent charity which is the perfect bond, abounding in our hearts yet more and more by Jesus Christ. I shall leave this first point when I have briefly drawn three lessons from it. “When the Lord gives quietness, who then can make trouble?” The first lesson is, those who have peace should, this morning adore and bless God for it. O God, when we remember what our trouble was before we knew a Savior! When we recollect what the tempest was when You did hide Your face from us, we cannot but be glad, exceedingly glad, that now You speak kindly and favorably unto us!

You who will not thank God for peace deserve to hear war in your streets again. You who will not thank Him at the place of the drawing of water because the noise of the archers has ceased—you deserve to have your hearts again plowed up by the hosts of the enemy. Praise Him, then, my Brothers and Sisters! From your hearts praise Him! Secondly, be hopeful, you who are seeking peace, whether for others or for yourselves. Do not despair of any soul, however near to death and Hell it may be— God can make quietness even in the heart that is ready to die. Lastly, give up all other peace but that which the Lord gives to every Believer. If you have a quietness which God has not created, implore the Lord to break it! If you have a peace which did not come from Heaven, it is “peace, peace, where there is no peace,” and the Lord deliver you from it.

II. Now let us turn to the second point. The all-sufficiency of God is seen, secondly, IN HIS SOVEREIGN WITHDRAWALS. God does sometimes hide His face from His people, and then, as His saints well know, nothing can enable them to behold Him or to be happy. You know God doctrinally, but what are the Doctrines of Grace to a soul when God hides His face? You may accept and hold fast the orthodox Gospel, but is the purest evangelical Truth anything but a cloud without rain unless the Lord Himself shall appear?

In vain, dear Friends, is all our experience to help us see God if He hides His face, for though we have tried and proved His faithfulness, yet if He does not continue to smile, we grow to be as unbelieving and as doubting as ever we were. At such times outward mercies are all in vain. Though today we can see God’s hand in the loaf of bread and in the cup of cold water, yet if God hides His face, though there should be a stalled ox before us, and a feast fit for kings, yet we should not see our Father’s love in them. Christian, you know well that if God takes Himself away and hides within His secret places, and speaks no more to you, neither earth nor all the sky can afford you one delight.

Now, Sinner, this is strikingly true in your case. If God shall be pleased to withdraw Himself from you, you cannot behold Him. If He should take the Gospel from you, what then? He may do it. He may send you across the seas as an emigrant. He may put you in some country village where there is no Gospel preaching. He may make you live in a situation where you cannot get out to hear a faithful Gospel preacher, and then what will you do? Still worse may it be with you! The Lord may let you continue under the ministry, and the ministry may be full of blessing to others, and yet be fruitless to you.

If God does but leave you to the corruptions of your own heart, dear Friend, it will be quite enough to secure your ruin. Then the tears of mothers, the counsels of friends, and the appeals of pastors shall all be powerless to touch your heart. The appeals of the Book of God, itself, shall never move your conscience—you will go headlong to your own destruction if God withdraws His face from you. Remember, my dear Hearer, this is possible! There is a point, we know not when, a place we know not where, where God may end your day of sensibility by saying, “I will let that sinner alone.” Then the cloud shall rain no more rain upon your desert soul—no more seed shall be scattered upon the highway of your thankless heart.

Shall horses run upon a rock? Shall men plow there with oxen? If you will not repent, God will not always waste the Gospel ministry upon you. He shall let that Gospel become a “savor of death unto death” to you, till you loathe it yourself as you become a Sabbath-breaker, or give yourself up to doubt and sin. O Sinner, I long that you may feel how absolutely you are in the hands of God! Should the sun go down all the candles in the world cannot light up the landscape. And if God shall desert the soul, all human power must fail to give it comfort. What a mercy it is that the Lord has not deserted you as yet, that still does His good Spirit strive and dwell with the chief of sinners. Still the cry is heard, “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.”

Yet I pray you remember that if you do harden your hearts, the Lord may do with you as He did with His people of old and swear in His wrath that you shall not enter into His rest. I have no doubt, dear Friends, that as this is true of the saint and the sinner, it is true of the Church. If God shall hide His face from a Church, who then can behold Him? Let me endeavor to set that Truth in two or three words before you. If we as a Church prove unfaithful—if we let go of our first love—if we do not plead in prayer, and seek the conversion of souls, God may take away His Presence from us as He has done from Churches that were once His Churches, but which are not now!

The traveler tells you that as he journeys through Asia Minor, he sees the ruins of those cities which once were the seven golden candlesticks, where the light of the Truth of God shone brightly. What will they now say of Thyatira? Where will they find Laodicea? These have passed away, and why not this Church? Look at Rome, once the glory of the Christian Church, her many ministers, and her power over the world for good—and now she is the place where Satan’s seat is—and her synagogue is a synagogue of Hell! How is this? She fell! She departed from her integrity! She left her first love, and the Lord cast her away.

Thus will the Lord deal with us if thus we sin. You know that terrible passage—“Go you now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel.” God first of all had the tabernacle pitched at Shiloh, but Shiloh was defiled by the sin of Eli’s sons. That tabernacle was taken away and Shiloh became a wilderness. So may this flourishing Church become. If justice should thus visit you, you may hold your Prayer Meetings— probably those will soon cease—but of what avail will your formal prayers be? You may get whom you will to preach, but what of that?

I know what you would do, if some of us were fallen asleep, and the faithful ones buried—if the Spirit of God were gone, you would say, “Well, we are still a large and influential congregation. We can afford to get a talented minister, money will do anything.” And you would get the man of talents, and then you would want an organ and a choir, and many other pretty things which we now count it our joy to do without. Then, if such were the case, all these vain attempts at grandeur would be unsuccessful, and the Church would before long become a scorn and a hissing, or else a mere log upon the water.

Then it would be said,” We must change the management,” and there would be this change and that change. But if the Lord were gone, what could you do? By what means could you ever make this Church to revive again, or any other Church? Alas for the carnal, spasmodic efforts we have seen made in some Churches! Prayer Meetings badly attended. No conversions, but still they have said, “Well, it is imperative upon us to keep up a respectable appearance. We must collect the congregation by our singing, by our organ, or some other outward attraction.” And angels might have wept as they saw the folly of men who sought after anything except the Lord, who alone can make a house His temple—who alone can make a ministry to be a ministration of mercy. Without whose Presence the most solemn congregation is but as the herding of men in the market, and the most melodious songs but as the shouting of those who make merry at a marriage.

Without the Lord, our solemn days, our new moons, and our appointed feasts are an abomination such as His soul hates. May this Church ever feel her utter, entire, absolute dependence upon the Presence of her God, and may she never cease humbly to implore Him to forgive her many sins, but still to command His blessing to abide upon her.

III. The time is gone, but I want just to say these two or three words— namely that, depend upon it, THIS IS TRUE OF A NATION as well as of any one Church and of any one man. At this particular time, though there is perhaps more Christian effort made in England than has been made for many years, there is also probably as little of the Divine blessing resting upon that effort as ever was known. It is a melancholy fact that with all the wonderful increase of accommodations which have been made in London for the worship of God, there is absolutely a greater deficiency now, owing to the increase of the population—a greater deficiency in the means of Grace now than there ever was.

It is also a notorious fact that of the new Churches which have been erected, you might go into many of them and not find enough to make a respectable gathering in a vestry, so that, even though tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of pounds have been contributed for mere bricks and mortar, in connection with the Episcopalian Establishment, these have merely been a spurious addition to the spiritual supply, but not a real one! It is easy to raise money, but it is not easy to find men! And while it is easy to get an architect to build a Church, none but God Himself can find a minister who will reach the dense masses of our heathendom around us and compel them to come in and worship.

The lack of men is the great crying need of the age, and that need is sent to us because we do not pray to God enough to send us men! We do not pray for men, when God does send them, that they may be helped as they should, and consequently much of the Church’s effort is thrown away. Beloved, I want to see something done in this London, and how is it to be done? There are thousands of Christians, tens of thousands of Christians in London, and yet the cause does not spread, or very slowly! What is the cause?

Jonah shook Nineveh from end to end, and yet a hundred thousand followers of Jesus cannot do it! Paul, marching along the Apian way at Rome, marked an era in Rome’s history—and yet there are many ministers of Christ who thread our streets, and yet what are we all put together for real power? We do not seem to amount in this great city, all of us, to anything more than a mere chip in the porridge! We scarcely affect the population at all. Oh, it is strange, it is passing strange! For it is the Gospel which we preach! We know it is the Gospel, and some of us do try to preach it with all our might. But if God withholds His face, what can be done?

Yet, Brethren, this can be done—we will cry to the Lord until He reveals His face again. We will give Him no rest till He establishes and makes His Church a praise in the earth! O Christian men and women, if you could realize the situation! A city of three millions, not wholly given to idolatry, but still very much given to sin—and we ourselves so weak in the midst of it! If we could but realize this position and then take hold upon the Omnipotent arm, and by an overcoming faith, such as only God could give to any one of us, believe it possible for the Lord Jesus to save this city! And then go forward boldly expecting Him to do it, we might see more than we have ever seen!

And now, what if I prophesy that we shall see it! What if I say that if God will but stir up His people everywhere for prayer, He will do a work in our day that shall make both the ears of him that hears it to tingle, not with horror, but with joy? He will yet let the world know that there is a God in Israel! Verily, that which hinders is our lack of faith, for if the Son of Man should descend among us, would He find faith on the earth? O unbelieving Church! O thankless generation! You are not straitened in God—you are straitened in your own hearts! And if you could but believe Him, and so prove Him by your faith, He would yet open the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing, such that you should not have room enough to receive!

This, then, is the matter, and we leave it with you. We are utterly dependent upon God—absolutely must we rest on Him. But this is as it should be, for it were better to trust in the Lord than to have confidence in man—better to trust in the Lord than to have confidence in princes. Through the blood of Jesus let us rest in Divine love and give the Lord no rest till He makes bare His arm in the midst of this land! May the Lord give His blessing to our words, for Jesus’ sake.

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÷Job 34.31

FOR THE SICK AND AFFLICTED  
NO. 1274

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

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

EVEN when addressing our fellow men there should be a flatness about our speech. Therefore Solomon represents the preacher as seeking out acceptable words, or words meet for the occasion. When we approach those who are high in authority, this necessity becomes conspicuous and, therefore, men who are petitioners in the courts of princes are very careful to order their language aright. Much more, then, when we speak before the Lord ought we to consider, as the text does, the meetness of our words. Some language must never be uttered in the Divine Presence and even that which is allowed must be well weighed and set forth with solemn humbleness.

Hence Elihu does well to suggest in the text, language that is “meet to be said unto God.” May our lips ever be kept as by a watchful sentinel, lest they suffer anything to pass through them dishonorable to the Most High. In the Divine Presence—and we are always there—it is incumbent upon us to set a double watch over every word that comes from our mouths. Remember that thought is speech before God. Thought is not speech to man, for men cannot read one another’s thoughts until they are set forth by words or other outward signs, but God, who reads the heart, regards that as being speech which was never spoken. And He hears us say in our souls many things which were never uttered by our tongues.

Beloved, there are thoughts which are not meet to be thought before the Lord and it is well for us, especially those of us who are afflicted, to be very watchful over those thoughts, lest the Lord hear us say in our hearts things which will grieve His Spirit and provoke Him to jealousy. O saints of God, since you never think except in the immediate Presence of your heavenly Father, make every effort that your thoughts are pure, lest you sin in the secret chambers of your being and charge God foolishly. Elihu tells us what it would be proper for us to think and say, “It is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not teach You me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.”

We will use the text mainly at this time in reference to those who are being chastened and afterwards we shall see if there is not teaching in it, even to those who, at present, are not smarting under the rod. Thirdly, we shall find a word of our text to those who are not the children of God and, therefore, know nothing of the smarting rod of fatherly correction. Perhaps to them, also, God may speak through this text. O that His Holy Spirit may deign to do so!

I. But first, dear Friends, let us commune together upon the text in its more natural application as addressed TO THE AFFLICTED. The instruction of the wise man is for them, especially, and there are three duties here prescribed for them, or rather three privileges suggested which they should pray the Holy Spirit to enable them to enjoy. The first lesson is, it is meet for them to accept the affliction which the Lord sends and to say to God, “I have borne chastisement.” We notice that the word, “chastisement,” is not actually in the Hebrew, though the Hebrew could not be well interpreted without supplying the word.

It might exactly and literally be translated, “I bear,” or “I have borne.” It is the softened heart saying to God, “I bear whatever You will put upon me. I have borne it, I still bear it and I will bear it—whatever You may ordain it to be. I submit myself entirely to You and accept the load with which You are pleased to give me.” Now, we ought to do this, dear Friends, and we shall do it if we are right at heart. We should cheerfully submit because no affliction from which we suffer has come to us by chance. We are not left to the misery of believing that things happen of themselves and are independent of a Divinely controlling power.

We know that not a drop of bitter ever falls into our cup unless the wisdom of our heavenly Father has placed it there. We are not even left in a world governed by angels, or ruled by cherubim—we dwell where everything is ordered by God Himself. Shall we rebel against the Most High? Shall we not let Him do as seems good in His sight? Shall we not cover our lips in silence when we know that the evil is of the Lord? Shame upon us, if we are His children, if this is not the prevalent spirit of our mind—“It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him.”

Moreover, we should not only bear all things because the Lord ordains them, but because He orders all things for a wise, kind, benevolent purpose. He does not afflict willingly. He takes no delight in the sufferings of His children. Whenever adversity must come, it is always with a purpose and, if a purpose of God is to be subserved by my suffering, would I wish to escape from it? If His Glory will come of it, shall I not crave the honor of being the agent of His Glory, even though it is by lying passive and enduring in anguish?

Yes, Beloved, since we know that God can only grieve His regenerated creatures for some purpose of love, we should willingly accept whatever sorrow He pleases to put upon us. And besides, we have His assurance that all things work together for our good. Our trials are not merely sent with a good objective, but with an objective good towards ourselves, a design which is being answered by every twig of our heavenly father’s rod. “The cup which our Father has given us, shall we not drink it?” It is healing medicine and not deadly poison, therefore let us put it to our lips without a murmur, yes, drink it to its very dregs, and say, “Not as I will, but as You will.”

A constant submission to the Divine will should be the very atmosphere in which a Christian lives. He should put an earnest negative upon his self-will by crying, “Not my will.” And then he should, with holy warmth, beseech the Lord to execute His purpose, saying, “The will of the Lord be done.” He should throw the whole vigor of his soul into the Lord’s will and exhibit more than submission, namely, a devout acquiescence in whatever the Lord appoints. Beloved Friends, we must not be content with bearing what the Lord sends, with the coolness which says, “It must be and, therefore, I must put up with it.” Such forced submission is far below a Christian—for many a heathen has attained it.

The stolid stoic accepted what predestination handed out to him and the Muslim still does the same. We must go beyond unfeeling submission. We must not so harden our hearts against affliction as not to be affected by it. That chastisement which does not make us smart has failed of its end. It is by the blueness of the wound, says Solomon, that the heart is made better! And if there is no real blueness—if it is merely a surface bruise—little good will come of it. “For a season we are in heaviness,” says the Apostle, “through manifold trials,” and not only the trial, but the heaviness which comes of it is necessary to us.

God would not have His children become like the ox or the ass, which present hard skins to hard blows, but He would have us tender and sensitive. There is such a thing as despising the chastening of the Lord by a defiant attitude which seems to challenge the Lord to draw a tear or fetch a sigh from us. Against this let us be on our guard! Neither, on the other hand, are we to receive affliction with a rebellious spirit. It is hard for us to kick against the pricks, like the ox which, when goaded, is irritated and strikes out and drives the iron into itself deeper than it went before. We can easily do this by complaining that God is too severe with us. In this spirit we may “take arms against a sea of troubles,” but by opposing we shall not end them, but increase their raging.

By a proud murmuring spirit we only bring upon ourselves trial upon trial—“the Lord resists the proud,” and a high spirit challenges His opposition. Neither, dear Friends, as believers in God, are we to despair under trouble, for that is not bearing the cross, but lying down under it. We are to take up our appointed burden and carry it, and not sit down in wicked sullenness and murmur that we can do no more. Some are in a very evil frame of mind, their moody spirits mutter that if God will be so severe with them they must yield to it, but they have lost all heart and all faith— and all they ask for is leave to die. A child of God must not repine. He has not yet “resisted unto blood, striving against sin,” and, if he has, he should still say, “Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him.”

Since Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, never murmured, it ill becomes any of His followers to do so. We must, in patience, possess our souls. Perhaps you think it easier for me to say this than it would be to practice it. And yet, by Almighty Grace, a saint can bear to the utmost of bearing. To the utmost of suffering he can suffer. To the utmost of loss he can lose and even to the uttermost of death, itself, he can die daily and yet triumph through the Divine life! For God, who works in us to will and to do, is almighty and makes our weakness strong. The Christian, then, is not to treat the cross which God puts upon him in any such way as I have described, but he is to accept it humbly, looking up to God, and saying, “Much worse than this I might reckon to receive even as Your child, for the discipline of Your house requires the rod, and well might I expect to be chastened every morning.”

The child of God should feel that it is in very faithfulness that the Lord afflicts him and that every stroke has love in it. Anything over and above the lowest abyss of Hell is a great mercy to us. If we had to lie ill for 50 years and scarcely have a minute free from pain, yet since the Lord has pardoned our sins and accepted us in Christ Jesus, and made us His children, we should be grateful for every pang and still continue to bless the Lord upon our beds and sing His high praises in the midst of the fires. Humbly, therefore, as sinners deserving Divine wrath, we are bound to accept the chastening of the Lord.

We should receive chastisement with meek submission, presenting ourselves to God that He may still do with us as He has dealt with us—not wishing to start aside to the right hand or to the left—asking Him, if it may be His will, to remove the load, to heal the pain, to deliver us from the bereavement and the like—but still always leaving ample margin for full resignation of spirit. The gold is not to rebel against the goldsmith, but should, at once, yield to be placed in the crucible and thrust into the fire. The wheat, as it lies upon the threshing floor, is not to have a will of its own, but to be willing to endure the strokes of the flail that the chaff may be separated from the precious corn.

We are not far off being purged from dross and cleansed from chaff when we are perfectly willing to undergo any process which the Divine Wisdom may appoint us. Self and sin are married and will never be divorced. And till our self-hood is crushed, the seed of sin will still have abundant vitality in it. But when it is, “not I,” but, “Christ that lives in me,” then have we come near to that mark to which God has called us and to which, by His Spirit, He is leading us. But we ought to go farther than this. We should accept chastisement cheerfully. It is a hard lesson, but a lesson which the Comforter is able to teach us—to be glad that God should have His way!

Do you know what it is, sometimes, to be very pleased to do what you do not like to do? I mean you would not have liked to do it, but you find that it pleases someone you love and straightway the irksome task becomes a pleasure? Have you not felt, sometimes, when one whom you very much esteem is sick and ill, that you would be glad enough to bear the pain, at least for a day or two, that you might give the suffering one a little rest? Would you not find a pleasure in being an invalid for a while to let your beloved one enjoy a season of health? Let the same motive, in a higher degree, sway your spirit! Try to feel, “If it pleases God, it pleases me. If, Lord, it is Your will, it shall be my will. Let the lashes of the scourge be multiplied, if so You shall be the more honored and I shall be permitted to bring You some degree of glory.”

The cross becomes sweet when our health is so sweetened by the Spirit that our will runs parallel with the will of God. We should learn to say, in the language of Elihu, “I have borne, I do bear, I accept it all.” To be as plastic clay on the potter’s wheel, or as wax in the sculpture’s hand should be our great desire. That is the first business of the sufferer. The next duty is to forsake the sin which may have occasioned the chastisement. “It is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement; I will not offend any more.”

There is a connection between sin and suffering in every case. It would be very wrong for us to suppose that every man who suffers is, therefore, more guilty than others—that was the mistake of Job’s friends—a mistake too commonly made every day. But it is right for the sufferer, himself, to judge his own case by a standard which we may not use toward him. He should say, “Is there not some connection between this chastisement and sin that dwells in me?” And here he must not judge himself unrighteously, even for God, lest he plunge himself into unnecessary sorrow. There are afflictions which come from God, not on account of past sin, but to prevent sin in the future. There are also sharp pruning which are intended to make us bring forth more fruit—they are not sent because we have brought forth no fruit—but because we are fruitful branches and are worth pruning. “Every branch in Me that bears fruit He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”

There are, also, afflictions which are sent by way of test, trial and proof, both for God’s Glory and for the manifestation of His power—as also for the comforting of others—that trembling saints may see how weak and feeble men can carry the heaviest cross for Christ’s sake and can triumph under it. We are not to be sure that every sorrow comes to us because of any sin actually committed, yet it will be best for us to be more severe with ourselves than we should think of being with others. We should always ask, “Is there not some cause for this chastisement? May there not be something of which God would rid me of, or something which has grieved Him which has caused Him to grieve me?”

Brothers and Sisters, I charge you never be lenient with yourselves. The best of us are men at the best and at our best we have much to mourn over in the Presence of the Most High! It is good to be always dissatisfied with ourselves and press forward to something yet beyond—always praying that Christ’s likeness may be completely formed in us. Thorns are often put in the nest that we may search for hidden evils. “Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you?” Has there been a defeat at Ai? May there not be an Achan in the camp? Has not a traitor concealed, in some secret place, a goodly Babylonian garment and a wedge of gold? Does not trial give a hint that there may be something amiss?

Beloved, I ask myself and I ask you to look, now, not only to your outward character, but to your more private life and to your walk before God and see if there is not some flaw. Is there trouble in the family? Have you always acted towards the children and the servants as you should have done as a master and a father? Question yourself! The child is grieving you. Have you, good Mother, always been as prayerful about that child as you should have been? May not your child’s conduct to you be a fair reflection of your own conduct towards your heavenly Father? I do not mention any of these things to increase your grief, but in order that you may put your finger on the evil which provokes the Lord God and may put it away.

Have there been losses in business? Are you sure, Brother, that when you were making money you always used it for God as you should? Were you a good steward? Did you give the Lord His full portion—the sacred tithe of all that you have? Or may you not have been too selfish—and

may not that be the cause why you must now be reduced from wealth to comparative poverty? Is that so? Does the affliction scourge your body? Then has there been anything wrong with your habits? Has the flesh predominated over the spirit? Has there been a failure of the entire consecration of the vessel unto the Lord?

Does the trial occur in the person of some dear one? You may not be conscious of any wrong there, but still look, dear Friends! Search the whole of your conduct as the spies searched Canaan of old. If your sin is glaring, there is little need of a chastisement to point it out to you, for you ought to see it without that. But there may be a secret sin between you and your Lord for which He has sent you chastisement—and after this you must raise a hue and cry. You know I do not mean that the Lord is punishing you for sin as a judge punishes a criminal, for He will not do that since He has laid the punishment of sin upon Christ and Christ has borne it as a matter of punitive justice. He, as a Father, chastens His child, but never without a cause.

I am urging you to see whether there may not be some cause for the present painful discipline. Never fall into the mistake of some who suppose that sin in God’s children is a trifle. Why, if there is any place where sin is horrible, it is in a child of God! Therefore the text puts it, “I will not offend any more.” Sin is an offensive thing to God. He cannot bear it. I should dislike a plague spot on anybody’s face, but I should tremble to see it, most of all, upon my own child’s face. Sin is more visible in a good man than in any other. I may drop a spot of ink upon a black handkerchief and never see it, but on a white one you will perceive it, directly, and see it the more because of the whiteness of the linen which it defiles.

You, child of God, know that just in proportion as you are sanctified— in proportion as you live near to God—sin will be grievous to the Most High. It is gloriously terrible to live near to God. I wonder if you understand me, all of you? To walk as a favored courtier with a monarch is a very delicate matter. Favorites have to pick their steps, for though they stand near a king, they well know how soon they may fall from their high position. We serve a jealous God! That is a wonderful question, “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” God is that consuming fire! God is the everlasting burnings! Who among us shall dwell with Him?

The answer is, “He that has clean hands and a pure heart, he shall dwell on high. His place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks”—but it is only the man who is very jealous of himself who will be able to bear that fierce light which beams around the Throne of God—that devouring flame which God, Himself is! As said the Apostle—“Even our God is a consuming fire.” Caesar’s wife must not only be without fault, but she must be above suspicion. And such must be the character of the child of God who, like Moses, lives in the inner circle—who stands on the mountaintop—who knows what the peaks of Sinai mean and what it is to be 40 days in fellowship with the Most High.

Beloved Friends, I urge upon you a very close search into what the transgression may be which has brought correction upon you, for it may be, in you, an offense which would scarcely be sin in anybody else. Another person might fall into your fault as a sin of ignorance, but since you know better, the sin is all the blacker in you. The Lord will be sanctified in them that draw near to Him, but woe to them if they defile themselves.

The third lesson in the text to the afflicted clearly teaches them that it is their duty and privilege to ask for more light. The text says, “That which I see not teach You me. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.” Do you see the drift of this? It is the child of God awakened to look after the sin which the chastisement indicates—and since he cannot see all the evil that may be in himself—he turns to his God with this prayer, “What I see not teach You me.” Beloved Friends, it may be that, in looking over your past life and searching through your heart, you do not see your sin, for perhaps it is where you do not suspect. You have been looking in another quarter. Your own opinion is that you are weak in one point, but possibly you are far weaker in the opposite direction.

In nothing do men make more mistakes than concerning their own characters. I have known a Brother confess that he was deficient in firmness, when, in my opinion, he was about as obstinate as any man I knew. Another man has said that he was always lacking in coolness, and yet I thought that if I needed to fill an ice-well, I had only to put him into it. Persons misjudge themselves. Unfeeling people say they are too sensitive and selfish persons imagine themselves to be victims to the good of others. So, it may be you have been looking in one quarter for the sin, while your fault lies in the opposite point of the compass. Pray, then, “Lord, search me and try me, and that which I see not teach You me.”

Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that our worst sins may lurk under our holiest things. Oh, how these evils will hide away—not under the docks and nettles of the dunghill—not they, but under the lilies and the roses of the garden! In the cups of the flowers they lurk. They do not flit through our souls like devils with dragons’ wings—they fly as angels of light with wings tinted as the rainbow! They come as sheep and a very fat sort they seem to be, but they are wolves in sheep’s clothing. Watch, therefore, very carefully against the sins of your holy things. In our holy things we are nearer to God than at any other time and, therefore, such defilement soon brings upon us the stroke of our heavenly Father’s rod.

Perhaps your sin is hidden away under something very dear to you. Jacob made a great search for the images—the teraphs which Laban worshipped. He could not find them. No, he did not like to disturb Rachel, and Laban did not like to disturb her, either—a favorite wife and daughter must not be inconvenienced. She may sit still on the camel’s furniture, but she hides the images there! Even thus you do not like to search in a certain quarter of your nature—it is a very tender subject—something you feel very grieved about when anybody even hints at it! It is just there that the sin is harbored.

My Brothers and Sisters, let us be honest with the Lord. Let us really wish to know where we are wrong and heartily long to be set right. Do you think we all honestly want to know our errors? Are there not chapters of the Bible which we do not like to read? If there are—if any text has a quarrel with you, quarrel with yourself, but yield wholly to the Word of

God. Is there any doctrine which you almost think is a Truth of God, but your friends do not believe it and they might, perhaps, think you heretical if you were to accept it—and therefore you dare not investigate any further? Oh, dear Friends, let us be rid of all such dishonesty! So much of it has got into the Church that many will not see things that are plain as a pikestaff. They will not see because the Truth of God might cost them too dearly!

They cover up and hide away some parts of Scripture, which it might be awkward for them to understand, because of their connection with a Church, or their standing in a certain circle. This is hateful and we need not wonder if God smites the man who allows himself in it! Be true, Brother! You cannot deceive God. Do not try it! Ask Him to search you through and through. Let your desire be, “Refining fire go through my heart with a mighty flame that shall devour everything like a lie, everything that is unholy, selfish, earthly, that I may be fully consecrated unto the Lord my God.” This is the right way in which to treat our chastisements. “If I have done iniquity, I will do no more. That which I see not, teach You me.”

“Alas,” somebody says, “we cannot say that we will do no more iniquity.” Yes, we can say it a great deal more easily than we can practice it and, therefore, it is a pity to say it except in the evangelical spirit, leaning entirely on the Divine strength. He who says, “I will do no more iniquity” has, then and there, perpetrated iniquity if he has vowed in his own strength, for he has exalted himself into the place of God by selfconfidence. Yet we must feel in our inmost hearts that we desire to depart from all iniquities. There must be an earnest and hearty intent that, as Paul shook off the viper into the fire, so will we, as God helps us, shake off the sin, whatever it may be, which brings us the trial or that causes the Lord to take away the light of His Countenance from us.

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

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

Now look, my Brothers and Sisters, look at yonder dear saint of God who has been, for months, upon his bed till the feathers have grown hard beneath him! He shifts from side to side but finds no ease—no sleep at night, no respite by day. Would you like to change places with him? Yet hear how he praises God amidst his many pains and abundant weaknesses and poverty! Do you prefer your lot to his? Well, then, in the name of everything that is good, accept your portion with joy and throw your soul into the Lord’s service! The great Captain might say to you, “What? Tired of marching? I will send you back to the trenches and let you lie there till you feel sick at heart of your inactivity. “What? Weary of fighting? You shall be put into the hospital with broken bones and made to lie there and pine and see what you think of enforced inactivity.”

If I have any message to give from my own bed of sickness it would be this—if you do not wish to be full of regrets when you are obliged to lie still, work while you can. If you desire to make a sick bed as soft as it can be, do not stuff it with the mournful reflection that you wasted time while you were in health and strength! People said to me years ago, “You will break your constitution down with preaching 10 times a week,” and the like. Well, if I have done so, I am glad of it! I would do the same again! If I had 50 constitutions, I would rejoice to break them down in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ!

You young men that are strong, overcome the Wicked One and fight for the Lord while you can. You will never regret having done all that lies in you for our blessed Lord and Master! Crowd as much as you can into every day and postpone no work till tomorrow. “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” We have yet another remark for those that are strong. Should not the favors of God lead us to search out our sins? Chastisement acts like a black finger to point out our failures— ought not the love of God to do the same with its hand glittering with jewels? Lord, do You give me good health? Lord, do You spare my wife and my children? Do You give me of substance enough and to spare? Then, Lord, is there anything about me that might grieve You? Do I harbor anything in my soul that might vex Your Spirit? Let Your love guide me that I may escape from these evils.

It is a sweet text—“I will guide you with My eyes. Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.” Your child only needs a glance of the eye and he runs to you. But your horse and mule will not do that—you must put a bit into their mouths and some of them must have very hard bits—and their mouths must be made very tender before they can be guided. You are men, do not be as the beasts are.

Yet some of God’s own children are very brutish. They will not obey His Words and so their God has to give them blows, for He will have His children obey Him. If they will be drawn with cords of love, so shall they be, but if they will not, they shall be driven with the rod. If you make yourselves horses and mules, He will treat you like horses and mules, or you will have reason to think so! Perhaps the best way to prevent your becoming altogether mulish is to treat you as if you were a mule and so drive you out of it by letting you see the effect of your folly. Let our mercies act as a sweet medicine and then we shall not need bitter potions.

Once again. Do you not think that while enjoying God’s mercy we should be anxious to be searched by the light of the love of God? Should we not wish to use the light of the Divine Countenance that we may dis

cover all our sin and overcome it? I know some Christians who will not come to this point. They have an ugly temper and they say, “Well, you know, this is constitutional.” Away forever with such wicked self-excusing! It is idle to say, “I cannot help it, it is my temperament.” Your temperament will destroy you, as surely as you live, if the Grace of God does not destroy your temperament! If such excuses were permitted, there is no crime, however abominable, for which temperament might not be pleaded. Thieves, harlots, drunks, murderers might all set up this justification, for they all have their evil temperaments!

Do you find in the Law that any sin is excused upon the ground that it is “constitutional?” Do you find anything in the example of Christ, or in the precepts of the Gospel, to justify a man in saying, “I must be treated with indulgence, for my nature is so inclined to a certain sin that I cannot help yielding to it”? My Brother, you must not talk such nonsense! Your first business is to conquer the sin you love best! Against it all your efforts and all the Grace you can get must be leveled. Jericho must be first besieged, for it is the strongest fort of the enemy. And until it is taken nothing can be done.

I have generally noticed, in conversion, that the most complete change takes place in that very point in which the man was constitutionally most weak. God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness. “Well,” cries one, “suppose I have a besetting sin, how can I help it?” I reply, if I knew that four fellows were going to beset me tonight on Clapham Common, I should take with me sufficient policemen to lock the fellows up. When a man knows that he has a besetting sin it is not for him to say, “It is a besetting sin and I cannot help it.”

He must, on the other hand, call for heavenly assistance against these besetments. If you have besetting sins and you know it, fight with them and overcome them by the blood of the Lamb! By faith in Jesus Christ, besetting sins can be led captive and they must be led captive, for the child of God must overcome, even to the end! He is to be more than conqueror through Him that has loved Him. Let the love of God, then, lead you to search yourselves and say, “That which I see not teach You me. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.”

III. The last remark I have to make is to THE UNCONVERTED. Perhaps there are some here who are not the people of God and yet they are very happy and prosperous. They have all that heart can wish and as they hear me talk about God’s children being chastened, they say, “I do not want to be one of them, if such is their portion.” You would rather be what you are, would you? “Yes,” you say. Listen! We will suppose that we have before us a prince of the blood who will one day be a king. He has been doing something wrong and his father has chastened him with the rod.

There stands the young prince with tears running down his cheeks. And over yonder is a street Arab who has no father that he knows of— certainly none that ever chastened him for his good. He may do what he likes—use any sort of language—steal, lie, swear if he likes, and no one will chasten him. He stands on his head or makes wheels in the streets, or rolls in the dirt, but no father ever holds a rod over him. He sees this little prince crying and he laughs at him, “You don’t have the liberty I do! You are not allowed to stand on your head as I do! Your father wouldn’t let you beg for coppers by the side of the omnibuses as I do! You don’t sleep under an arch all night as I do! I would not be you to catch that thrashing! I would sooner be a street boy than a prince!”

Your little prince very soon wipes his eyes and answers, “Go along with you. Why, I would rather be chastened every day and be a prince and heir to a kingdom, than I would be you with all your fine liberty!” He looks down upon the ragged urchin with the greatest conceivable pity, even though he, himself, is smarting from the rod. Now, Sinners, that is just what we think of you and your freedom from heavenly discipline! When you are merriest and happiest, and full of your joy, we would not be you for the world! When you have been electrified by that splendid spectacle at the theater, or have enjoyed yourself so much in a licentious dance, or, perhaps, in something worse, we would not be as you are! Take us at our worst—when we are most sick, most desponding, most tried, most penitent before God—we would not exchange with you at your best!

Would we change with you for all your mirth and sinful hilarity? No, that we would not! Ask the old woman in the winter time who has only a couple of sticks to make a fire with and has nothing to live upon but what the tender mercy of the parish allows her. Ask her if she would change with Dives in his purple and fine linen! Look at her. She puts on an old red cloak to shelter her poor limbs, which are as full of rheumatism as they can be. The cupboard is bare, her poor husband lies in the churchyard and she has not a child to come and see her. Ah, there she is. You say, “She is a miserable object.” Here is the young squire in his top boots, coming home from the hunt. He is standing in front of her. He might say to her, with all his large possessions and broad acres, “You would change with me, Mother, would you not?”

She knows his character, and she knows that he has no love for God, and no union to Christ and, therefore, she replies, “Change with you? No, that I would not for a thousand worlds!”

*“Go you that boast of all your stores,  
And tell how bright they shine;  
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,*

*But my Redeemer’s mine.”*  
I have yet another word for you that fear not God. I wish you would reflect, for a moment, what will become of you one of these days. God loves His dear children very much—He loves them so much that Jesus died to save them—and yet He does not spare them when they sin, but He chastens them with the rod of men. Now, if He does so with His children, what will He do with you who are His enemies? If judgement begins at the house of God—if when His anger does but gently smoke it is so hot—what will it be when the winds of Justice fan it to a furious flame? As when the fire sets the forests of the mountains burning, or as when the vast prairie becomes one sheet of fire, so shall it be in that dread day when God shall launch all His vengeance against the sins of the ungodly! I beseech you, think of this!

He spared not His own Son, but put Him to a cruel death upon the tree for the sins of others! Will He spare His enemies—think, you who have rebelled against Him and rejected His mercy—when He visits them for their

own personal sins? “Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.” One more thought, for I must not send you away with that terrible warning and no Gospel encouragement. Learn a lesson from the Lord’s children. When His children are chastened, they submit—and when they submit they obtain peace. Sinner, I pray you, learn wisdom! And if you have been troubled of late, if you have had trials from God, yield to Him! Yield to Him!

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

Hang on the arm that otherwise might smite you! Trust in the Lord, Sinner, through Jesus Christ, the atoning Sacrifice, and you shall find peace with Him. Ask Him, with humble submission, to put away the sin that has made you suffer and has nearly cost you your soul. Pray Him to search you and find out the sin. Repent and believe the Gospel! Forsake evil and cling to the Savior, the great Physician who heals the disease of sin, and you shall live! Come, now, to your Father’s home. Those rags, that hungry belly, those swine and filthy troughs, those citizens that would not help you, that blandest of all citizens, whose only kindness lay in degrading you lower than you were before—all these are sent to fetch you home.

Believe it, Soul, and say, “I will arise and go unto my Father, and will say unto Him, Father I have sinned.” And while you are yet saying it, you shall have the kiss of His love, the embraces of His affection, the robe of His righteousness and the fatted calf of spiritual food! And there shall be merriment concerning you, both on earth and in Heaven! The Lord bless you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Job 34.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—91, 701.  
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÷Job 34.33

PRIDE CATECHIZED  
NO. 2670

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, APRIL 15, 1900.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Should it be according to your mind? He will recompense it whether you refuse, or whether you choose; and not I: therefore speak what you know.” Job 34:33.**

DEAR FRIENDS, it is never wise to dispute with God. Let a man strive with his fellow, but not with his Maker. If we must discuss any point, let it be with imperfect beings like ourselves, but not with the Infallible and Infinitely wise God, for, in most of our discussions, these questions will come back to us, “Should it be according to your mind? Are you master? Is everyone to be subordinate to you?”

I am going to speak, this evening, to those who have a quarrel with God concerning the way of salvation. They are very unwise not to take salvation just as God brings it to them, but they do not. They have some difficulty or other, so they raise a dispute and they have been, perhaps for years, quibbling at the Savior whose Infinite goodness has provided a way of salvation exactly adapted to their needs. I am going to use Elihu’s words and apply them to their case.

I. To begin at the beginning, here is, first, A QUESTION—“Should it be according to your mind?” You say that you are willing to find mercy, and that you are very teachable; but you object to the plan of salvation as it is revealed in the Scriptures.

First, then, what is it to which you object? Do you object to the very basis of the plan, namely, that God will forgive sin through the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son? I know that some do object to this— they cannot bear to hear about Atonement by blood, or justification by imputed righteousness. Others, who will not say that they object to Atonement, spirit away the very meaning of it! They cannot endure that glorious Doctrine of Substitution which is such a joy to us. Christ standing in the sinner’s place and the sinner then standing in the place of Christ—Christ taking the sinner’s sin and the sinner wearing Christ’s righteousness—all this they absolutely reject! “No doubt Christ did something for sinners,” they say, but they cannot define what He did and, as for the sin of any man being actually put away by Christ being punished in the place of the ungodly sinner, they will not believe it!

Yet, that is God’s plan of salvation, and some of us know, in our inmost hearts, that we never had peace until we accepted that plan of salvation, and that now, if it should be taken away from us, we would lose all the joy of existence and go back to the despair which, at one time, was so heavy upon us that we could sympathize with Job when be said, “My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life.” We could better afford that the sun should be quenched, that the moon should be darkened, that all springs should be dried, that the very air itself should disappear—we could better afford to die and rot in our graves than that we should lose our Savior and His atoning blood and justifying righteousness! Whatever you, Mr. Objector, may say about it, we say to you, “Should it be according to your mind?” Would you have Christ to die and yet not really secure salvation by His death? Could you invent a better plan, or even one half as good—

*“So just to God, so safe for man”—*  
so consolatory to a wounded conscience, so constraining to gratitude when that conscience has been pacified? Would you, could you, propose anything one thousandth as good as God’s plan of salvation? Even if you could, “should it be according to your mind?” Who are you, a guilty sinner, to despise the Savior’s blood? If you had your just deserts, you would years ago have been in the lowest pit of Hell! Will you set aside the Cross of Christ and seek to put something else in the place of the crucified Redeemer?

But, possibly, you do not object to the Doctrine of Substitution, but your objection is to the way of salvation by faith. “I don’t like that Doctrine of Justification by Faith,” says one, “for I am sure that when it is preached, people will begin to think that there is no virtue in good works and that they may live as they like.” I have often heard such a remark as yours, my Friend, but experience is dead against you! Whenever justification by faith has been uppermost in the preaching, the morals of the people have been purest and their spirituality has been brightest! But whenever the preachers have extolled the works and ceremonies of the Law, or the Arminianism which brings in something of trust in works, or human power, it is most certain that there has been a declension in point of morals, while religion itself has seemed almost ready to expire! You may go to those who preach up salvation by works to hear them talk, but you had better not go to see how they live—whereas those who preach justification by faith can boldly point to the multitudes who have accepted this Truth of God and whose godly lives prove the sanctifying power of the Doctrine!

But if you object to this Doctrine, how would you like to have it altered? “Oh, well, I would like to have some good feelings put in with faith.” And how, then, would any man be saved? Can he command his own feelings? Those feelings come naturally enough after faith, but, if they are demanded without faith, how will they ever be presented to God? Besides, feelings would claim some credit if they were thus joined with faith. A man would be able to boast that he had felt his way to Heaven and he would have the same self-congratulatory spirit which we see in those who trust in works and ceremonies—and thus Christ would be robbed of His Glory as the sinner’s Savior. Man would put his dirty hands upon the crown and place it upon his own head—but that must never be the case! You shall be saved if you trust the Savior, but if you do not like that way of salvation, you can never be saved! Why should the plan of salvation be changed for you? Is God to be tied down to act only as you please? Is He to alter His Gospel to suit the fancies of rebellious men? That must not be! There is no mistake about this matter—“He that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.” And our Lord, Himself, said, “He that believes not shall be damned.” That is the only message for him if he continues in his unbelief—and it shall not be altered to suit the mind of any man that lives!

“Oh, but,” some say, “we object to the requirements of the Gospel, especially to that verse where Christ says, ‘You must be born again.’ Where is the need of that? We were christened when we were children! We were confirmed as we grew older! We have taken the sacrament! We do not agree with that hard saying, ‘You must be born again.’” They will not walk with Christ if He insists upon that condition. Moreover, He requires the giving up of all known sin, the hating of all sin—and the objector says, “But may I not retain my one darling sin? May I not keep my pet evil? I will give up all else, but that one I must have.” And when men are told that wherever Christ comes, He makes a radical change—He casts out Satan and all his imps, drives them out by force and takes complete possession of the soul—they bar the door of their heart against the Savior, for they do not want such strong measures as His in their case.

Well, Sirs, as you say that Christ’s requirements are not according to your mind, what would you like them to be? Do you wish to be allowed to continue taking what you call your little drop, which is powerful enough to make you reel across the street? Then there is somebody over yonder who would like to keep his adulteries. And another who would like to keep his petty thefts. And another who would like to keep on with his swearing and another who would like to retain his covetousness so that he could still grind the poor to powder and make money by crushing them! What sin is there, in the whole world, that would be put to death if men were left to pick and choose the Agag which each one wished to save? No! Christ came to save His people from their sins—not in them— and it is essential to salvation that sin should be repented of and, being repented of, should be renounced and that, by the help of God, we should lead a new life, under a new Master, serving from a new motive because the Grace of God has renewed our spirit!

“Should it be according to your mind?” No, certainly not, for, putting all reasons into one, it is not the slightest use for you to make any objection to the Gospel, for you will be lost if you do not accept it just as it is revealed in the Scriptures! Christ will never alter the Gospel one jot or tittle—not the cross of a “t” or the dot of an “i”—to please the biggest man that lives! “Oh, but, really, I am a man of education! Am I to be saved in the same way as the man who does not know A from B?” Precisely! There is no other way of salvation for you. There is not one gate for Doctors of Divinity and another for the poor and ignorant. “But I am a person of good character, a matronly woman. Am I to be saved just in the same way as a Magdalene?” Precisely the same! There is no other Savior for you than the one in whom Mary Magdalene delighted and trusted. “But, Sir, you do not surely mean to say that all these street Arabs are to go to Heaven in the same way as a man who has kept shop and been respectable all his life?” Yes, I do! All must go in exactly the same road. Queens and chimney sweeps must enter Heaven by the same gate, or not enter at all. There is but one name given among men whereby we must be saved! There is no other Savior but Christ Jesus the Lord! He suits every class of persons—big sinners and little ones, if there are any little sinners anywhere—all must come to Christ and at His feet confess their sin, for God’s plan cannot be altered for anyone. My dear Sir, we are not going to have any enlargement, or rather, any mystification, of the plan of salvation to suit your profound mind! There will be no golden handles put to the doors of Heaven to suit you, my lord, with all your wealth and pride! No, no, no! Come to Christ, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and He will give you rest! But there is no other way of obtaining rest of heart and conscience.

I have thus tried to mention a few of the objections which men make to God’s plan of salvation. Now let me ask two or three questions. First, should not God have His way? Is it not intolerable that you and I should raise objections at all when the mercy of God, if it ever comes to us, is a pure gift of charity? God may well say to us, “Shall I not do as I will with My own?” There is no man living who has any absolute right to receive anything from God except destruction. That terrible doom we have all merited, but nothing beyond that. If we were shut up in prison and fed only dry bread, so long as we were out of Hell we would still be under obligation to God. If the Lord should choose to show mercy to only one man in the world, He has a perfect right to do so. If He chooses to give it to a few, or if He chooses to give it to all, He has the right to do so. He is absolutely Sovereign and these are the words that He would have everyone of us hear and heed—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

The crown rights of the King of Kings must never be assailed! For us beggars to turn choosers and to dictate to God what He shall give to us— for us condemned criminals to begin to make bargains with God as to how He shall preserve our lives, if He chooses to do so—oh, this will never do! You know, dear Friends, that when we give even a trifling charity, we like to do it in our own way. I remember that one Christmastime a certain gentleman had given away a quantity of meat to many poor people. He had been so generous that he had given away all he had. The next morning a woman came to him, bringing back the piece of meat which she had received, which was meant for boiling—she said she wanted to have a piece for roasting. There was none left for changing, so she had to take what had been given to her or go without any at all. You are quite sure that the next year, that woman’s name was put down among the first to have a Christmas gift, are you not? On the contrary, the gentleman said, “She will not be troubled next year, either with a boiling piece or a roasting piece from me. I will take good care of that.” I think it was quite natural that he should say so, for our common proverb regards it as ingratitude when we “look a gift horse in the mouth.” When anything comes to us entirely as a gift, it is not for us to quibble at it, but to accept it!

And this is specially true of God’s great gift of salvation. O Lord, if You will but save me, save me Your way! If I may be delivered from this accursed sin of mine and made pure and holy, do it, Lord, after Your own gracious fashion! It is not for me to suggest any plan to You, but to leave myself entirely in Your hands and to let it be according to Your mind.

Further, is not God’s way the best? The mind of God is so Infinitely great, good and wise, that it cannot be supposed that even if He left the plan of salvation to our option, we could choose anything half as good as what He decrees and appoints! Should He, for a single moment, hold His Sovereignty in abeyance and allow us to be kings and princes on our own account, what follies we would perpetrate! We would choose a way of salvation that would not honor God, nor destroy evil, nor even be good for our own selves! Some people would like a Heaven into which they could enter without being born again, but what kind of Heaven would that be? Some would like to have joy and peace without believing in Christ. Some would like to have eternal happiness, but still indulge their lusts. This would be an evil of the most awful kind! It is better that sin should bring to man infinite sorrow than that it should be linked with eternal enjoyment! The mischief of it is that it does get linked with enjoyment for a while by foolish men who forget what must come afterwards—but God has never joined these two things together—it is only wicked men who have pretended to celebrate this unholy marriage! God proclaims a perpetual separation between sin and happiness and it is well that it should be so.

Now, to conclude this first part of our subject, suppose the plan of salvation should be according to any human mind, whose mind is to decide what it shall be? Yours? No, mine! And another says, “No, mine!” Our proverb rightly says, “Many men, many minds,” and if we were to have salvation arranged according to the mind of each one of us, there would be a pretty quarrel before we left this place. You say, Friend, that it is to be according to your mind. But why not according to your neighbor’s mind? If man’s mind were to decide it, what should we have? Why, you would all contradict each other and there would be no plan of salvation at all if God did not settle it once and for all!

Then, besides, should it be according to your mind today? “Yes,” you say, “I have made up my mind.” But you will take your mind to pieces tomorrow—what little there is of it—and then you will put it together again the next day, and say, “I have made up my mind. I am a man of mind, you know.” Ah, yes, we know you, Sir. There is a certain tribe of people about, nowadays, who call themselves “men of culture” and they sneer at everybody who does not go in for that kind of boasting. If they were really men of mind, they would never talk like that, for the man who has the most culture generally has enough to be a little modest and not to brag about what he is. Well, then, if salvation is to be according to man’s mind, whose mind is to decide it, and on what day, and at what hour of the day is the verdict of that man’s mind to be taken? It is vacillating, changing like the moon, never twice in the same mood on the same day—so salvation cannot be according to our mind—for it would be chaos! It would be destruction if that were the case.

II. Now, secondly, here is A WARNING. “He will recompense it, whether you refuse, or whether you choose.”

By this I understand that, whatever our will may be, God will carry out His own purpose. As surely as God is God, He will never be defeated in anything. He who is Omniscient and, therefore, sees the end from the beginning, is also Omnipotent and, therefore, can work His own will exactly as He chooses—He will never be baffled by the will of men. I believe in the free agency of man as much as anyone who lives, but I equally believe in the eternal purpose of God. If you ask, “How do you reconcile those beliefs?” I answer, “They have never yet been at variance, so there is no need to attempt to reconcile them. They are like two parallel lines which will run side by side forever—man responsible because he does what he wills, and God infinitely glorious, achieving His own purposes, not only in the world of dead, inert matter, but also through those who are free agents—without changing them in the least degree, leaving them just as free as they ever were, He yet, in every jot and tittle, performs the eternal purpose of His will.”

I would also remind you that though you quibble at God’s way of salvation, God will punish sin just the same. There is many a man who has said, “I will never believe that God will send men to Hell”—but he has gone there—and then he has changed his mind in a very remarkable and terrible fashion when it is too late! There are many who say, “It should be this, or it should not be that,” but they do not ask, “What says the Scripture?” Yet that is the all-important point, for, whatever you may say as to what it should be or should not be, makes no difference to God! He will take less notice of you and your opinion than you do of a gnat or a fly that buzzes about you on a summer’s evening. He is so infinitely great and good that any opposition you and I may think that we can raise against Him shall be less than nothing and vanity! Shall twigs contend with fire, or wax with the flame? Shall nothing oppose itself to Omnipotence? Shall the creature of a day, that is and is not, attempt to wrestle with the Eternal? No, this cannot be! Therefore, God will have His way and He will punish sin!

And, further, my Friends, though you may object to God’s way of salvation, others will be saved by it. Christ did not die in vain. He will rejoice in everyone whom He purchased with His blood. He will not lose one of the jewels that are to deck His crown forever. You may strive against His Kingdom, but that Kingdom will come when He pleases. The King eternal, immortal, invisible, shall surely reign forever and ever! And if your voice is not heard in the great Hallelujah chorus of Heaven, yet not one of its notes will be missing! Christ shall be glorified to the highest possible degree, whoever may oppose Him. It is well that those who object to God’s plan of salvation should know these facts. That is how Christ treated objectors when He was upon the earth. When they murmured at what He told them, He did not tone down the unpalatable Truth. He did not say to them, “You are robbing me of My honor and glory, and I shall never prosper.” He said, “No man can come to Me unless the Father, which has sent Me, draw him.” On another occasion, He said, “You believe not because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you.” He did not humble Himself to them, but again proclaimed His own Truth in all its majesty and sublimity, that they might bow before Him and His message.

Just once more upon this point, let me say that God will certainly magnify His own name, whoever may oppose Him—“Whether you refuse, or whether you choose,” shall make no difference to Him! His Grace comes like the dew, which tarries not for man, neither waits for the sons of men. Oftentimes, He is found of them that seek Him not and, to those who were not His people, He says, “You are My people,” thus magnifying His own amazing Grace. Whoever may stand out against Him, He shall lack none of His honor and glory, world without end.

III. This brings us to the third part of our subject, on which I desire to say exactly what Elihu said, “and not I.” We cannot be absolutely sure what these three words mean, but, if they mean what I think they do, they teach us a lesson which I have called A PROTEST.

Whenever you find anyone opposing God, say to yourself, “and not I.” When there is any wrong thing being done, and it comes under your notice, say, “and not I.” Take care that you go not with a multitude to do evil! Do not take upon your tongue just what others may be saying, but bear your individual protest against the evil. Even if you stand alone, say, “and not I.”

What Elihu meant, I think, was this. Whoever opposes God should know that he is not dealing with a man like himself. If you hear a preacher make a statement, and you feel, “That is not the Word of the Lord,” pray God to forgive him for his sin in saying it. But if he speaks with the sound of his Master’s feet behind him and what he says is the Word of God, then do not trifle with it. If it is clearly a revealed Truth of God, it may grate against your feelings and set your teeth on edge, but what of that? You had better get your teeth and your feelings put right, for the Truth of God cannot be altered in order to please you! Someone says, “I cannot believe that statement, because it seems too shocking.” That is just why I do believe it, for it does me good by shocking me. And if it is in God’s Word, I am bound to accept it. “Oh,” you say, “but something within me revolts against it.” It is only natural it should do so, for “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked”—and it naturally cries out against the thing that is most surely true. The supreme majesty of God’s Word is that before which we have to bow, and not the insignificant usurpers of our inward feelings, fancies and whims. “Let God be true and every man a liar.”

Elihu also means, I think, “ I will not be responsible for the man who refuses God’s Word. I will not stand in his place, or take the blame which is due him. He shall be recompensed, and not I, for I have spoken the Truth. I will not bear the responsibility of it. If men choose to refuse it, they must take the consequences—to the Lord alone they must stand or fall.”

And, once more, Elihu means, “ If you refuse God’s Word, it is not I. I will not share in your rebellion against Him.” Ah, my dear Hearers, there are some of you who think yourselves very intelligent, wise and thoughtful. And you imagine that you know a great deal more than I do and, therefore, you refuse to receive God’s Word. Well, if you do so, I will not! I am determined about this matter and I say, with Joshua, “As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.” And, mark you, by, “Jehovah,” I mean the old Testament God! I have never seen Him superseded in His own Word, though some men profess that it is so. According to them, the God of the Hebrews was not the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, though Jesus never said so, but quite the reverse! The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob is He whom we worship this day—and His Character, as it is written out in full in the Old and New Testament—is that which we admire and delight in!

Others may have new gods, newly come up, which our fathers knew not, but not I. He who made the heavens and the earth. He who led forth His people out of Egypt and divided the sea, even the Red Sea. He whose mercy endures forever. The God who shines forth all along as the God of a covenanted people to whom He did reveal Himself, “this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death.” Learned men may dispute as much as they like about Him, but we bow humbly at His feet. We question nothing that He does! We believe it to be right even when we do not understand it and it is our hope that others will do the same. But if they will not, it will not affect our own decision.

IV. Our last head is, A CHALLENGE AND AN INVITATION. If there are any who refuse the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for any reason known only to themselves, we venture to ask them to say what it is—“Therefore speak what you know.” It was not in Elihu’s mind to tell Job to be silent and never open his mouth again. Speech is the glory of man, and freedom of speech, as far as concerns his fellow creatures, is the right of every man! It is far better that when there is a difficulty or an objection, it should be fairly stated, than that it should lie smothered up within the soul to breed untold mischief. Therefore, if you have an objection to God’s Word, write it out and look at it. Or, if you care not to do that, state it, if not to your friend—if you prefer privacy—state it to yourself! Only bring it out and let it be known! But, at the same time, when you are speaking, “speak what you know.”  
Now, what do you really know of God? Little enough do the most of us know, but, still, I think we know enough to know that He is not the god of modern times whom some preach. One single night of frost will destroy millions upon millions of creatures that were happy and enjoyed life— and this is done by that God of whom we are often assured that He cannot possibly punish sin, or put men to pain. But He does it. Hear the cry of the poor seamen, when the storm tosses the great boat and drives it on the rocks. See how, everywhere, the Lord is a great God and terrible. Even though He condescends to be a Father to those of us who trust in Jesus Christ, His Son, and is gentle as a nurse to us, yet is He the God of thunder and of fire, the great and almighty God, the King who will not be questioned by His subjects and who will not alter His arrangements to please their fancies!  
It is well for us to speak of God as we have found Him. He has dealt kindly and graciously with us—“He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities”—else had we been cast away forever. We long that others may be able to speak of God in the same way—not saying what they would have Him to be, but what He has revealed Himself to be in nature, in Providence and especially in Grace. Let us all come humbly to His feet! He bids us look to His dear Son and so find peace and salvation. If we will not do so, there is nothing for us but to be driven from His Presence and from the glory of His power, world without end.  
Will we dare to defy Him? Have we the impiety to do so? O God, humble us! Beneath the terror of Your majesty, the glory of Your righteousness and the supreme splendor of Your love, bow us down to accept Your Grace and to become Yours forever and ever! God grant that it may be so, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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CONCEIT REBUKED  
NO. 2834

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JUNE 17, 1903.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 5, 1877.

**“Should it be according to your mind?”  
Job 34:33.**

ELIHU thought that Job had spoken too boastfully and that there was too much of self about him and, therefore, he reproved him by asking this question, “Should it be according to your mind?” It is a question which, in the original, has a great wealth of meaning in it and, as the language of the Book of Job is extremely ancient and very terse, it is not easy to get the fullness of Elihu’s meaning. But it has been said that upon the whole, our translation not only gives the meaning of his enquiry, but also more of the meaning than can be conveyed in any other words, so that we may be perfectly satisfied with it and may pray God the Holy Spirit to apply it to us. And if we have grown to be high and mighty, and have begun to criticize the way of God in dealing with us, this question may come to us very sharply, “‘Should it be according to your mind?’ Should everything be arranged just to suit your whims and wishes? Should everything in the world be fashioned according to your taste and the whole globe revolve just to serve you and please your fancy? Should it be according to your mind?’”

There are four things I am going to say concerning our text. First I shall ask, Are there really any people in the world who think that everything should be according to their mind? Then, secondly, I shall enquire, what leads them to that notion? Thirdly, I shall try to show you what a mercy it is that they cannot have everything according to their mind. And then, fourthly, I shall urge you to keep this evil spirit in check, so that, henceforth, you will not wish that things should be according to your mind.

I. Our first question has a measure of astonishment about it. ARE THERE REALLY ANY PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WHO WOULD HAVE EVERYTHING ACCORDING TO THEIR MIND? Oh, yes, there are such people! I should not wonder if there are some of them here right now. In fact, I question whether we have not, all of us, at times, drunk very deeply into this naughty, haughty spirit. If we have done so, may we be speedily delivered from it!

First, there are some people who would have God, Himself, according to their mind. Now, as a matter of fact, all that I can know of God I must learn from God revealing Himself to me. I cannot discover Him by myself—He must unveil Himself to me—and that He has done in Holy Scripture. All that He intends us to know about Himself, He has revealed in the written Word and in the Incarnate Word, His ever-blessed Son. But there are some people who get their idea of God out of themselves. You may have heard of the German philosopher who evolved the idea of a camel out of his own consciousness—at least, so he said. I do not think it was much like a camel when he had evolved it, but there are many persons who try to evolve the idea of God out of their own consciousness. It cannot be, they say, that certain statements in the Bible are true because there is something or other, in their inner consciousness, that contradicts the Scriptural declarations. God, as they believe in Him, is what they think He ought to be, not what He really is. And there are some, in these days, who have even gone so far as to reject the Old Testament altogether because its teaching concerning God does not meet the approval of their very marvelous minds.

Practically, these people are idolaters, for an idolater is one who makes a god unto himself. The true worshipper of God—the accepted worshipper—is one who worships God as He is and as He reveals Himself in His Word. But there are many persons who make a god out of their own thoughts. The teachers of the modern school of theology work in a kind of god-factory. The people in some heathen lands make their gods out of mud, but these men make their gods out of their own thought, their imagination, their “intellect.” That is what they call it, though I am not sure that it is that organ which is at work in this instance. But when a man makes a god of thought, he is just as much an idolater as if he had made a god of wood or of gold. The true God—the God of Scripture thus revealed Himself to His ancient people, “I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” This God is our God, “the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” “the God of the whole earth He shall be called.” Many a man refuses to accept this God as his, but I would like to ask him, “Should God be according to your mind?” That would be a strange god, indeed! Should He have no other attributes but such as you would give to Him? Should His Character and conduct be only such as you can comprehend and justify? Must there be nothing in Him that shall puzzle you? Are there to be no Divine deeps that shall be beyond the reach of your finite mind? Are there to be no heights beyond your power to soar?

That is what seems to be your notion and if there is anything that staggers you a little, you say, “I cannot believe it.” If it were possible, you would eliminate from the Character of God everything that is stern and terrible—though these attributes clearly appertain to the Most High as He has been pleased to reveal Himself in Scripture. I beg you, dear Friends, never to attempt to mold the Character of God with the fingers of your own fancy! Worship Him just as He is, though you cannot comprehend Him. Believe in Him as He reveals Himself and never imagine that you could, by making any change in Him, effect an improvement in Him. By toning down His justice, you think that you are increasing His love and, by denying His righteous vengeance, you imagine that you are honoring His goodness. But, instead of doing so by the removal of these things which alarm and annoy you—if you could do so—you would take away part of God’s grandeur and strength which make His goodness and His mercy to shine as brightly as they now do!

Leave God just as He is, remembering how He has said, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” The Infinite God must be past finding out by the creatures whom He has made. I confess that it is one of my greatest joys to find myself completely baffled when I am trying to comprehend the Character of God. Sometimes, when I have tried to preach upon the Deity of Christ, I have been fairly staggered under the burden of that stupendous Truth and I have felt the utter uselessness and poverty of human language to describe our great and terrible, yet loving Lord! And I have been glad to have it so, for, verily, God is altogether above our comprehension and none of us can speak of Him as He deserves to be spoken of! But never let us try in any way to diminish His glorious perfections.

A more common way of offending God and setting up our self-will, is by quarreling with His Providential dealings. If anyone here is doing so, let me ask, “Should it be according to your mind?” You look, sometimes, upon the arrangements of Providence on a great scale in reference to the nations of the earth. You see them at war with one another and you note how slow the progress of civil and religious liberty are and how few there are to rally in defense of right principles. Sometimes you get greatly distressed about the general state of affairs and you wish you could alter it—but the Lord looks down from His eternal Throne and He seems to say to you, “Should it be according to your mind?” The world was wisely ordered by God before we were born and it will be equally well ordered by Him after we are dead!

When Alexander Peden, the Covenanter, was dying, he sent for one of his brethren, a fellow-minister of the Word, James Renwick, and he bade him stand out in the room and turn his back to his departing friend. When he had done so, Peden said to him, “I have looked at you and I perceive that you are only a little man and you have but feeble shoulders and weak legs.” “Yes,” replied Renwick, “that is true, but why have you made that observation?” “Because,” said Peden, “I perceive that you cannot, after all, carry the whole world upon your back—you are not made for any such work as that.” And I may say of all of us who are here that we were not made to carry the world on our backs. Yet some of us attempt to play the part of Atlas and not only try to carry the world, but seek to set the Church right as well! We fancy that we can do that, poor worms that we are, but the Lord knows that we can do nothing of the kind. “He remembers that we are dust,” though we are apt to forget it ourselves!

Well, Beloved, after all, “should it be according to your mind?” Will you, like Jonah, sit pining, mourning and complaining? Does not the Eternal Ruler understand the politics of nations and the best way of governing the world infinitely better than you do? Do not attempt to drive the horses of the sun—your puny hands are unfit for so tremendous a task as that. Leave all things with God! As long as they are ordered by Him, they are well ordered!

Probably, however, it is with the minor Providence that we more often quarrel when we are in an ill state of heart. You think that you would like to be rich, yet you are poor. “Should it be according to your mind?” You would have liked to be healthy and strong, but you are weak and sickly, or you have a suffering limb that troubles you and you sometimes think, “Mine is a very hard loss. I wish it could be changed.” “Should it be according to your mind?” Should the fashioning of yourself and your circumstances have been left to you? What do you think? Possibly you have recently sustained a great loss in business and you cannot quite get over it. “Should it be according to your mind?” Should Providential circumstances have been arranged otherwise so as to suit you? Should God have stopped the great machinery of the universe and put it out of gear in order to prevent you from losing a few pounds? “Should it be according to your mind?”

Perhaps it is worse than that—a dear child has been taken away just when he had become most closely entwined around your heart. You would gladly have kept him with you, but was it right that he should go, or right that he should stay? Come now, there is a difference of opinion between you and God—who is in the right? Should it be according to His mind, or according to your mind? “Ah,” says someone else, “it is the mainstay of the home who has been taken away from us—the husband— the father of the family.” Well, though it is so, again I ask concerning this bereavement, or any other trial that comes to you, “Should it be according to your mind?” It should be sufficient for you to know that the Lord has permitted it or actually performed it.

Should it be according to your mind, or according to His mind? It is not easy, I know, to submit without murmuring to all that happens to us. I am probably touching very tender places in many who, at divers times and seasons, have really felt that God, in His Providential dealings with them, had been unkind to them, or that, at least, He had been showing His kindness in a very strange way.

There are some who carry this difference between them and God into another sphere, for they do not approve of the Gospel as it is taught in the Bible. You know that the Gospel, as revealed in the New Testament, is so simple that a child can understand it. And you may go and teach it to the poorest and the most illiterate and many of them will leap at it, and grasp it at once! But there are others who think that it should be something which is much more difficult to understand, something which would need a higher order of intellect than the common people possess. Do you really think so, my dear Sir? “Should it be according to your mind?” Would you shut out the poor and the needy and the illiterate from the privileges of the Gospel—and keep them to yourself and to a few others who have been highly educated? Surely not! O Brothers and Sisters, if it were possible for us to preach a Gospel that we had made obscure, or which could only be comprehended by the elite of society, we would soon have cause to sadly deplore before God that we had lost that simple, blessed, plain way of instruction which the wayfaring man, though a fool, can understand, and in which he need not err!

Many try to bring down the Doctrines of Grace. They would get rid of Election if they could. Anything like the specialty of the Atonement of Christ they cannot bear! The sweet and blessed Doctrine of Effectual Calling they abhor and they would gladly make a Gospel of their own. But should they want to do so? Is it not your duty and mine, Brother, rather to try to find out what the Gospel really is than to seek to make it what we consider it ought to be? “Should it be according to your mind?” We have known some people take a text of Scripture and, because it did not square with the system in which they were brought up, they tried to cut it down to make it fit in with their notion! But, Sirs, is not the Gospel grander than any of our comprehension of it? Are there not in it great Truths of God that cannot be cut down to fit any system that the human mind can make? And ought we not to be thoroughly glad that it is so? For, surely, it is better that the Gospel should be according to God’s mind than that it should be according to the mind of Toplady, or the mind of Wesley, or the mind of Calvin, or the mind of Arminius! The mind of God is greater than all the minds of men, so let all men leave the Gospel just as God has delivered it unto us.

Sometimes this difference comes up concerning the Church of Christ. Some people do not like God’s order of Church membership and Church government—they would like to see the world welcomed inside the Church. They do not approve of the ordinances as they were instituted and observed by our Lord Jesus Christ. Believers’ Baptism is peculiarly objectionable to them. Sometimes they disapprove of God’s ministers— they pick holes in the most useful of them. This man ought to be so-andso, and that other man ought to be something else. I can only ask again, with regard to the whole matter, “Should it be according to your mind?” Are you to make the ministers and to teach them what they are to preach? Are they your servants or God’s servants, and are they to deliver their message in your way or in God’s way? Let the question be honestly considered and then, perhaps, much of the murmuring that is sometimes heard, and much of the discord that often arises among professing Christians would be cleared away. For, surely, these things should not be according to our mind, but we should let God appoint, equip and send forth His own servants just as He pleases—not as we please. Christ must decide everything concerning His own Church! He must be free to choose whom He likes to be members of it and to fashion His Church after His own model.

II. Now, secondly, we are to enquire—WHAT LEADS PEOPLE TO THINK THAT EVERYTHING SHOULD BE ACCORDING TO THEIR MIND?  
My answer is, first, that there is a great deal of self-importance in such a notion. There are some people who seem to fancy that they are the center of the whole universe. The times are always bad if they do not prosper. If the earth does not so revolve as to bring grist to their mill, then the times must be out of joint. But who are you, dear Friend, that you should suppose that for you, the sun rises and sets? That for you seasons change and that God is to have respect to you and to nobody else? “Should it be according to your mind?” Then, if so, why not according to my mind, also? And why not according to the mind of another Brother? And why not according to the mind of yet another? But no, it is according to your mind that you would have it! Ah, does not this show what overweening importance we attach to ourselves? We are mere ants, creeping insects upon the bay-leaf of existence—here today and gone tomorrow—yet we suppose that all things are to be ordered for our special benefit and we quarrel with God if we suffer even a little inconvenience!  
This notion also arises from self-conceit. We really seem to fancy that we could arrange things much better than they now are—we would not dare to plainly say so, much less would we be willing to put it in writing, but we talk and feel as if it were really so. If only we had had the ordering of things, we are quite sure that they would not have happened as they have done! But then, depend upon it, they would have happened wrongly if they had been other than they have been! “Should it be according to your mind?” No! Unless you are self-conceited enough to put your folly in comparison with the wisdom of God, you know that it should not be according to your mind!  
Then there is the spirit of murmuring that so easily comes upon us. We have known some who really became slaves to that evil spirit. They complained of everything, nothing was right in their eyes. It was not possible, it seemed, even for God, Himself, to please them. “Should it be according to your mind?” How would it be possible to please one who is so changeable, so whimsical, so fanciful as you are? Poor simpleton, surely you cannot think that such a thing should be.  
But, oftentimes, this quarrel arises from lack of faith in God. If we did but believe in Him, we would see that all things are ordered well. If we did but trust in God as a loving child trusts in its father, we would feel safe enough at all times and we would not want to have anything different from what it is. Have you ever heard of the woman who was in a great storm at sea and terribly frightened? She saw her husband, who was the captain of the ship, perfectly composed even while the vessel was tossed about by the mighty billows—but he could not calm her troubled heart. So he drew a sword from its scabbard and held it close to her breast. As he did so, he said to her, “Do you not tremble, my wife?” “No,” she replied, “I am not in the least afraid.” “But this sword is close to you.” “I am not afraid of that,” she said, “because it is in my husband’s hand. “Well,” he said, “is it not even so with this storm? Is it not in the hands of God? And if it is in His hands, why should we be alarmed?” So, if we have true faith in God, we shall accept whatever God sends us, and we shall not want to have things arranged according to our mind, but we shall quite agree with what His mind ordains.  
So would it be, too, if you had more love to God, for love always agrees with that which its object delights in. So, dear Friends, when we come to love God with a perfect heart, we are glad for God to have His way with us. If He wills that we should be sick, we would not wish to be otherwise. If He wills that we should be poor, we are willing to be poor—and if He wills that we should pass through a sea of trial, we would not wish to have a drop less than His blessed will appoints.  
III. But now, thirdly, WHAT A MERCY IT IS THAT THINGS ARE NOT ACCORDING TO OUR MIND! If they were, I wonder what sort of world we would live in?  
If things were according to our mind, God’s Glory would be obscured. He knows what will best glorify Him and He has been pleased to so arrange His Providential dealings with men that all shall glorify Him to the highest possible degree. And, Beloved, if we were to alter anything of this—if we could altar anything, it is evident that the Glory of God would not be so well promoted. So, “should it be according to your mind” that God would lose a measure of the Glory that is due unto His name? God forbid!  
If it were according to our mind, others would often have to suffer. At any rate, if things were arranged according to the mind of some people, they would grind the poor in the dust and utterly crush them. If things were settled according to the mind of man, we would often be in a terrible plight. Did not David say to God, “Let us fall now into the hands of the Lord, for His mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hands of man”? When God is most grieved with His people, He never deals with them in so harsh a manner as the ungodly would deal with them if they had them in their power. Let us trust in the Lord, my Brothers and Sisters, and thank Him that He does not allow things to be according to the mind of man, for it would be terrible, indeed, for us, then!  
Here is another reflection. If things were according to our mind, we would have an awful responsibility resting upon us because we would feel that if anything went amiss, we would be the cause of it. If we had the choosing of our circumstances and the details of all that happened to us, we would straightway feel that we would be called to account for everything by our fellow men and by our own conscience. But now that it is according to the mind of God, you have no responsibility concerning it. If it is according to His will, it must be that which is right and that which is best! So let us bless His name that all things are left at His disposal.  
If things were according to our mind, I am afraid our temptations would soon be greatly increased, for many who are poor would speedily become rich—and they do not know what the temptation of riches might be, nor the Grace they would need to resist it. And some, who are now sick and are praising God upon their sickbeds—if they were well, might find much of their spirituality departing and they might be thrown into a thousand troubles which they now escape in the quiet of their own room. Some of you are in a condition of life where you may not have many comforts, but, on the other hand, you are not subject to those trials which come to us who are prominent in public life. You can be sure you are in your right place if God put you there. “Should it be according to your mind?” If so, you would have more temptations and less Grace—more of the world, but less of your Lord. So thank Him that it is not according to your mind.  
If it were according to our mind, we would seldom know our own mind. If a man could manage everything as he liked, he would not long like his own management. Unrenewed men, especially, are never satisfied. The way for a man to be happy is not to have his own will, but to sink his will in the will of God. Look at Solomon when he had his own way. As one time he gave all his thoughts to grand buildings—and when he had built his palaces he got quite tired, so he took to making gardens, aqueducts and fountains of water. When he had made them, he did not get much satisfaction out of them, so he got instruments of music and singing men and singing women, but he was soon tired of them. Then he took to study, but he said, “Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.” He had whatever he chose to have, yet it was all vanity and vexation of spirit to him! And he never had what filled his soul till he came to rest alone in his God, which, we trust, he did in his old age.  
I do not know a more horrible endowment that a man could have than for God to say to him, “Everything shall be as you like to have it.” He would probably be the most miserable and most dissatisfied person under Heaven! “Should it be according to your mind?” Ah, then sin would go uncorrected in you, for you would never have a mind to use the rod! Then your dross would remain, for you would never have a mind to be put into the furnace! Should all things go with you according to your own will, then your flesh would get the mastery over you and be pampered and indulged—you would be settled on your less, not emptied from vessel to vessel—and you would bring upon yourself unutterable woe! O Beloved, for this reason, also, it is a thousand mercies that things are not arranged according to the mind of even the best saint out of Heaven except when his mind is brought into full subjection to the will of God!  
“Should it be according to your mind?” Then there would be universal strife. If this were the case, think what a terrible condition the Church of God and the world, too, would soon be brought into, because, as I have already hinted, if it were according to your mind, why should it not be according to my mind, or according to the mind of every other person? Then what chaos, what confusion there would be! How would the world be managed if you, I, and 50 others, each one with a different mind from all the rest, must have it according to our minds? It would mean that the King of Heaven must resign His Throne and give place to universal anarchy! It could not be—it would be impossible that such an arrangement should continue for an hour! We would have to go, in tears, before the Lord and cry to Him, “O Lord, come back and reign over us, for we cannot get on without You! Everything is going to destruction for need of an Almighty Will to manage it.” Should it be according to your mind? “No, Lord never let it be so except when you have made my mind to be filled with Your mind and then it shall be well.” “I always have my way,” said a holy man. “How is that?” asked one who heard him. And the good man replied, “Because God’s way is my way.” “I always have my will,” said another, and he gave a similar explanation, “because it is my will that God should have His will.” When God’s will gets to be your will, then it may be according to your mind—but not till then—thank God, not till then!  
IV. So now, in the last place, dear Friends, I am going to say to you, let us try, by the help of God’s Holy Spirit, to CHECK THAT SPIRIT WHICH LEADS MEN TO THINK THAT ALL THINGS SHOULD BE ACCORDING TO THEIR MIND.  
First, because it is impracticable. As I have already shown you, it is quite impossible that all things should be according to the mind of men so long as their mind is in its natural carnal state.  
Again, it is unreasonable that it should be so. In a well-ordered house, whose will ought to be supreme? Should it not be the father’s? Do you expect everything in your home to be ordered according to the will of your little boy? No, you know that you take a comprehensive view of all who are in the house and all their concerns—and you are better able to judge than he is, what is right. It would be very unreasonable for your child to say, “Everything is to be managed according to my will.” If he were to talk like that, you would soon teach him better, I guarantee you—and it is unreasonable to imagine that the Lord should make your will to be the rule of His dispensations. Do not cultivate a spirit which you cannot justify by any sensible and reasonable arguments.  
In the next place, it is un-Christlike. “Should it be according to your mind?” Why, if ever there was a Son of the great Father, according to whose mind things should be, it was our blessed Lord Jesus Christ! Yet what did He say? “Not as I will, but as You will.” And as Jesus said, “Not as I will,” is there one among us who shall dare to say, “Let it be as I will?” “Will you not join your Elder Brother in that sweet resignation of all desire to be the ruler in order that the great Father, who fills all things, may have His way? If you wish to have all things according to your mind, you are not like Christ—for in all things He did the Father’s will and suffered the Father’s will, too, and rejoiced in it. Let us pray the Holy Spirit to help us to do the same!  
Once more, if we desire to have our own mind, it is atheistic, for a god without a controlling mind is no god. And a god whose will was not carried out would be no god. If you were to have your way in all things, you would be taking the place of God—do you not tremble at the very thought of it? His Throne ill becomes you. Would you—  
*“Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod, Rejudge His judgments, be the God of God”?*If you are truly converted, you shudder at the bare mention of such a thing as that! Yet, dear Sister, was not that the spirit in which you came into this House? Did you not feel, “The Lord has dealt very harshly with me. I can scarcely be reconciled to Him”? Oh, drop that rebellious spirit! You are but a poor, helpless creature, and He is God Over All! Let His supreme will sweetly rule your heart at this hour—and labor to get rid of that waywardness and that revolting from the Most High!  
I knew one who was in mourning many, many years for a child. And a good Quaker said to her, “Friend, have you not forgiven God yet?” There are some to whom we might put the same question. And we have heard of some who professed to be Christians, who, when they met with a very terrible reverse, said they could never understand it— really meaning that they could never acquiesce in the Divine Will about that loss. It must not be so with us. Whenever a child falls out with his father, the best thing he can do is to fall in again, for a sullen child who is angry with his father, will have to come round if he has a wise father. The father will say to him, “My dear Boy, there is one of us who must change before we can be perfectly agreed. And I cannot, for I know I am in the right. It is you who must change and come round to my way of thinking.” And if you have fallen out with God by willfulness and stubbornness, He cannot come round to you, but you will have to come back to Him. So yield to Him at once! Bow down before Him, your own Father in Heaven, who infinitely loves you! Do you mean to say that you will keep up the quarrel with Him? You began the dispute and you know that you are in the wrong and He is right, so say, “It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him.” Or if you cannot say as much as that, at least do what Aaron did in his great bereavement, “Aaron held his peace,” or what David did when he said, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because You did it.” Oh, for that blessed silence which springs from acquiescence to the Divine Will!  
I should like you to go further than that, however, and even to praise and bless the Lord for poverty, pain and bereavement. In Heaven, among the sweetest notes of your song will be those you sing over your trials here below. There was one who lost his eyesight, but he always praised God for that, for he said that he never saw till he was blind. I have heard of another who had lost a leg, and he said that he never stood on the Rock of Ages till he had that leg amputated. We, who are branches of the true vine, will have more of Christ’s sharp pruning-knife than of anything else, but let us praise and bless God for it and henceforth labor, by the Spirit’s Power, to chase out of our soul the idea that things should be according to our mind. Get away to your room and confess your willfulness and pride, dear Brother, if you have fallen into that sad state. Ask the Lord to make your soul even as a weaned child—  
*“Pleased with all the Lord provides  
Weaned from all the world besides.”*  
I know that I have been speaking to some who do not love the Lord. I wonder what it is that keeps them where they now are—out of Christ? You want something to be changed, you say. Well, ask the Lord to change you, for that is the alteration that is needed. The plan of salvation does not quite suit you. Well, there will never be another. Does not Jesus Christ please you? God will never lay another foundation for a sinner to build his hopes upon, so you had better be pleased with God’s way and build upon Christ Jesus, the sure Foundation Stone. We tell people, sometimes, that they had better not fall out with their living and I can tell you, Soul, that you had better not fall out with your salvation! God’s way of saving you is the best conceivable way—and it is also the only way.  
He says that whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. May the Eternal Spirit bring you to believe in the Lord Jesus now—and if you do so believe you shall be saved at once! But do not think that the plan of salvation will be altered to please you. It will not be made according to your mind. There is the Gospel—take it or leave it, but change it you cannot! May the Lord grant that you may accept it and rejoice in it for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **GALATIANS 6:6-18.**

Verses 6, 7. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teaches in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. Paul puts that in connection with the support of those who are teachers of the Truth. And I have sometimes thought that in certain Churches where God’s ministers have starved, it was not very surprising that the people should starve, too. They thought so little about the pastor that they left him in need, so it was not strange that, as they sowed little, they reaped little. One of these misers said that his religion did not cost him more than a shilling a year—and somebody replied that he thought it was a shilling wasted on a bad thing, for his poor religion was not worth even that small amount!

8. For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. He shall reap what flesh turns to in due time—“he shall of the flesh reap corruption.” What is the end of flesh? The fairest flesh that ever was molded from the most beauteous form ends in corruption! And if we live for the flesh, and sow to it, we shall reap “corruption.”

8. But he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. He shall reap what the Spirit really is and what the Spirit really generates—“life everlasting.” Of course if a man sows tares, he reaps tares. If he sows wheat, he reaps wheat. If we sow to the flesh, we reap corruption. If we sow to the Spirit, we shall “reap life everlasting.”

9. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. It is a pity to faint just when the time is coming to reap, so, sow on, Brothers and Sisters, sow on!

10. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. Extend your love, your charity to all mankind. But let the center of that circle be in the home where God has placed you—in the home of His people—“especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

11. You see how large a letter I have written unto you with my own hand. I suppose that he meant, “See what big letters I have made. My eyes are weak, and so, when I do write a letter,” says Paul, “in the dimness of this dungeon, with my poor weak eyes and my hands chained, I have to write text-hand and give it to you in large letters. Well,” he says, “then carry it out in big letters. You see with what large letters I have written to you, now emphasize it all, take it as emphatic and carry it out with great diligence. As I have written this with my own hand and not used a secretary, I beseech you to pay the more attention to it, you Galatians who seem to be so bewitched that to deliver you from false doctrine and an evil spirit, I would even write a letter with my own blood if it were necessary.”

12, 13. As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the Law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. “See,” they say, “these Gentiles. We have converted them and we have got them circumcised. Is not that a wonderful thing?” No, not at all, for he says—

14. But God foretold that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. “I have ceased to care,” says Paul, “about glorying in men and making other people glory in my converts. The world is dead to me, and I to it.”

15-17. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. I have the marks of the whips upon my body. I am the branded slave of Jesus Christ. There is no getting the marks out of me. I cannot run away. I cannot deny that He is my Master and my Owner! “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

18. Brethren, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. And that is our benediction to you. The Lord fulfill it to each one of you!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2558 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 35.10

SONGS IN THE NIGHT  
NO. 2558

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1898. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK. “But none says, Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?” Job 35:10.

ELIHU was a wise man, exceedingly wise, though not as wise as the All-Wise Jehovah, who sees light in the clouds and finds order in confusion. Hence Elihu, being much puzzled at beholding Job so afflicted, cast about him to find the cause of it and he very wisely hit upon one of the most likely reasons, although it did not happen to be the right one in Job’s case. He said within himself, “Surely, if men are sorely tried and troubled, it is because while they think about their troubles and distress themselves about their fears, they do not say, ‘Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?’” Elihu’s reason is right in the majority of cases. The great cause of a Christian’s distress, the reason of the depths of sorrow into which many Believers are plunged is simply this—that while they are looking about, on the right hand and on the left, to see how they may escape their troubles, they forget to look to the hills from where all real help comes—they do not say, “Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?”

We shall, however, leave that enquiry and dwell upon those sweet words, “God my Maker, who gives songs in the night.” The world has its night. It seems necessary that it should have one. The sun shines by day and men go forth to their labors. But they grow weary and nightfall comes on, like a sweet gift from Heaven. The darkness draws the curtains and shuts out the light which might prevent our eyes from slumber. The sweet, calm stillness of the night permits us to rest upon the bed of ease and forget, awhile, our cares, until the morning sun appears and an angel puts his hand upon the curtain, opens it once again, touches our eyelids, and bids us rise and proceed to the labors of the day. Night is one of the greatest blessings men enjoy—we have many reasons to thank God for it. Yet night is to many a gloomy season. There is “the pestilence that walks in darkness.” There is “the terror by night.” There is the dread of robbers and of fell disease with all those fears that the timorous know when they have no light wherewith they can discern different objects. It is then they fancy that spiritual creatures walk the earth, though, if they knew rightly, they would find it to be true that—

*“Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep,”*  
and that at all times they are round about us, not more by night than by day.

Night is the season of terror and alarm to most men, yet even night has its songs. Have you ever stood by the seaside at night and heard the pebbles sing, and the waves chant God’s praises? Or have you ever risen from your bed and thrown up the window of your chamber and listened? Listened to what? Silence—save now and then a murmuring sound which seems sweet music. And have you not fancied that you have heard the harps of gold playing in Heaven? Did you not conceive that yon stars—those eyes of God looking down on you—were also mouths of song and that every star was singing God’s glory, singing as it shone its mighty Maker’s well-deserved praise? Night has its songs! We need not much poetry in our spirit to catch the song of night and hear the spheres as they chant praises which are loud to the heart, though they are silent to the ear—the praises of the mighty God who bears up the unpillared arch of Heaven and moves the stars in their courses.

Man, too, like the great world in which he lives, must have his night. For it is true that man is like the world around him—he is himself a little world—he resembles the world in almost everything and if the world has its night, so has man. And many a night do we have—nights of sorrow, nights of persecution, nights of doubt, nights of bewilderment, nights of affliction, nights of anxiety, nights of ignorance, nights of all kinds which press upon our spirits and terrify our souls! But blessed be God, the Christian can say, “My God gives me songs in the night.”

It is not necessary, I take it, to prove to you that Christians have nights, for if you are Christians, you will find that you have them and you will not need any proof, for nights will come quite often enough. I will, therefore, proceed at once to the subject and notice, with regard to songs in the night, first, their source—God gives them. Secondly, their matter—what do we sing about in the night? Thirdly, their excellence— they are hearty songs and they are sweet ones. And fourthly, their uses— their benefits to ourselves and others.

I. First, songs in the night—WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF THEM? “God,” says the text. Our “Maker, who gives songs in the night.”  
Any man can sing in the day. When the cup is full, man draws inspiration from it. When wealth rolls in abundance around him, any man can sing to the praise of a God who gives a plenteous harvest, or sends home a loaded argosy. It is easy enough for an Aeolian harp to whisper music when the winds blow—the difficulty is for music to come when no wind blows. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight, but he is the skillful singer who can sing when there is not a ray of light by which to read. He sings from his heart and not from a book that he can see, because he has no means of reading, save from that inward book of his own living spirit from where notes of gratitude pour forth in songs of praise. No man can make a song in the night, himself. He may attempt it, but he will find how difficult it is. It is not natural to sing in trouble. “Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name,” is a daylight song. But it was a Divine song which Habakkuk sang when, in the night, he said, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom,” and so on, “yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” I think on the banks of the Red Sea, any man could have made a song like that of Moses, “The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.” The difficulty would have been to compose a song before the Red Sea had been divided, and to sing it before Pharaoh’s hosts had been drowned, while yet the darkness of doubt and fear was resting on Israel’s hosts! Songs in the night come only from God—they are not in the power of man!  
But what does the text mean when it asserts that God gives songs in the night? We think we find two answers to the question. The first is that usually in the night of a Christian’s experience, God is his only song. If it is daylight in my heart, I can sing songs touching my gifts, songs touching my sweet experiences, songs touching my duties, songs touching my labors. But let the night come, my gifts appear to have withered. My evidences, though they are there, are hidden. Now I have nothing left to sing of but my God. It is strange that when God gives His children mercies, they generally set their hearts more on the mercies than on the Giver of them! But when the night comes and He sweeps all the mercies away, then at once they each say, “Now, my God, I have nothing to sing of but You! I must come to You and to You, only. I had cisterns once—they were full of water and I drank from them—but now the created streams are dry. Sweet Lord, I desire no stream but Yourself, I drink from no fountain but from You.” Yes, child of God, you know what I say, or, if you do not yet understand it, you will do so, by-and-by! It is in the night we sing of God and of God alone. Every string is tuned and every power has its tribute of song while we praise God and nothing else! We can sacrifice to ourselves in daylight—we only sacrifice to God by night. We can sing high praises to ourselves when all is joyful, but we cannot sing praise to any but our God when circumstances are untoward and Providences appear adverse. God alone can furnish us with songs in the night.  
And yet again, not only does God give the song in the night because He is the only subject upon which we can sing, then, but because He is the only One who inspires songs in the night. Bring me a poor, melancholy, distressed child of God. I seek to tell him precious promises and whisper to him sweet words of comfort. He listens not to me—he is like the deaf adder, he heeds not the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely. Send him round to all the comforting divines and all the holy Barnabases who ever preached and they will do very little with him—they will not be able to squeeze a song out of him, do what they may! He is drinking gall and wormwood! He says, “O Lord, I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping.” And comfort him as you may, it will be only a faint note or two of mournful resignation that you will get from him—you will evoke no Psalms of praise, no hallelujahs, no joyful sonnets.  
But let God come to His child in the night, let Him whisper in his ear as he lies on his bed, and now you can see his eyes glisten in the night season. Do you not hear him say—

*“‘Tis Paradise, if You are here!*

*If You depart, ‘tis Hell”?*  
I could not have cheered him—it is God that has done it—for God “gives songs in the night.” It is marvelous, Brothers and Sisters, how one sweet Word of God will make many songs for Christians. One Word of God is like a piece of gold—the Christian is the gold-beater and he can hammer that promise out for whole weeks! I can say, myself, I have lived on one promise for weeks and needed no other. I had just simply to hammer the promise out into gold leaf and plate my whole existence with joy from it! The Christian gets his songs from God. God gives him inspiration and teaches him how to sing! “God my Maker, who gives songs in the night.”

So, then, poor Christian, you need not go pumping up your poor heart to make it glad! Go to your Maker and ask Him to give you a song in the night, for you are a poor dry well. You have heard it said that when a pump is dry, you must pour water down it, first of all, and then you will get some up. So, Christian, when you are dry, go to your God! Ask Him to pour some joy down you and then you will get more joy up from your own heart. Do not go to this comforter or that, for you will find them, after all, “Job’s comforters.” Go first and foremost to your Maker, for He is the great Composer of songs and Teacher of music—He it is who can teach you how to sing!

II. Thus we have dwelt upon the first point. Now let us turn to the second. WHAT IS GENERALLY THE MATTER CONTAINED IN A SONG IN THE NIGHT? What do we sing about?

Why, I think, when we sing by night, there are three things we sing about. Either we sing about the day that is over, or about the night, itself, or else about the morrow that is to come. Those are all sweet themes when God our Maker gives us songs in the night. In the midst of the night, the most usual method is for Christians to sing about the day that is over. The man says, “It is night now, but I can remember when it was daylight. Neither moon nor stars appear at present, but I remember when I saw the sun. I have no evidences just now, but there was a time when I could say, ‘I know that my Redeemer lives.’ I have my doubts and fears at this present moment, but it is not long since I could say with full assurance, ‘I know that He shed His blood for me.’ It may be darkness, now, but I know the promises were sweet. I know I had blessed seasons in His House. I am quite sure of this. I used to enjoy myself in the ways of the Lord and though now my path is strewn with thorns, I know it is the King’s Highway. It was a way of pleasantness, once—it will be a way of pleasantness again. ‘I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.’”

Christian, perhaps the best song you can sing, to cheer you in the night, is the song of yesterday! Remember, it was not always night with you—in fact, night is a new thing to you. Once you had a glad heart and a buoyant spirit. Once your eyes were full of fire. Once your feet were light. Once you could sing for very joy and ecstasy of heart. Well, then, remember that God who made you sing yesterday has not left you in the night! He is not a daylight God who cannot know His children in darkness, but He loves you now as much as ever! Though He has left you for a little while, it is to prove you, to make you trust Him more and love and serve Him more. Let me tell you some of the sweet things of which a Christian may make a song when it is night with him.

If we are going to sing of the things of yesterday, let us begin with what God did for us in times past. My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, you will find it a sweet subject for song, at times, to begin to sing of electing love and Covenant mercies. When you, yourself, are low, it is well to sing of the Fountainhead of mercy, of that blessed decree wherein you were ordained unto eternal life—and of that glorious Man who undertook your redemption—of that solemn Covenant signed, sealed and ratified in all things ordered well, of that everlasting love which, before the hoary mountains were begotten, or before the aged hills were children, chose you, loved you firmly, loved you fast, loved you well, loved you eternally! I tell you, Believer, if you can go back to the years of eternity—if you can, in your mind, run back to that period before the everlasting hills were fashioned, or the fountains of the great deep were scooped out—and if you can see your God inscribing your name in His eternal Book. If you can read in His loving heart eternal thoughts of love to you, you will find this a charming means of giving you songs in the night! There are no songs like those which come from electing love, no sonnets like those that are dictated by meditations on discriminating mercy!

Think, Christian, of the Eternal Covenant, and you will get a song in the night! But if you have not a voice tuned to so high a key as that, let me suggest some other mercies you may sing of—they are the mercies you have experienced. What? Can you not sing a little of that blessed hour when Jesus met you, when, as a blind slave, you were sporting with death and He saw you and said, “Come, poor slave, come with Me”? Can you not sing of that rapturous moment when He snapped your fetters, dashed your chains to the earth and said, “‘I am the Breaker. I am come to break your chains and set you free”? Though you are now ever so gloomy, can you forget that happy morning when, in the House of God, your voice was loud—almost as a seraph’s voice, in praise, for you could sing, “I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of Grace, a sinner saved by blood”? Go back, Brothers and Sisters—sing of that moment and then you will have a song in the night! Or, if you have almost forgotten that, then surely you have some precious milestone along the road of life that is not quite overgrown with moss, on which you can read some happy inscription of God’s mercy towards you! What? Did you ever have a sickness like that which you are suffering now, and did He not raise you up from it? Were you ever poor, before, and did He not supply your needs? Were you ever in straits before, and did He not deliver you? Come, Brothers and Sisters! I beseech you—go to the river of your experience and pull up a few bulrushes and weave them into an ark wherein your infant faith may float safely on the stream! I bid you not forget what God has done for you.

What? Have you buried your diary? I beseech you, turn over the book of your remembrance. Can you not see some sweet Hill Mizar? Can you not think of some blessed hour when the Lord met with you at Hermon? Have you never been on the Delectable Mountains? Have you never been fetched from the den of lions? Have you never escaped the jaw of the lion and the claws of the bear? No? O, I know you have! Go back, then, a little way, to the mercies of the past—and though it is dark, now, light up the lamps of yesterday and they shall glitter through the darkness and you shall find that God has given you a song in the night!

“Yes!” says one, “but you know that when we are in the dark, we cannot see the mercies that God has given us. It is all very well for you to talk to us thus, but we cannot get hold of them.” I remember an old experimental Christian speaking about the great pillars of our faith. He was a sailor and we were on board ship and there were sundry huge posts on the shore, to which the vessels were usually fastened by throwing a cable over them. After I had told him a great many promises, he said, “I know they are good promises, but I cannot get near enough to shore to throw my cable around them. That is the difficulty.” Now it often happens that God’s past mercies and loving kindnesses would be good sure posts to hold on to, but we have not faith enough to throw our cable around them, so we go slipping down the stream of unbelief, because we cannot stop ourselves by our former mercies.

I will, however, give you something over which I think you can throw your cable. If God has never been kind to you, one thing you surely know, and that is, He has been kind to others. Come, now, if you are in ever so great straits, surely there have been others in greater straits. What? Are you lower down than poor Jonah was when he went to the bottom of the mountains? Are you worse off than your Master when He had nowhere to lay His head? What? Do you conceive yourself to be the worst of the worst? Look at Job, scraping himself with a potsherd and sitting on a dunghill. Are you as low as he? Yet Job rose up and was richer than before! And out of the depths, Jonah came and preached the Word! And our Savior, Jesus, has mounted to His Throne!

O Christian, only think of what God has done for others! If you cannot remember that He has done anything for you, yet remember, I beseech you, what His usual rule is and do not judge my God harshly! You remember when Benhadad was overcome and fled, his servants said to him, “Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Let us, I pray you, put on sackcloth on our loins, ropes upon our heads and go out to the king of Israel: perhaps he will save your life. So they girded sackcloth on their loins, put ropes on their heads and said, Your servant Benhadad says, I pray you, let me live.” What said the king? “Is he yet alive? He is my brother!” And truly, poor Soul, if you had never had a merciful God, yet others have had! The King of Kings is merciful! Go and try Him! If you are ever so low in your troubles, look to the hills from where comes your help. Others have had help from there and so may you!

Up might start hundreds of God’s children and show us their hands full of comforts and mercies—and they could say, “The Lord gave us these without money and without price. And why should He not give to you, also, seeing that you, too, are the King’s son?” Thus, Christian, you may get a song in the night out of other people if you cannot get a song from yourself. Never be ashamed of taking a leaf out of another man’s experience book! If you can find no good leaf in your own, tear one out of someone else’s! If you have no cause to be grateful to God in darkness, or cannot find cause in your own experience, go to someone else and, if you can, harp God’s praise in the dark and, like the nightingale, sing His praises sweetly when all the world has gone to rest. Sing in the night of the mercies of yesterday!

But I think, Beloved, there is never so dark a night but there is something to sing about, even concerning that night. For there is one thing I am sure we can sing about, let the night be ever so dark, and that is, “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.” If we cannot sing very loudly, yet we can sing a little low tune, something like this, “He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” “Oh,” says one, “I do not know where I shall get my dinner tomorrow! I am a poor wretch.” So you may be, my dear Friend, but you are not so poor as you deserve to be! Do not be mightily offended about that. If you are, you are no child of God, for the child of God acknowledges that he has no right to the least of God’s mercies, but that they come through the channel of Divine Grace alone. As long as I am out of Hell, I have no right to grumble. And if I were in Hell, I should have no right to complain, for I felt, when convinced of sin, that never creature deserved to go there more than I did. We have no cause to murmur—we can lift up our hands and say, “Night! You are dark, but you might have been darker. I am poor, but if I could not have been poorer, I might have been sick. I am poor and sick, yet I have some friends left. My lot cannot be so bad but it might have been worse.”

Therefore, Christian, you will always have one thing to sing about, “Lord, I thank You it is not all darkness!” Besides, however dark the night is, there is always a star or moon. There is scarcely a night that we have, but there are just one or two little lamps burning in the sky and, however dark it may be, I think you may find some little comfort, some little joy, some little mercy left—and some little promise to cheer your spirit. The stars are not put out, are they? No, if you cannot see them, they are there, but I think one or two must be shining on you—therefore give God a song in the night! If you have only one star, bless God for that one, and perhaps He will make it two. And if you have only two stars, bless God twice for the two stars, and perhaps He will make them four. Try, then, if you cannot find a song in the night.

But, Beloved, there is another thing of which we can sing yet more sweetly, and that is we can sing of the day that is to come. Often I cheer myself with the thought of the coming of the Lord. We preach now, perhaps, with little success. “The kingdoms of this world” have not yet “become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.” We are laboring, but we do not see the fruit of our labor. Well, what then? We shall not always labor in vain, or spend our strength for nothing! A day is coming when every minister of Christ shall speak with unction, when all the servants of God shall preach with power, and when colossal systems of heathenism shall tumble from their pedestals and mighty, gigantic delusions shall be scattered to the winds! The shout shall be heard, “Alleluia! Alleluia! The Lord God Omnipotent reigns.” I look for that day—it is to the bright horizon of Christ’s Second Coming that I turn my eyes! My anxious expectation is that the blessed Sun of Righteousness will soon arise with healing in His wings, that the oppressed shall be righted, that despotism shall be cut down, that liberty shall be established, that peace shall be made lasting and that the glorious liberty of the children of God shall be extended throughout the known world! Christian, if it is night with you, think of tomorrow! Cheer up your heart with the thought of the coming of your Lord! Be patient, for you know who has said, “Behold, I come quickly and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

One thought more upon this point. There is another sweet tomorrow of which we hope to sing in the night. Soon, Beloved, you and I shall lie on our dying bed and we shall not lack a song in the night even then! And I do not know where we shall get that song if we do not get it from the tomorrow. Kneeling by the bed of an apparently dying saint recently, I said, “Well, Sister, the Lord has been very precious to you. You can rejoice in His Covenant mercies and His past loving kindnesses.” She put out her hand and said, “Ah, Sir, do not talk about them now! I need the sinner’s Savior as much, now, as ever—it is not a saint’s Savior I need, it is still a sinner’s Savior that I need, for I am still a sinner.” I found that I could not comfort her with the past, so I reminded her of the golden streets, of the gates of pearl, of the walls of jasper, of the harps of gold, of the songs of bliss. And then her eyes glistened as she said, “Yes, I shall be there soon. I shall see them, by-and-by,” and then she seemed so glad. Ah, Believer, you may always cheer yourself with that thought! Your head may be crowned with thorny troubles now, but it shall wear a starry crown presently! Your hands may be filled with cares, but they shall soon grasp a harp—a harp full of music. Your garments may be soiled with dust, but they shall be white, by-and-by! Wait a little longer.

Ah, Beloved, how despicable our troubles and trials will seem when we look back upon them! Looking at them here in the present, they seem immense. But when we get to Heaven they will seem to us just nothing at all! We shall talk to one another about them in Heaven and find all the more to converse about, according as we have suffered more here below. Let us go on, therefore, and if the night is ever so dark, remember there is not a night that shall not have a morning! And that morning is to come, by-and-by. When sinners are lost in darkness, we shall lift up our eyes in everlasting light. Surely I need not dwell longer on this thought. There is matter enough for songs in the night in the past, the present and the future.

III. And now I want to tell you, very briefly, WHAT ARE THE EXCELLENCIES OF SONGS IN THE NIGHT ABOVE ALL OTHER SONGS.  
In the first place, when you hear a man singing a song in the night—I mean in the night of trouble—you may be quite sure it is a hearty one. Many of you sing very heartily now. I wonder whether you would sing as loudly if there were a stake or two in Smithfield for all of you who dared to do it? If you sang under pain and penalty, that would show your heart to be in your song. We can all sing very nicely, indeed, when everybody else sings—it is the easiest thing in the world to open our mouth and let the words come out. But when the devil puts his hand over our mouth, can we then sing? Can you say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him”? That is hearty singing! That is real song that springs up in the night!  
Again, the song we sing in the night will be lasting. Many songs we hear our fellow creatures singing will not do to sing, by-and-by. They can now sing rollicking drinking songs, but they will not sing them when they come to die. No, but the Christian who can sing in the night will not have to leave off his song—he may keep on singing it forever! He may put his foot in Jordan’s stream and continue his melody. He may wade through it and keep on singing until he is landed safe in Heaven! And when he is there, there need not be a pause in his strain, but in a nobler, sweeter song he may still continue singing the Savior’s power to save!  
Again, the songs we warble in the night are those that show we have real faith in God. Many men have just enough faith to trust God as far as Providence goes as they think right. But true faith can sing when its possessors cannot see! It can take hold of God when they cannot discern Him!  
Songs in the night, too, prove that we have true courage. Many sing by day who are silent by night. They are afraid of thieves and robbers. But the Christian who sings in the night proves himself to be a courageous character. It is the bold Christian who can sing God’s sonnets in the darkness.  
He who can sing songs in the night proves, also, that he has true love to Christ. It is not love to Christ merely to praise Him while everybody else praises Him—to walk arm in arm with Him when He has the crown on His head is no great thing to do. To walk with Christ in rags, is something more. To believe in Christ when He is shrouded in darkness. To stick hard and fast by the Savior when all men speak ill of Him and forsake Him—that proves true faith and love. He who sings a song to Christ in the night, sings the best song in all the world, for he sings from the heart.  
IV. I will not dwell further on the excellencies of night songs, but just, in the last place, SHOW YOU THEIR USE.  
Well, Beloved, it is very useful to sing in the night of our troubles, first, because it will cheer ourselves. When some of you were boys, living in the country, and had some distance to go alone at night, do you not remember how you whistled and sang to keep your courage up? Well, what we do in the natural world, we ought to do in the spiritual! There is nothing like singing to keep up our spirits. When we have been in trouble, we have often thought ourselves to be well near overwhelmed with difficulty, so we have said, “Let us have a song.” We have begun to sing and we have proved the truth of what Martin Luther says, “The devil cannot stand singing, he does not like music.” It was so in King Saul’s day—an evil spirit rested on him, but when David played his harp, the evil spirit left him. This is usually the case, and if we can begin to sing, we shall remove our fears.  
I like to hear servants sometimes humming a tune at their work. I love to hear a plowman in the country singing as he goes along with his horses. Why not? You say he has no time to praise God, but if he can sing a song, surely he can sing a Psalm—it will take no more time! Singing is the best thing to purge ourselves of evil thoughts. Keep your mouth full of songs and you will often keep your heart full of praises—keep on singing as long as you can—you will find it a good method of driving away your fears.  
Sing in trouble, again, because God loves to hear His people sing in the night. At no time does God love His children’s singing so well as when He has hidden His face from them and they are all in darkness. “Ah,” says God, “that is true faith that can make them sing praises when I do not appear to them! I know there is faith in them that makes them lift up their hearts, even when I seem to withhold from them all My tender mercies and all My compassions.” Sing then, Christian, for singing pleases God! In Heaven we read that the angels are employed in singing—be you employed in the same way—for by no better means can you gratify the Almighty One of Israel who stoops from His high Throne to observe us poor, feeble creatures of a day!  
Sing, again, for another reason—because it will cheer your companions. If any of them are in the valley and in the darkness with you, it will be a great help to comfort them. John Bunyan tells us as Christian was going through the valley, he found it a dreadful place—horrible demons and hobgoblins were all about him—and poor Christian thought he must perish for certain. But just when his doubts were the strongest, he heard a sweet voice. He listened to it and he heard a man in front of him singing, “Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil.” Now, that man did not know who was near him, but he was unwittingly cheering a pilgrim behind him! Christian, when you are in trouble, sing! You do not know who is near you. Sing—perhaps you will get a good companion by it. Sing! Perhaps there will be another heart cheered by your song. There is some broken spirit, it may be, that will be bound up by your sonnets. Sing! There is some poor distressed Brother, perhaps, shut up in the Castle of Despair, who, like King Richard, will hear your song inside the walls and sing to you—and you may be the means of getting him ransomed and released! Sing, Christian, wherever you go! Try, if you can, to wash your face every morning in a bath of praise. When you go down from your chamber, never look on man till you have first looked on your God—and when you have looked on Him, seek to come down with a face beaming with joy! Carry a smile, for you will cheer up many a poor, wayward pilgrim by it. And when you fast, Christian. When you have an aching heart, do not appear to men to fast—appear cheerful and happy! Anoint your head and wash your face—be happy for your Brothers and Sisters’ sake—it will tend to cheer them up and help them through the valley.  
One more reason, and I know it will be a good one for you. Try and sing in the night, Christian, for that is one of the best arguments in all the world in favor of your religion. Our divines, nowadays, spend a great deal of time in trying to prove the truth of Christianity to those who disbelieve it. I would like to have seen Paul trying that plan! Elymas the sorcerer withstood him—how did Paul treat him? He said, “O full of all subtlety and all mischief, you child of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?” That is about all the politeness such men ought to have when they deny God’s Truth! We start with this assumption—that the Bible is God’s Word—but we are not going to prove God’s Word. If you do not believe it, we will bid you, “Good-bye.” We will not argue with you. Religion is not a thing merely for your intellect to prove the greatness of your own talent—it is a thing that demands your faith. As a messenger of Heaven, I demand that faith! If you do not choose to give it, on your own head be your doom!  
O Christian, instead of disputing, let me tell you how to prove your religion! Live it out! Live it out! Give the external as well as the internal evidence! Give the external evidence of your own life. You are sick. There is your neighbor who laughs at religion. Let him come into your house. When he was sick, he said, “Oh, send for the doctor!” And there he was fretting, fuming and making all manner of noises. When you are sick, send for him, first—tell him that you are resigned to the Lord’s will, that you will kiss the chastening rod, that you will take the cup and drink it, because your Father gives it. You need not make a boast of this, or it will lose all its power. But do it because you cannot help doing it. Your neighbor will say, “There is something in such a religion as that.”  
And when you come to the borders of the grave—your neighbor was there, once, and you heard how he shrieked and how frightened he was— give him your hand and say to him, “Ah, I have a Christ who is with me now. I have a religion that will make me sing in the night.” Let him hear how you can sing, “Victory, victory, victory,” through Him that loved you. I tell you, we may preach fifty thousand sermons to prove the Gospel, but we shall not prove it half as well as you will through singing in the night! Keep a cheerful face, keep a happy heart, keep a contented spirit, keep your eyes bright and your heart aloft—and you will prove Christianity better than all the Butlers, and all the wise men who ever lived! Give them the “analogy” of a holy life and then you will prove religion to them! Give them the “evidences” of internal piety, developed externally, and you will give the best possible proof of Christianity! Try and sing songs in the night, for they are so rare that if you can sing them, you will honor your God and bless your friends!  
I have been all this while addressing the children of God. And now there is a sad turn that this subject must take. Just a word or so, and then I have done. There is a night coming in which there will be no songs of joy—a night when a song shall be sung of which misery shall be the subject, set to the music of wailing and gnashing of teeth. There is a night coming when woe, unutterable woe, shall be the theme of an awful, terrific miserere. There is a night coming for the poor soul—and unless he repents it will be a night wherein he will have to sigh, and cry, and moan, and groan forever! I hope I shall never preach a sermon without speaking to the ungodly, for oh, how I love them! Swearer, your mouth is black with oaths, now, and if you die, you must go on blaspheming throughout eternity—and be punished for it throughout eternity! But listen to me, blasphemer! Do you repent? Do you feel yourself to have sinned against God? Do you feel a desire to be saved? Listen! You may be saved! You may be saved! There is another. She has sinned enormously against God and she blushes even now while I mention her case. Do you repent of your sins? Then there is pardon for you! Remember Him who said, “Go, and sin no more.”  
Drunkard! But a little while ago you were reeling down the street and now you repent. Drunkard, there is hope for you! “Well,” you say, “what shall I do to be saved?” Let me again tell you the old way of salvation. It is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” We can get no further than that, do what we will! This is the sum and substance of the Gospel. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” So says the Savior Himself. Do you ask, “What is it to believe?” Am I to tell you again? I cannot tell you except that it is to look to Christ. Do you see the Savior there? He is hanging on the Cross. There are His dear hands, pierced with nails, fastened to a tree as if they were waiting for your tardy footsteps because you would not come. Do you see His dear head there? It is hanging on His breast as if He would lean over and kiss your poor soul. Do you see His blood, gushing from His head, His hands, His feet, His side? It is running after you because He well knew that you would never run after Him.  
Sinner, to be saved, all you have to do is to look at that Man! Can you not do it now? “No,” you say, “I do not believe that will save me.” Ah, my poor Friend, try it, I beseech you, try it! And if you do not succeed when you have tried it, I will be bondsman for my Lord—here, take me, bind me and I will suffer your doom for you! This I will venture to say—if you cast yourself on Christ and He deserts you—I will be willing to go halves with you in all your misery and woe, for He will never do it. Never, never,

NEVER— *“No sinner was ever empty sent back,  
Who came seeking mercy for Jesus’ sake.”*

I beseech you, therefore, try Him and you shall not try Him in vain! You shall find Him “able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” And you shall, by His Grace, be saved now—and saved forever!

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1511 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

QUESTIONS WHICH OUGHT TO BE ASKED  
NO. 1511

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
(This was followed by a farewell address from his son, Thomas Spurgeon).  
“But none says, Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night; who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the fowls of Heaven?”  
Job 35:10-11.

ELIHU perceived the great ones of the earth oppressing the needy and he traced their domineering tyranny to their forgetfulness of God—“None says, Where is God my Maker?” Surely, had they thought of God, they could not have acted so unjustly. Worse still, if I understand Elihu aright, he complained that even among the oppressed there was the same departure in heart from the Lord—they cried out by reason of the arm of the mighty, but unhappily they did not cry unto God their Maker, though He waits to be gracious unto all such and executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. Both with great and small, with oppressors and oppressed, there is one common fault in our nature which is described by the Apostle in Romans, “There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God.” Until Divine Grace comes in and changes our nature, there is none that says, “Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?” This is a very grave fault, about which we shall speak for a few minutes and may the Holy Spirit bless the word.

I. And first, LET US THINK OVER THESE NEGLECTED QUESTIONS, beginning with, “Where is God my Maker?” There are four questions in the text, each of which reminds us of the folly of forgetting it. First, Where is God? Above all things in the world we ought to think of Him. Pope said, “The proper study of mankind is man,” but it is far more true that the proper study of mankind is God. Let man study man in the second place, but God first. It is a sad thing that God is All in All, that we owe everything to Him and are under allegiance to Him and yet we neglect Him.

Some men think of every person but God. They have a place for everything else, but no place in their heart for God. They are most exact in the discharge of other relative duties and yet they forget their God! They would count themselves mean, indeed, if they did not pay every man his own and yet they rob God. They rob Him of His honor, to which they never give a thought. They rob Him of obedience, for His Law has no hold on them. They rob Him of His praise, for they are receiving daily at His hands and yet they yield no gratitude to their great Benefactor. “None says, Where is God?”

My dear Hearer, do you stand convicted of this? Have you been walking up and down in this great house and never asked to see the King whose palace it is? Have you been rejoicing at this great feast and have you never asked to see your Host? Have you gone abroad through the various fields of Nature and have you never wished to know Him whose breath perfumes the flowers, whose pencil paints the clouds, whose smile makes sunlight and whose frown its storm? Oh, it is a strange, sad fact—God so near us and so necessary to us and yet not sought for!

The next point is, “None says, Where is God my Maker?” Oh, unthinking man! God made you! He fashioned your curious framework and put every bone in its place. He, as with needlework, embroidered each nerve and vein and sinew. He made this curious harp of twice ten thousand strings—wonderful it is that it has kept in tune so long—but only He could have maintained its harmony. He is your Maker! You are a mass of dust and you would crumble back to dust at this moment if He withdrew His preserving power—He but speaks and you dissolve into the earth on which you tread. Do you never think of your Maker? Have you not thought of Him without whom you could not think at all? Oh, strange perversity and insanity that a man should find himself thus curiously made and bearing within his own body that which will make him either a madman or a worshipper—and yet, for all that, he lives as if he had nothing to do with his Creator—“None says, Where is God my Maker?”

There is great force in the next sentence—“Who gives songs in the night.” That is to say, God is our Comforter. Beloved Friends, you that know God, I am sure you will bear witness that though you have had very severe trials, you have always been sustained in them when God has been near you. Some of us have been sick—near death—but we have almost loved our suffering chamber and scarcely wished to come out of it, so bright has the room become with the Presence of God! Some of us here have known what it is to bury our dearest friends and others have been short of bread and forced to look up, each morning, for daily manna. But when your heavenly Father has been with you—speak, you children of God—have you not had joy and rejoicing and light in your dwellings?

When the night has been very dark, yet the fiery pillar has set the desert on a glow! No groans have made night hideous, but you have sung like nightingales amid the blackest shades when God has been with you. I can hardly tell you what joy, what confidence, what inward peace the Presence of God gives to a man! It will make him bear and dare, rest and wrestle, yield and yet conquer, die and yet live! It will be very sad, therefore, if we poor sufferers forget our God, our Comforter, our song-giver!

Two little boys were once speaking together about Elijah riding to Heaven in the chariot of fire. One of them said, “I think he had plenty of courage. I should have been afraid to ride in such a carriage as that.” “Ah!” Ah!” said the other, “but I would not mind if God drove it.” So do Christians say! They mind not if they are called to mount a chariot of fire if God drives it! We speak as honest men what we know and feel and we tell all our fellow men that as long as God is present with us, we really don’t care what happens to us—whether we sorrow or whether we rejoice! We have learned to glory in tribulations, also, when God’s own Presence cheers our souls.

And then there is a fourth point. “None says, Where is God my Maker, who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the fowls of Heaven?” Here we are reminded that God is our Instructor. God has given us intellect. It is not by accident, but by His gift that we are distinguished from the beasts and the fowls. Now, if animals do not turn to God, we do not wonder, but shall man forget Him? Strange to say, there has been no rebellion against God among the beasts or the birds. The beasts obey their God and bow their necks to man. There are no sinloving cattle or apostate fowls, but there are fallen men!

Think, O Man, it may have been better for you if you had been made a frog or a toad than to have lived a man if you should live and die without making peace with your Maker. You glory that you are not a beast—take heed that the beasts do not condemn you. You think yourself vastly better than the sparrow which lights upon your dwelling—take heed that you do better and rise to nobler things. I think if there were a choice in birds and souls dwelt in them, their singing would be as pure as it is now—they would scorn to sing loose and frivolous songs as men do! They would carol everlastingly sweet Psalms of praise to God.

I think if there were souls in any of the creatures they would devote themselves to God as surely as angels do. Why then, O Man, why is it that you, with your superior endowments, must be the sole rebel, the only creature of earthly mold that forgets the creating and instructing Lord? Four points are then before us. Man does not ask after his God, his Maker, his Comforter, his Instructor—is he not filled with a four-fold madness? How can he excuse himself?

II. Supposing you do not ask these questions. Let me remind you that THERE ARE QUESTIONS WHICH GOD WILL ASK OF YOU. When Adam had broken God’s command, he did not say, “Where is God my Maker?” but the Lord did not, therefore, leave him alone! No, the Lord came out and a Voice, silvery with Divine Grace, but yet terrible with Divine Justice, rang through the trees, “Adam, where are you?” There will come such a Voice to you who have neglected God. Your Judge will inquire, “Where are you?” Though you hide in the top of Carmel, or dive with the crooked serpent into the depths of the sea, you will hear that Voice and you will be forced to answer!

Your dust, long scattered to the wind, will come together and your soul will enter into your body and you will be obliged to answer, “Here I am, for You did call me.” Then you will hear the second question, “Why did you live and die without Me?” And such questions as these will come thick upon you, “What did I do that you should slight Me? Did I not give you innumerable mercies? Why did you never think of Me? Did I not put salvation before you? Did I not plead with you? Did I not entreat you to turn to Me? Why did you refuse Me? “You will have no answer to those questions and then there will come another question—ah, how I wish it would come to you while there is time to answer it—“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”

Tonight I put it to you that you may propose a way of escape if your imagination is equal to the task. You will be baffled even in trying to invent an escape, now—but how much more when your time of judgment really comes! If you neglect the salvation of God in Christ you cannot be saved. In the next world how will you answer that question—“How shall we escape?” You will ask the rocks to hide you, but they will refuse you that dread indulgence. You will beseech them to crush you, that you may no longer see the terrible face of the King upon the Throne, but even that shall be denied you. Oh, be wise and before you dare the wrath of the eternal King and dash upon the bosses of His buckler, turn and repent, for why will you die?

III. Now, if any seek an answer to the grave enquiries of the text and do sincerely ask, “Where is God my Maker?” let us GIVE THE ANSWERS. Where is God? He is everywhere! He is all around you now. If you want Him, here He is. He waits to be gracious to you. Where is God your Maker? He is within eyesight of you. You cannot see Him, but He sees you. He reads each thought and every motion of your spirit and records it, too. He is within earshot of you. Speak and He will hear you! Yes, whisper—no, you need not even form the words with your lips, just let the thought be in your soul He is so near you! For in Him you live and move and have your being—He knows what is in your heart before you know it yourself!

Where is your Comforter? He is ready with His “songs in the night.” Where is your Instructor? He waits to make you wise unto salvation. “Where, then, may I meet Him?” asks one. You cannot meet Him—you must not attempt it—except through the Mediator. “There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.” If you come to Jesus you have come to God. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them and has committed unto us the Word of reconciliation,” which Word we preach. Believe in Jesus Christ and your God is with you! Trust your soul with Jesus Christ and you have found your Creator and you shall never again have to say, “Where is God my Maker?” for you shall live in Him and He shall live in you!

You have found your Comforter and you shall joy in Him, while He shall joy in you. You have also, in Christ Jesus, found your Instructor who shall guide you through life and bring you to perfection in yonder bright world above. For Christ’s sake may the Holy Spirit use this little sermon as a short sword to slay your indifference!

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #1403 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 36.2

GOD’S ADVOCATES BREAKING SILENCE  
NO. 1403

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 17, 1878, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Suffer me a little and I will show you that I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.”  
Job 36:2.**

ELIHU was sufficiently severe with Job, but as this arose from his honest conviction that Job had spoken amiss, we cannot blame him. The style of his address is, in some points, highly commendable. We admire the courtesy which moved him to say, “Suffer me a little.” It shows some little consideration for his audience. It is to be feared that under our preaching our people suffer greatly and we do not sympathize with their sense of weariness—otherwise we might often apologize in the terms of Elihu, saying, “Suffer me a little.” I admire Elihu’s attempt at brevity. I call it an attempt, for I am not quite sure that he succeeded, for he filled two more chapters! Yet he said, “Suffer me a little” and thereby promised to make his oration as short as he could.

Some lengthy Divines, with their many divisions, their, “Finallies,” and “Lastlies,” and concluding observations, spin and spin and cause their congregations to suffer—and that not a little, but exceedingly much. It is well, when we have anything good to say, to use as few words as possible, for if brevity is not the garment of Divine Grace, it is the soul of wit, and all our wits should be set to work to put Gospel teaching into such a form that it will be the better received. Assuredly, short and pointed addresses are more likely to reach the heart than long and dreary sermons. If our preaching is so poor that the people suffer, it is better that they suffer little rather than much! And if our ministry is very rich and satisfying, it is better to send the people home longing than loathing.

We may also admire the prudence of Elihu in dividing his discourse into four or five portions. If you turn to the book of Job you will see that he has been speaking ever since the 32nd chapter and he has made at least three pauses. It may be that these filled up considerable intervals. His talk would have reached an unbearable length had he continued to speak on and on without a parenthesis of silence. But he stopped and gave his hearers space to breathe. Doubtless four sermonettes were better than one long discourse. Teachers and all those who seek to win the hearts of others, should imitate Elihu in this and not say too much at one time, for the spirit of the hearer may be willing, but his flesh is weak. Be wise and do not attempt to say everything at once!

Remember that there is such a thing as undoing by overdoing. Many of those whom we try to teach are like bottles with narrow necks—we must pour gently with a slender stream or we shall spill the Truth of God rather than convey it. Hungry children cannot eat a whole field of wheat! We must prepare the food and give them a loaf and even that will often be

better if it is cut into slices and handed out a little at a time. Little and often in spiritual feeding is far better than much at long intervals. “Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little” is the way in which Wisdom teaches her disciples. Often let the preacher or teacher pause, as Elihu did, and say to himself, if not to his hearers, “I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”

It is admirable in Elihu, also, that he knew what he was doing when he spoke. He says, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” He has a definite objective before him! His subject has been considered and his drift has been determined. “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” Elihu felt the necessity of doing so. He had kept silent for a while, but after what he had heard spoken by the Patriarch’s three friends, he came to the conclusion that, “Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment.” The speeches of Job also had stirred his soul, for in his judgment, Job drank up scorning like water (Job 34:7). He felt that he must speak.

His swelling heart impelled him—woe was upon him if he kept silent and, therefore, he burst forth with the exclamation, “I am full of matter, the spirit within me compels me. Behold, my belly is as wine which has no vent! It is ready to burst like new bottles.” He was forced to speak. Duty called him and impulse compelled him. There is nothing like emptying out your heart when it is full. It is wretched work to hear the noise of an empty barrel. It is good speaking when you say what must be said and give forth utterances which you cannot restrain. He who speaks from conscious necessity will speak with earnestness, readiness and power.

I suppose, too, that Elihu felt that he must continue to speak because he had once begun. “I have yet to speak,” says he, “on God’s behalf.” He had started and could not come to a standstill all of a sudden. The theme which he had chosen, when once adopted, keeps its grip upon the soul—it holds the speaker spell-bound. Forgive us if we sometimes transgress the usual limits of time, for when we reach the height of our great argument we long to linger and are drawn on and drawn out beyond our first intentions, feeling that we have yet to speak on God’s behalf. He who once begins to speak concerning his God feels that his heart intends a good matter and his tongue is as the pen of a ready writer. On such a theme, “Naphtali is a hind let loose—he gives goodly words.”

Thus you see that Elihu spoke because he felt laid under a necessity to do so and I believe that the same necessity is laid upon many of us. While we muse, the fire burns—and we must speak with our tongue. It is evident that Elihu felt great responsibility in speaking on behalf of God, as who would not? It is no light thing to be called to advocate the cause of the King of kings! Therefore he was very thoughtful as to his speech and he says, “I will fetch my knowledge from afar and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.” It is not every sort of talk that is good enough to be used in pleading for the Lord our God—the best of the best is not so good as such a cause demands! Words should be fitly chosen and statements should be carefully weighed when we are pleading on behalf of God.

It may well be a matter of prayer with us that all who speak for Jesus may feel the weight of their engagement and go about it in the deepest solemnity of spirit. Feeling how awesome is their work and calling, let us not fail to pray for them that they may be divinely helped and prospered! Let us speak unto the Lord on their behalf and say to our great Father—

*“We plead for those who plead for Thee,*

*Successful pleaders may they be.”*  
Elihu surely felt it to be a high honor to be an advocate for God. What greater dignity can be bestowed upon us? He must have felt it an honor, for he spoke in tones of courage and confidence. He cried, “Behold, I am according to your wish in God’s stead.” No flattering speeches were on his tongue. How can any man flatter his fellows when he is called to speak in the name of God? He might fear that in so doing his Maker would take him away. Ill would it become an ambassador for Christ to demean his office by stooping to flatter the king’s enemies! His business is to reflect honor upon the Prince who has bestowed honor upon him.

We know, also, that Elihu felt it to be a great privilege to speak on the behalf of God, for he declares, “I will speak, that I may be refreshed.” O Beloved, when the Lord teaches you much of His love, you feel compelled to tell of it! That is a secret which is hard to keep and, blessed be the name of the Lord, we are both permitted and commanded to divulge it! Has He not said, whom we call Master and Lord, “That which you have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the housetops”? It is a delight to the renewed soul to speak concerning Christ as much as it is to a bird to sing! The faculty is given, the impulse is bestowed and we must exercise and indulge them both!

That I have yet to speak personally on God’s behalf is to me a great joy. It is a delight in which few of you can fully sympathize because you may not have spoken so much as I have done, nor have been so long and dolorously silent. Glory be unto the Lord my God, once more my tongue is loosed and the opportunity to speak is given! I say it with unfeigned joy and perhaps with more joy than Elihu ever knew, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” [Brother Spurgeon had been ill and away from the Tabernacle, recuperating, for some time. See sermon #1396 in this volume, Reasons for Turning to the Lord.]

I hope, however, that all of you whose lives are spared, whose spheres of usefulness are enlarged, or who see new doors of utterance open to you, will, with joy, say, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf,” and that you will not hesitate to avail yourselves of the privilege to the fullest possible extent. What a host will go forth to publish the Gospel if you all feel that you must speak on God’s behalf! How will Satan’s kingdom be moved if you all do it with power from on high, the power of the Holy Spirit! In our text we have a duty set before us. First, let us think of it. Secondly, let us consider how to perform it. And thirdly, let us do it at once.

I. We have before us a privilege and a duty—“I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” LET US THINK OF IT. Speech is the high prerogative of man. It is given to him, alone, of all earthly creatures. He is the one sole articulate voice for this lower world. Birds and beasts, fishes and creeping things, mountains and seas exhibit the praises of God, but they cannot

express them. Man is the world’s tongue—it were well if that tongue were always sanctified to the Divine service, for otherwise it misrepresents the universe for which it should be the interpreter. Of our text we note that the subject is sublime. “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.”

Is it not a high calling and an exalted theme? The cause of God and Truth deserves seraphic eloquence. At first sight it seems as if it were needless to speak on behalf of God. He is so great that human opinion can be of no consequence to Him! He is so good that He doe not need defense. His claims are so clear—does He need that they should be pleaded? Alas, my Brothers and Sisters, pleaders for God and advocates of His cause have always been needed since that evil day when He was slandered in Paradise and our first parents lifted disobedient hands to pluck the forbidden fruit. Though no voice is so sweet as the Divine, man is hardened against his God and it is the office of the whole Church with a thousand voices to be continually crying in the world’s dull ears and speaking on the behalf of God. There is need, and growing need, that we should lift up our voices for our God and His Gospel!

Yet may we tremble as we enter upon the enterprise! Who shall fitly commend perfection? Who shall vindicate spotless purity? Who shall rightly tell of insulted justice, or who shall declare boundless love? The theme will exhaust every faculty when elevated to the highest degree and strengthened to its utmost possibility. To speak on God’s behalf—this is a lofty argument, indeed, and yet we will not flinch from it, for it is natural that we should speak for Him to whom we owe everything! If we have a tongue at all, we ought to speak here—if silent upon all other themes, yet never should we be unwilling to speak for our God! The stones themselves might speak if we should hold our speech in such a cause. The theme might make slow speaking Moses wax as eloquent as his brother Aaron!

A God so good, so good to us, so good beyond all imagination deserves that we shake off our cowardice and speak out for Him manfully! Reflect, my Brothers who are called to speak on the behalf of God, that since He has provided an Advocate for you, you are bound to become advocates for Him! What a pleader has He set apart for you! It is Christ of whom we read, “Never man spoke like this Man.” Our glorious Mediator stands forever pleading the causes of our souls and it is but natural and right, therefore, that His redeemed should, with all their hearts, plead His cause before the sons of men!

And yet there are few who speak on behalf of God. I mean more than perhaps you think. There are few who vindicate the honor of Jehovah and view matters from His Throne. Their eyes look elsewhere and not to the sacred Majesty of the Supreme Being. Many are the preachers of the Gospel, but still, I note but few who preach the Gospel on behalf of God. There are two aspects of the Gospel—the one which looks towards man and the other which looks towards God—he who preaches the Gospel only from its manward side is apt to forget its major part. He regards man with a pity and sympathy most fitting and proper, but, alas, too often he fails in sympathy with God and in distinct recognition of the claims and rights of the great Sovereign.

How seldom is Divine sovereignty spoken of! Man is looked upon as though he were a deserving creature and had a right to salvation. One would think, to hear some preachers, that God was under obligation to man, or, at least, that He had no will of His own, but had left man’s will to be supreme! The Truth of God is that if all the race had been condemned, God would have been infinitely just! And if He spares one and not another, none can say to Him, “What are You doing?” His declaration is, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” I sympathize with man, but I have in my very soul an infinitely deeper sympathy with God. I am bound to love my neighbor as myself, but the still higher Law calls on me to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength!

Speaking on behalf of man may be carried so far that you come, at length, to look upon man’s sin as his misfortune rather than his fault and to view the fact that sin is punished at all as a matter to be deplored. In some professed Christians their pity for the criminal has overcome their horror at the crime! Eternal punishment is denied, not because the Scriptures are not plain enough on that point, but because man has become the god of man and everything must be toned down to suit the tender feelings of an age which excuses sin but denounces its penalties—which has no condemnation for the offense and spends its denunciations upon the Judge and His righteous sentence. By all means, have sympathies manward, but at the same time show some tenderness towards the dishonored Law and the insulted Lord!

Is justice a figment? Is there no necessity for Divine anger? Has mercy, itself, become a debt due to mankind? Do you see nothing horrible in sin? Is there no guilt in rejecting Christ and trampling on His blood? And is there none in closing the eyes even to the feebler light which streams from the visible works of God and reveals His power and Godhead? Few, I say, look at the matter in this light, and yet it should be the main business of every Believer “to speak on God’s behalf.” It becomes, therefore, all the more necessary that those who have been led to side with God and who feel their hearts drawn to adore and magnify and vindicate their glorious Lord, that they should count it a privilege to be spared to speak on the behalf of God.

I would silence no voice that speaks for man so far as it speaks truthfully, but oh for more voices to speak for God and maintain His crown rights! It seems that we vindicate His Law and the terrors of it, His Gospel and the sovereignty of it, His Nature and the completeness of it, His Providence and the wisdom of it, His redemption and the efficacy of it, His eternal purpose and the accomplishment of it. May this theme, though long silent, be sounded forth till its voice is heard in every street of Zion! Not the exaggeration of Divine Truth, but that Truth, itself, we desire to hear, and God grant we may live to hear it! May many a man of God be compelled to say, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” Let others plead what cause they will, it is ours with the greatest of poets, “To justify the

ways of God to men.”

While thinking over the work described in the text we would further remark that the call is personal—“I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” Do we not, as Believers in Jesus, recognize ourselves in that little word, I? “I have yet to speak,” though to now, a listener, as Elihu was while the elders gave, each one, his opinion. I, though silenced for a while, blessed be His name, have yet to speak on God’s behalf! The harp has hung awhile upon the wall and pined in silence—but now the Chief Musician takes it down again and almost before He sweeps the chords, every string begins to thrill with delight at the thought that He will make them resound again! The cobweb and the dust suit not the lyre which for so many years has welcomed the sacred touch!

Have you been laid aside awhile, Brother or Sister? Then rejoice in the day of your restoration and say, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” I, again, though not the wisest nor the best, have my testimony to bear even as Elihu did, who had, to then, given place to those whom he thought to be wiser than he. His words were, “I am young and you are very old. Therefore I was afraid and dared not show you my opinion. I said, Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man and the Inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding.” And so, though esteeming himself to be least and, therefore, fitly coming last, he rose in his place and faithfully delivered his soul.

O you that are not eloquent, whose tongues will scarcely respond to your thoughts—nevertheless you have to speak in the name of the Lord in ways as forcible as uttered language! Take care that you do so and make no long delays, but look forward eagerly for times when you shall speak on God’s behalf after your own manner. The smallest bell in the steeple is needed to complete the chime and the tiniest bird in the forest would be missed if its notes were hushed! Therefore come forth, O least of all the brotherhood, for without your presence the Father’s family is not complete! All voices are needed! No child of God may be silent!

You, too, who are conscious of great weakness and unworthiness, I invite you to say, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf,” for this man, Elihu, was a trembler like yourselves. In the 37th chapter he says, “At this, also, my heart trembles, and is moved out of his place.” Nor did he feel that his abilities were equal to his subject, for in the 19th verse of the same chapter he breathed this prayer, “Teach us what we shall say unto Him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.” And yet, though conscious of his inability to handle the theme, and trembling under its power, he nevertheless rejoiced to feel that he must speak something—and he opened his mouth boldly in the name of the Lord!

Brother, work for God, whether you can or not! Power will increase as you use the little you possess. You will learn to speak more graciously as you proceed, if not more fluently and accurately. Therefore plunge into the middle of the matter, saying, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” Glory be to God, the devil himself cannot silence the man whose mouth the Lord has opened and whose heart He has quickened by His Truth! He may be laid aside for many a day and it may seem to his fellow men that he is useless and worthless, but the hour will need the man and the man will seize the hour and speak so as to be heard! Only let your heart be ready and your spirit watchful and waiting—the time shall surely come when, though you are now a poor prattling babe, you shall speak like a man on God’s behalf!

I think, dear Friends, I may now make a third remark, namely, that in the text the reminder is seasonable and may be addressed most rightly to many of us, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” Does not this awaken you, O silent and sluggish soul? Have you been hidden among stuff all these days? Are you on the Lord’s side but of a faint heart? Have you never found a tongue? Wake up, my Brother, and say, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” Is it not written, “Then shall the lame man leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sing”? How can you bear a life-long silence when, to me, even a few weeks become irksome? Our children need no encouragement to talk! Should the children of God be tongue-tied?

I have thought, lately, a great deal about Zacharias who was struck dumb, on account of his unbelief, while sacrificing in the temple, but was assured that in a few months he should speak again. How I watched, those weary weeks, until the day should come when my tongue should once more express my thoughts! How glad I was as the day drew near! Have you been shut up, Brother, so that you could not come forth? Then cheer yourself and look for the day when you will say, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” This thought may justly occur to us after times of great deliverance. David had been seized by the Philistines and taken before king Abimelech—and had only escaped by feigning madness. No sooner was he safe than he said, “I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psa.34:1).

Among the verses of that grateful song you read the following, “Come, you children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” He felt bound to tell the Lord’s goodness both to old and young! When we are raised from deep distress we should never fail to say, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” The same is true if you have been conscious of a grave fault and have received forgiveness. Then, too, you have yet to speak on God’s behalf and you may be very glad of it, for it will serve as a pledge of your forgiveness! Poor Peter might very naturally have remained quiet throughout the rest of his life after having denied his Master, but it must have cheered him to remember that the Lord had said beforehand, “When you are converted, strengthen your brethren.” Moreover, he felt the certainty of his Lord’s forgiving love when, by the sea of Galilee, in loving tones He said, “Feed My sheep.” Do you wonder that on the day of Pentecost Peter felt a joy not to be expressed as he said to himself, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf. Even I, who once denied Him, am yet allowed to be His advocate and to proclaim His Grace”?

Beloved Friends, if any of you have been disappointed in your Christian work and are therefore cast down, I want you to take my text as a slogan. Have you fallen into the condition of the Prophet Jeremiah, of whom we read, “Then I said I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name”? Have you been despised and defamed, laughed at and rejected? And do you fear that you have done no good and that you are altogether unfit for the service? Do you therefore cry, “I will speak no more in the name of the Lord”? Mark, my Brother, you will not easily abide in silence, for your experience will soon be like that of the Prophet—“But His Word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.” You will be obliged to speak! Yes, again and again you will be compelled to say, “I have yet to speak in the name of the Lord.”

Perhaps you have been foolish like Jonah and have run away from the Lord’s service—and now you have just escaped from the deeps with the sea slime upon you—and the tokens of the whale’s belly about you. What then? Why, the first thing you have to do, almost before you brush your clothes, is to hasten to Nineveh and deliver your Lord’s message, for you have yet to speak on God’s behalf! Though you have once refused, you will be brought to do it and it will be well to yield at once and go boldly with this doctrine in your heart, “Salvation is of the Lord!” And with this message upon your tongue, “Repent and seek the Lord.” If you go at once, your voice shall ring through the streets of Nineveh and the man with the salt-sea smell upon him shall be more revered in the streets of Nineveh than if he had come there perfumed from the courts of kings!

Take the text home as coming seasonably to many characters here. I cannot tell the exact condition of each Brother’s and Sister’s heart, and yet I think if I could read your inmost souls I should see the strongest reasons why this should be the soliloquy of each one, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” Furthermore, while thinking this matter over, let us remark that this duty is a very solemn and difficult one. And, consequently, it deserves our best possible preparations. When a young barrister was chosen years ago, almost within the recollection of our older folks, to advocate the cause of a queen whose character had been questioned, I can imagine him sitting up late and rising early that he might study his brief and get the whole matter well into his mind and choose out good words with which to urge her suit.

I can conceive the trepidation with which he stood up in the Hall at Westminster to plead for one whom many in the nation regarded as an injured queen. But all that feeling of responsibility should be far outdone by everyone who has to speak for God! To rush from your bed to the pulpit to speak what first comes to hand seems to me to be next door to profanity! Even to talk to little children about Jesus without the slightest anxiety beforehand cannot be excused. We should not offer unto God that which costs us nothing! And if we stand up to plead for Him, surely it should not be said that the first time we saw our brief was when we appeared in court!

No, fetch your words from far. Let them be gained by diving into the deeps of your own soul and into the depths of the Divine Word. Say to yourself, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf and I would do it with my utmost ability. O you powers of mind, be ready! But, above all, O power Divine, rest on me, for he that speaks for God should speak by God, or else he speaks in vain.” If we have to speak for God we should certainly do it with all zeal and earnestness. A cold advocacy of the cause of God is next door to an attack upon it! To speak for God with careless air, with bated breath, or with affected tone is gravely unbecoming in a case where faith and fire should be the main attributes of the speaker. Let us throw ourselves into every word we utter for God even though we speak only to one poor ragged child.

At the same time, let us cultivate a constant promptness in this work. We should be ready to give an answer to him that asks us. We should be eager to seize opportunities! We should be on the watch for openings for advancing the great suit. Be always in trim for this great business! When you leave home, say to yourself, “I may have to speak for God in the omnibus, or in the workshop, in the parlor, or in the kitchen. I may have to speak on the behalf of God when least I expect it—let me have my heart in order for it.” May the Holy Spirit enable you to do so. The mercy of the Lord to us never fails—so let our zeal to honor Him never cease!

Thus we have thought upon the subject and I trust are prepared to enquire into the way in which we can show our practical interest in it. I can only give brief hints and there is no need of more, for the work itself will open before you when you once get at it.

II. “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” Let us now consider HOW IT IS TO BE DONE. A great number of Christians will do it best by manifesting holiness in their daily lives, by their common conversation being seasoned with salt and by taking such opportunities as the Providence of God puts in their way of speaking to their Redeemer’s praise. “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf” as the master of a family to my children and to my servants, as a mistress to my domestics, as a servant by my life, as a merchant in my trade. I have so to speak on God’s behalf that those about me may see what religion is by watching my life.

Whatever my lot, condition, or occupation, I have a witness to bear, for those who never read the Bible may read me and those who never think of Christ may at least think of one of His disciples and see, in some degree, what the Master is by what the servant is. Let this objective tone and tune your lives, my Brothers and Sisters, and let the members of this Church, especially, bear in mind that they are bound, from morning to night, in all that they are and all that they do to be speaking on the behalf of God!

But, further, we are bound to do this by giving instruction. All of you who have been taught should also teach and I am sure there is a great need of instruction in this age—instruction, I mean, upon the things of God. We have probably more present need of instruction than of exhortation. We have many who exhort, but few who edify. Do, dear Friends, whether you teach in the Sunday school, or stand up at the corner of the street, or talk with friends and comrades, try to make known the name and Nature and attributes of God! Tell of His claims, the perfect righteousness demanded by His Law and the penalties due to disobedience. Speak on God’s behalf of His Gospel’s freeness, fullness and sureness. Speak on God’s behalf concerning the doctrine of His Providence and the great Truths of His Grace and Sovereignty.

Do not let those around you die for lack of knowledge! Make the name of the Lord to be known as much as lies in you. All themes, if rightly regarded, point to God and are best seen when He is our Standard. There is a great need that we should be continually putting Gospel Truths in the sunlight of God, giving clear instruction to the sons of men in reference to the Character, the work, the purposes, the will, the supremacy of God in Christ Jesus—for the Lord, He is God, even He is God, alone, and the whole earth shall yet know this. For this end we have yet to speak on God’s behalf.

Thirdly, there is another way of doing this, namely, by bearing personal testimony to what you have known and felt and experienced of the good things of God. This is a very powerful way of speaking on God’s behalf. Tell of your own sense of sin worked in you by the Holy Spirit. Tell of your own delight in the pardoning blood. Tell of the power of prayer as proved by yourself. Tell of the reality of faith and the fidelity of God to His promises and illustrate these by your own history. Perhaps you are not doing this from alarm lest you should be thought egotistical. If Paul had never spoken of himself in his Epistles, we should have been great losers and I do not suppose that Paul would have been any the humbler for his silence.

It is a mock humility, it is a detestable humility, which robs God of His Glory because we are afraid somebody will criticize us if we spoke to His praise! Such a motive is sheer selfishness—it is base pride when a man, to make himself the better thought of, dares not say, “My God did this and that for me, this and that by me and unto Him be praise.” Bear your testimony in your homes and tell your friends what great things God has done for you. Say among the heathen, “The Lord has done great things for us whereof we are glad.” Be witnesses for the Lord in all companies!

Sometimes, too, we may have to bear our testimony by way of controversy. We are to contend earnestly for the faith. Have you not heard it said, “Why cannot a man preach his own views and let other people alone?” Yes, why didn’t Luther do so? Why didn’t he take the advice of Staupnitz when he said, “Go to your cell and pray and leave these matters to God and hold your tongue”? Where had been the Reformation if he had followed that sage advice? Could not Calvin have done so and studied the decrees of God by himself and have made no war on Rome? Where would have been the Church of the present day?

It is an easy way to save your skin, to believe what you believe and let other people alone. Martyrs at the stake and confessors in prison were fools on the hypothesis that controversy is wrong! No, it is a part of our religion to let no error alone, to draw the sword and fight the good fight, warring against the many false spirits which have come into the world! If you ever hear severe criticisms upon bold and strong speeches which assail error, do not join in those criticisms. If you do, I do not know that those who are the victims of your remarks will care much about it, but you will be fighting on the wrong side—and that is an important point for you to think of. If you are wise, you will let the Christian soldier war his warfare and, at the very least, not oppose.

Surely, if error is to have liberty, the Truth of God ought not to be bound! Our “modern thought” men are the least liberal of all professors. Their bigotry outbigots all that has gone before! They have a warm side for every error, but the old-fashioned orthodox Gospel is sneered at, run down and caricatured. Well, here is the end of the matter—by God’s Grace we have believed and what we have believed we hold fast—and this day, again, we lift up a banner because of the Truth of God and rejoice that we have yet to speak on God’s behalf!

There is another way of speaking on God’s behalf and that is by pleading with sinners, setting forth God’s claims, urging them to accept God’s gracious way of mercy, reminding them of God’s right to our obedience and of the demand of His justice that sin should be punished. It is setting before them the Sovereignty of God so that they shall admit that they have no claims upon His goodness and urging them to yield to Him and accept the Grace which He so spontaneously gives.

You can all do something of this—I pray you do a great deal more. During the late special services many of you have been diligent in speaking to strangers in the pews—keep up the custom, Brothers and Sisters! You used to do it years ago—renew the habit. Your hearts are warm and your tongues have come into practice! Go on, I pray you, as you have begun. Say, each one, “I have permitted many to go in and out of the pew without a word for Christ, but it shall not be so again, for I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.”

III. My third head is, LET US DO IT, but I have no time to attempt it except in the briefest fashion. I have to speak on behalf of God to those among you who are utterly careless about Divine claims. How long will you provoke the Majesty of Heaven? Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth! The Lord has nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Him! “The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib, but you do not know Him and do not consider.” Are you honest towards everybody but God? Will you consider everyone but your Maker? Do you cast an eye of love on all except the great Being who is Love itself?

Some of you have lived half a century and yet have neglected all the claims of your God. I beseech you remember that the time will come when He will reckon with you and call you to account. The talents committed to you have all been buried as yet—what will you say in that day when He shall call you to His bar? Oh, for God’s sake, even if you leave out all considerations of your own eternal condition, by the common honesty which suggests that each one should have his own, I pray you turn your eyes to God and think upon His Christ!

I speak, again, on God’s behalf to many who are undecided and this is my message—How long will you linger between two opinions? If God is God, serve Him! If Baal is God, serve him! It is time that you should put an end to these hesitations—that the equivocal life which you are now leading should close in one way or the other! You said years ago that you were almost persuaded! You are no better today—you are worse and will grow worse, still—and in the end you will perish in your sins unless you come to a dead halt, consider your ways, acquaint yourself with God and be at peace. Oh, I pray you hear the voice which cries to you to cease

your wandering and return to your God!

I would speak to you new converts on the behalf of God just these few sentences. See to it that your conversion is true. Have no superficial religion. Pray God to plow you deep that there may be a sure harvest. Remember, if you get healed before you are wounded, it will serve no useful purpose. Many a surgeon has filmed a wound and found that he has done more hurt than good. You must be killed before you can be made alive! You must be stripped before you can be clothed. See to it that you repent as well as believe the Gospel, for a dry-eyed faith is not the faith of God’s elect and will not save you. Repent and be converted! Let sin be abhorred, lamented and forsaken! Then, with the precious blood of Christ to make you clean, go on your way rejoicing!

O you new converts who are to be brought into the Church, I speak on God’s behalf to you! I hope you will be better than your fathers, better far than some of us who have been a stiff-necked generation! I hope you will come in among us as plastic material which the Lord Jesus will mold according to His will. I trust you will come into the Church like firebrands, like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame—that all of us may anew be set on fire! There are some of us—I will not say who—but each one may judge for himself, who are quite cold. O that their arctic hearts may become a torrid region! May the Lord warm the mass right through that we may praise and bless His name.

And now, to you Christians, I have yet to speak on the behalf of God. Is it necessary I should? Do you love the Lord? Do you really love Him? “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” Mary, Hannah, do you, indeed, love your Lord? Then what manner of persons ought we to be? What lives should love prompt us to lead? Come, let us gird our garments about us and give ourselves up, once again, to His service, by whom we are brought near unto God. May the Holy Spirit come upon us in a sevenfold measure from this day forward, to the praise of the Glory of His name who gives us the great privilege of saying, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.”

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SPEAKING ON GOD’S BEHALF  
NO. 3543

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1916.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.”  
Job 36:2.

So said Elihu. And verily many of us might make the same resolve. We have tasted that the Lord is gracious. When first we came to Him laden with guilt and full of woes, we found Him ready to pardon—a God with whom there is plenteous redemption—

*“Many days have passed since then,*

*Many changes have we seen.”*  
Still, we have the same tale to tell. God has been faithful to us under all circumstances! He has passed by our backslidings. He has been patient with all of our shortcomings and He has borne with our waywardness. To this day His kindness has not abated, His promise has not been forfeited and His Covenant is unbroken—it has never failed us. In bounden duty, yet with cheerful gratitude, we are compelled to say that the Lord is good and His mercy endures forever! On God’s behalf, then, we will speak. Much reason have we to do so. While the world is scoffing or despising, while some are doubting and others are blaspheming. While idolatry and infidelity have their respective champions, we will offer our personal testimony in the teeth of all the Lord’s adversaries. Blessed be His name, He is a faithful and true God, and if all the dwellers on earth should belie and forsake Him, His love binds us fast! We cannot, neither will we let our trust in Him be displaced or our witness to Him be silenced! It seems to me that the chief business of a Christian while here below is to speak on God’s behalf. Why is he placed here? Lower ends or meaner objectives do not appear to me to resolve that question. Merely to work, to toil, to fulfill his days as a hireling, in common with the rest of his fellow creatures, were a poor account to give of a pilgrim bound to the heavenly city! Is he not allowed to tarry here that he may glorify his God by speaking on His behalf? Are we not, each one of us, appointed to linger in these lowlands that we may personally bear witness to what we have heard and seen, tasted and handled, tested and proved to be true of the good Word of Life? This sacred obligation may be very heart-searching to some of you. I am afraid there are dumb tongues that do not speak on God’s behalf—and which of us can escape a sharp rebuke on this score? Those of us who do speak, speak not as we should—we are not always giving such evidence and bearing such witness as well becomes us on God’s behalf.

I purpose this evening to mention some of the occasions on which we have yet to speak on God’s behalf. Some prevalent excuses for silence. Some imperative reasons for bearing testimony. And some pointed suggestions to those who feel compelled to open their mouth boldly for the honor of God. To my mind, it seems obvious that—

I. THERE ARE CERTAIN OCCASIONS WHEN EVERY SAVED ONE SHOULD SPEAK ON GOD’S BEHALF.  
Is it not peculiarly incumbent upon us immediately after we have found peace by putting our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ? He that believes with his heart is bound, according to the Gospel rule, to confess also with his mouth. Have you heard the good tidings, the way of salvation, yourself—believed it and received the fullness of its blessing? Then you are forbidden to hide your light under a bushel! You are admonished to let it be seen by all that are in the house. You are not, as a coward, to conceal your allegiance to your Lord, but you are, as a warrior, to put on the King’s livery, enter the ranks and join with the rest of His people. Is not this the message we are told to circulate, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”? Should you not, therefore, avow your faith and confess your Lord in Baptism? Then, having believed His Word and obeyed His precept, take up His Cross as one who is dead and buried with Him in the outward type and symbol—to follow wherever He leads! This seems to me, as I read the Word of God, to have been the course with all the early Christians. They believed and were baptized. They did not postpone or procrastinate, but no sooner were they Christians than they confessed their Christianity in Baptism. And why is it not so now? Would God that His people would come back to the simple methods of the early Churches and feel that, being saved, their next business is to give the answer of a good conscience toward God, speaking thus on His behalf, and avowing themselves to be the Lord’s people!  
This is but a fitting preface to a life of testimony. The whole of a Christian’s career should be vocal with spiritual power. By the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit within him, he should ring out, as it were, in silver notes, through all his conversation, both in the Church and in the world, a goodly, gracious, grateful testimony—“I have yet to speak on God’s behalf. Even if I have spoken for the last 20 years, it becomes me yet to speak on God’s behalf.” I may be gray-headed, I may lean upon my staff, I may come near the bounds of man’s short span on this poor stage, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” Even when pillows hold up my aching head and when my flesh and my heart are failing—until the pulse of life shall flag and the power of speech shall fail—our witness to the sons of men must never falter, much less must it come to an ignoble end. “I have yet to speak.” When first I knew Him I was compelled to speak. Would that every converted man was moved instantly to avow his Lord! But if we have anything to regret in the past, let us not be hesitant now. Say it, resolve it, yes, vow it! I have and I shall have yet to speak on God’s behalf till speech shall fail me, till, dying, “I clasp my Savior in my arms, the antidote of death.”  
And oh, how specially bound the Christian is to speak on God’s behalf when he is cast among ungodly men and women! There may be in the house where you live no lover of Jesus except yourself. Take care that your conversation makes the rest know that you have been with Jesus and have learned of Him! There is no other candle in the house—oh, put not the extinguisher on that one! You are the only salt—take care that you are sprinkled over the mass. Let the savor of your walk and conversation be diffused among your associates! At times the name of Christ will be blasphemed, perhaps, in your presence. Or it may be unholy and even lewd conversation will assail your ears. It is for you to express your displeasure at anything which is displeasing to Him you serve! You must put in a word, though you do but feebly thrust it in edgeways, for the Christ whom ungodly tongues are slandering! You may not sit still and hear your best Friend evilly spoken of—that were ungrateful in the extreme! Well might He say, “Is this your kindness to your Friend?” Should you smile, they will think you are amused, but if you laugh with them over an unholy jest, they would say you enjoyed it! “You also were as one of them” was a charge made against a professor. Oh, let it never be laid against any of us! If we see our neighbor sin and rebuke him not when the opportunity offers, we become partakers in his sin. Remember this— on such occasions it is our bounden duty to speak on God’s behalf!  
Yet again, we meet with Brothers and Sisters in affliction. They are mourning and bemoaning themselves and their hardships. God’s own people commonly find that in all their trials they are beset with temptations. How apt they are to speak unadvisedly because they think untowardly of the order of God’s Providence and the manner of His love! I wish this ill condition of the heart and this bad habit of the lips were less prevalent than unhappily it is. They talk as if they served a hard Master and they murmur as if His Providence were peculiarly severe towards them. I beseech you, seize the propitious moment to speak on God’s behalf! Daughter of poverty! You who have known the pinch of want, tell of the faithfulness of God that supported you! Child of pain! You who have tossed so long upon a bed of affliction, changing your posture over and over till your bones began to peep through your skin, tell, you patient sufferers—and there are many of you whose pangs are smart, whose wounds are incurable—tell how God has succored you! Be not silent, you who have gone through fire and water, the furnace and the flood! Testify, you fathers in the Church, and you mothers in Israel speak on God’s behalf of the goodness, the guidance and the Grace you have had. Do not let the young recruits entertain hard thoughts of your Lord and Master! Tell them that the battle of life, stern though it is, does not baffle His counsel or His care. He who has upheld you will bear them through ten thousand billows, keep them alive in the midst of afflictions fiery as a furnace seven times heated—and even to the end will prove that He is their gracious God! You have yet to speak on God’s behalf.  
Now, Brothers and Sisters, some of you may not only have so to speak in the chambers where the afflicted are confined, and in the Sunday School where the little children come round your knee, and in your own families and workshops, but you may have a call to speak in the open streets, or in the pulpits of our sanctuaries. I pray you, then, if you have ability for such work in this day of blasphemy and rebuke, stand not back! I am persuaded that some of my Brothers look for greater talents, before they can speak for Christ, than they have a right to expect at the first. If none are permitted to speak on God’s behalf but those who have ten talents, surely the Kingdom of God must be deeply indebted to the education and scholarship of learned men! But if I read this Word aright, it is not so. Rather has it pleased God to take weak and foolish things to confound the mighty and the wise. Therefore, let not the Brother of low degree keep back his testimony. If you can only say a few good words, say them! Who would withhold a few drops of moisture from the flowers in the garden because he had no plenteous streams at his command? Should every twinkling star cease its shining because it was not a sun, the night—how dark! The firmament—how bereft of its beauty! Did each drop of rain refuse to fall because it was but a drop, we would lack the goodly showers which cheer the thirsty soil! Do what you can if you cannot do what you would, for you, even you, have yet to speak on God’s behalf! And, perhaps, you have more talent than you think—a little exercise might bring out your latent powers. Men grow not up to man’s estate in a week or a year. Rome was not built in a day. How can you expect to be qualified to serve your God with much success unless you are trained with drill and discipline? If you begin to walk, or even to crawl on all fours, you may afterwards learn to run. Be content to use such powers as you have to the utmost of your ability, for He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Do not reserve your strength, but consecrate all you have, “for He gives more Grace. ” Diligently cultivate every faculty, knowing that He gives Grace upon Grace. “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.”  
I know not whether I am just now like the seraph who flew with a live coal, bearing it in the tongs from off the altar, to touch some lips, to put it to anyone’s mouth, and say, “Lo, this has touched your lips.” It may be so. Some child of God, up to now dumb, may be called henceforth to speak for his Master. If you now hear a voice saying, “Who will go for Us? Whom shall We send?” Let your answer be, “Here am I, send me.” Respond, in the words of our text, “I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.” Turn we now to—  
II. THOSE ARGUMENTS WHICH READILY SUGGEST THEMSELVES TO SOME MINDS FOR KEEPING SILENCE.  
Have I yet to speak on God’s behalf? “No,” says one, “pardon me, but speaking out for God cannot be accounted essential to salvation. Are there not some who come, like Nicodemus, by night? May there not be many Believers in Jesus who have not the courage to speak out of the fullness of their heart? Why should not I be one of these secret Believers, and yet enter into Heaven?” You think to go to the Celestial City by a by-road, unseen and unnoticed, hoping to be safe at the last. Suppose it true that to avow your faith is not absolutely essential to salvation—I ask you if it is not absolutely essential to obedience? And I ask again if obedience is not essential to every Believer as a vindication of his faith? Though you may tell me that there are many secret Believers, I venture to affirm that you never knew one, or if you think you did, the secret must have been ill kept if you knew it! Obviously, if it was a genuine secret, it must have been beyond your understanding, or mine either, so we cannot fairly argue about it. And as we do not know that such a thing ever was, we have no fact to build upon. Surely to someone or other that gracious secret must have been made known, or what you tried to conceal someone would have found out. I should think if your Christian character and conduct were not palpable, your Christianity could scarcely be sterling! Who can conceal fire in his bosom? Will it not sooner or later break out? The more wicked the persons by whom you are surrounded, the more readily will they discover the difference between a Christian and themselves. You can scarcely conceal the Light of God—it must reveal itself. Why, therefore, should you attempt to hide it? Merely to do what is absolutely necessary for salvation is a mean, selfish thing! To be always thinking about whether this or that is necessary to your being saved—is this how you would show your allegiance to the Savior? Should the selfdenial of our blessed Lord and Master be requited with the selfishness of followers who are always muttering, “Cui bono? What profit can I make of His service?” Oh, that we may be delivered from such an ungenerous disposition! Knowing that Christ has done so much for us and feeling the compelling power of love, may we rejoice to serve Him, whether the service shall be grateful to our taste, or mortifying to our pride! And in so doing, we shall soon find that in keeping His Commandments there is great reward!  
“But do you happen to be of a very retiring disposition?” A beautiful disposition that is, I have no doubt, and rare enough in some select circles to claim admiration, but undesirable, indeed, on some particular fields at some critical junctures. For a soldier, when the battle is raging, to be of a retiring disposition would be neither patriotic nor praiseworthy. Had this dainty temper been the main virtue of the hosts from where British heroes leapt forth, the trumpet of fame had long since ceased to resound the deeds of prowess of which every Englishman is proud! A soldier of Christ may well be modest in estimating himself, but he had need be mighty in serving his Lord. If he is too modest to avow his Master, this shameless modesty betrays a cowardly spirit, at which his comrades well might shudder—  
*“Ashamed of Jesus? That dear Friend  
On whom my hopes of Heaven depend?  
No! When I blush, be this my shame,  
That I no more revere His name.”*  
Ashamed of Jesus? Really, the words seem so harsh that they imply an insult! Yet this beautiful, retiring disposition, when translated out of the fine words in which you wrap it up, means nothing more nor less than a disloyalty which verges hard on treason! Ashamed of Jesus, who shed His blood for you? Ah, you must all confess that there is no violation of genuine modesty in avowing one’s intense attachment and allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ! This may be true retirement, after all, for you may renounce, thereby, the world’s praises, repudiate her honors, bring upon yourself her loudest censure and be requited with the cold shoulder by your companions when you take up your cross and follow Him.  
But have I not often heard persons says, “Why should I speak on God’s behalf, when already some who do speak are hypocrites?” This seems to me a reason why you should speak twice as much in order to counteract their false testimony—and why you should speak with all the more carefulness and integrity, making their example a beacon, lest you fall into the same condemnation! If a friend of mine has an enemy who is a snake in the grass, pretending kindness while he is plotting mischief, am I, therefore, to say, “I will forsake my friend, and not acknowledge him, because another is a traitor to him”? Such reasoning would refute itself! Let us not, therefore, delude ourselves with its subtlety. The more hypocrites there are, the more need of honest men to grasp the banner of the Cross! The more deceivers, the more cause why the faithful and the true should come and fill up the ranks—and prevent the battle being turned over to the enemy!  
Or do you hesitate to speak for God because you are afraid your testimony would be so very feeble? But why disquiet yourselves on this ground? Are not all great things the aggregate of little things? And may there not be something great involved in the motion of the little? A good word from your tongue may kindle a thought or a series of thoughts which may issue in the conversion of one whose eloquence shall shake the nation! You emit but a spark, but what a conflagration it may cause, Heaven only knows! What though you seem tiny and insignificant as the coral insect, yet if you do your fair share of the work with your fellows, you may help to pile up an island that shall be abundant in fertility and adorned with beauty. You are not called upon to do anything that exceeds your power or your skill. It is enough that you do what you can. God requires not according to what a man has not, but according to what a man has. Therefore, let it be no

excuse for your silence that you cannot speak with a voice of thunder.  
“But,” says one, “were I to open my mouth on God’s behalf, I should feel ever afterwards a weight of responsibility from which I could not escape. A man of God standing by that pool not many weeks ago said to me, “I dare not be baptized, though I believe it is a Scriptural ordinance, because I feel that it involves such a solemn profession. I would never be able to live up to it.” My reply to him was. “Is not that the very reason why you should yield up yourself to God at once—for the more we feel bound to holiness, the better?” “Your vows are upon me.” Should the profession of our faith in Christ become a restriction to us, it need not be regretted on that account. We need such restrictions! If we shall feel bound to be more precise, we serve a precise God—and if we feel bound to be more jealous, we serve a jealous God. I like to see men put upon their mettle. Members of this Church, whenever the world picks holes in your coat and watches you, I am thankful to the world for doing so! It is good for our welfare to have an eagle eye upon us. What though Argus uses all his eyes, let us only be what we should be, and we need not mind who criticized or carps at us! If we are not what we ought to be, but mere hypocrites, then, in truth, we may well wish to be hidden! Confess the name of Jesus, become a true follower in His blessed footsteps and walk with all humility and carefulness as His Grace shall enables you, worthy of your high calling! Be bold to confess His name all the more! Certainly none the less because such confession will lay you under solemn obligations to live nearer to Him than before!  
Still, I can imagine that there are many here who are using some excuse or other, which they would not like to mention. They say they will wait a little—they will tarry awhile. Others say nothing, but are simply neglecting the duty. Well, I will not stay to argue with them, but I will rather pray that God the Holy Spirit may convince them, if they have been quickened from their spiritual death and are this day heirs of God, to face their incumbent duty and their blessed privilege in all ways—and on all prudent opportunities to speak on God’s behalf. But there are—  
III. VALID REASONS WHY WE SHOULD SPEAK ON GOD’S BEHALF, to which I will now draw your attention.  
Surely it is demanded of all Believers. We are bidden to confess with the mouth if we have believed with the heart. We have, moreover, the promise that, “he that with his heart believes, and with his mouth confesses, shall be saved.” And this likewise, “He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father who is in Heaven.” The alternative is fraught with judgment—“He that denies Me”—which signifies a non-confession—“he that denies Me before men, him will I deny before My Father which is in Heaven.” If it is, then, the Lord’s will, it is at your peril that you forget or neglect it! “He that knows his Master’s will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.” Hasten, then, you backward Christian! Make haste and delay not to keep this Commandment! Be convinced that you have yet to speak on God’s behalf.  
Be assured that such testimony as you can and ought to bear would be a great comfort to the Lord’s people. You do not know, some of you saved ones who have never confessed your faith, what pleasure it would give the minister. I know of no joy comparable to that of hearing that one has been made the instrument of the conversion of a soul. It keeps our spirits up and our Master knows that we have good need, sometimes, of some success to encourage us. He who thinks that the Christian ministry is an easy post—exempt from care and free and from trials—had better try it. It were better to be a galley-slave, chained to the oar, than to be a minister of the Gospel, if it were not for the strong consolations which support us in the present—and for the Divine reward which there will be at the last. He who diligently discharges this solemn vocation never knows rest or release from anxiety. His mind is always actively exercised in his Master’s service. His heart bears about a load which it cannot shake off. He dreams of some who walk disorderly—and wakes to sigh and cry over others who grow cold or lukewarm. He must plow the stony ground and he can but regret the loss of his seed. He scatters the good seed on the way, and if it come not up, by-and-by, according to the promise, he cries, “Who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” As cold water to a thirsty soul, so would the news be of your conversion! You saved ones ought, for that reason, to speak on God’s behalf!  
And how encouraging it is to the entire Church! In the Church assembly I am sure we often have simple music that is more thrilling than any of the anthems in your cathedrals. There is joyful melody in our hearts before the Lord when we hear of a broken-hearted penitent finding peace, of an outcast reclaimed from the wilds, an outrageous sinner led into paths of obedience and holiness! Even the angels account this to be rare music to be mightily relished. I believe they strike their golden harps to nobler melody when they learn that prodigals have sought their Father’s face! You have yet to speak on God’s behalf for His Church’s sake, that she may be encouraged!  
Greatly, too, does it behoove you to speak on God’s behalf, for the sake of the undecided. Some of them would probably be fully persuaded if they saw your example. How many people there are in the world who are led by the influence that others exert over them! Thousands have been brought to Jesus just as those early disciples, of whom we read, that Andrew followed Jesus, and presently brought his own brother, Simon, to Jesus. Or Philip, who, after being found of Jesus, finds Nathanael and tells him and draws him to the Savior. We can all exert an influence of some kind—let us tell what God has worked in us and many a one who halts between two opinions may, by Divine Grace, be induced to cast in his lot with the people of God!  
Look on the great outlying world. What a mass of creatures whose lives must prove a blessing or a curse! Will you not speak on God’s behalf for their sakes? Do you not feel compelled to bear your testimony against their neglect, their waywardness and their willful disobedience of the great Father? With habitual negligence and constant forgetfulness, they slight Him who never forgets them, Him who, with unslumbering eyes, watches for their good! Lay this to heart, my Brothers and Sisters, and come out, I pray you! Be you separate, touch not the unclean thing! You have your Father’s promise that He will be a Father to you and you shall be His children. You are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world—why, then, should you seek to remain mingled with the world in name? Be distinct and separate! Take up your cross daily and follow your Master.  
For your own sake, too, I would venture to press this upon any of you who are backward in avowing your faith. You cannot conceive what blessing it would bring you were you distinctly and persistently to speak for Jesus! That timidity which now embarrasses you would speedily cease to check your zeal. After you had once openly professed Christ, gifts that now slumber unconsciously to yourself would be developed by exercise. Rich comfort the service of God would then bring you! Were you ever to win a soul for Jesus, you would be happier than the merchantman when he found the goodly pearl! You would think that all the happiness you ever knew before was less than nothing compared with the joy of saving a soul from death and rescuing a sinner from going down into the pit of Hell! Oh, the bliss of speaking a word that affects three worlds, making a change in Heaven, earth and Hell, as devils grind their teeth in wrath because one of their victims is snatched out of their jaws—as men on earth wonder and admire the change that Grace has worked—and as angels rejoice when they hear of sinners saved!  
For the sake of Him who bought you with His precious blood, seek out others who have been redeemed at the same inestimable price! For the sake of that blessed Spirit who brought you to Jesus and who now moves in you that you may move others to come to Jesus, be up and doing, steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord! You have yet to speak on God’s behalf, and these are the motives that ought to move you. And now let me close with—  
IV. ONE OR TWO SUGGESTIONS.  
Should you feel, dear Friends, that you ought to speak on God’s behalf—and I hope you do feel it—whether Brothers in public ministry, or Sisters in the privacy of social circles, I would counsel you, before you begin to speak, to seek of God guidance as to how you shall speak on His behalf. There are better words spoken of by the ignorant when they wait upon God, than by the wise when they speak out of their own heads. It is wonderful to read the answers which some of the martyrs gave to their accusers. Think of that woman, Anne Askew, how, after being racked and tortured, she nonplussed the priests. It is really marvelous to read how she overcame them. And there was my Lord Mayor of London—what a fool she made of him! He put to her this question—“Woman, if a mouse were to eat the blessed sacrament which contains the body and blood of Christ, what do you think would become of it?” “My lord,” she answered, “that is a deep question. I had rather you would answer it yourself. My Lord Mayor, what do you think would become of the mouse that should do that,” “I verily believe” said the Lord Mayor, whose ears must have been preternaturally long, “I verily believe the mouse would be damned!” And what said Anne Askew? Why, what could she reply better than this, “Alas, poor mouse.” Often a few short words—three or four words—have met the case when the martyrs have waited upon God! And they have made their adversaries seem so ridiculous that I think they might hear a laugh both from Heaven and Hell at once at their foolery, for God’s servants have convicted them of folly and put them to shame! Ask what you should say, particularly when men would wrest your words, and when they would catch you in the speech. Be like your Master sometimes— stoop down and write on the ground—wait a while. Sometimes a question is best answered by another question. Ask your Master to teach you that rhetoric which confuses men who would catch you in your speech.  
And if you seek the conversion of others, especially remember that it is words from God’s mouth rather than words from your mouth that will effect it. Ask the Master, for He knows how to draw the bow when you cannot. You might draw it at a venture, but He can draw at a certainty, so that the arrows shall surely pierce between the joints of the armor. Here is a prayer for every man and woman that has to speak for Jesus—“Open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.”  
And look to the Holy Spirit, that He would bless what He directs you to say. It were better to speak five words by the promptings of the Holy Spirit than to utter whole volumes without His guidance. Better be filled with silent musings by the blessed Spirit of God than pour forth floods of words and sentences, however pleasant, without His influence. There is an irresistible power about the man who has an unction from the Holy One which Demosthenes or Pericles, Cicero or Socrates, never dreamed of! Put the man up to speak to his fellow men who is endowed with this mysterious power and he will make hearts of stone melt and force a way for the Truth of God through gates of brass and bars of triple steel! Where the Divine Witness attests the word spoken, there is a majesty in the simplest utterances that carries conviction to the heart, while it makes Satan and all his Myrmidons tremble! Seek for this might. Tarry at Jerusalem till you are endowed with power from on high and then speak boldly on God’s behalf! Wherever your calling may be, and whenever your opportunity shall arise, speak as one whose heart has been enlarged, as one whose mouth has been opened, as one who is filled with the Spirit!  
Very earnestly would I caution you young Christians not to put off or delay speaking, otherwise you will lack the facility you might quickly attain by habitually attending to it. An aptitude for speaking to people one by one is very desirable. I know some Brothers in the ministry whom I greatly envy for the possession of a talent which I do not possess in the same proportion as they do. The genius of conversation so sanctified that one can be personal and yet prudent—plain and pointed, yet withal pleasant—administering a rebuke without endangering a rebuff, winning a man’s confidence while wounding his pride and commending the Gospel by the courteousness with which it is stated—that is a power of utterance to be emulated by us all! We are too apt to be ambitious of speaking to the many and oblivious of the talking power that can deftly speak to a friend. Begin early, then, after your conversion to speak, one by one, with your kinsfolk and acquaintances! Keep up the practice. Should you find yourselves getting sluggish, so that it becomes irksome to you, seek unto the Lord, confess your sin before Him. The tact of speaking to individuals is worth all the study and attention you can bestow upon it. Ask for wisdom and prudence to know when to speak and how to speak! It is not every fisherman who can catch fish. There is a knack about it and so there is about speaking for Christ. There is a suitable time and there is a suitable way. Why, there are some people who, if they were to try to speak for Christ, would do mischief! They have got such forbidding faces, such ungainly manners, such a coarse way of expressing themselves, that in spite of good intentions, they rather hinder than help. They expect to catch their flies with vinegar, but they will never succeed or be able to do it. If they could learn to be kind and genial, affable and sympathetic, they would be far more likely to succeed. There are men who put the Truth of God in such a shape that it looks like a lie. There are other men who do a good deal with so little delicacy that they affront those they intend to oblige. Do let us learn, when we speak for God, to speak in the best possible manner, exercising all the Christian Graces! Of our blessed Lord it was said, “Never man spoke like this Man.” Of us who are His humble followers, may it be observed that we have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him.  
God grant you, Believers all, Grace to speak for God! And you unbelievers, may you be brought to trust the Master and to love Him, and then speak for Him! And His be the praise, though yours the profit! Amen.

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1379 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 36.5

THE MAGNANIMITY OF GOD  
NO. 1379

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 21, 1877, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Behold, God is mighty, and despises not any:  
He is mighty in strength and wisdom” (or, in strength of heart). Job 36:5.**

WE cannot wonder that, in the extreme bitterness of his soul, Job was driven to utter some expressions which he would not, afterwards, have attempted to justify. Among the rest Job had thought and almost said that God had despised him. In the 10th chapter, at the 3rd verse, he appealed to Him thus, “Is it good unto You that You should oppress, that You should despise the work of Your hands?” Elihu, in his zeal to vindicate the righteousness of his Maker, fixes his mind, as I think, upon that expression of Job and meets it with a positive denial, proving his point from the might and the great-heartedness of the Lord. He had promised to fetch his argument from afar and, therefore, he does not argue against God’s despising any from His mercy or goodness.

Nor does he give us a commonplace reason for his assertion, such as would easily have suggested itself even to the thoughtless, but he grounds his declaration that God despises no one and, consequently, not Job, upon the fact of God’s being mighty. “Behold, God is mighty, and despises not any: He is mighty in strength of heart.” That form of argument would not have naturally occurred to you or to me. We might even have been inclined to argue the other way and say—He is so mighty that He cannot be expected to consider such feeble things as His creatures and He despises them all! And it is, therefore, little wonder that He should despise Job among the rest. Elihu, with far better judgment than the most of us possess, draws quite the opposite inference and declares that because God is mighty, therefore He despises no one!

Facts are convincing arguments and if you carefully observe, you will see that usually those persons who despise others are weak and, if weak nowhere else, weak in understanding. Those little men who are dressed in brief authority are often harsh and tyrannical, but the truly great are courteous, tender and considerate. The strong have no reason to be suspicious and jealous and, therefore, they are free from envy. They are void of fear of the power of others and, therefore, they become anxious that their own power should not be oppressive to the weak ones around them. They become considerate of others because this furnishes a fit sphere for the use of their strength. Yon man who is only strong in appearance and is really feeble, despises others because he dreads them—and knowing how much he deserves to be despised, himself, he pretends to look down upon his neighbors.

It is your half-educated man who sneers. It is your pretender to gentility who gives himself airs. Wherever anything is mere pretense, it endeavors to shield itself from criticism by casting sarcasms upon its rivals. It is

said of the Pharisees that they trusted in themselves, that they were righteous and despised others. Had they been truly righteous, they would not have despised others, but because they had a mere veneer of religion, a superficial varnish or gilding of righteousness—or something that looked like righteousness—they looked down with supreme scorn upon all who did not make the same show as themselves.

God is so great in all things that He despises none! He has no rivals and has no need to sustain Himself by lowering the good name of others. He is supremely real. He is so true and thorough that in Him there can never be so much as the thought of despising any in order to guard Himself. His power is not soon awakened to war because it has no opposition to fear. His might is associated with gentleness—fury is not in Him because it is such great might that when it is once in action it devours His adversaries as flame consumes the stubble! God is too great to be contemptuous, too mighty to be haughty.

Note, too, that mere brute force may despise the weak, but the might here ascribed to the Lord is of a higher order. His might is seen not only in that power which rocks the solid world with earthquakes and shakes the heavens with tempests, but in that nobler form of might which reveals itself in wisdom and nobleness of mind. The power of His arm is equaled by the greatness of His spirit. His might lies in His heart—in His understanding and in His love. He is mighty in spiritual things, in sublimity of thought, grandeur of motive, nobleness of spirit and loftiness of aim. When you perceive the exaltation of the Divine Mind and the sublimity of the Divine Character, you perceive the reason why the Lord does not despise any.

To put my meaning into one cumbersome but expressive word, it is the magnanimity of God which prevents His despising any. The sun is so glorious that it refuses not to shine upon a dunghill! The rain is so plenteous that it declines not to drop into the tiny flower cup! The sea is so vast that it does not hesitate to waft a feather and God is so mighty that He rejects not the praises of babes and sucklings. If God were little, He might despise the little. If He were weak He would disdain the weak. If He were untrue He would be supercilious to those about Him. But, seeing He is none of these, but is God Over All, blessed forever, the Only Wise God, we have to deal with One who, though He is high, has respect unto the lowly! Our God is One who, though He humbles Himself even to observe the things which are done in Heaven, yet despises not the cry of the humble! The magnanimity of God is the reason why He despises no one. By the aid of the Holy Spirit we will, this morning, first dwell upon the doctrine and then consider its practical uses.

I. First, I want you reverently to consider THE DOCTRINE that God is mighty and, therefore, despises not any. Begin at the beginning. The Lord is mighty—that is to say, God is so strong that immeasurable and inconceivable power belongs to Him. “God has spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongs unto God.” All that God has already done proves His power, but we cannot, even from His greatest works, guess at what He is yet able to do! “Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him? The thunder of His power, who can understand?” Since there is no boundary to His power and it would be sinful to attempt to limit the Holy One of Israel, we are free to believe that the Lord could work in even a more stupendous scale than He has done if it so pleased Him.

Search as long as you will, and by His help obtain as clear a discovery of Divine power as was ever given to mortal mind, but remember that He is past finding out and that even if you saw Him stand and measure the earth, and drive asunder the nations and cause the everlasting mountains to be scattered, and the perpetual hills to bow, you would yet have to say with Habakkuk, “There was the hiding of His power.” With the Lord nothing is impossible! Learn somewhat of His power from the following facts. First, all the power there is in the universe came from God at first, comes from Him, still, and, at His bidding, would, in a single moment, cease! Whatever of force there is in inanimate Nature it is but God at work. He set the wheel of Nature in motion and at His bidding it would cease to turn.

Whatever mental faculty there may be in cherub or seraph, angel or man, it is but an emanation from His creative energy, a ray from His eternal sun which would cease if He restrained His might. If Jehovah willed it, yonder enormous orbs, which now revolve in order around the central sphere, would rush in wild confusion to inevitable destruction! The law of gravitation, which holds all things in their places, would be broken in an instant if He withdrew the force which makes the law a power! There would be no coherence among atoms—no, the atoms, themselves, would dissolve into non-existence and leave one vast sepulcher—one universal void!

Herein is power so great that we cry with Nehemiah, “You, even You, are Lord alone! You have made Heaven, the Heaven of heavens, with all their hosts, the earth and all things that are therein. The seas and all that is therein and You preserve them all and the host of Heaven worships you.” The great God can do all things without help. He needs no assistance from any created thing. Indeed, there could be no such aid, since all the power of all other beings is derived from Him! Creatures do not contribute to His strength—they only manifest Him, revealing the power which they have first of all borrowed from Him. To achieve any purpose of His heart He asks none to be His ally, for He does as He wills.

What is more, He could, with equal ease, accomplish all His purposes if all created intelligences and forces were against Him. It would make no difference to His supremacy of might though all the tremendous powers which have now been created should revolt. He that sits in the heavens would have them in derision. Even powers which set up their standard against Him are beneath His control! His enemies are His footstool—out of their rage He brings forth His peaceful purposes—“He makes the wrath of men to praise Him and the remainder thereof He does restrain.” Note well that when God has done all that He pleases, He has not spent His strength. “He faints not, neither is weary. There is no searching of His understanding.”

He watches always, but He never wearies so as to need to slumber. He works always, but He never pauses to take rest because of any weariness or exhaustion. When He has done all that He has purposed to do, He remains as ready to work as before. When He has, according to our notions, gone to the utmost of His potency, He is but at the beginning! These are

the hems of His garments, but His full Glory is not seen. I tremble while I speak upon that of which I know so little, but assuredly God is mighty in the most emphatic sense that can be conceived by the most enlarged intellect, yes, and far beyond all that has entered into the heart of man.

The text, also, tells us that He is “mighty in strength and in wisdom,” so that we have to consider that God is powerful in mind. “There is no searching of His understanding.” He not only possesses physical might, by which He creates, preserves, or destroys, but the higher power of understanding, for, “He is wonderful in counsel.” “Great is our Lord and of great power His understanding is infinite.” It is difficult to find words to express my meaning, for God is a Spirit and as far as He may reverently be spoken of as possessing a mind and intellect, He is as Omnipotent in that sphere as in the physical world. This is the security of His creatures—that He is a great-minded God! He who has great power of hand is to be dreaded unless he has corresponding greatness of soul. It is a calamity when the ruler of an empire cannot rule his own spirit.

The world has shuddered at Neros and Domitians and Caligulas who were so weak in character that they broke every law of morality and humanity—and yet had the destinies of nations under their control. Look at the conformation of the heads of those monsters and they strike you as resembling both prizefighters and idiots, or a combination of the two! And one’s blood chills at hearing that such beings were once masters of the Roman world. Happy is it for a nation when the master of its legions is of a benevolent mind and generous spirit, strong in self-restraint and irresistible in the force of virtue. In the highest degree we have this in “the Blessed and Only Potentate.” God has great thoughts, great designs, great wisdom, great goodness! He is mighty in all respects and especially in the restraint which He puts upon His wrath.

If you wish to see this, look at the forbearance and long-suffering which He manifests towards the disobedient. How matchless is His patience! How enduring His mercy! The wicked provoke Him and He feels the provocation, but yet He does not smite. Week after week they insult Him—they even touch the apple of His eye by persecuting His people—but still He lets the lifted thunder drop and gives space for repentance. He sends them messages of mercy. He implores them to turn from the error of their ways, but they harden their hearts, they blaspheme Him, they take His holy name in vain! Still, by the space of many years He bears with their incessant rebellions and though He is grieved with the hardness of their hearts, He keeps back His indignation. This patience is shown not here and there to one of our race, but to myriads of the human family—and not for one generation, only, but from generation after generation does His good Spirit strive—still does He stretch out His hands all the day long even to the disobedient and to the gainsayers. Not willing that any should perish, He waits long and patiently because He delights in mercy.

Equally wonderful, I think, is the power which God has over His own mind in the ultimate pardoning of many of these transgressors. It is marvelous that He should be able to forgive any and so perfectly to forgive! It often happens to us that we feel compelled to say, when greatly offended, “I can forgive you, but I fear I shall never forget the wrong.” God goes far beyond this, for He casts all our sins behind His back and He declares that He will not remember them against us any more, forever. What? Never? Such deep offenses! Such heinous crimes! Such provoking transgressions! Shall they never be remembered? What? Not ever remembered? Shall there not be at least a frown, or a degree of coolness on account of them? No. “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.”

It shows the great-mindedness of God that He should be able to act thus and to act thus towards the very chief of sinners! “Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity and passes by the transgressions of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever because He delights in mercy.” Let me add that when He does not forgive, but when persistent impenitence demands the final doom, God is great-souled even in the punishment of the wicked. He takes no pleasure in the sinner’s death. Judgment is His strange work. Punishment is never inflicted as a matter of arbitrary sovereignty, but always because demanded by justice. The Lord, in vindicating His justice, deals not with the poor and the obscure, alone, but with the great ones of the earth—plucking down from their high places, emperors and kings red-handed with human carnage—and casting them down to Hell.

Nor does He, on the other hand, exercise exceptional severity on the great blasphemer, but He deals with the baser sort, also, and does not spare the braggart of the streets who profanes His name. Calmly and impartially does God deal out justice, “for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.” His sentence is so just that none shall be able to criticize it. Thus He proves the greatness of His mind, for when He does condemn and punish it is never in passion, never in haste, never without exact weighing of evidence. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? “Yes, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.” Our God, then, is mighty of heart. Now, the pith of the doctrine lies here, that because of His might God, despises not any. The proof is very manifest. God is so great and mighty that all things must be little to Him. There can be nothing great to the infinite God.

There are worlds so ponderous that human reckoning cannot estimate their size. There are worlds so numerous that we have to leave them uncounted, yet separately or apart, or taken altogether in their constellations, all these must be as a drop in a bucket to Him. Since, then, all things must be little, it comes to pass that nothing is, therefore, more than little and nothing falls much more below the level of His greatness than other things which we are known to think much of. If the Divine observation and care is to extend to creatures at all, then it must be exercised upon insignificance and weakness, since, compared with Himself, there is nothing else. If you desire proof that the Lord considers the lesser things, look at Creation. The great and mighty God has displayed His greatness as much in the tiny objects which He has made as in the magnificent worlds which He has fashioned. Myriads of creatures disport themselves in a single drop of stagnant water and yet in each one of these, Omnipotence is manifested.

The bodies of those minute beings display, in every part, amazing skill and admirable design. Their very minuteness increases our wonder and compels us to feel the mightiness of the Divine Creator. For each of these infusorial creatures, so small as only to be observed beneath a strong microscope, God finds fitting food and puts life-force into each part of its organization so that it can exist, grow, mature, enjoy life, and transmit it to its successor. He sees to everything that concerns a gnat or a fly—and as surely as He watches over seraphim and cherubim He guards the worm of the earth and the minnow of the brook! God has created tiny things, not as a freak or an experiment, nor as the sport of His leisure, but in sober earnest. He has evidently put forth as much of His mind in the formation of the minute as in the fashioning of the immense!

And since He has done so, let us not question that He will deal tenderly with the poor and needy among men and He will despise none that seek Him in sincerity of heart. He who takes care of gnats and flies will hear the prayers of humble hearts and will not refuse to regard the ignorant and the obscure! Jesus, His Son, was meek and lowly in heart, and suffered the little children to come unto Him and, therefore, we who are least among men shall not be despised! The same respect to the minor things is observable in Providence. The Providence of God does not only concern wars between mighty empires and the discussions of cabinets and royal councils, but it comprehends within its rule everything that transpires. The blooming of each one of the millions of daisies in the meadows is arranged by eternal purpose and the croaking of a frog in the marsh, or the falling of a leaf from an oak in the forest is part of the plan of eternal wisdom!

The migration of each swallow is as much arranged as the voyage of Columbus! The breaking of a fowler’s net is as surely ordained as the emancipation of a nation! God is in ALL things—not a sparrow lights to the ground without your Father—and the very hairs of your head are all numbered. A Force which encompasses these little things and condescends to make them a part of His eternal purpose most evidently proves that the Lord cannot be suspected of despising any! One telling argument to prove that the magnanimity of God despises none is found in the fact that He has regarded man. David thought so when he surveyed, “the heavens, the work of God’s fingers, the moon and the stars which He had ordained,” for he exclaimed, “What is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?”

Man is neither the greatest, the strongest, nor the swiftest among animals. Lions outmatch him in force, horses in swiftness, eagles in power to soar and fish in ability to dive. Leviathan far surpasses him in bulk and behemoth exceeds him in the strength of his loins. Man is apparently a feeble creature and more likely to be the prey of beasts than their destroyer. Look at him in his naked weakness and what a defenseless, unprotected creature he appears! And yet he is monarch of the world! As David said, “You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands. You have put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the seas.”

That God should consider man is an instance of that great-mindedness which does not look at bulk and strength, but abounds in condescension. This is more clear, too, when you think of what sort of men God has most of all favored. Who are his chosen? Remember that the most intimate love of God has seldom fallen to the lot of the great ones of this earth. “Not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God has full often chosen the poor of this world.”—

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

What does Paul say in His Epistle to the Corinthians? “Things which are despised has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are.” He despises not any, we are sure, for when He ordained fathers in His Church and set 12 leaders in the Apostleship, He chose to this office neither philosophers, nor senators, nor kings, but lowly fishermen! And from that day, to this, it has been His pleasure to do His mightiest actions for His people by those who have been least esteemed among the sons of men, for He is so mighty that He despises not any.

Brethren, you know, some of you, another sweet proof that He does not despise any, for you can say in the language of David, in the 22nd Psalm, “He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither has He hid His face from him; but when he cried unto Him, He heard.” You have, some of you, been in very deep waters through bodily pain, bereavement, poverty, or persecution. You have found loved ones and friends forsake you, for you have been but poor company for their merrymakings. But God has not forsaken you! He has been very near to you in the time of your distress and thus has He proven that He despises not any. To this man, also, has He looked, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at His Word.

I need not stay to prove this further, for all history declares that God has no esteem for human greatness—that He has no flattery for human excellence—but that, on the contrary, He lays the axe at the root of the tall and the green trees and brings them down even to the ground. But as for those that are lowly and despised and appear to be withered, He has pity upon them and blesses them—and so the word of His servant, Ezekiel, is fulfilled, “And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the Lord, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree and have made the dry tree to flourish. I, the Lord, have spoken and have done it.”

Now, Brothers and Sisters, the proof which I have given you that the Lord looks upon little and lowly things shows the greatness of His soul. Our God is not like the great ones among men. Kings and princes generally esteem those most who can do them or the State most service. God needs nothing from any and, therefore, neither esteems the great nor despises the little. He is delivered from all consideration of self, seeing that

He is All in All. Those who can do the State no service are usually looked upon by their rulers as the last to be considered. Why should they have a voice? Who are they, that their interests should be thought of? But seeing God requires not to look to any for help, He is not led to look down with despite and contempt upon any!

If you feel an undue esteem for some, it follows almost as a matter of course that you should have a lack of consideration for others. But because God has no need to ask favors of any of His creatures or, in the slightest degree, to care for their strength or wisdom, He makes not much of the great and, therefore, on the other hand, He does not make little of those who are of lowly rank. God has power, also, to protect all interests and this, human rulers say, they cannot do. The great ones of the earth will often argue thus, “For the good of the general public, a portion of the population must suffer. Great measures naturally involve distress here and there, and this is unavoidable. The law bears hard upon a few, but we cannot alter it—all regulations do so, more or less.”

But God is so mighty that He has no need to perform a deed which involves injustice to one of the least of His creatures! Strict justice shall be dealt out to every individual as impartially as if He were the only creature God had ever made! The Lord knows how to consider everyone a separate individual of the human family as carefully as if there were no more than that one. He is so great in might and His thoughts are so deeply wise that He looks to the interests of all. “The Lord is good to all and His tender mercies are over all His works.” Let us adore and bless Him that this doctrine stands on so sure a basis—He is mighty in heart, and despises not any!

II. Now I come to THE PRACTICAL USES of this great Truth of God. And the first use is, it should greatly encourage those who are tried. You have not come, my dear Friend, to quite so low a state as that of Job when he sat upon a dunghill and scraped his sores with a potsherd. But even if you had, you ought not to conclude that you are despised of the Lord. He could never despise one of those for whom Christ died. The Lord has not thought contemptuously of you and said, “Let Him suffer! He is a nobody—it matters not what becomes of him.” On the contrary, whatever your griefs are today, they have been allotted to you by infinite Wisdom and superlative Love. You are in the best condition that you could be in. Bad as it appears to you, God knows that your lot is rightly ordained.

If it had been better for you, upon the whole, to have been rolling in wealth, you would have been. If it had been better for you never to know pang or pain, you would not have known them. But God’s great purposes and plans, involving you and the rest of His people, render it the best thing that you should be tried and, therefore, tried you are. If you could have all the facts of the case and all the Divine purposes spread before you—and if you could have as clear an understanding as God has—you would put yourself just where you are now, for your Father’s dealings are right and good. He has not put you in the furnace because He despises you, but because He values you! He bought you with the blood of Jesus and, therefore, you may be sure He prizes you.

Neither does the Lord think so little of you as to forget you in your pains. In all your grief, Jesus has deep sympathy with you. In the watches of the night His eyes see your faintness and sleeplessness. When nurse and friend must, from very weariness, leave you, He is still with you, making your bed in your sickness. You must not say, “My God is so busy with Heaven’s glories and with the management of the world’s affairs that He forgot me.” Far from it! “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” Depend upon it, the great God is too mighty to despise one of His own children!

He does not say, “It is only a work-girl pining away with consumption, she will not be missed.” Nor does He say, “It is only a poor old woman, worn out and suffering the natural pains of old age, it little matters what happens to her.” He does not speak contemptuously and say, “It is only a man of a small brain who will never do much and is not worth caring about—let him sorrow and die—there will only be one grave more in the cemetery and one less mouth to feed, and that is all.” Oh, no, He “despises not any.” “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” He sees your tears and hears your groans, for He is in fellowship with the very least of His people! “In all their affliction He is afflicted and the angel of His Presence saves them.”

If any of you have come here, this morning, very much cast down because your trials are little known to others and nobody sympathizes with you, get a grasp of this grand fact—“He despises not any”—and you will be much cheered. You are not made to suffer because of any indifference in God’s heart towards you, but because He loves you! “As many as I love,” He says, “I rebuke and chasten.” Take these rebukes and chastening as tokens of His love and when the rod falls more heavily than usual, perceive it to be the rod of the Covenant which is held in a father’s hand and only comes upon His own beloved!

A second use of this great Truth of God is one which I pray God to render effectual. It should encourage every sinner who is seeking the face of God to think that God is mighty and despises no one. You, dear Friend, feel now as if God might very well pass you by and suffer you to perish. You have begun to seek His face, but you could not blame Him if He were to hide Himself from you and leave you to perish, for you have such a keen sense of your unworthiness and insignificance. Be comforted by this—God is too great to deny you His favor! What profit would He have in your blood? What benefit would it be to Him that you should go down alive into the Pit? His Justice has been glorified sufficiently in the death of His Son, Jesus, and those that believe in Him shall, therefore, live!

Beloved Friend, it may be you say, “I am so ignorant, I know but little of the Lord.” Will He despise you because of that? If He does, woe unto us all, for we are all ignorant—and on that ground He might despise even the angels whom He charged with folly! In comparison with His Omniscience, all creatures are fools! Little as you know, He will teach you and instruct you, but He will not despise you. “Ah,” you say, “but I have such slender faculties.” Suppose you have—the greatest intellect that God has created must, in comparison with Him, have little enough of capacity and, therefore, He would despise all that He has made! But it is not so.

Does the Lord ask any faculty from us, except the faculty to receive His mercy and to lay hold upon His Grace? Your very emptiness and sense of need constitute a faculty of receptiveness into which He will pour His

Grace! Be not discouraged, however low in the scale of intelligence you may place yourself. God is mighty in heart and despises not any. Your heart is broken. Well, it is written, “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” Your graces are very weak. You cannot see clear marks of the Divine Spirit about you. It is written, “He has not despised the day of small things.” Even sparks of Grace He never tramples out! And although your Grace is but as a smoking flax, which may have more of offense about it than of excellence, even that He does not quench. The bruised reed, the Grace which seems to be destroyed, and out of which no music can be brought, He does not despise or break! Others may despise you, but the heavenly Father will not.

It is possible that you say, “Oh, Sir, I cannot think deep thoughts. I try to grasp the great doctrines, but they are beyond me.” God is so mighty that He does not despise you for that, for He has sent you a Gospel which requires no deep thought. The Gospel of, “believe and live,” is on the level of any man’s capacity who desires to understand and believe. Christ Jesus has pitched the Gospel note so low that our poor cracked bass voices may join in the tune! He has made the steps of the Palace Beautiful so easy that little children may climb them! I bless Him for that Word, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not,” for then I, who feel myself as a mere babe amidst the great mysteries of His Kingdom, may come to Him and be sure that He despises not any and despises not even me!

“Ah, but,” you say, “I fear that God will cast me away because I shall never be eminent for any great Grace even if He saves me. My faith, I fear, will always be weak. My love will always be chill, my character will be imperfect.” Well, beloved Friend, then you will owe more to His love than others! And more to His patience and His Grace! But in any case He will not despise you. Do you think that the great God needs our great graces? It is true He is pleased with great faith, but He would be a great God if we had no faith at all! It is true He delights to see the heroism of His children, but not because He depends upon that or needs it in the slightest degree! He gets nothing out of us! Our goodness extends not to Him, therefore is He too mighty to despise us if we cannot render anything to Him.

Yet another replies, “I can understand God’s saving a man who afterwards becomes an eminent minister or a gifted missionary. But if He were to save me, He could not make much of me. What would I be if Divine Grace did its best with me? I could only be a humble unknown member of the Church drawing greatly upon His resources, but giving Him a very small return.” Well, Beloved, the Lord is so mighty that He is willing to receive multitudes of such! Why should He not? If He did not receive them, He would not be enriched by His refusal. If He does receive them, He will not be impoverished by what He bestows upon them!

Believe firmly in the generosity of God! I have known what it is to find shelter behind His magnanimity when I have cried, “O that He would look upon me in love! I am utterly unworthy and insignificant—will He take the trouble to spurn me? Will it be worth His while to refuse me His Grace? Surely I am too unimportant for Him to break His promise in order to reject me and act contrary to His Nature in order to cast me away—and both of these He would have to do if He rejected one poor, needy, penitent spirit which dares to trust in Him through Jesus Christ!” O poor, discouraged one, believe in God’s great-heartedness! Throw yourself at the foot of the Cross, Sinner, and say unto God, “By Your very greatness I will lay hold upon You. Surely you are too mighty to crush a worm like I, too mighty to refuse me, now that I trust the blood and merit of Your Son! Display the greatness of Your might by saving me, even me, I beseech You.”

Do you not see how full of consolation is the doctrine of the text? May faith be given by the Holy Spirit to enable you to grasp it! Lastly, this doctrine affords an example for God’s people. If our heavenly Father is mighty and despises not any, then it clearly follows that if we are imitators of God, as dear children we must not despise any. I pray you never despise any of your Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Are they poorer than you? Do not despise them, but rather help them! If they are very, very poor, think what they have to bear and do not add to their other sorrows the grief caused by your contempt. Deal gently and tenderly with them!

If they are parts of your Lord’s body, you should be glad to serve them, for so you wash His feet. You should feel it to be a blessing that there are poor saints to whom you can minister because, in doing so, you are ministering to Christ. “The poor you have always with you” and they are necessary, for if there were no poor saints, we might begin crying, “Lord Jesus, what can we do for You? We wish we could show our love to You, but now, seeing there are no poor saints, we do not know how to clothe You, nor how to visit You in Your sickness, and we shall miss the blessing of doing it.” If poor saints abound around you, esteem them, because it is through them you will be able to be commended by your Lord when He will say to you, “I was hungry and you gave Me meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me drink.”

Perhaps your poorer Brothers and Sisters are more honorable in God’s esteem than you are—and probably they love the Master better than you do. It is very possible that they show more of the power of godliness in their lives than you do in yours and it may be, when Christ will come in His Glory, He will put them in a higher seat than some who have houses and lands. Brothers and Sisters, do not despise one another! If you see a Brother with very little talent doing his best, never sneer at him. God may, perhaps, bless his one handful of corn more than He will your basketful if he sows in more faith than you do. Do not despise young beginners. What if they do not know as much as you do? You do not know too much and you know but little to the purpose if you have no compassion upon the lambs of the flock.

Never despise a Brother because of the mistakes he makes in doctrine. If you can set him right, do so, but if the love of God is in him, do not cast him out for his blunders. Do not say, “I will never associate with that man.” In the family of Grace there are some strange people. Some of the Lord’s are such that if He did not choose them in sovereignty, I am at a loss to see how else they were chosen. But then, if the Lord loves them, you should endeavor to do the same. Never despise one of Christ’s little ones, or evil will come of it.

Once more, never despise any. There is a text that some people are very pleased with—“Honor the king.” Yes, by all means! I trust we shall always be very loyal and honor the sovereign of the realm in which we dwell. But

did you ever notice the precept which comes before it, which I recommend to those people who sneer at the poor? It runs thus—“Honor all men.” This is just as much a duty as, “Honor the king.” “Honor all men.” What? Honor the lower classes? Yes, Sir, “honor all men.” Honor agricultural laborers? Yes, “all men.” Honor paupers, crossing-sweepers? Yes, “honor all men.” Respect the worker and the sufferer? Respect the burden and the burden-bearer? Anything in the shape of a man or a woman deserves to be honored, for man was made in the image of God!

You are not to say of the fallen woman, “Away with her! The less said about her, the better.” Perhaps so, Sister, but the more done the better. Nor are you to say of any man, “He is an incorrigible character. We can do nothing for him.” No, that is not the way Jesus deals with men—He despises not any. Upon the worst of characters we ought to spend sevenfold love and patience in the hope that we may rescue such depraved ones from the depths of sin. If it comes, you know, to the matter of despising, and you and I begin despising our fellow creatures, God may make short work of us by despising us! He may just shut the door of Mercy in our faces and say, “You think little enough of one another. You poor people are railing at the rich and you rich people are sneering at the poor. By your own judgment you shall all be judged.”

The Lord knows if He were to leave a woman to be judged by women, or even if He were to leave a man to be judged by men, a whole host of us would be lost! But instead of that, He sets wide the door of Grace and bids the despised ones come and welcome! For Jesus’ sake He looks in pity upon men and has a kindness towards them. He sets before us an open door of Mercy and cries, “I have given My Son to die, and whoever among you will but believe in Him shall prove that I will not despise you, but will receive you to My heart, love you in time and love you in eternity—and give you to be sharers of the Throne of My only begotten Son forever and ever.”

Brothers and Sisters, shake off your pride and love your fellow man, for if you love not your brother whom you have seen, how can you love God, whom you have not seen? If He is mighty and despises not any, then you can be sure that if you despise any it is because you are not the mighty body that you think you are! Your contempt of others proves that you are a little-souled creature—weak, pitiful, pretentious! You may measure yourself by this—if you despise others you ought to be despised! But, if on the contrary, your tender heart of sympathy would lift even the beggar from the dunghill, you are magnanimous, great-souled and like unto God! May the Holy Spirit make you more and more so. Amen.

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÷Job 37.7

THE SEALED HAND—A WINTER SERMON  
NO. 3289

A SERMON  
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“He seals up the hand of every man; that all men may know His work.” Job 37:7.

When the Lord seals up a man’s hand, he is unable to perform his labor. The Lord has an objective in this, namely, “that all men may know His work.” When they cannot do their own work, they are intended to observe the works of God. This is a fact which I fear many of us have never noticed. When the ground is hardened into iron by the frost. When the land lies deep beneath the snow. When the ox rests in the stall and the servants warm their hands at the fire, then the farmer’s hand is sealed up. But I fear the Divine Purpose is not often heeded. As you look through the frosted pane upon the driving snow, do you say to yourself, “God has taken me off from my own work and given me a holiday which He would have me turn into a holy day—let me now turn my thoughts to the Lord’s great works in Nature, Providence and Grace. Shut out from my calling, I am also shut in to think of my God and of His work”?

To the most of us, it happens that at sundry times we are set aside from our ordinary service—and it is well if we improve the hour. One is never absent from his desk. Another is regularly behind the counter. A third is always diligent in his travelling but, sooner or later, there comes a day of pain and weakness—when the usual course of life is interrupted and the busiest man lies still. In the sickbed for weeks and months, God seals up the active hand, and thus He presents to the busy a quiet season for reflection! In France, they call the hospital, “the House of God,” and it is well when it becomes so. The man who will not think of God if he can help it, while he is busy in the world, is, by sickness blessed with time for consideration and, being set aside from turmoil, he is invited to rise above his engrossing cares! The Great Father seems to say, “Lie there alone. Lie awake through the night-watches and think of your past ways and what they lead to. Listen to the tick of the clock and mark the flight of time till you number your days and apply your heart unto wisdom. Your own work you cannot touch. Now, therefore, think of the work of your God and Savior till you obtain the blessing which comes of it.” This is the design of sickness and inability to follow our calling! Thus is our hand sealed from its occupation that our heart may be unsealed towards God, Heaven and eternal things!—

*“It needs our hearts be weaned from earth. It needs that we be driven  
By loss of every earthly stay,  
To seek our joys in Heaven.”*

It is clear that God can easily seal up the hand of man if he uses his strength in rebellion or folly, for He has other seals besides sickness. When the wicked are determined to carry out a plan which is not according to His mind, He can baffle them. See the people gathering on the plain of Shinar, bringing together brick and slime that they may build a tower whose lofty height shall mark the center of a universal monarchy! What does God do? By simply confounding their language, he seals every man’s hand! No storm, or flood, or earthquake could have more effectually caused the workmen to desist. Look through the loopholes of retreat tonight upon this wicked world and see men urgent with schemes which to them appear admirable. If they are not for God’s Glory, He that sits in Heaven laughs! The Lord has them in derision! With a word He seals up their hand so that it loses all its cunning and their purpose falls to the ground! Sometimes He closes up the hands of His inveterate enemies with the cold seal of death. Walk over the place where Sennacherib’s hosts had pitched their tents. They spread themselves upon the face of the earth and threatened to devour Judah and Jerusalem—yes to quickly swallow them up—but “the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,” and the sleepers never again rose to blaspheme Jehovah! They lie with their weapons under their heads, but they cannot grasp them! Bows, spears and chariots remain as a spoil to the armies of the Lord! Let us never, therefore, be disturbed by the vaunting of the adversaries of Jehovah! He can seal up their hands and then the men of might are captives! “The Lord reigns”—

*“Though sinners boldly join,  
Against the Lord to rise,  
Against His Christ combine,  
The Anointed to despise.  
Though earth disdain,  
And Hell engage,  
Vain is the rage—  
Their counsel vain.”*

We will leave that part of the subject and handle the text in another way. Here is, first, a word to Christian workers. And when we have so expounded it, we shall turn to struggling Believers panting for victory—for with both these classes there are seasons when their hands are sealed. Thirdly, we shall speak to such as are toiling after self-salvation for it is a happy thing when such an hour comes to them, also, and they cease from their own work and know the work of the Lord!

I. First, then, I speak to YOU WHO ARE GOD’S PEOPLE and have grown into strong men in Christ Jesus.  
Do not be surprised if sometimes your Master seals up your hand by a consciousness of unfitness. You may have preached for years and yet just now you feel as if you could never preach again. Your cry is, “I am shut up and cannot come forth.” The brain is weary, the heart is faint and you are on the brink of saying, “I will speak no more in the name of the Lord.” Your seed basket is empty and your plow is rusty—when you get to the granary, it seems to be locked against you. What are you to do? No message from God drops sweetly into your soul and how can your speech among the people distil as the dew? Perhaps some of you who have lately begun to serve the Lord wonder that it should ever be so with us older workers. You will not wonder long, for it will also happen to you! When a farmer sows his field with a seeder, the drill has no aches and pains, for it has no nerves and nothing to prevent the seed shaking out of it with precise regularity. But our great Lord never sows His fields with iron seeders. He uses men and women like ourselves, who are liable to headaches, heartaches and all sorts of miseries and, therefore, cannot sow as they could wish. Comrades in the Lord’s work, it is essential that we learn our own inability! It is profitable to feel that without our Lord we can do nothing—but that the Lord can do very well without us! If we cannot break the clods, His frost is doing it. If we cannot water the soil, His snow is saturating it. When man is paralyzed, God is not even hindered. When we feel our own weakness, it is that we may know the Lord’s work and comprehend that whatever understanding we have, He gave us. Whatever thought or utterance we have, He worked it in us and if we have any power among men to deliver the precious Gospel of Christ, He has anointed us to that end. Therefore, if we have received, we may not boast as if we had not received! It is a great blessing for us to be emptied of self that God may be All-in-All, for then our infirmities cease to be drawbacks and rise into qualifications through Divine Grace! This has a world of comfort in it.  
Sometimes the Christian worker’s hand is sealed, not by his own incompetence, but by the hardness of the hearts he has to deal with. Do we not often cry, “I cannot make any impression upon that man! I have tried in several ways, but I cannot find a vulnerable place in him. I cannot get the sword of Truth to strike at him”? Have you never mourned that you could not touch those children—they were so volatile and frivolous? Have you not been ready to weep because so many men are so coarse, so drunk and so reckless? Have you not groaned, “Lord, I cannot get at those wealthy people! They are educated and sneer at my mistakes. And they are so eaten up with the conceit of their own position that they will not come to You as the poor do, and receive Your salvation. Truly, my hand is sealed”? This is all meant to drive you to your God in prayer, crying, “It is time for You, Lord, to work!” Oh, for that word which is like a hammer, breaking the rock in pieces! Oh, that the fire would melt and save the sinner!  
Another thing which often seals the hand of the worker and leaves it maimed and bleeding, is the apostasy of any who were thought to be converts. Oh, how we rejoiced over them! Perhaps just a little, behind the door, we thought how wonderfully well we labored to have such converts. As we saw them at worship and remembered that they were once drunks and swearers, we almost whispered that a notable miracle had been worked by us. Ah me, how light-fingered we are! How ready to rob God of His Glory to clothe self with it! What did the Lord do? He let our precious convert go reeling home and he that prayed at the Prayer Meeting was heard cursing! Thus all our weaving was unraveled. Then we wept and cried, “We have accomplished nothing at all! We have only bred a generation of hypocrites! They only need to be tempted and they go back again! Alas for us!” We shall return to our work with more tenderness and humility, with more prayer and faith—and looking alone to God we shall see His hand outstretched to save! We shall wonder that we have not gone back, ourselves, and shall be prepared to sing Jude’s doxology, “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.” When the Lord seals up your hand in any way, then, dear Christian worker, consider God’s work, and call Him into the field— *“Arm of the Lord, awake, awake!  
Your power unconquerable take.  
Your strength put on, assert Your might  
And triumph in the dreadful fight!  
Why do You tarry, mighty Lord?  
Why slumbers in its sheath Your sword? Oh, awaken for Your honor’s sake—  
Arm of the Lord, awake, awake!  
Hasten then, but come not to destroy.  
Mercy is Yours—Your crown, Your joy!  
Their hatred quell, their pride remove,  
But melt with Grace, subdue with love.”*  
Some think the text teaches that when God seals up a man’s hand, it is that he may know his own work, that is, that he may perceive what poor, imperfect work it is—that he may form a correct estimate of it and not glory in it—that he may observe the scantiness of the sphere of human action and mourn how ineffective, how despicable, how feeble man’s efforts are apart from God’s power. It is a great blessing to know our own work and to be humble, but still it is a higher blessing to know the Lord’s work and to be confident in Him. O Brothers and Sisters, we must be nothing, or the Lord will not use us! If the axe vaunts itself against him that fells trees therewith, he will fling that axe away. If we sacrifice to our own net, the Great Fisherman will never drag the sea with us again till He has made us more fit for use. Oh, to be nothing! To lie at His feet and then, full of His power, because emptied of our own, to move forward to victory! May the Lord work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure— then shall we work out a glorious destiny to His praise!  
II. This Scripture equally applies to THE CASE OF THE STRUGGLING BELIEVER.  
The man is earnestly striving. Look at him! He is seeking to pray. I sometimes ask young people, “Do you pray?” They answer, “We could not live without prayer.” “Can you always pray alike?” I thank God that I usually receive the answer, “No, Sir. We wish we could always be earnest.” Just so. A steam engine can always do its work with equal force, but a living man cannot always pray. A mere actor can perform the externals of devotion at any time, but the real suppliant has his variations. We have all read of the preacher who, while preaching, used to cry most unaccountably when others were untouched. The reason was that he had put in the margin of his manuscript, “Cry here,” and this he had done in the quiet of his study, without considering whether the passage would really produce tears. A man of genuine emotion cannot make himself cry at say, half-past seven in the morning and ten at night. Mighty prevailing prayer is an effect of the inward impulses of the Spirit of God and the Spirit blows where He wishes. We cannot command His influence. We ought always to pray most when we think we cannot pray at all! Mark that paradox. When you feel disinclined to pray, let it be a sign to you that prayer is doubly necessary! Pray for prayer! Yet there are times with me, and I suppose with you, when at the Throne of Grace I mourn because I cannot mourn, and feel wretched because all feeling has fled. The Lord has sealed up my hand! But that is that I may learn anew how His Spirit helps my infirmities and that I am powerless in supplication till He quickens me. We could as easily create a world as present a fervent prayer without the Spirit of God! We need to have this written upon our hearts, for only so shall we offer those inwrought supplications which the Lord hears with delight.  
Look at the struggling Believer, next, when he tries to learn the Truth of God. For instance, in reading the Scriptures, he pants to know the meaning of them. Did you never try to dig into a passage and find yourself unable to make headway? Fetch a commentary! Do you find that it leaves your difficulty untouched? Have you not begun at the wrong end? Would it not be better to pray your way into the text and when you have got somewhat through the rind of it, will it not be well to imitate a mouse when he meets with cheese and eats his way to the center? Work away at the passage by prayer and experience and you will tunnel into the secret! Yet you will at times find yourself lost among grand Truths of God and quite unable to cut your way through the forest of Doctrines because your understanding seems to have lost its edge. God has sealed up your hand that now you may go to Him for instruction, and clearly so that not in books nor in teachers, but in His Holy Spirit is the light by which the Word of Truth is to be understood by the soul! He seals up our hands that we may sit at His feet—  
*“Light in Your light oh may we see,  
Your Grace and mercy prove,  
Revived, and cheered, and blessed by Thee, Spirit of peace and love.”*  
The struggling Believer may have set himself to watch against certain sin. Possibly he has enjoyed his morning’s devotion and he goes downstairs resolved to be patient, whatever provocation may occur, for he wept last night over the evil done by a quick temper. He converses cheerfully and yet, before the breakfast is over, the lion is roused and he is in the wars again! The poor man murmurs to himself, “What will become of me? This hot temper runs away with me.” Do not excuse yourself but still learn from your own folly. Does not the Lord thus let you see your own weakness more and more till you gird on His strength and overcome it? Remember, it must be conquered! You must not dare to be the slave of a fierce temper, or, indeed, of any sin! If the Son make you free, you shall be free, indeed! And it is His emancipating hand that you need within. Sanctification is the work of the Spirit of God—only He can accomplish it—and it is for you to cry unto the Strong for strength!  
Perhaps the struggle is of yet another kind. You long to grow in Grace. This is a matter worthy of the utmost desire and labor, and yet, as a matter of fact, neither plants nor souls actually grow through conscience effort. “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.” Children of God, when they grow, grow up into Christ, not by agonies and excitements, but by the quiet force of the inward life renewed from day to day by the Holy Spirit! We have heard some true saints complain that they felt as if they were rather growing downward than upward, for they feel worse instead of better. Thus do many of the plants of our garden grow—and we are joyful that it is so—for we need not the useless top growth, but we prize the root! To grow downward in humility may be the best possible growth—the hand sealed may be bringing us more spiritual profit than the hand at work!  
III. I might thus enlarge, but it would come to the same thing and, therefore, I leave the struggling Christians to lend a hand to THE SELFRIGHTEOUS, whom I would gladly help into a ditch and leave there till the Almighty One shall come to take them out!  
If we believe their own statements, there are a great many very good people in this world. True, the Bible says, “There is none that does good; no, not one,” but that is an old-fashioned sort of book! Good men are plentiful as blackberries! I hear certain of them bearing witness that they are quite as good as those who make a profession of religion and, in fact, rather better! They are so good that they do not even profess to trust the Lord Jesus Christ! Now, you excessively good people, I am right glad when the Lord seals up your hands so that you cannot persevere in your fine doings and are compelled to try the true way of getting to Heaven!  
Sometimes that sealing up comes by a discovery that the Law of God is spiritual, and that the service of God is a matter of the heart. Here is a good woman! She says, “I never stole a penny. I always pay my debts. I am sober, kind and industrious. I thank God I am not a gossip, or proud, or idle, as so many are.” Is she not a superior person? But observe a change! She hears a sermon, or reads the Bible and finds that external goodness is nothing unless there is goodness in the heart—unless there is love to God and love to men—unless there is the new birth and a consequent total and radical change of nature manifested by a simple reliance upon Christ! Is this the same woman? How different her manner! How changed the tone of her talk! Hear her exclaim, “I am utterly lost! I had no idea that God required the heart and judged our thoughts and desires. What searching Truths! A look can make me guilty of adultery. Anger without a cause is murder!” If this fact comes with power to the heart—the hand is sealed and all hope of salvation by works is gone! Oh, that this would happen to all self-justifiers! Oh, that the Lord would wean them from self, that they might know His work, the work of Christ who satisfied the Law for all His people, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him!  
Sometimes an actual sin has let in light upon the sinfulness of the heart! I knew a young man who, in his own esteem, was as fine a fellow as ever worked in a shop. He prided himself that he had never told a lie, nor been dishonest, nor a drunk, nor loose in his life—and if the Savior had said to him that he must keep the commandments, he would have replied, “All these have I kept from my youth up.” In pushing a fellow workman, he upset an oilcan. It happened to have been upset before, and the master had spoken strongly about the careless waste. The master, coming along on this occasion, called out, “Who upset that can?”“ The young man said that he did not know, though he himself was the offender. That passed away. No further question was asked, but in a moment he said to himself, “I have told a lie! I never would have believed myself capable of such meanness.” His beautiful card house tumbled down! The bubble of his reputation burst and he said to himself, “Now I understand what Mr. Spurgeon means by the depravity of the heart. I am a good-for-nothing creature! What must I do to be saved?” No doubt outward sin has often revealed the secret power of evil in the heart. The leprosy has come out upon the skin and so it has been seen to be in the system. Thus is pride hidden from man—and his hand is sealed up that he may look for mercy from God, and live!  
Yes, I have known God seal up some men’s hands by a sense of spiritual inability, so that they have said, “I cannot pray. I thought I prayed every morning and night, but I now see that it is not prayer at all. I cannot now praise God. I used to sit in the choir and sing as sweetly as any of them, but I was singing to my own glory, and not unto the Lord. I fear I have been deceiving myself and setting up my righteousness instead of Christ’s—and that is the worst form of idolatry. I have dishonored God and I have crucified Christ by claiming to myself the power of selfsalvation. I have un-Christed Christ and counted His blood to be a superfluous thing.” When a man has come to that, then he—  
*“Casts his deadly doing down,  
Down at Jesus’ feet—  
To stand in Him, in Him alone,  
Gloriously complete!”*  
“What?” cries yonder friend, “Would you not have us do good works?” Yes, a host of them! But not to thereby save yourself! You must do them because you are saved! You know what children do when they are little and silly—they go into their fathers garden and pick handfuls of flowers, and make a garden. “A pretty, pretty garden,” so they say. Wait till tomorrow morning and every flower will be withered and there will be no pretty garden at all, for their flowers have no roots! That is what you do when you cultivate good works before faith—it is a foolish, fruitless business. Repent of sin and believe in Jesus, for these are the roots of good works! And, though at first they look like black bulbs with no beauty in them, yet out of them shall come the rarest flowers in the garden of holiness! Get away with your good works! Get away with your salvation of yourself! This is all proud fancy and falsehood. Why did God send a Savior if you need no saving? What need of the Cross if you can be saved by your own works? Why did Jesus bleed and die if your own merits are sufficient? Come, you guilty ones! Come, you weary! Come, you whose hands are sealed, so that you can do nothing more—take the work of Christ and be saved by it at once!  
A young Sister who I saw just now, told me how a friend helped her to see the way of salvation. She could not believe in Jesus Christ because she did not feel herself to be all that she wanted to be. But the friend said to her, “Suppose I were to give you this Bible for a present.” “Yes.” “Would it not be yours as soon as you took it? It would not depend upon whether you were good or not, would it?” “No.” “Well, then,” the friend replied, “the Lord God has given Jesus Christ to you as a free gift—and if you take him by faith, He is immediately yours, whoever you may be.” The case stands just so. Accept Jesus as the free gift of God to you and you are saved! And being saved, you will work with all your might to show your gratitude to God your Savior!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 94.**

This is the prayer of a man of God in great trouble, standing out for God in an evil day, when the Lord’s people were greatly oppressed, and the honor of God was being trampled in the mire. The prayer wells up from an oppressed heart struggling against great difficulty.

Verse 1. LORD God—“O Jehovah, El.” Men of God in trouble delight to call upon the name of the Lord. His very name is a stronghold to them! The Infinite Jehovah, the strong God. EL. “O Lord God”—

1. To whom vengeance belongs; O God, to whom vengeance belongs, show Yourself. Vengeance does not belong to us! It is not right for any private individual to attempt to avenge himself. But vengeance does belong to the just Judge who will mete out to all the due reward of evil or of good. Hence, my appeal is to the Court of King’s Bench, or higher still, to the King, Himself! “O God, to whom vengeance belongs, show Yourself.” When false Doctrine abounds, only God can put it down. All the efforts of the faithful will be futile apart from Him.

2-4. Lift up Yourself, You judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud. LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? That expression, “How long?” repeated three times, is very sorrowful. It seems to get into a kind of howling or wailing. But a child of God, when he sees things going wrong with his Lord’s Kingdom, must grow somewhat impatient and he cries out to His God, “How long? How long? How long will You bear it?” The very triumphs of the wicked and the hard things they say, with which they seem to bubble over like fountains, (for that is the force of the term “utter and speak” used here), stir the heart of the man of God to its very depths! He gets alone and grieves before God. And out of a full heart he thus cries to Him, “How long shall they utter and speak hard things? And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?”

5. They break in pieces Your people, O LORD—There is a strong plea in that declaration, for the Lord of Hosts says to His people, He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye.” In days of persecution the saints can pray in this fashion, “They break in pieces Your people, Jehovah.”

5, 6. And afflict Your heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. This made the appeal still stronger, for God is “a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows.”

7. Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Yet this very God of Jacob came to the troubled Patriarch at Jabbok and blessed him there. And He said to heathen kings, “Touch not My Anointed, and do my Prophets no harm”—so can it be true that He does not see and regard what the wicked do to His people? They dare to say so, and render themselves the more brazen in their sin because of this, their infidelity!

8. Understand, you brutish among the people. Here the pleader turn into a Prophet and, after having spoken to God, he now speaks to men. Understand, you boors,” for so the word may be rendered, “You swine among the people.”

9. And you fools, when will you be wise? He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? [See Sermon #2118, Vo  
lume 35—THE PLANTER OF THE EAR MUST HEAR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of

charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You say that God does not see, that He does not regard—but how can that be? You are mad to talk so! He that gave men the sense of hearing—cannot He, Himself, hear? He that gave them sight—cannot He see?—

*“Shall He who, with transcendent skill,  
Fashioned the eye and formed the ear— Who modeled Nature to His will—  
Shall He not see? Shall He not hear?  
Vain hope! His eyes at once survey  
Whatever fills Creation’s space—  
He sees our thoughts, and marks our ways, He knows no bounds of time and place.”*

10. He that chastises the heathen, shall not He correct? He judges the nations—read the Book of Providence and see how He deals out justice to nation after nation! So shall He not also correct the individual man?

10. He that teaches man knowledge—If you look at your Bibles, you will see that the translators have put in here the words, “shall not He know.” They are printed in italics because they are not in the original. The original is very abrupt—it is as if the Psalmist had said, “There, I am tired of arguing with you. You can draw your own inference. I will leave you to do that for yourselves. Fools as You are, I need not draw the inference for you.” “He that teaches man knowledge.” Does man really know anything unless God teaches him? Adam was taught of God at the first— and every particle of true science that man knows has been imparted by God! I do not say that God is the Author of the science of today—much of that evidently comes from man—but all true knowledge is imparted to us by God. “He that teaches man knowledge”—do you think—do you dream that He does not Himself know everything?

10, 11. Shall not He know? The LORD knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. He knows that men are vanity, that they are, according to one translation, a vapor! The men themselves are but a vapor, but as for their thoughts, their intellect, their power to think, that of which many men are most proud—what does God think of these? What a wonderful thing “modern thought” seems to be! But listen to this, “The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are nothing.” Vanity is a negation, it is a bubble—a thing puffed up that has no substance in it—“The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.”

12. Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O LORD, and teach him out  
of Your Law. [See Sermon #2374, Volume 40—BLESSED DISCIPLINE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] These are two things that go

well together—a rod and a book. No man ever learns much without both rod and book. “Blessed is the man whom You chasten.” The Book is never properly understood without some touches of the rod, but the Book must also be there—“and teach” him out of Your Law, “for if it were all rod and no Book, there would be plenty of scars, but there would be no learning! Have you got the two together, my dear Friend? Have you been of late very much with the Book in a nook, and very much with the rod upon your bed? Well, then, you are a blessed man, for the Psalmist says, “Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of Your Law.”

13. That You may give him a rest from the days of activity, until the pit is dug for the wicked. In these days, the quiet virtues are not prized as much as they ought to be. Men are always busy—they must be ever on the trot—but blessed is the man who is so taught by the Book and by the rod that he comes to a holy quietism and learns to rest! The man or woman most rested is the best worker. He who knows how to sit at Jesus’ feet, knows how to work for Jesus better than if he were continually running about and getting cumbered with much service. We never learn the secret of this rest by the Book, alone, or by the rod, alone—the rod and the book together teach us to rest from the days of adversity. They teach us not to lay the present too much to heart, not to fret because of things as they are today, but to think of what is to be in that Day when the righteous shall be rewarded, and when the Mighty Hunter shall have trapped His adversary and ours—when the pit shall be dug for the wicked and Satan’s power shall be forever destroyed!

14. For the LORD will not cast off His people. He may cast them down, but He will never cast them off!  
14. Neither will He forsake His inheritance. Even men will not give up their inheritance. This is especially the case among the Jews! You remember how Naboth would not sell his inheritance—he would sooner die. And the Lord will not forsake His inheritance—there is a sacred condition upon His people that never can be broken—and He will never give them up.  
15. But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it. The wicked may be the upper spokes of the wheel just now, but they will be the lower spokes before long! The Truth of God may be in the mire, today, but she shall be upon the Throne tomorrow! The revolutions of the wheels of Providence produce strange changes. Wait. Work. Watch. For the Lord will set things right in His own good time.  
16. Who will rise up for me against the evildoer or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? The Psalmist appeals for helpers, but he gets no response from man. And sometimes the man of God will have to stand alone— and that can be quite an education for him. Blessed is he who has learned to hang on the bare arm of God—he is better off without his earthly friends than he was with them! Here is the answer to the Psalmist’s question—  
17. Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. You may be one of the best of God’s servants and yet that may be your experience. Here is another piece of testimony in which many of us can join—  
18. When I said, My foot slips, Your mercy, O Lord, held me up. “My foot had slipped from under me. I was down. But then, even then, You did put underneath me Your everlasting arms. ‘Your mercy, O Lord, held me up.’”  
19. In the multitude of my thoughts within me Your comforts delight my

soul. [See Sermon #883, Volume 15—MULTIUDINOUS THOUGHTS AND SACRED COMFORTS— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] “My

thoughts”—so some read this verse—“seem intertwisted and interlaced like the many branches of a tree. I cannot make them out—they are in such a tangle.” But the bird has learned to sit among the branches and sing, “Your comforts delight my soul.” There are thoughts of grief, thoughts of fear, thoughts of disappointment, thoughts of desertion, thoughts of a broken heart—all sorts of thoughts, but God’s comforts come in and delight the soul! You know what it is—do you not?—to be cast down, but not destroyed? To be troubled, and yet to be happy? “As sorrowful,” says Paul, “yet always rejoicing.” Whereupon an old Divine remarks that it is “as sorrowful”—quasi sorrowful—but it is not “as always rejoicing.” There is no “quasi” to that, but there is a real joy in the midst of a seeming sorrow! “In the multitude of my thoughts within me Your comforts delight my soul.”

20. Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with You, which frames mischief by a Law? Lord, are You on their side? Oh, no, and as You are not on their side, I care not who is! So long as You will not aid iniquity or help wrong-doing, I will, by Your Grace, fight the battle through.

21, 22. They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous and condemn the innocent blood. But the LORD is my defense; and my God is the rock of my refuge. He gets away unto his God as he had been accustomed to hide in the cave of Adullam out of reach of his foes! And then he sits down in peace to sing—

23. And He shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yes the LORD our God shall cut them off.  
—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2917 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 38.17

THE DOORS OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH  
NO. 2917

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 5, 1905.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 24, 1876.

**“Have you seen the doors of the shadow of death?” Job 38:17.**

Last Sabbath our spirits flew forward as far as the Judgment Day. We stood with wondering awe to gaze upon the Great White Throne and the fillet of gold about the head of the Reaper who gathered in the harvest of the earth. We trembled as we saw the other angel take the sharp sickle and reap the world’s vintage and hurl it into the winepress of Jehovah’s wrath where it was trampled underfoot until the blood of men flowed

forth in torrents. [See Sermon #2910, Volume 50—THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeons.org.] Our excursion

at this time will not take us so far in human history. We shall halt at a nearer stopping place. We shall not journey even to the Resurrection— only to the doors of the shadow of death.

The question is, “Have you seen the doors of the shadow at death?” And the answer implied is—“No.” In this chapter, God is questioning Job in order to show him his inability and his ignorance. To each question which the Lord puts to the Patriarch, a negative answer is expected. “Have you entered into the springs of the sea?” “Have you walked in the search of the depth?” “Have the gates of death been opened to you?” “Have you perceived the breadth of the earth?” Job had done none of these things.

Well, then, Job, “Have you seen the doors of the shadow of death?” The only answer the Patriarch could have given or that we can give is, “No.” We can get as far as the gates of death, but we cannot pry within. Apart from Revelation, we have no information about the dreary land beyond that land which lies enshrouded, as far as we are concerned, in perpetual gloom. We cannot tell when or how we, ourselves, shall die, so we know little of the dread mystery. The message will someday come to us that the pitcher is to be broken at the cistern, but when it shall come, we little dream. It may be much nearer than we think and, on the other hand it, may be farther off than we have feared. We are all, in this life, something like the prisoners confined during the dreadful French Revolution. They were shut in so that they could not escape—and every morning there came a man with a little slip of paper who read out the names of that day’s victims—who were then hurried to the wagon which was in waiting outside to drag off its weary load to death. So every morning comes the death angel into the world and he reads out the names of such an one and such an one. We miss our comrade who has been called and we grow so accustomed to the routine that, alas, we think too little of having missed him. But we are waiting, each one of us, till the missive shall come for ourselves—yet we know no more when we shall die than does the ox in the pasture, or the sheep in the fold.

Neither do we know what it is to die. We know, in a certain sense, what the act of death is, but what is the strange feeling with which the soul finds itself houseless, forsaken of the body which falls about it like a crumbling tenement? What is it to have the link severed which keeps the mortal bound to the immortal—the spiritual caged within the material? What that is, we do not know—neither has any told us. We have watched others passing. We have stood by the beside of the dying. We have witnessed the last gasp and still it remains a secret what it is to die! We only know that these gates of the shadow of death are so shut upon us that we cannot hold any conversation whatever with the world beyond, save only as there is an everlasting fellowship in the Person of Christ between all that are in Him, so that—

*“The saints on earth, and all the dead,  
But one communion make.”*

Indeed, we are so shut off from the other world that we never even dare to pry behind the curtain which God has thrown across the abode of spirits. There have been necromancers in all ages who have desired to intrude into these mysterious regions—who have pretended to have done so. Their craft is to be abhorred as Hell! Woe unto the man that comes near to them! They are, as far as Christians are concerned, to be utterly loathed, for, where the Lord has hung up a curtain and shut the door, it is not for you and me to meddle, lest in eating those sacrifices of the dead we are found to be having fellowship with devils and be cast down to share their doom!

“Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death?” We are content to give the answer which Job must have given, that we have not seen them and do not wish to see them. Between those iron bars we do not wish to pry. What the Lord reveals we are content to learn from His Word, but we wish to know nothing more. Now, dear Friends, that being the case, we shall only in meditation go down to those gates as far as we may lawfully go—and speak only about what we may actually know, not dreaming or doting about things beyond our knowledge. There have been some poets who have sung of descents to Avernus and of the circles of the Inferno. You need not that I go through Dante’s majestic conceptions, or tell how Milton sings of worlds unknown. Ours is a far less ambitious business. We have no poetry to make—we have simple facts to state.

I. First, then, we ask you to come down as near to the gates of death as we may, in mediation, VIEWING DEATH IN GENERAL for a few minutes.

Look up in vision to these terrible portals and do you not observe, as you stand before them, that these gates are always open? Never, day and night, are those gates of death shut, for at all hours there is traffic through them. Men die at midnight, as they did in Pharaoh’s palace. And men die at noon, as the child did who said, “My head, my head,” and whose father said, “Take him to his mother,” and who then fell asleep in her lap. They die in springtime and the flowers sweetly waking from the earth adorn the hillock which marks their tomb. And they die in summer and know nothing of the sweet flowers that bloom and perfume all the air. They drop like autumn leaves and the winter, howling their requiem, bears many of them away. There is never a moment, I suppose, at any time when the fall of feet may not be heard by listening ears that are hard by the gates of death-shade. The dead have always been coming since Abel led the way—one perpetual stream, never ceasing day nor night.

Let us also remember that multitudes have now passed through those iron gates! You cannot count the hosts who have entered. The calculating machine might fail and the powers of mind utterly fail before the mighty total! We speak of them as the great majority and earth with her more than thousand millions has but a slender congregation of living persons compared with the congregation of the dead. What multitudes, I say, have passed through from the first day until now! Sometimes there has been a rush when death’s jackals, the kings and princes of the world, have driven their prey in troops through them by means of bloody wars. At other times men in hosts have rushed through those gates pursued by plague or famine—and always by human decay or disease men have come up to these gates, always, always, always passing through. The stream of passengers through the gates of death goes on, on, on. While you and I are sitting here, they are stepping between the posts. Perhaps some dear to us are nearing the portals. We ourselves are, certainly, on the way, and at all times our fellow creatures are being swallowed within the gaping jaws which never shut!

If you will stop here a minute and look—and have eyes strong enough in the shade to mark who they are that come—you will see there a man leaning on his staff. But did you notice that there also went by him little children that had not yet learned to speak? You see the strong man come all of a sudden, running away from life. And you see the invalid who has long waited for his summons—you may count his bones as he passes down to his grave. Do you see yonder man? There is nothing special about him. He looks just like any other. He once was a king—there is still a little royal about him. Do you see that other man? He was once a beggar. He does not seem, now, a bit more beggarly than did the monarch! They have, neither of them, brought anything with them—they come here penniless—all of them, and they pass through with empty hands. Titles, grandeur, estates, position, fame—all are left behind. They come a great crowd in a liberty, equality and fraternity of death—a common brotherhood that will never be realized in life. Do you see them going? In view of this general leveling, you may set small store on the distinctions of this world. I have come to declare that nothing is worth seeking after but that which will survive the tomb!

Through that gate you have seen many go in thought tonight. Will you please remember that no one has ever returned, with the exception of a few restored by miracle? They go through that way, but there are no steps backward. Gone, gone forever. Once the breath has left the body, I think that the soul shall not revisit its old haunts or know anything of all that it done under the sun. But whether that is so or not, it is certain that they will not come back in the old familiar form. They are gone. They cannot return. It is idle to weep and wish them among us again—floods of tears cannot restore them. As for the tree that is cut down, at the scent of water it will bud, but rivers of precious water from weeping eyes cannot cause these dead ones to live again.

Now, concerning these gates of the grave, we may say further that though they are thus thronged, there are very few that ever come there as voluntary passengers. Man dreads to die. It is right that he should, so long as it does not come to a fear that is bondage. Understand this—that God has implanted within us all the desire to live for right ends and purposes. There are a few that pass that way in a hurry or of their own consent. Ah, dreary souls that take away their lives! To what has a man come when he dares to contemplate such an insult to his Maker? He that gave you breath may take it back, but you may not give it up yourself! To die by your own hand is not to escape from suffering, but to plunge yourself into it forever, for we know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. Therefore he that murders himself, if he knows what he is doing, gives sure evidence that eternal life is not in him! We must all go through those gates, but we must gallantly bide our time and take arms against the sea of trouble that now awaits us. Then at last, if we are Christ’s—and all of us may be His and know we are His—when our Captain bids us come to Him, we will bow our heads and pass through the gates of iron, not fearing for a moment! Our Lord will come to meet us and our soul will stretch her wings in haste and fly fearless through the shadowed portals, nor feel anything of terror as she passes them!

Those thoughts may suffice about death in general.  
II. Now, in the second place, let us go down to the doors of that deathshade and stand some moments VIEWING SAINTLY DEATHS. I wish only to speak simply about them.  
First, I remark that all saintly deaths are not pleasant to look upon. Some of the grandest men who ever lived have died in a storm. Martin Luther’s deathbed was troubled. I do not wonder that when a man has done such glorious mischief to Satan’s dominions, he should not be allowed to enter into his rest without one more struggle with his foe! John Knox, again, had a fierce battle when he came to die. He found it hard, though he triumphed at the last even as Luther did. And many that have served their Master well, instead of shouts of joy and singing of hymns in their departure, have had to lay hold with all their might upon their Crucified Savior in order to sustain their hope. There is something right about this, too—it becomes a lesson to us all—“If the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” And if to die is sometimes hard work to a man who is known to be a true Believer and who has shown to others that he is really saved, what shall they expect in the hour of death who have no such confidence in God?  
Yet, Beloved, standing at the doors of death tonight, I must confess that as far as I am concerned, of those I have seen passing through, who have believed in Christ, most of the saints have passed through gladly. They have entered the gates with a cheery note, with a song, or with a Hallelujah. I cannot forget the times in which I have been asked to sing at dying beds when I could not possibly have done it for very choking of sympathy with those about me. But the dying man has sung and the dying woman has joined sweetly in the hymn—and when we seemed to feel as if it might be too much for the failing strength—we have been asked by the saint who was ready to depart that we might sing another verse! While they have been—  
*“Sweeping through the gates of the new Jerusalem,”*they have wanted us to sing them Home! If I had to tell where I have seen the most joy on earth, I would certainly not say at the bridal feasts, for that joy has much that is flimsy about it. In many that partake in that festival, the sentiments are often unreal. But the joy of the dying man— the joy of the expiring saint—has something so deep, so sublime, yet so simple in it that I know not where to equal it, whether I am permitted to search in the palaces of kings or in the homes of content! The greatest joy on earth is, after all, the joy of departing saints. So you may stand at the gates of death-shade, and hear them sing as they pass through. Some of them you may hear saying extraordinary things. Haliburton cried, “Have at you, Death! Have at you, Death!”—as if he fought and conquered the grim foe without a fear. Others have shouted, “Victory, victory, victory, through the blood of the Lamb!” in their last moments. There has been sorrow, but there has been far oftener joy!  
Concerning the doors of the shadow of death, let me say that there are stores of Grace laid up hard by those gates of the grave for saints when they come there. You must not expect, dear Friends, to have dying Grace in living moments. You must not expect at this time to have Grace to die with, when, perhaps, God intends you to live another 50 years! What would you do with such Grace? Where would you put it? You shall have it when you come to die. Only trust in Christ, today, and do His bidding—when the dying time shall come—the dying Grace shall be afforded you.  
In addition to this, I believe that God not only gives His people Grace to die, but, in their last moments, some of the saints get visions of another world before they enter the gates of death. I am persuaded that the glow and the glory that I have seen on some men’s faces when they have been dying, have not been of earth—that the strange light that lit their features and the wondrous smile of ineffable delight with which they have fallen asleep—have not been things of time. They could not have been created by their present circumstances, for their surroundings have been all to the contrary. The radiance from the world beyond has been upon them. What strange things, too, they have said! Some of them have been hard to comprehend, for the expiring saints have spoken a language more of Heaven than of earth, as if they knew things which were unlawful for them to utter and must not speak so as to be understood. Stray notes from harps of seraphim they have caught and they have tried to sing them here, below, but have failed. Yet we have heard enough to let us know that God has partly drawn up the blinds and permitted them to see through the lattice and behold the King in His beauty. Angels, too, we doubt not, come to those gates of death. Why should they not? They came to Jesus in Gethsemane. They are bid to the care of the Lord’s people, lest they dash their foot against a stone. I have no doubt that they minister to the heirs of salvation, for it is written that when Lazarus died angels carried him into Abraham’s bosom. The angelic bands wait, I believe, at these gates of death to help the righteous in their last extremity.  
Best of all, I should like you, as you come with me to these doors of death-shade, to notice that there is a blood-mark right across the entrance. If you look down, there is the print of a footprint unlike that of all the rest, for it is the print of a foot that once was pierced! Ah, I recognize that mark. My Lord has gone that way! I have not yet been down to the doors of death-shade, but He, my Savior, has been there. He has passed through them, indeed, and yet He lives! Therefore the joy of the Believer is that when he passes through, because Christ lives, he shall also live! And because Christ is risen, he, too, shall rise! I could not believe the Resurrection if it were not certain that Christ has risen. But if ever there was a fact in history that is well attested beyond all conceivable doubt, it is the fact that He who was put into the grave by the Jews and whose tomb was sealed, rose again from the dead on the third day! All His people shall also rise because He has led the way. O gates of death-shade, we dread you no longer since Christ has passed through your portals!  
And see, Brothers and Sisters, for the Believer, all around those gates of death-shade bright lamps are burning! Do you not see them? They are lamps of promise. “When you pass through the rivers I will be with you, and through the rivers they shall not overflow you.” “O death, I will be your plagues.” You know how the Lord of the pilgrims has given the assurance over and over and over again, in all shapes and ways, that He will not leave nor forsake His people, but that He will help them even to the end and cause them, when they walk through the Valley of the Shadow at Death, to fear no evil because He is with them.  
The gates of the grave, then, as far as Believers are concerned, are not places of gloom at all! We ought often to go there. It is greatly wise to be familiar with our last hours—to antedate them and to die daily. Make a friend of death! Oh, go to the graves, not to weep, but that you may not weep when you go there! Often strip yourself and go through the rehearsal of your death, that when the time shall come it may be no strange work for you to die since you shall have died daily for, it may be, 50 years at a stretch!  
III. Now, lastly, and very sorrowfully, a few words VIEWING THE DEATH OF SINNERS. Down to these grim gates the ungodly must go as well as the people of God. To every one of them is the lot appointed. Let us speak the truth about them solemnly and tenderly, with tears in our heart, though sad words are on our lips.  
The death of ungodly people is not always terrible. There are many that die and are lost, of whom David says in the Psalm, “Like sheep they are laid in the grave.” They never cared for the House of God nor regarded the Sabbath. They knew nothing of prayer, or of faith. Their consciences have become seared. They played bravado with God and He has given them up, so when they come to die, they take it coolly enough. They “shuffle off this mortal coil” almost without a fear, and they that stand around say, “Oh, he died so sweetly—such a happy death.” Ah me! Ah me! Ah me! Saints often die struggling—and sinners often die in dreadful peace! I say, “dreadful,” for have you never noticed the stillness—the awful silence of nature before a storm, when there is not a breath of air and not a leaf stirs on the trees? The very clouds seem to hang still in mid Heaven and earth and sky get more quiet and still more quiet, and our very breath becomes intensely stifling in the dread stagnation—till with peal on peal the dread artillery of Heaven begins to shake Heaven and earth! Such is the death of many an ungodly man—a treacherous calm. Oh, what an awakening for him when in Hell he shall lift up his eyes, far from every hope of mercy! Pray God you may not die so. I should not like to die stupefied. I would prefer to be in my senses. Presumption is a drug which stupefies the soul and because of it men often die at peace, full many of them. But it were far better that they had never taken that dire drug, but could really look into the future, perhaps, even at the last moment, while their feet were sliding, so they might find Grace enough to start back and lay hold on Everlasting life that they might not descend into the abyss below! Because their eyes are blinded, there are many that die peaceably enough—and are lost.  
Of impenitent men I may say that when they come to die, many of them are not at peace. A very large number of such people shrink back from the doors of death because, in the quiet chamber, memory begins to work. Then the evil deed, the midnight scene, the neglected Sabbath, the unread Bible, the Throne of Grace forsaken—all claim to speak. And as the clock goes tick, tick, upon the wall, the mind begins to go over childhood, youth, manhood, married life and to remember and to bring up sin. It is not every sinner that is such a fool as to be able to remember a wasted life without some terror or regret! Fear, too, is generally busy, for the mind begins to ask whether the thought is pleasant to the dying person or not—“Where am I going?” And there is a something in man that does not let him believe that he is a mere animal. Look at your wife, man—you that believe all living men to be mere beasts. What is that dear body of your wife whom you have loved these many years? Well, principally so much water and so much gas. When that is taken away, there is a small residuum of earthy ash—that is all. And is that what you have loved—so many pounds of water and gas and earth?  
No, Sir, you have not. You have loved a woman! You have loved a thing infinitely better than dead earth and water and gas. You know that. You do not believe that your mother is only mere water and gas and earth, nor your child, nor yourself! You cannot persuade yourself to accept such materialism as that! There is a something in this body that is better than this water, gas and earth—a something that will consciously exist when these have been dissolved. And there is that within all of us that makes us believe it whether we will it or not! Therefore, at the portals of death there comes into the mind the question, “Where am I going?” And if the heart cannot answer that question by saying, “I am going where Jesus is—I am going to my Savior, in whom I have trusted, who has washed me from my sin”—then fear comes up and the man begins to say, “Oh, how can I go forward? The Bible tells me I am going to judgment and I am unfit for judgment—that I am going to resurrection and what must it be for a sinful body like mine to rise from the dead? I am going to condemnation and already in my conscience I am condemned! How can I go? How can I stop? Ah, must I leave you, O earth, and cannot I enter you, O Heaven? Then where must I fly?” Not many ungodly men can manage to shake off such thoughts as these in the dread prospect of departure.  
Let me say, further, that near these gates of death-shade is a very difficult place in which to seek the Lord. When a man gets troubled with memory and fear, and his body it racked with pain, he is very ill-fitted to listen to the voice of Jesus. I would not discourage a dying man for a moment from looking to Jesus. If he desires salvation, if he will but believe in the Christ of God, he shall have eternal life even at the last! But speaking from what I have seen, the most of men in the article of death are quite unfit for thought—quite unable to feel anything beyond the stabs of physical anguish—and quite incapable of faith. No man knows how far God’s mercy goes, but if that mercy is given to faith, I cannot see how it can be extended to some dying men. Delirium, a wandering mind, an aching head—oh, these will give you quite enough to do in dying without having to seek your peace with God! It is task enough only to die, to take a tearful farewell of those babes and of the partner of your life. It is enough to die without then having to begin to cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Have you seen the doors of deathshade? If you have, you will not choose them as a place to repent in—you will rather choose the present time to seek the Lord—now while yet your mind is fresh and vigorous and He is waiting to be gracious!  
I must not detain you more than another minute or two, but let me remind you that at the doors of death-shade is the place of testing and the place of stripping. The man comes there who has professed to be a Christian. If he is not, how the rags of his self-righteousness are torn off! Or he says, “I was no professor of religion. I was better than that! I was an honest man.” Now it turns out, at last, that he was not even true to his God and his fancied honesty drops off him like a garment! Build castles in the air if you will, but death is a wonderful dissipater of all your magic! At the shadowy gates nothing will do for you or for God but reality. If the religion you have and the hope you have will not stand the test of self-examination and heart-searching sermons, certainly it will not stand the test of a dying hour. What a stripping time it will be! Now, my lord, you must take the last look at your crown—that will never encircle your brow again. Now look through the window at your broad estates— you will not be able to call a foot of it your own! Even the six feet of earth in which you lie will only be yours as long as the charity of your successors will permit you to slumber in peace. Good-bye to your money bags! Farewell to the market and the exchange! You have got your wealth with much labor, but you are forced to leave it now—every penny of it. None of it can go with you.  
Worse still, the gates of death-shade are the places of farewell. An ungodly man has to bid, sometimes, farewell to a Christian wife. Kiss her cheek, man—you will never see her again. You have a Christian child, a dear child that has lately joined the church, but you are no follower of Christ. When you come to die, they will bring her to your bedside and you will have to say, “Good-bye, Mary. I shall never see you again, or if I do it, will only be as Dives, who looked up and saw Lazarus far away in Abraham’s bosom, but with an awful gulf between.” Some of you unconverted brothers, how will you like to be separated from your Christian sisters? Some of you daughters—how will you like to be divided from your father and your mother who will be in Heaven? Oh, all of you say, “We would like to meet in Heaven as unbroken families.” Young girl. Young man. What if your name should be left out when Christ shall summon home His own? Certain it is that death-shade gates are the place of everlasting farewell. God grant you may never have to take such farewell of any of your kin who are in Christ, but may you soar up to Heaven and be raised with them when the trumpet of the archangel sounds!  
Thus I have, as best I could, talked of the end of the earthly life. O Souls, prepare to meet your God, for you may have to meet Him before another sun has risen! I beseech you, by the living God, whose servant I am, postpone not repentance and faith, but now, while mercy’s white flag is to the front and God waits to be gracious to you, bow before the Cross of Christ! Trust in Jesus and be saved! The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 49.**

The chief musician here bids us not to fear the ungodly. However high they may be placed, they are but dying men and when they die their hope shall perish with them. He gives a very graphic description of the deathbed and of the perdition of ungodly men.

Verses 1, 2. Hear this, all you people; give ear, all you inhabitants of the world: both low and high, rich and poor together. Whenever God has a voice for men, it is meant for all sorts of men. No Scripture is of private interpretation. No warning is intended only for a few. Hear this, then, all you people. Whether you are low, you are not too low to listen to His voice. Or, whether you are high, you are not too high to be under His supremacy.

3, 4. My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. I will incline my ear to a parable: I will disclose my dark saying upon the harp. Mysteries are to be preached, but they are to be preached with an earnest endeavor on the preacher’s part to make them plain. If it is a dark saying, yet let it be open and, if music will help, so let it be. Whatever there is to be taught, let it be plainly taught to the sons of men.

5. Why should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about? We may read it, “The iniquity of my supplanters shall compass me about.” There may be some dark days when the wicked seed, whose delight it is to bite at the heel of the Seed of God, will gather around us. And we think, perhaps, that they will be too many for us. But why should we fear them? Who are they? They are great and mighty, perhaps, but if they are but an iniquity—we need not to be afraid of them. Our righteous God is our defender.

6, 7. They that trust in their wealth and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him. They may be rich as Croesus, but they cannot save a comrade from the grave. They may pay the physician, but they cannot bribe death. How little is the power of wealth, after all! The rich man cannot even save his baby that he loves so well. He certainly cannot save his fellow sinner.

8. (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceases forever). There is no redemption but one. And if a soul is unredeemed, the hope of it ceases forever.

9. That he should still live forever, and not see corruption. For the bodies of the great are fed upon by worms as readily as the bodies of the paupers. They may embalm the body, if they will, to cheat the worms, or put it into a coffin of lead, but little can they do with it. It is a costly business, after all, and is the exception to the rule. Even the wisest cannot live forever so as not to see corruption.

10. For he sees that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish and leave their wealth to others. Whatever men may have gathered, the wisest cannot find an invention which will enable him to take his treasure with him. He must leave it behind. “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there.”

11. Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations. They call their lands after their own names. Man is so fond of immortality that while he foolishly rejects the reality of it, he clings to the name of it—and he builds a house which he ties down by deed to his heirs, and his heirs’ heirs, “forever,” as he calls it. And then he calls the land by his own name that it may never be forgotten that such a worm as he once crawled over that portion of the earth!

12. Nevertheless man being in honor abides not. He passes away. His grace, his lordship, his reverence must lie in the grave! How ridiculous grand titles seem when once it is said, “Earth to earth; dust to dust; ashes to ashes.” “Vain pomp and glory of the earth.” Indeed we may say in the presence of the shroud and the mattock, and the grave and the worm—“Man being in honor abides not.”

12. He is like the beasts that perish. Not like any one beast, but like any beast that perishes. He does but live and, as far as this world is concerned, he is gone.

13. This their way is their folly: yet their prosperity approves their sayings. Selah. When men have lived only for this world and die and pass away without any future worth the having—without any hope of Heaven—yet still they report it in the papers that he died “worth” so much—as if it were wonderful to have so much to leave! And they speak of the shrewd things he used to say—mostly very greedy things and very grasping things. And though he was a fool, after all, for aiming at the “main chance,” as he called it—while he missed the real main chance, namely, the salvation of his soul—yet his posterity inherit his folly with his blood and they approve his sayings.

14. Like sheep they are laid in the grave. They lead a worldly life and die a worldly death—quiet, contented with this world—no thought of the world to come.

14. Death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning. That everlasting daybreak shall shed a light on many things. And then the master and the lord who tyrannized over the poor and needy shall find himself under the foot of those he trod upon! “The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.”

14, 15. And their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for He shall receive me. Selah. What a happy confidence! Blessed are those who, by a living faith in a living God, know that their soul shall be received into its Maker’s hands! But woe unto those whose confidence lies in the treasure they have accumulated and the acres they have purchased.

16, 17. Be not you afraid when one is made rich when the glory of his house is increased. For when he dies he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. They will not know him in the next world to be the squire, the peer, the prince. Death is a dreadful leveler. Envy not the great man of this world! “His glory shall not descend after him.”

18. Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise you, when you do well to yourself. Not “when you do good,” mark, for often when you do good, men will criticize and censure—and the better the deed, the more sure is it to provoke the contempt of many. But “men will praise you when you do well to yourself.” “A shrewd man, that! That is the kind of man I want to be! See how he prospers! A smart, pushing fellow! Oh, yes, he is the man for a friend.” Whenever there is an aggravated selfishness that accumulates to itself like a rolling snow-ball, men are sure to praise. It is the irony of life.

19. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. They are sleeping in the grave. So shall he. And beyond the grave there is nothing but darkness for him whose heart is set on this world.

20. Man that is in honor and understands not, is like the beasts that perish. Understanding and the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom—not earthly honor—is our only succor in the day of death.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2583 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 38.25

RAIN AND GRACE—A PARALLEL  
NO. 2583

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 14, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 5, 1883.

**“Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, or a path for the thunderbolt, to cause it to rain on the earth, where there is no one; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?”  
Job 38:25-27.**

JOB was an admirable man, but the Lord meant to make him still better. The best of men are but men at the best and though Job was, in a certain sense, perfect, yet he was not perfectly perfect—there was a further stage beyond that which he had reached, otherwise he would not have been tried as he was. But because the Lord knew that there was something better for Job than he had already attained, he had to be subjected to extraordinary trial. He was such a valuable diamond that there had to be more cutting for him than for a common stone. He was made of such good metal that he paid for being put into the furnace—there would come out something still more pleasing to the great Refiner if He cast that which was so precious into the most fervent heat. Hence it was that Job was so greatly tried. Yet, after all his trials, it seemed as if he would miss their blessed result, for his three friends—the miserable comforters—appeared to be the meddlers in the whole design. By their cruel, cutting, sarcastic observations, they irritated Job so that it looked as if he would be harder instead of softer because of the fires.

Sometimes, when a man knows that he is being unjustly and unfairly treated, he stiffens his back, hardens himself and influences which, by themselves, might have worked great tenderness of spirit, are spoiled because something else is thrown in. Job was in this condition and he, therefore, seemed to rise in his own estimation rather than to sink, as was desired, until, at last, the Lord ended the dispute by manifesting Himself. Out of the whirlwind He spoke to Job and bade him gird up his loins and meet his Maker if he dared. Then it was that Job was brought to his right position and, at the end, he said, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Then Job realized the benefit of his affliction—but not till then. When the Lord revealed to Job His supremacy, His eternal Glory, and in that light compelled him to see his own imperfection and nothingness—then the Patriarch’s trials became sanctified to him.

Our text is a part of God’s challenge to Job. The Lord seemed to say, “If Job is, indeed, half as great as he thinks he is, let him see whether he can do what his Creator does.” He is challenged about so slight a matter, apparently, as the sending of the rain. Does Job know how it is done? Can he explain all the phenomena? Our modern scientists tell us how rain is produced and I suppose their explanation is the correct one, but they cannot tell us how it is that power is given to carry out what they call, “the laws of Nature.” Neither can they make the rain, themselves, nor, if a drought were to continue till the nation was on the verge of famine, would they be able to cover the skies with blackness, or even to water a single acre of land! No, with all our explanations, it is still a great mystery—and it remains a secret with God how it is that He waters the earth with rain.

I am not going into that matter at this time. I intend to use the rain as an emblem of the Grace of God, as it usually is in Scripture—a figure of that blessed overflowing of the river of God’s Love which comes down to quench our thirst of sin, to refresh us, to enliven us, to feed us, to soften us and to cleanse us. This matchless water of life has all sorts of uses and God sends it, when He pleases, in abundant showers upon His own people according to that ancient Word of God, “You, O God, did send a plentiful rain whereby You did confirm Your inheritance, when it was weary.” The Hebrew means, “You did pour out blessings,” as from a cornucopia, and so, “You did confirm Your inheritance, when it was weary.” There are many here who are weary—they need to be refreshed and they are praying to God to send a gracious shower, a copious distilling of His matchless Grace upon their hearts and lives. I am going to preach upon this passage with the desire that while I am speaking, such a blessing may come upon us, or that, at any rate, we may begin to pray for it.

I. My first point is that, AS GOD ALONE GIVES RAIN, SO GOD ALONE GIVES GRACE.  
Jehovah asks of Job the question, “Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, or a path for the thunderbolt, to cause it to rain on the earth?” It is God, and God only, who creates rain. We cannot make it, but He can and He does give it. And it is absolutely so with His Grace— The Lord must give it, or there will be none. If it had not been for His eternal plan whereby He purposed to give Grace to the guilty, the whole race of mankind would have been left, like the fallen angels, without hope and without mercy! The angels that kept not their first estate, but rebelled against God, were given over to punishment without any intimation whatever of redemption for them—or of any possibility of their restoration. God, who does as He wills with His Grace which is most sovereign and free, passed over the fallen angels and made His Grace to light on insignificant and guilty men. And it has been after the same fashion in all history—if God has withheld the blessings of His Grace from any of the nations, they have not been able to procure them for themselves.  
One lone light burned in Israel for hundreds of years while the rest of the inhabitants of the earth were left in darkness. And the world, with all its wisdom, could not and did not find God. Men, in their ignorance, set up idols almost as numerous as their worshippers—and in their blindness they went this way and that way, but always away from God. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from he Father of Lights”—as certainly as the rain comes down from Heaven! There is but one source of supply for Grace and that source is God Himself. He gives Grace and, “He gives more Grace.” otherwise there would be none whatever among the sons of men!  
And, moreover, it is God who finds the way by which His Grace can come to men. I will not enter into any elaborate explanations of my text. It indicates that God finds a way by which the rain comes down from the upper regions to water the thirsty fields. “Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water?” Only God Himself has made a channel for the rain—we could not have made it. So is it with His Grace, otherwise how could Grace have come to man? How was it possible for the thrice-holy God to deal leniently with sinners who had provoked Him to anger? How could it be that the Judge of all the earth, who must be just, should, nevertheless, pass by transgression, iniquity and sin? This is a problem which would have perplexed a Sanhedrim of seraphim! If all the mightiest intelligences that God has ever made had sat together in solemn conclave for a thousand years, they would not have been able to solve this problem—How can God be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly? Infinite Wisdom devised that matchless way of substitution by which, through the death of the Son of God, men might be saved! There is the stamp of Divinity about that verse, “the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.”  
It is God who gives Grace and God who, in a Divinely gracious way, has given His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to be the channel through which Grace can come down to guilty men! Blessed be God for this and let His name be adored forever! Having thus resolved upon giving Grace to men and having made a channel in which His Grace might flow to men, let it never be forgotten that God now directs the pathway of all the Grace that comes into the world. Our parallel, in the natural world, is that, according to the original of our text, there is a sort of canal, or path, made for every drop of water as it descends from the heavens to the earth. There is not the most minute particle of rain that is left to fall according to its own fancy or will—each single drop of water that is blown aslant by the March wind, is as surely steered by God as are yonder glorious stars revolving in their orbits! There is a purpose of God concerning every solitary flake of snow and every single portion of hail that comes down from Heaven—all these are ordered according to His eternal counsel and will. God alone can arrange all this.  
It always seems to me to be a very wonderful way in which the world is watered. If all the rain were to pour upon us at once in a deluge, we should all be drowned—but it comes down gently, drop by drop, and thus it effects God’s purpose much more surely than if it burst in one tremendous waterspout destroying everything. God, by the mysterious laws by which He governs inanimate matter, has so planned it that the rain shall come in drops exactly the right size, such drops as shall hang upon a tiny blade of grass and scarcely shall bend it. See how the bright drops, like so many diamonds, hang in myriads on the hedgerows just the right size to hang there—neither too large nor too little. So is it with the Grace of God—it is given sovereignly and wisely.  
I daresay some Christian people think that they would like to have, in their first five minutes after believing in Christ, all the Grace they will ever have—but it cannot be. I have often admired that expression of the Apostle Paul, “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace; wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.” God teaches us His will, but He does not teach us too much at a time. Have you ever seen children who have been in school, so hardly driven by their masters that they have been mentally crippled and have never made the advance they ought to have made because they were driven too hard at the first? I have met with this sort of thing, spiritually. In several cases I have known, men and women have learned so much of the things of God in a short time that their reason has been most seriously jeopardized. I often have to look at young converts and almost to pray that they might not learn too much at once, for the deep things of God are so amazing to a man who is just plucked out of the world that if the cases of insanity through religion were much more frequent than they are, I should not at all be astonished! I wonder how any of us can bear what God has taught us already. If you could give eyesight to a man born blind and then, in a moment, were to place him in the full blaze of the sun, it would be a serious danger to him. If he has been long in the darkness, he must see the light by degrees. In like manner, we ought to thank God that He does not deluge us all at once with all the Grace we shall ever have, but He gives it to us gently, as soft vernal showers which, in Infinite Wisdom, distil upon the thirsty earth.  
So we have seen that God gives Grace and God finds a way of giving Grace. And then God directs the way of His Grace and the measure and the manner of it. And He does it all in wisdom and prudence.  
See, then, my dear Friends—I hope you all do—our absolute dependence upon God for all spiritual blessings. A farmer may do all he likes with his ground, but he will never have a harvest if God withholds the rain. He may be the most skillful agriculturist who ever lived, but he can do nothing if the heavens above him are as brass. If he were to call in the most learned astronomer of the day, there is not one who, with his wand, could move the stars, or cause the clouds to open and pour down rain upon the earth. If there were sore trouble in the land because farming was failing for lack of rain, if both Houses of Parliament were to be called together and the Queen were to sit upon her throne of state—and they were unanimously to pass an act ordering the rain to fall—He that sits in the heavens would laugh! The Lord would have them in derision, for the key of the rain is in no hand but that of Jehovah. It is exactly so with the Grace of God. You and I cannot command it. The presence of the most holy men in our midst would not, of itself, bring it. The most earnest preaching, the most Scriptural doctrine, the most faithful obedience to ordinances would not make it necessary that we should receive Grace. God must give it—He is an absolute Sovereign and we are entirely dependent upon Him.  
To what does this fact drive us? It drives us to prayer. When we have done all that we can—and surely we can scarcely pray if we have neglected anything that we can do—when we have done all that lies within our power as earnest-hearted Christian workers, then we must come to the Lord, Himself, for strength, and unto the God of our salvation for all power. This has been said so many times that when I say it, again, someone may reply, “That is a mere platitude.” Just so—and the mischief is that the Church is beginning to think it is only a platitude—but if we all felt that the most important thing for the Church of Christ to do, after she has borne her testimony to the world, is to pray, what a different state of things there would soon be! But now you know what they are doing in far too many places—they push the Prayer Meeting up into a corner and if there is anything to be put off, they give up the Prayer Meeting! In some of our places of worship, we might search a long time for the Prayer Meeting. It is somewhere in the back settlements, down in some small room which is too big for it even then! People plead that they cannot get out to the Prayer Meeting—they will go out to a lecture or to spend the evening for pleasure—but they do not care to go out when it is “only a Prayer Meeting.”  
Just so and as long as that is the estimation in which professing Christians hold it, so long must we cease to expect showers of blessing from on high! The main thing is for the Church to pray! She knows that she is dependent upon her God—let her show it by crying day and night to Him that He would send a blessing. There is a big mill with all its spindles and all its workers. I think I see it as we speed along in the train through one of our Northern counties. It is all lit up, tonight, and many busy hands are at work. But where is the power that makes those spindles move? In that little shed outside, where there is a man with black hands, stirring the fire, and keeping up the pressure of

team. That is where the power is! And that is a picture of the Prayer Meeting. It is the source of the Church’s energy and if public prayer is neglected, or if private prayer is slackened, or if family prayer is held back in any degree, we lose the power which brings the blessing—this will be acknowledged when we come to truly know that all the power is of God and that as we cannot command a drop of rain, but must leave it in the hands of God, so we cannot command an ounce of Grace—if Grace is to be so measured—it must come from God, and from God alone.  
II. Now, secondly, dear Friends, notice in my text that, AS GOD GIVES RAIN, SO RAIN FALLS IRRESPECTIVE OF MEN. “Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, or a path for the thunderbolt; to cause it to rain on the earth, where there is no one; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man?”  
I daresay you have often thought it strange that it should rain out at sea where it cannot water a single furrow, or apparently benefit any human being. Is it not still more strange that the water should fall so abundantly on vast tracts of sand and on plains that as yet have never been trod by the foot of man, and on those lofty peaks, those virgin hills where a human being has never yet been found? Men have a notion that nothing is good for anything if it is not good for them, but they are very foolish for thinking so. If what God does in Providence is good for nothing but for a rat, it is not unwise for Him to do it! He has other creatures to think of beside men and He thinks of them. The little fish in the sea and the birds of the air—and even the worms in the earth are remembered by the Most High and, sometimes, that weather which we say is so bad is only bad because it is bad for us—rebels against God. It may have been given especially for the birds and, perhaps, sometimes, God thinks that it is better to have weather that is good for birds than good for men, for He has to provide for us all and they, at least, have not sinned. And if He thinks of them, there is as much of mercy in the thought as when He thinks of us rebellious creatures. He makes it “to rain on the earth, where there is no one.”  
Now the parallel in Grace is this—that God’s Grace will come without any human observation. If the Grace of God comes to some of us, thousands will see it, for they will mark the working of His Grace in our life and conversation. But there sits a dear friend, over yonder, so obscure that possibly only two or three will ever know anything that she does. Perhaps, my Brother, only half-a-dozen are affected by your influence. Do you not rejoice that God, who makes the rain to fall where there is no one, will make His Grace to come to you, though nobody, or, at most, only two or three, may see it? I have delighted sometimes to wander into the middle of a forest and get far away from all sound of the voices of fallen men—and then to spy out some little flower growing right among the big trees. The sun gets at it, somehow, for a few hours in the day, and in its golden beams that little flower rejoices. And as I have looked at it and seen its beauty, I have remembered the words of the poet— *“Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,”*but I have not at all agreed with him when he added—  
*“And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”*  
It is God’s flower! God made it grow that He might look at it, Himself, and, therefore, its sweetness was not wasted, for God was there to appreciate and accept it! The most beautiful places in the world are, doubtless, places where men have never been. The most lovely gardens are those that God, Himself, keeps, where no Adam has been placed to till the soil. His trees, untouched by the axe, and unpruned by the knife, grow gloriously—“The trees of the Lord are full of sap. The cedars of Lebanon which He has planted.” My heart has rejoiced as I have thought of God walking among the great trees of the far-off West—those mighty monarchs of the forest that seem to touch the stars—walking among them when nobody was there but Himself, looking at the works of His own hands and admiring what He had made. Well, now, if you happen to be a solitary person, quite alone, one who will never make a noise in the world for all that God does for you, never mind about that—He causes it to rain on the earth where there is no one—and your obscurity shall not keep back the blessing!  
So, you see, rain comes without human observation. And it also comes without human co-operation, for it often rains “where there is no one.” Therefore, no man helps God to send the rain. As to Grace, it, also, often comes where there is no man to bring it. When a person has not heard a sermon, when he has been on the sea, far away from all means of Grace, yet God has caused it to rain upon him. There is here, tonight, I think, a Brother who left this country unimpressed by the Gospel, who, nevertheless, when near the shores of Australia, sat down and read a sermon which his wife had put into his box—and God met with him there! The Lord has many ways of proving that His Grace descends upon men without any help from them—and that He can send it where He pleases by ways of His own. If the ordinary means should seem to fail, He can cause it to rain “where there is no one.”  
Perhaps there is somebody here who is going right away from the usual means of Grace. Possibly, dear Friend, you are fretting to yourself as you think, “I shall never come to this place of worship again. Perhaps I may never hear the Gospel to my soul’s comfort again.” Suppose you are right away in the bush of Australia? God can send His Grace to you, there, just as easily as He can send it here! If you are going to the backwoods of America or Canada, do not be afraid—the Lord is at home there. If you have to settle down in a log hut and are miles from any meeting of Christian people—do not be dispirited or cast down, but, in your loneliness, sit and sing and let this be a part of your song, “He makes a way for the overflowing water, to cause it to rain on the earth, where there is no one; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man.” Therefore be encouraged by this second thought.  
III. I had many other things to say to you upon this point, but time fails, so I must notice, thirdly, that BOTH RAIN AND GRACE FALL WHERE WE MIGHT LEAST HAVE EXPECTED THEM. “To satisfy the desolate and waste ground.”  
Grace comes where there was no Grace before. Where all was desert and waste, there comes the rain. And where all was graceless and godless, there comes the Grace of God. Grace comes where there is the greatest need of it. Here was a dreadful place—it was waste—it was a wilderness yet the rain came there. And where there are men who feel themselves to be just as dead and barren as a desert, Grace will come even there! The rain comes to wildernesses and Grace can come to you, poor guilty Sinners! If you have nothing with which to entertain the Grace, Grace will bring its own company with it. It will come into your empty heart and make you one of the “people prepared for the Lord.” Grace waits not for men, neither tarries for the sins of men. We call it Prevenient Grace because it comes before it is sought—and God bestows it on a people who are utterly undeserving of it.  
Grace comes where, apparently, there is nothing to repay it for coming. When the rain falls on the wilderness, it seems as if no result could follow from its fall. What a mercy it is that when we have nothing to pay, God lavishes His mercy on us and, in due time, we repay Him in the way He expects. I do not suppose that many of you have ever seen the great steppes of Russia. I have been told that for thousands of miles they are like our London streets, without a single blade of anything green—a horrible desolation! Yet after the snow has gone and springtime comes in and summer, with its wonderful heat, that plain is covered with grass and with abundant flowers of the field. And the grass continues until it is cut for use—and then the land returns to that same barren appearance which it wore before. It is amazing, is it not, that showers of rain and the warmth of the sun should produce vegetation where, apparently, there seemed to be none whatever?  
Just so does the Grace of God come to a sinner’s heart! It is all hard, dead, black, hopeless. But when the Grace comes, it brings life with it and suddenly there spring up in the man all manner of good works, holy words, gracious thoughts and everything that is sweet and pleasing in the sight of God! And what is best of all, it continues to produce a harvest that never dries up and the soil never returns to its former barrenness again! Therefore, Beloved, let us take heart concerning the Grace of God. If the rain comes where there seems to be no argument in favor of its coming, so may the Grace of God come to you who have no right to it—no expectation of it—no hope of it—no, are even filled with despair concerning it! While you are sitting here, the Lord can meet with you and save you! Be of good comfort—to you is the Gospel sent, saying, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Trust your guilty soul with Him and you, even you, shall receive the showers of love that come from God’s right hand! There is nothing in the Covenant of Grace that shall be held back from you—even though you are the very worst and vilest one in this place—if you only trust the Savior. Though you may write yourself down as most surely lost and given up to barrenness, like the heath that is near unto burning, yet it shall not be so with you—God shall bless you and that right early.  
“Oh, if He does!” says one, “I will bless His name.” Then that is one reason why He will do it, that you may bless His name. I have often told you of one who said, “If God saves me, He shall never hear the last of it.” Well, that is the sort of people He likes to save—people who, with glad heart and voice, will proclaim and proclaim again, and proclaim to all eternity that the Lord saved them—even them! Remember the text of last Sunday night, for it is just in the same key as the text of tonight—“He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away

empty.” [See Sermon #2582, Volume 44—Alto and Bass—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org ] He has caused it “to rain on the

earth where there is no one; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground,” for it is to these waste grounds, these desolate places, that God specially looks with favor. If you are great in your own esteem, He will make you little. But if you are little, He will make you great. If you live by your own power, you shall be slain. But if you are slain and dead beyond hope of recovery in yourself, you shall be made alive! You empty ones shall be filled and you filled ones shall be emptied. You that are up shall be down—and you that are down shall be lifted up, for God turns things upside down. And when He comes to work, He effects marvelous changes in the condition of the hearts of men.

IV. Now I close by noticing, in the fourth place, that RAIN, WHEN IT COMES, IS MOST VALUED BY LIFE, for we read in our text, that it comes “to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth.”

You may water a dead post as long as you like, yet nothing will come of it. But the most tender, tiniest little herb that has a bud fast shut, knows when the rain comes and begins to develop its hidden power—and opens its bud to the rain and to the sun! That is why the Grace of God comes, “to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth.” I hope that there is a good deal of budding life here. The Lord has looked upon you and has made you feel uneasy—that is a bud. Oh, that the uneasiness might open into full repentance! The Lord has looked upon you and He has given you desires. Oh, that the Grace of God may increase those desires till they shall open into resolution and determination! The Lord has sent the dew from on high upon your soul, dear Friend, and you are beginning to hope that there is salvation somewhere and, perhaps, for you. Oh, that the hope may open, like a bud that has been shut up—open into faith in Jesus Christ, so that you shall say, “I will trust in Him.” All the buds everywhere are just now trying to get out into the sunshine. They seem bound up in gummy envelopes, but they are beginning to open in the sunshine. I like to sit under the fir trees and hear the crack of the opening caused by the heat of the sun. You can almost see the trees rejoicing that summertime is coming! So may you see young converts open when the Grace of God is displayed abundantly—they grow before your very eyes till, sometimes, you are astonished at what the Grace of God does, with wise prudence, but yet with a sweet readiness, upon the hearts of the sons of men!

How far have your buds developed? Have you begun to pray a little? Oh, that your prayer might be more intense! I hope that little bud of private prayer will grow till it comes to family prayer so that you can pray with your wife and children. You have been reading your Bible lately, have you? Oh, thank God for that! Now I hope that bud of Bible reading will open into the daily habit of feeding upon the Word of God. Go right through the Bible if you can. Pray to God to give you a solid knowledge of its contents that you may be rooted and grounded in what His Spirit teaches you there. Some of you have another sort of bud—you have been thinking of what you can do for Christ. You thought you were converted, but you have never done much for Christ. I do not use any whips, but sometimes I am tempted to take a good long one to some of those lazy folk who do nothing and yet hope to go to Heaven. One says, “I think, my dear Pastor, that I must try to do something for Christ.” Well, that is a bud—may the Grace of God be so abundant that you will leave off trying and get actually to doing!

“How am I to serve God?” said one to me the other day. I answered, “My dear Brother, get at it. ‘Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.’ Don’t come and ask me, for where there is so much to be done, the man is idle who asks, ‘What am I to do?’ Do the first thing that comes to hand!” If a soldier in battle saw that the enemy was winning the day, he would not be hesitating and asking, “Captain, what can I do?” He would kill the first fellow that came near—and so must you, in a spiritual sense. Do something for Christ. Oh, that this Church might begin to open all its buds! May every little one become a thousand, and every small one a great multitude, to the praise of the glory of the Grace of God! O you little ones, you hidden ones, you timid ones, you trembling ones—the Grace of God is abundant! Open to receive it! See how the crocus, after having been long hidden beneath the soil, knows when the new year begins and, as soon as the sun smiles on the earth, it gently lifts up its golden cup—and is there anything more beautiful in all the world than the crocus cup when God fills that chalice with the light of Heaven? What a depth of wonderful brightness of color there is within it! All the crocus can do is to open itself—and that is all you can do—just stand and drink in God’s light! Open yourself to the sweet influences of the Grace of God.

The fair lilies of the garden toil not, neither do they spin; but yet they glorify God. How they seem to stand still and just show what God can do with them! They just drink in the light and heat and then pour it all out again in silent, quiet beauty. Now you do the same! Let the purity of your life, like the purity of the lily, glorify the God who created it in you. So may His blessing rest upon you all, dear Friends, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**Isaiah 4:8-20.**

Verse 8. But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, My friend. Let us, for the time being, forget the people to whom this message was addressed, and see whether it might not be spoken to ourselves. Come, my Friend, are you truly God’s servant? Do you delight to do His will and to walk in His ways? If so, then you are God’s chosen, for, wherever there is the true spirit of obedience to the Lord, it is the result of His Grace, and Grace never comes except from the wellhead of electing love! If you are God’s servant, you are God’s chosen. Then see to it that you walk and live as one of the seed of Abraham, whom God calls, “My friend.”

It was very touching, the other day, to notice how the Queen spoke of one who was her servant, but who had gained the friendship of his royal mistress. So the Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his Lord does: but I have called you friends.” May we so faithfully serve Him that it will be fitting for the Lord to speak of us in all three of these terms—“You, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My friend.”

9 *.*You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called you from the chief men thereof, and said unto you, You are My servant; I have chosen you, and not cast you away. May the Lord now say that to each one of you who are His servants! Especially may He say the latter part of it, “I have not cast you away”! Many times He might have done so if He had dealt with us according to our deeds. “Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord,” is a prayer we ought often to put up, for, in that service, we are far from perfect. I think I speak for all sane Christians—I do not undertake to speak for certain insane ones that abound at this time—but I believe that all sane servants of the Lord confess that they are such poor servants that their wonder is that they have not been dismissed from His service. Yet it is sweet to hear Him say, “I have chosen you, and not cast you away.”

10. Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God. Oh, the riches of that word, “I am your God”! That is more than, “Your Friend, your Helper.” “I am your God.”

10. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you. First, “I will give you strength, and then I will use My own strength on your behalf: ‘I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you.’”

10. Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness. The poor child of God seems to cry, “Lord, You say, ‘I will help you,’ but I can hardly stand! I am such a babe, I have not yet learned to stand alone.” “Well, then,” says God, “I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.” Are any of you afraid that you will slip right off your feet? Are you put in very perplexing positions, so that you hardly know which way to turn? Then rest on this sweet promise, “Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.”

11. Behold, all they that were incensed against you shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with you shall perish. The Lord Jesus Christ will put to rout all the enemies of His people! Their sins and their sorrows, their foes and their woes, shall alike be scattered to the wind!

12 *.*You shall seek them, and shall not find them, even them that contended with you: they that war against you shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nothing. You know how it happened to Pharaoh and all his hosts—the Israelites could not find them after the Lord had overthrown them in the Red Sea. The Psalmist sang, long afterwards, concerning the Egyptians who were drowned, “There was not one of them left.” So shall it be with all those whom you now fear and dread—God shall appear and work such a deliverance for you that you shall wonder where your trouble is! It shall be drowned, utterly washed away, like the Egyptians whom the children of Israel saw no more.

13, 14. For I the LORD your God will hold your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not; I will help you. Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the LORD, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. You must not miss those charming words, dear Friends! Let me read them again. Some of you will want them, so do not miss them. There is some medicine here that you will need, maybe, before long— “Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”

15 *.*Behold, I will make you as a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff. You know the corn drag was made rough at the bottom, as though it had sharp teeth, and when it was drawn over the wheat after it was spread out on the threshing floor, the grain was separated from the chaff. So God tells His people, if they trust Him, that He will make them into a threshing instrument having teeth—and they shall thresh not ordinary harvests—but shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff! No task is too hard for God’s people to accomplish when God is with them! Difficulties vanish and their fears are driven before the wind when God strengthens them.

16. You shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and you shall rejoice in the LORD, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel. Come, you that are drooping in spirit— here is God’s promise to you that you shall overcome all your difficulties and then shall rejoice in God. “Oh,” you say, “I could rejoice in God if He enabled me to do that!” Put the, “if,” away, and believe that He is about to help you, and anticipate the victory He is going to give you by singing the song of faith!

17. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst. They have come to such a state that they cannot even tell their needs— they do not know how to speak to others about their grief, or even to describe it to themselves. “Their tongue fails for thirst.” What then?

17. I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. “But, Lord, they could not speak! Did You not say, ‘Their tongue fails’? Yet You say, ‘I the Lord will hear them.’” It shows, dear Friends, that a groan is a prayer, a sigh is a prayer, and that even if we cannot get as far as to sigh or groan, our very hunger and thirst make up a prayer before God! “I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”

18. I will open rivers in high places. That is an unusual place to find rivers, but God does strange things when He shows mercy to the poor and needy “I will open rivers in high places.”

18. And fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. There shall be enough and to spare! There shall be an abundance of the water of which before they could not find a single drop! When God is gracious to a soul, He is gracious. When His mercy is made to enter a man’s heart, then He pours floods upon him. No little Grace will God bestow, but endless Grace, and boundless Grace, “and crown that Grace with glory, too.”

19, 20. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the cypress tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree. I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it. May these gracious promises be fulfilled in you and me, that we may praise our faithful Covenant-keeping God forever and ever! Amen.

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Job 38.31

THE PLEIADES AND ORION  
NO. 818

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 28, 1868, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Can you bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?” Job 38:31.**

MOST of you know that singularly beautiful cluster of stars called the Pleiades—very small, but intensely bright. These are most conspicuous about the time of spring, and therefore, in poetry the vernal influences which quicken the earth and clothe it with the green grass and the manycolored flowers are connected with the Pleiades. By the sweet influences of the Pleiades we understand, then, in plain language, those benign influences which produce the spring and the summer. These, it is said, no man can restrain.

Orion, a very conspicuous constellation with its glittering belt, is best seen towards the close of autumn, just before the coming in of the winter. It is a southern and wintry sign and therefore, poetically, the winter is traced to the bands of Orion, and we are told in the text, literally, that no man is able to loosen the bonds of frost, or check the incoming of the cold. In other words, the whole verse asserts that none can stop the revolutions of the seasons! When God ordains the spring the shining months come laughing on. And when, again, He calls for winter, snow and ice must rule the dreary hour.

The farmer is entirely dependent upon the God of Heaven. He may plow with industry and cast in the good seed with hope, but unless the sweet influences of Heaven shall be given he can reap no harvest. If the drought is long and severe, he cannot cause the clouds to drench the thirsty furrows, or, if the rain descends in torrents, drowning the pastures, he cannot seal up the bottles of Heaven. He is absolutely dependent upon God, who governs all things according to His will. And we who know so little of agricultural operations—being so far removed from the country which God has made and living in the town which man has made—we, also, are as much dependent as any—for even the king is nourished by the fruit of the field! And follow what merchandise we will, ultimately it is still from the fields that our nourishment must come.

All of us, then, and not us alone, but all the beasts and birds, and all the creatures are entirely and absolutely dependent upon God, and unless He helps them, they cannot help themselves. This is the simple teaching of the verse, but it was doubtless used to teach Job that as he could not alter the ordinances of Heaven, so neither could he change the purposes of God in the events of Providence. You cannot hasten the spring nor postpone the winter! Neither can you prevent those calamities which plunge nations in distress, nor prohibit those mercies which lift up tribes into prosperity. Evil comes to the sons of men by God’s purpose, and good comes also. Neither is it in your power, O son of man, with all your discretion and skill, with all your economy and industry to avert the evil which God appoints!

The scythe of the dread mower cannot be arrested by wisdom—the inevitable hour comes to all. Need and sickness, and bereavement invade us at the Lord’s bidding, and although we may greatly mitigate their rigor, yet we cannot avert them, for the ordinances of God must surely come to pass. Whatever is written in the folded book of the Divine decree must, in due season, be fulfilled in the history of man. If you cannot alter, then bow yourself and submit! If you cannot change the purpose, then yield to it and ask to have it sanctified to you! O Job, if your cattle must be taken away, if your children must die, if sore boils must break out upon your body, if you must sit upon the dunghill, if you have no power to alter a single circumstance—then accept the affliction at the hand of the Infinite One! Humbly kiss the hand that smites, and say, “It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him.”

The doctrine of a Divine Providence is calculated to create in the minds of the thoughtful and believing, the spirit of resignation. They might, perhaps, rebel and struggle, if this were of some use, but since it would be utterly useless—since the great wheels of Providence proceed in their perpetual revolutions, not pausing for our tears nor hastening for our groans—then it is best for us to admire it as it revolves, to believe that it is producing good and to submit ourselves to whatever the Lord appoints.

However, I do not intend using the text in that sense this morning, but as we are told that no man can restrain the benign influences of the Pleiades, so, in the first place men cannot utterly prevent the working of the gracious Spirit. And as men, in the second place, cannot loose the bands of Orion, so men, of themselves, are not able to overcome those wintry powers which sometimes seize upon the human heart. These two things, and then, in the third place, the lessons from them.

I. WHO SHALL BIND THE SWEET INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT? The Holy Spirit does not always operate in the same degree of power, but when His time, His set time, to favor Zion is come, then, blessed be God, He is like the dew upon the grass that waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men. It is not in human or in diabolical power to restrain the influences of the Holy One of Israel when He deigns to visit His Church.

Many attempts have been made against the Church of God but they have all proven failures because the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit has frustrated all the purposes of the Lord’s enemies. The Church of God, especially in her early days, has been assailed by the envenomed tongue of slander. All over the Roman empire it was reported that Christians were men of the most brutalized habits. I dare not mention, for the cheek of modesty would be crimsoned, what were the charges brought against Christians of crimes perpetrated in their assemblies. Suffice it to say that among the rest, as they met together to break bread and drink wine in memory of their Lord, it was said they were accustomed to eat the flesh of a man and that they passed round from hand to hand and drank together out of a cup of warm human blood.

Of course, the populace believing these horrible stories were violently opposed to the Christian faith. And how did the Christian faith overcome the popular opposition stimulated by such calumny as this? Simply by the power of the Holy Spirit! The sweet influences of the Holy Spirit which descended upon the disciples at Pentecost remained with them, so that when they preached they preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven! When in their private assemblies they spoke of Jesus, they spoke in the power with which they had been endowed at Jerusalem and calumny was of no more avail than chaff contending with the whirlwind, or stubble warring against the fire!

In fact, these very calumnies brought men out of curiosity to behold these atrocious sinners in their orgies of vice, and coming, they listened to the gracious words which proceeded out of their mouths, and, in the power of the Holy Spirit they believed and became Christians, too! Beloved, this stands good today. Many a Christian has to endure slander, and of the most cruel kind, too. To a sensitive heart, perhaps, slander is a more severe trial than even the whip or the rack. And yet, glory be to God, if our names are cast out as evil, they cannot deprive us of the comfort of the Holy One of Israel!

Often, when we are worst spoken of by the world, we are best beloved of our God. The Lord has a way of taking up His people when they are despised and rejected of men, and manifesting His love to them after an unusual sort, so that if the cup might have been dashed with bitters, God pours in so much of the honey of His own precious love the bitter is forgotten, and the calumny is swallowed up in the communion. Happy are you, Beloved, when they say all manner of evil against you for Christ’s name’s sake, for you can reply to your accusers, “Can you bind up the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit? Can you stop from my soul the Divine and overflowing consolations which proceed from the Pleiades of promise when they shine full upon my soul?”

If calumny does not do, the world has always been ready with coarser weapons—she resorts to open persecution. But, Beloved, all the persecutions which have ever assaulted the Church have never been able to stop the sweet influence of the Pleiades—I mean to quench the work of the Spirit and deprive the Church of God of her true comfort. When it has been her springtime, all the blood which could be shed could not thrust her back again into her dreary winter. Her flowers bloomed, her buds began to shoot forth and her fruits adorned her branches to the glory of our God! Behold Paul and Silas in the dungeon of Philippi! Their persecutors have scourged them. They have laid them in the stocks. They have thrust them into the noisome filth of the innermost prison—but the sweet influences of the Pleiades are felt and they begin to sing in the dead of night until the prisoners hear them!

Behold the influence of these same Pleiades in every place where the Apostles went! They were followed by their Jewish persecutors and they were molested by the Gentile mobs—but their preaching drew to the Cross of Christ a company whose hearts the Lord had touched and He added unto the Church, daily, of such as should be saved. After the Apostolic days, often in the midst of the amphitheater, when the nobles and the matrons of Rome and the Plebs—in all their ranks were gathered together and a few defenseless men and women were given up to bears and wolves and lions in the midst of the arena—how the sweet influence of the Pleiades fell on them! How they sung their Psalms as the lions rushed from their dens, or folded their arms in peace, praising the Lord that He thought them worthy to be partakers of His sufferings!

So was it on the snowy Alps! So was it in the valleys of Piedmont! So was it among the suffering Huguenots of France! So was it among our martyred fathers! Smithfield felt the influence of the Pleiades full often when her flames became as chariots in which the saints mounted to their thrones! In the glens of Scotland, among her lone hills and shaggy woods, when such men as Cargill and Cameron opened the Bible and read the text by a flash of lightning and then preached of the royalties of King Jesus—in those covenanting days the sweet influence of the Pleiades were, perhaps, more felt than in these softer hours when men learn to sleep under the ministry of the Truth—and too many of them are ready to cancel their principles and give up their hopes if but a little gain should cross their path.

Persecution, what have you done? March before us, you cruel ranks of persecutors, each with the Hell-brand on your brow! You sons of Cain, you brethren of Korah, you disciples of Balaam—you have never been able to impede the onward march of the Church of God—no, not so much as for a single hour! Vain were your arts and villainies, for God from Heaven fought against you! Nor, dear Brethren, have even the crafty heresies which at different times have crept into the Church of God been able to bind the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit.

Oftentimes, the very springtime of the Church has come when to all outward appearance it appeared that evil had altogether triumphed. When Popery’s power had become consolidated and universal, it was then that Savonarola, Jerome of Prague, and John Huss were raised up together with our own John Wickliffe to shake the foundations of the throne of Antichrist! At the darkest hour of the world’s history the light began to shine! These men, when they had either burnt them alive, or consumed their corpses—these men it was supposed, would be forgotten and their influence would perish from off the face of the earth—for, were not all the doctors on the side of Rome? Were not all the school-men zealous to maintain her dogmas?

What were these few men that they should be able to stand against the old, the venerable, the wealthy? But, Brothers and Sisters, the old error had to give way and the light of the Gospel shone forth! And a new spring life came to the world, and the time of the singing of birds and the blooming of the flowers was come, and men called it the Reformation! Rest assured it will be so today. The craft of Satan and the wickedness of man have invented forms of mischief so insinuating that they threaten speedily to envelop our land. We have among us a form of Popery in which Romanism is divested of its grosser idolatries, clothed with gorgeous vestments, garnished with attractive pomp and upheld by the most earnest, and to all appearances, the most pious of men!

Will this prevail? Will this destroy the Gospel by whose dew the nation has so long been watered? We have among us at the same hour a rationalism, sufficiently cautious not to deny too much, stealthily advancing to its ultimate results, but lingering wisely by the way to talk of liberality and breadth of thought. This is fascinating to the last degree to many minds, and is subduing to itself hundreds of the more thoughtful youths of this country. Between these two millstones will not Christ’s kingdom be crushed? May we not fear that rationalism and ceremonialism will be like the two hands of Samson to remove the pillars whereon our house does lean?

Ah, not so! If the Holy Spirit does but descend upon the living Churches of God and put power into the preaching of the Truth, we may safely laugh all these to scorn, and say to the greatest of them, “Can you stand for a single second against the benign power of the adorable Spirit who is the Guardian of the Truth of God, the Life of the Church, the Defender of the faith, the Vanquisher of errors, the Defier of Hell, the Establisher of Truth’s empire and the Destroyer of the throne of falsehood?”

Advancing step by step I would remind you that there is a great opposition in man himself to the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit. When the time comes for any one man to be saved, his natural enmity is sure to be on the alert against the Divine power, and Satan is certain, also, to strengthen him lest he should lose his victim. Now, I glorify God in this that you, Sinner, though you may resist and grieve the Spirit for awhile, yet if He comes to you with Omnipotent power effectually to save, you must yield, for you, even you, with all your enmity, cannot bind the sweet influences of the Spirit of eternal life!

It is with many men as I have sometimes seen with a village brook—it has been dammed up for some reason and the water has become a pool. A heavy shower has, by-and-by, fallen upon the hills and the full stream has leaped downward. There stands the dam for a little while, but it trembles as the stream swells. Perhaps the villagers strengthen it, but if the rain continues to fall the stream increases in volume, and at last, with one noble outburst, down leaps the torrent and the dam is swept away like a bowing wall. So with our evil nature—when the Holy Spirit comes with greater and greater power, descending from the hills of God’s eternal purposes—He at last sweeps away every remnant of opposition, and on He sweeps in the greatness of His strength.

“You deny, then,” says one, “the free will of man?” Who says that? I never denied it! On the contrary, I insist upon it more than most men! There is no opposition between the doctrine of Irresistible Grace and the fact of the free agency of man. “How,” you say, “if man is thus irresistibly carried as by storm, how can he be free?” Think, Man, and answer for yourself! Were you never overcome in an argument? Did you never resist an argument for a time, till at last another reason was given, and then another and you could not but yield to the overwhelming arguments? Did you then prove that you had no reason of your own?

No, it proved you had a reason, and therefore could be mastered by arguments fitted to your reason. If you had been bereft of reason—an idiot— nobody could have spoken of an irresistible argument so far as you were concerned. But your powers of understanding enabled you to be overcome by legitimate force. So with the will—we do not dream, as some falsely imagine, that physical force is used by the Lord with men’s moral natures! We teach that there are appeals and persuasions, arguments and forces which are applicable to the will which, without violating its freedom even in the smallest degree, yet overwhelm it and subdue it to the right and the true—so that the man, with full consent, yields up himself to the full power of Divine love!

Do not the hymns of Mr. Wesley often express our meaning when he uses such words as overcoming and forcing? As in the verse*— “Save the vilest of the race,  
Force me to be saved by Grace”?*

Such expressions mean just what we mean and no more. We do not mean the violation of the will, but we do mean this, that where the Holy Spirit comes, though the man’s will may have been obstinate enough before, when He exerts His wondrous influences, He makes the will to yield itself at once! The man is made willing in the day of God’s power—the sweet influences of the Pleiades are not bound even by human rebellion!

It is cause for thankfulness, also, that no man can bind the sweet influence completely after he has been saved. If your experience is at all like mine, you sometimes get into a very horrible state of mind. You may feel as if you had no spiritual life at all. You cannot pray—or, if you pray, you do not enjoy it. You go up to the House of God and get no comfort. You turn to the Bible and behold no gleams of light. You get wretched and you sing with Dr. Watts*—*

*“Dear Lord, and shall we always live  
At this poor dying rate?”*

Well, all of a sudden you have such a visitation—you have not had such a time for months. It may be under a sermon, or, perhaps, at the Lord’s Table or even in the midst of your business! Before you are aware your soul is made like the chariots of Amminadab—you feel so rejoicing—it is not bodily excitement, it is spiritual life filled with vigor!

Now you can pray. Now you can pour out your soul in tears. Now you feel most happy and blessed you wonder how you could have been like a desert before, for you blossom so much like a garden now. Ah, it is this— the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit could not be bound even by your darkness and your death. God determined to visit you, and coming to you, He overcame every obstacle and made your soul to rejoice with joy unspeakable! Beloved, it is just so with a Church. I am sure this Church was in about as bad a plight as we could well suppose for the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit to work in it. It was a scattered flock, and divided and brought low—yet, though there were a thousand discouragements—no sooner did the Holy Spirit visit this Church than see how it began to multiply and rejoice!

During these years the same influences have blessed us, obstacles have been overcome, difficulties have been swept away and none have been able to keep from us the reviving influences of the Holy Spirit! You have now before you the thought of the freeness of the Spirit of God, who, like wind, blows as He wishes and is not bound by human might. Let me only add that although no man can, by his own power, bind or effectually and finally restrain the power of the Spirit of God, yet the Lord may withdraw His Spirit either from a Church or from an individual for a season and so cause sore distress—and prove that nothing is good or strong without Him.

Be tender, therefore, of the Holy Spirit. O you who know His power, trifle not with any of His Divine warnings! Be jealous lest you grieve Him! Follow His faintest monitions, and in all things do Him honor as your Friend and Guide. He may depart from the sinner who is not obedient to Him, He may leave altogether, and then such a soul is given up! From the saint also He may, for a time, be gone, till the good man repents and humbles himself—and then He will return, like a dove, with all His peaceful powers, to abide with Him evermore.

II. Now we shall turn to the second half of the text. There is a winter time both with Churches and with individuals when Orion is in the ascendant, and then, though we could well wish to do so, WE ARE NOT ABLE TO LOOSE THE BONDS OF THE FROST. This is sadly true in individual cases. My dear Brothers and Sisters, I suppose in your endeavors to do good you have met with persons in despair. There are none who more thoroughly baffle all the arts of the human comforter than these. You bring them the Gospel and they see it, but refuse it. If they cannot help it, they will sometimes get a little light, but only let them have time enough and they will shut their eyes and get into the dark again.

They bring objections and you answer them so conclusively that you could almost laugh at them, but they only renounce one set of fears to raise another. You hunt them out of one hole and you close it so that they never can get into it again. Alas, they make another! You drive them forth, again, but they find another retreat. They are most ingenious in inventing reasons for misery! They are diligent in the business of tormenting themselves. They are good people—they really have the fear of God. They are desirous of eternal life—they have it, even—and yet for all this, are involved in a net in which the more they struggle the more they are entangled. They are like men in the mud of the river Nile, who, sinking in it, splash and plunge only to sink deeper every time.

Have you not felt altogether confused in dealing with them? Have you not come out of the house and said, “I did think I could comfort people. I had some sort of conceit that I could have brought forward precious promises which might have cheered the hopeless, but I am altogether beaten. I can do nothing.” Now you may quote the language of the Psalm we sang this morning*—*

*“When he shuts up in long despair,*

*Who can remove the heavy bar?”*  
Such cases are not at all uncommon. What a happy day it is when God, having proved to us that we cannot loose the bands of Orion, looses them Himself and says to the captives, “Go free!” These make the best of Christians when they obtain liberty! They become among the fairest of the Divine family when they anoint their faces with the oil of joy!

The terrible experience they have had helps them to sympathize with others and instructs them in the devices of Satan so that they can console others. If it sometimes becomes a puzzle how to cheer others, I am sure it is so with yourself. Whenever I get under the bands of Orion, I find I cannot loose them from my own hands. There are some very happy, cheerful spirits who appear to have no winter, but the most of us occasionally fall into doubts and fears, and spiritual decays when our liveliness and joy are at a low ebb—

*“If anything is felt, ‘tis only pain  
To find I cannot feel.”*

We are, in the words of the text, bound with the bands of Orion, frost bound, ice-bound. The soul which once ran warbling on like a clear stream is cold and hard as a stone. Its prayers are like icicles, its emotions like blocks of ice.

Then, Brothers and Sisters, you may try and make the effort, as you ought to do, to loosen yourself from these bands, but you are powerless. Then is that text learned experimentally, “Without Me you can do nothing.” Oh then we feel that we are less than nothing and vanity, while merciless Orion hangs fetters on our soul and hunts our joys to death! Blessed be God, the warmth of love returns before long and the Pleiades shine again, and then we, “Rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

Now, Brethren, this same Truth is carried out in our works of faith in connection with each soul. You are going into your classes this afternoon and I would be far from dispiriting you, but I would have you remember that if you attempt to convert a soul yourself, you had better first answer the question of our text, “Can you loose the bands of Orion?” It were easier for you to turn winter into summer than to turn a child of wrath into an heir of Divine Grace. You have a task before you which is utterly impossible to human strength!

Conversion is no more in your power than creation. Regeneration lies not with you, but men are begotten again by the great Father of Spirits unto a lively hope. Bow before the power of God and feel at this moment your own utter powerlessness in the work to which He has called you. To turn an understanding from darkness to light, to make the stubborn will supple, to break the iron sinew of pride and make the neck to bow with cheerful obedience—this belongs not unto you, but unto the eternal Spirit who is Omnipotent in the world of mind. Think of this and go in His strength—not in your own.

Brethren, if it is so with individuals, it is in proportion equally so with entire congregations. We have, under God, as His servants, to save a perishing world. We are sent out as laborers in Christ’s vineyard to be the means of reclaiming the wild wastes to the husbandry of Christ. And what a task is ours! How impossible! We had better first attempt to loose the bands of Orion before we shall be able, unaided of God, to loose the bands of wickedness and say to the oppressed, “Go free!” The missionary enterprise, apart from supernatural influences, is the most insane that ever crossed the mind of man!

Yes, I will venture to say that the work of preaching the Gospel, even in Christian England, is of all attempts the most foolish unless we believe in the celestial power which alone can make preaching to be of any avail. Withdraw the Spirit—withdraw our belief in His power—and our teachings become the subjects of deserved ridicule! It is even so in our attempts to revive a slumbering Church. I discern a sleeping Church pretty readily. When I am preaching in any place I can soon tell what kind of people I am preaching to by their looks. There is a fire that flashes where there is life. Truth draws forth a responsive glance—good men’s bosoms heave while Christ is preached!

But in some places hearers are stolid, cold, dead—you might almost as well preach to the green hillocks that surround the Church as preach to them. They stir not, they move not, neither can they be moved. Now, at such times it is very dispiriting unless one can fall back upon the belief that the Holy Spirit can, if He wills, on a sudden quicken the most dead of all professing Churches and make His people again to live! And like the dry bones of Ezekiel’s vision, they shall stand upon their feet an exceedingly great army, ready to fight the battle of their Master! Can you loose the bands of Orion? Christian, feel your powerlessness! Behold, what must be done, and yet how you can do less than nothing in it!

III. Stand here and hear the voice of God which now speaks to you— that voice I will try to expound in the third part of the subject which consists of THE LESSONS DRAWN FROM THIS GREAT TRUTH, that we can neither restrain nor yet command the influences of the Holy Spirit. On the very surface lies the lesson of humility. I trust, Brethren, I have no need to say this, for the doctrine before us must have already had an effect upon your minds—while you have been thinking of the power of God, and of your own insignificance—you must have felt bowed down and humbled.

It is always dangerous to be useful. It is to be desired above silver, and coveted above fine gold, and yet, when obtained, it has its measure of dangers, for Satan will whisper, even if natural pride does not, “What an excellent man you must be! What qualifications there must be in you! What glory God gets out of you!” “See,” says the devil, “hundreds saved under you! Believers comforted under you!” And then the foul thought, the wicked thought seeks to build its nest right under the eaves of God’s own temple in the heart, “You are something after all.”

But, Brethren, we need to be brought back to this—“You can do nothing out of Christ. You are, apart from Him, a withered bough to be gathered and cast into the fire.” Yes, you preacher—powerful, useful, honored of God—nothing but a withered bough apart from Christ! Yes, you goodly woman, you godly, earnest man engaged in the Sunday school or in the Bible-class—all speak well of you and yet you art a cloud without rain, and a well without water—unless you have a vital union with Christ! As well might a child uproot an Alp as you attempt to win a soul apart from Christ! As well an infant creep from the cradle and pluck the sun from its place, and hurl the moon into the deep as you be able to deliver a soul from going down into the pit! Oh, this thought, Brothers and Sisters! I feel as if I should not speak of it for it prostrates me before God and makes me ask Him never to leave me to myself to think myself something lest He be angry with me, and use me no more!

Should not the next thought which comes into the mind be that of gratitude and adoration to God? If we cannot command the Holy Spirit’s power, yet He can. What if Orion’s bands cannot be loosed by us—they can be loosed by Him! There is no despairing soul that cannot find comfort when He visits it. “Yes, He makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.” “He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill, that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people.” “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.” He opens the blind eyes, and brings “out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.”

Glory be to His name! Where the human arm fails to work results, the Divine arm, with ease, achieves its purpose. And with us here, within our hearts, these gardens so frostbitten can be visited by Him. And if the WellBeloved comes, the summer comes with all its pleasant fruits! If Jesus will but walk into this garden and open the doors of our hearts and enter in, then there will be a paradise where there was before a wilderness! Blessed be the Lord, we cannot have sunk so low but He can lift us up! We cannot be so barren and so comfortless but what He can make us fruitful and give us joy and peace again.

There is no Church which He cannot revive! Are you members of congregations which are slumbering? Do not despair! You will go home after the day’s service, and say, “I wish I could do some good here, but I am only one.” No, dear Brother, you cannot loose the bands of Orion, but God can! The great Head of His Church can suddenly come into His temple and fill it with His glory. He can rake together the almost expiring ashes and kindle the fire anew, and bring the sacrifice and make your Church yet to be a temple to His praise! Glorify the name of God, the All-Powerful One! never let despair cross your soul. While He lives, who made Heaven and earth. While He works, who bears up the pillars of the universe. While He loves, who once gave up His Son to redeem us—there can be no cause for trembling! Zion shall be comforted! Her days of gladness shall dawn! Her winter of sorrow shall flee away! God is on her side and Orion relaxes his bonds.

There is another lesson, however, which I must not fail to bring before you in a word or two, namely this—behold the path and walk of Faith! She cannot walk in human power. She has quick eyes and she perceives mortal might to be a mere pretense, but she walks in the power of the Unseen One. “Can you bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades?” Faith answers, “I can.” If Joshua bound the sun—put chains upon the horns of the moon—Faith feels that she can do the same. Can you loose the bands of Orion? “Yes,” says Faith, “that I can.” If Elijah, after three years of drought, prayed, and the heavens were covered with clouds and there was a sound of abundance of rain—and he did this by the prayer of faith— even so can we do by the power of Him that lives and rules in the highest heavens!

Faith has the art of getting hold upon the arm of God and then, though she cannot stir or move in her own strength, yet she moves the arm of God that moves everything! She touches the motor nerve of Omnipotence and He acts whose action is conquest, whose work never fails. O Brothers and Sisters, if we can believe and pray, all things will be possible to us and we shall hold the Holy Spirit bound in this Church to remain with us for many and many a year! He will never depart while His people’s cries, and tears, and joyful thanksgivings are like a golden chain to stop His blessed feet! He will be bound and held by us.

We may do with Him as the spouse did with her Beloved. “I found him,” says she, “and I would not let him go.” O Beloved members of this Church, make it a resolution that the Holy Spirit shall not go from us! That we will, with diligent service and unceasing prayer, and constant gratitude stay Him and compel Him, seeing the day is far spent, to abide with us! One of the best ways to retain the Holy Spirit is to use what powers we have. Look at our farmers, how busy they have been during the last two or three weeks while the sun was shining, to gather in their hay! We must use every gleam of heavenly sunshine for Jesus’ sake! It does not always come, but when a Church is favored with it, let it use it to the utmost of its power, for God will not continue to give while we do not appreciate and prove our appreciation by making the full use of it.

Yes, prayer and faith can hold the Spirit! Prayer and faith can also loose the bonds of Orion. We will have sinners saved, we will have Churches revived, we will have London yet warmed with the life of God! Not because we can do it, but because we will give Him no rest until He comes forth from His secret dwelling place and makes the power and life of His Truth to be known from the ends of the earth!

The drift of the sermon is to cut you off from yourselves and throw you flat on your faces before God. Sinner, you cannot save yourself! You cannot bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades! You cannot take away from yourself those bands of Orion! But Jehovah can, and in simple faith in Him who offers His blood before the Throne, come to your Father and ask Him to do these things for you and they shall be done! And you shall glorify His name! May the blessing of God descend upon these words, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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÷Job 40.3

INDWELLING SIN  
NO. 83

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 1, 1856, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“Then Job answered the Lord and said, Behold, I am vile.” Job 40:3, 4.**

SURELY if any man had a right to say I am not vile, it was Job. According to the testimony of God, Himself, Job was “a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil.” Yet we find even this eminent saint when, by his nearness to God he had received light enough to discover his own condition, exclaiming, “Behold, I am vile.” We are sure that what Job was forced to say, we may each of us assent unto—whether we are God’s children or not. And if we are partakers of Divine Grace, it becomes a subject of great consideration for us since even we, although we are regenerated, must exclaim, each one for himself, “Behold, I am vile.”

It is a Doctrine, as I believe, taught us in Holy Writ, that when a man is saved by Divine Grace, he is not wholly cleansed from the corruption of his heart. When we believe in Jesus Christ, all our sins are pardoned. Yet the power of sin, albeit weakened and kept under by the dominion of the new-born nature which God does infuse into our souls, does not cease. It still tarries in us and will do so to our dying day. It is a Doctrine held by all the orthodox—that there still dwells in the regenerate, the lusts of the flesh—and that there does still remain in the hearts of those who, by God’s mercy are converted, the evil of carnal nature. I have found it very difficult to distinguish, in experimental matters, concerning sin. It is usual with many writers, especially with hymn writers, to confuse the two natures of a Christian. Now, I hold that there is in every Christian, two natures, as distinct as were the two natures of the GodMan, Christ Jesus. There is one nature which cannot sin, because it is born of God—a spiritual nature coming directly from Heaven—as pure and as perfect as God, Himself, who is the Author of it. And there is also in man that ancient nature which, by the Fall of Adam, has become altogether vile, corrupt, sinful and devilish! There remains in the heart of the Christian a nature which cannot do that which is right any more than it could before regeneration. It is as evil as it was before the new birth—as sinful, as altogether hostile to God’s Laws, as ever it was! It is a nature which, as I said before, is curbed and kept under by the new nature in a great measure. But it is not removed and never will be until this tabernacle of our flesh is broken down and we soar into that land unto which there shall never enter anything that defiles.

It will be my business, this morning, to say something of that evil nature which still abides in the righteous. That it does remain, I shall first attempt to prove. And the other points I will suggest to you as we proceed.

I. The FACT, the great and terrible fact that EVEN THE RIGHTEOUS HAVE IN THEM EVIL NATURES. Job said, “Behold, I am vile.” He did not always know it. All through the long controversy, he had declared himself to be just and upright. He had said, “My righteousness I will hold fast and I will not let it go.” And notwithstanding he did scrape his body with a potsherd and his friends did vex his mind with the most bitter reviling, yet he still held fast his integrity and would not confess his sin. But what happened when God came to plead with him? Job had no sooner listened to the voice of God in the whirlwind and heard the question, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” than at once he put his finger on his lips and would not answer God, but simply said, “Behold I am vile.” Possibly some may say that Job was an exception to the rule. And they will tell us that other saints had not in them such a reason for humiliation but we remind them of David. And we bid them read the 51st penitential Psalm, where we find him declaring that he was shaped in iniquity and in sin did his mother conceive him—confessing that he had sin in his heart and asking God to create in him a clean heart and to renew a right spirit within him. In many other places in the Psalms, David does continually acknowledge and confess that he is not perfectly rid of sin—that the evil viper still twists itself around his heart. Turn also, if you please, to Isaiah. There you have him, in one of his visions, saying that he was a man of unclean lips and that he dwelt among a people of unclean lips. But more especially, under the Gospel dispensation, you find Paul, in that memorable Chapter we have been reading, declaring that he found in his members a law warring against the law of his mind and “bringing him into captivity to the law of sin.” Yes, we hear that remarkable exclamation of struggling desire and intense agony, “O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Do you expect to find yourselves better saints than Job? Do you imagine that the confession which befitted the mouth of Daniel is too mean for you? Are you so proud that you will not exclaim with Isaiah, “I also am a man of unclean lips”? Or rather, have you progressed so far in pride that you dare to exalt yourselves above the laborious Apostle Paul and to hope that in you, that is, in your flesh, there dwells any good thing? If you think yourselves to be perfectly pure from sin, listen to the Word of God—“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the Truth is not in us. If we say we have no sin, we make God a liar.”

But scarcely do I need to prove this, Beloved. For all of you, I am sure, who know anything about the experience of a living child of God, have found that in your best and happiest moments, sin still dwells in you! You know that when you would serve your God the best, sin frequently works in you the most furiously. There have been many saints of God who have abstained, for a time, from doing anything they have known to be sin. But still, there has not been one who has been inwardly perfect. If a being were perfect, the angels would come down in ten minutes and carry him off to Heaven, for he would be ripe for it as soon as he had attained perfection! I have found in talking to men who have said a good deal about perfection, that after all, they really did not believe in any such thing! They have taken the Word of God and attached a different meaning to it and either then proved a Doctrine which we all knew before, or else supposed a perfection so absurd and worthless that I would not give three half-pence for it if I might have it! In many of them it is a fault, I believe, of their brains, rather than their hearts. As John Berridge says, “God will wash their brains before they get to Heaven.” But why should I stay to prove this, when you have daily proofs of it yourselves? How many times do you feel that corruption is still within you? Mark how easily you are surprised into sin. You rise in the morning and dedicate yourselves by fervent prayer to God, thinking what a happy day you have before you. Scarcely have you uttered your prayer when something comes to ruffle your spirit—your good resolutions are cast to the winds and you say, “this day, which I thought would be such a happy one, has suffered a terrific inroad. I cannot live to God as I would.” Perhaps you have thought, “I will go upstairs and ask my God to keep me.” Well, you were, in the main, kept by the power of God, but all of a sudden something came—an evil temper all of a sudden surprised you—your heart was taken by storm when you were not expecting an attack! The doors were broken open and some unholy expression came forth from your lips—and down you went, again, on your knees in private—exclaiming, “Lord, I am vile.” I have found out that I have a something in my heart which, when I have bolted my doors and think all is safe, creeps forth and undoes every bolt and lets in the sin! Besides, Beloved, you will find in your heart, even when you are not surprised into sin, such an awful tendency to evil, that it is as much as you can do to keep it in check and to say, “This far you shall you come, but no further.” No, you will find it more than you can do, unless a Divine Power is with you and Preventing Grace restrains your passions and prevents you from indulging your inbred lusts! Ah, soldiers of Jesus, you have felt—I know you have felt, the uprisings of corruption—for you know the Lord in sincerity and in Truth and you dare not, unless you would make yourselves liars to your own hearts, hope to be in this world perfectly free from sin!

Having stated that fact, I must just make a remark upon it and leave it. How wrong it is of any of us, from the fact of our possessing evil hearts, to excuse our sins. I have known some persons who profess to be Christians, speak very lightly of sin. There was corruption still remaining and, therefore, they said they could not help it. Such persons have no visible part nor lot in God’s Covenant! The truly loving child of God, though he knows sin is there, hates that sin. It is a pain and misery to him and he never makes the corruption of his heart an excuse for the corruption of his life. He never pleads the evil of his nature as an apology for the evil of his conduct! If any man can, in the least degree, clear himself from the conviction of his own conscience on account of his daily failings, by pleading the evil of his heart, he is not one of the broken-hearted children of God! He is not one of the tried servants of the Lord, for they groan concerning sin and carry it to God’s Throne. They know it is in them—they do not, therefore, leave it, but seek with all their minds to keep it down in order that it may not rise and carry them away!

II. Thus we have mentioned the fact that the best of men have sin still remaining in them. Now I will tell you what are the doings of this sin. What does the sin which still remains in our hearts, do? I answer—

1. Experience will tell you that this sin exerts a checking power upon every good thing. You have felt, when you would do good, that evil was present with you. Just like the chariot, which might go swiftly down the hill, you have had a clog put upon your wheels. Or, like the bird that would mount towards Heaven, you have found your sins, like the wires of a cage, preventing your soaring towards the Most High. You have bent your knees in prayer, but corruption has distracted your thoughts. You have attempted to sing, but you have felt “hosannas languish on your tongue.” Some insinuation of Satan has taken fire, like a spark in tinder, and well-near smothered your soul with its abominable smoke! You would run in your holy duties with all speed, but the sin that does so easily beset you, entangles your feet—and when you would be nearing the goal, it trips you up and down you fall—to your own dishonor and pain. You will find indwelling sin frequently retarding you the most when you are most earnest. When you desire to be most alive to God, you will generally find sin most alive to repel you. The “evil heart of unbelief” puts itself straight in the road and says, “You shall not come this way.” And when the soul says, “I will serve God—I will worship in His Temple”—the evil heart says, “Get you to Dan and Beersheba and bow yourself before false gods, but you shall not approach Jerusalem. I will not allow you to behold the face of the Most High.” You have often felt this to be the case—a cold hand has been placed upon your hot spirit when you have been full of devotion and prayer. And when you have had the wings of the dove and thought you could flee away and be at rest, a clog has been put upon your feet so that you could not mount. Now, that is one of the effects of indwelling sin.

2. But indwelling sin does more than that—it not only prevents us from going forward, but at times even assails us, as well as seeks to obstruct us. It is not merely that I fight with indwelling sin—it is indwelling sin that sometimes makes an assault on me! You will notice the Apostle says, “O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Now, this proves that he was not attacking his sin, but that this sin was attacking him! I do not seek to be delivered from a man against whom I lead the attack—but it is the man who is opposing me from whom I seek to be delivered. And so, sometimes, the sin that dwells in Believers flies at us, like some foul tiger of the woods or some demon, jealous of the celestial spirit within us. The evil nature rises up—it does not only seek to stop us in the way, but like Amalek, it labors to destroy us and cut us utterly off! Did you ever feel, Beloved, the attacks of inbred sin? It may be you have not—but if not, depend upon it—you will! Before you get all the way to Heaven, you will be attacked by sin. It will not simply be your driving out the Canaanite, but the Canaanite, with chariots of iron, will attempt to overcome you—to drive you out, to kill your spiritual nature, dampen the flame of your piety—and crush the new life which God has implanted in you!

3. The evil heart which still remains in the Christian, does always, when it is not attacking or obstructing, still reign and dwell within him. My heart is just as bad when no evil emanates from it as when vileness in its external developments is all over it. A volcano is always a volcano. Even when it sleeps, trust it not. A lion is a lion even though he plays like a kid. And a serpent is a serpent even though you may stroke it while, for a season, it slumbers. There is still a venom in its sting when its azure scales invite the eyes. My heart, even though for an hour it may not have had an evil thought, is still evil. If it were possible that I could live for days without a single temptation from my own heart to sin, it would be still just as evil as it was before! And the heart is always either displaying its vileness, or else preparing for another display. It is either loading its cannon to shoot against us, or else it is positively at warfare with us. You may rest assured that the heart is never other than it originally was—the evil nature is still evil! And when there is no blaze, it is heaping up the wood wherewith it is to blaze another day. It is gathering up from my joys, from my devotions, from my holiness and from all I do—materials to attack me at some future period! The evil nature is only evil, and that continually, without the slightest mitigation or element of good. The new nature must always wrestle and fight with it and when the two natures are not wrestling and fighting, there is no truce between them. When they are not in conflict, they are still foes. We must not trust our heart at any time. Even when it speaks most fair, we must call it a liar. And when it pretends to the most good, still we must remember its nature, for it is evil and that continually!

The doings of indwelling sin I will not mention at length—but it is sufficient to let you recognize some of your own experiences, that you may see that it is in keeping with that of the children of God. Even though you may be as perfect as Job, as he you will yet say, “Behold, I am vile.”

III. Having mentioned the doings of indwelling sin, allow me to mention, in the third place, THE DANGER WE ARE UNDER FROM SUCH EVIL HEARTS. There are few people who think what a solemn thing it is to be a Christian. I guess there is not a Believer in the world who knows what a miracle it is to be kept a Believer. We little think of the miracles that are working all around us. We see the flowers grow, but we do not think of the wondrous power that gives them life. We see the stars shine. But how seldom do we think of the hand that moves them. The sun gladdens us with its light—yet we little think of the miracles which God works to feed that sun with fuel, or to gird it like a giant to run its course. And we see Christians walking in integrity and holiness but how little do we suspect what a mass of miracles a Christian is! There are as great a number of miracles expended on a Christian every day—as many as the hairs on his head! A Christian is a perpetual miracle. Every hour that I am preserved from sinning, is an hour of as Divine a might as that which saw a new-born world swathed in its darkness and heard “the morning stars sing for joy.” Did you ever think how great is the danger to which a Christian is exposed from his indwelling sin? Come let me tell you.

One danger to which we are exposed from indwelling sin arises from the fact that sin is within us and, therefore, it has a great power over us. If a captain has a city, he may for a long time preserve it from the constant attacks of enemies outside. He may have walls so strong and gates so well secured that he may laugh at all the attacks of besiegers and their sallies may have no more effect upon his walls than sallies of wit. But if there should happen to be a traitor inside the gates—if there should be one who has charge of the keys and who could unlock every door and let in the enemy—how is the toil of the commander doubled!— for he has not merely to guard against foes outside, but against foes within. And here is the danger of the Christian. I could fight the devil. I could overcome every sin that ever tempted me if it were not that I had an enemy within. Those Diabolians within do more service to Satan than all the Diabolians outside! As Bunyan says in his Holy War, the enemy tried to get some of his friends within the City of Mansoul and he found his darlings inside the walls did him far more good than all those outside. Ah, Christian, you could laugh at your enemy if you had not your evil heart within, but remember, your heart keeps the keys—because out of it are the issues of life. And sin is there. The worst thing you have to fear is the treachery of your own heart!

And moreover, Christian, remember how many backers your evil nature has. As for your gracious life, it finds few friends beneath the sky. But your original sin has allies in every quarter. It looks down to Hell and it finds them there—demons ready to let slip the sweet coos of Hell upon your soul! It looks out into the world and sees “the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life.” It looks around and it sees all kinds of men seeking, if it is possible, to lead the Christian from his steadfastness. It looks into the Church and it finds all manner of false doctrine ready to inflame lust and guide the soul from the sincerity of its faith! It looks to the body and it finds head, hands, feet and all other members ready to be subservient to sin. I could overcome my evil heart if it had not such a mighty host of allies. But it makes my position doubly dangerous to have foes outside the gates in league and amity with a foe more vile within.

And I would have you remember, Christian, one more thing and that is that this evil nature of yours is very strong and very powerful— stronger than the new nature if the new nature were not sustained by Divine Power. How old is my old nature? “It is as old as myself,” the aged saint may say, “and has become all the stronger from its age.” There is one thing which seldom gets weaker through old age—old Adam. He is as strong in his old age as he is in his young age—just as able to lead us astray when our head is covered with gray hairs, as he was in our youth. We have heard it said that growing in Divine Grace will make our corruptions less mighty. But I have seen many of God’s aged saints and asked them the question and they have said, “No.” Their lusts have been essentially as strong when they have been many years in their Master’s service as they were at first, although more subdued by the new principle within. So far from becoming weaker, it is my firm belief that sin increases in power. A person who is deceitful becomes more deceitful by practicing deceit. So with our heart. It lured us at first and easily entrapped us, but having learned a thousand snares, it misleads us now, perhaps, more easily than before. And although our spiritual nature has been more fully developed and grown in Grace, yet the old nature has lost little of its energy! I do not know that the house of Saul grows weaker and weaker in our hearts—I know that the house of David grows stronger—but I do not know that my heart gets less vile, or that my corruptions become less strong. I believe that if I should ever say my corruptions are all dead, I would hear a voice, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson.” Or, “The Philistines are in you, Samson!” Notwithstanding all former victories and all the heaps upon heaps of sins I may have slain, I would yet be overcome if Almighty Mercy did not preserve me!

Christian! Mind your danger! There is not a man in battle as much in danger from the shot as you are from your own sin! You carry in your soul an infamous traitor. Even when he speaks with fair words, he is not to be trusted. You have in your heart a slumbering volcano—a volcano of such terrific force that it may yet shake your whole nature! And unless you are circumspect and are kept by the power of God, you have a heart which may lead you into the most diabolical sins and the most infamous crimes. Take care, O take care, Christians! If there were no devil to tempt you and no world to lead you astray, you would have need to take care of your own hearts! Look, therefore, at home. Your worst foes are the foes of your own households. “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life,” and out of it death may issue, too—death which would damn you if Sovereign Mercy did not prevent! God grant, my Brothers and Sisters, that we may learn our corruptions in an easy way and not discover them by their breaking out into open sin.

IV. And now I come to the fourth point, which is, THE DISCOVERY OF OUR CORRUPTION. Job said, “Behold, I am vile. That word, “behold,” implies that he was astonished! The discovery was unexpected. There are special times with the Lord’s people when they learn by experience that they are vile. They heard the minister assert the power of inbred lust, but, perhaps, they shook their heads and said, “I cannot go as far as that.” But after a little while they found, by some clearer Light from Heaven, that it was a Truth of God after all—“Behold, I am vile.” I remember preaching a little while ago from some deep text concerning the desperate evil of the heart. One of my most esteemed friends said, “Well, I have not discovered that,” and I thought within myself, what a blessing, Brother! I wish I had not. For it is a most fearful experience to pass through—I dare say there are many here, now, who say, “I trust in no righteousness of my own. I trust in nothing in the world but the blood of Christ, and still, I have not discovered the vileness of my heart in the way you have mentioned.” Perhaps not, Brothers and Sisters, but it may not be many years before you are made to learn it. You may be of a peculiar temperament. God has preserved you from all contact with temptations which would have revealed your corruptions. Or perhaps He has been pleased, as a reward of His Grace, for deeds which you have been enabled to do for Him, to give you a peaceable life, so that you have not been often tossed about by the tumults of your own sin. But nevertheless, let me tell you that you must expect to find, in the inmost depths of your heart, a lower depth, still! God comfort you and enable you when you come out of the furnace, to lie lower than ever at the footstool of Divine Mercy!

I believe we generally find out most of our failings when we have the greatest access to God. Job never had such a discovery of God as he had at this time. God spoke to him in the whirlwind and then Job said, “I am vile.” It is not so much when we are desponding, or unbelieving that we learn our vileness—we do find out something of it then—but not all. It is when, by God’s Grace, we are helped to climb the mountain, when we come near to God and when God reveals Himself to us, that we feel that we are not pure in His sight. We get some gleams of His high majesty. We see the brightness of His garments, “dark—with insufferable light”—and after having been dazzled by the sight, there comes a fall—as if smitten by the fiery light of the sun, the eagle should fall from his lofty heights, even to the ground! So with the Believer. He soars up to God and all of a sudden, down he comes! “Behold,” he says, “I am vile! I had never known this if I had not seen God. Behold, I have seen Him and now I discover how vile I am.” Nothing shows blackness like exposure to light. If I would see the blackness of my own character, I must put it side by side with spotless purity. And when the Lord is pleased to give us some special vision of Himself, some sweet communion with His own blessed Person— then it is that the soul learns, as it never knew before—with an agony, perhaps, which it never felt, even when at first convinced of sin! “Behold, I am vile.” God is pleased to let us see this, lest we should be, “exalted above measure, by the abundance of the revelation”—and He sends us this “thorn in the flesh,” to let us see ourselves after we have seen Him.

There are many men who never know much of their vileness till after the blood of Christ has been sprinkled on their consciences, or even till they have been, many years, God’s children. I met, some time ago, with the case of a Christian who was positively pardoned before he had a strong sense of sin. “I did not,” he said, “feel my vileness until I heard a voice, ‘I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.’ And after that, I thought how black I had been. I did not think of my filthiness,” he said, “till after I saw that I had been washed.” I think there are many of God’s people, who, though they had some notion of their blackness before they came to Christ, never knew how thoroughly vile they were till afterwards. They then thought, “How great must have been my sin to need such a Savior! How desperate my filth to require such a washing! How awful my guilt to need such an Atonement as the blood of Christ.” You may rest assured that the more you know of God and of Christ, the more you will know of yourself. And you will be obliged to say, as you did before, “Behold, I am vile.” Vile in an extraordinary sense even as you never guessed or fancied until now. “Behold, I am vile!” “I am vile, indeed!” No doubt many of you will still think that what I say concerning your evil nature is not true. You may, perhaps, imagine that Divine Grace has cut your evil nature up. But you know little about spiritual life if you suppose that it will not be long before you find the old Adam as strong in you as ever! There will be a war carried on in your heart to your dying day in which Grace shall prevail—but not without sighs, groans, agonies, wrestling and a daily death!

V. Here is the way in which God shows us our vileness to ourselves. Now, if it is true that we are still vile, WHAT ARE OUR DUTIES? And here, let me solemnly speak to such of you as are heirs of eternal life, desiring as your Brother in Christ Jesus, to urge you to some duties which are most necessary on account of the continual filthiness of your heart.

In the first place, if your hearts are still vile and there is still an evil nature in you, how wrong is it to suppose that all your work is done. There is one thing concerning which I have much reason to complain of some of you. Before your Baptism you were extremely earnest. You were always attending the means of Grace and I always saw you here. But there are some, some even now in this place who, as soon as they had crossed that Rubicon, began from that moment to decrease in zeal, thinking that the work was over. I tell you solemnly that I know there are some of you who were prayerful, careful, devout, living close and near to your God until you joined the Church. But from that time forth you have gradually declined. Now, it really appears to me a matter of doubt whether such persons are Christians! I tell you I have very grave doubts of the sincerity of some of you. If I see a man less earnest after Baptism, I think he had no right to be baptized, for if he had had a proper sense of the value of that ordinance and had been rightly dedicated to God, he would not have turned back to the ways of the world! I am grieved when I see one or two who once walked very consistently with us, beginning to slide away. I have no fault to find with the great majority of you—as to your firm adherence to God’s Word. I bless God that for the space of two years and more you have held firm and fast by God. I have not seen you absent from the House of Prayer, nor do I think your zeal has flagged. But there are some few who have been tempted by the world and who have been led astray by Satan, or who, by some change in their circumstances, or some removal to a distance, have become cold and not diligent in the work of the Lord. There are some of my hearers who are not as earnest as they once were. My dear Friends, if you knew the vileness of your hearts, you would see the necessity of being as earnest, now, as you ever were! Oh, if when you were converted, your old nature were cut up, there would now be no need of watchfulness! If all your lusts were entirely gone and all the strength of corruption dead within you, there would be no need of perseverance! But it is just because you have evil hearts that I bid you be just as earnest as ever you were to stir up the gift of God which is in you! Look as well to yourselves as you ever did—fancy not the battle is over, Brothers and Sisters—it is but the first trumpet— summoning to the warfare! That trumpet has ceased and you think the battle is over—I tell you, no, the fight has but just begun! The hosts are only just led forth and you have newly put on your armor. You have conflicts yet to come. Be earnest, or else that first love of yours shall die and you shall yet “go out from us, proving that you were not of us.” Take care, my dear Friends, of backsliding—it is the easiest thing in the world and yet the most dangerous thing in the world! Take care of giving up your first zeal, beware of cooling in the least degree. You were hot and earnest once—be hot and earnest still—and let the fire which once burnt within you still animate you. Be you still men of might and vigor, men who serve their God with diligence and zeal!

Again—if your evil nature is still within you, how watchful you ought to be! The devil never sleeps—your evil nature never sleeps—you ought never to sleep. “What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.” These are Jesus Christ’s words and there is no word that needs repeating half as much as that word, “watch.” We can do almost anything better than watch. For watching is very wearisome work, especially when we have sleepy souls to watch with. Watching is very fatiguing work. There is little open honor received by it and, therefore, we do not have the hope of renown to cheer us up. Watching is a work that few of us, I am afraid, rightly perform! And if the Almighty had not watched over you, the devil would have carried you away long ago! Dear Friends, I bid you watch constantly. When the adjoining house is on fire, how speedily do persons rise from their beds and if they have combustibles, move them from the premises—and watch—lest their house, also, should become a prey to the devouring element! You have corruption in your heart—watch for the first spark lest it set your soul on fire. “Let us not sleep as do others.” You might sleep over the crater of a volcano if you liked. You might sleep with your head before the cannon’s mouth. You might, if you pleased, sleep in the midst of an earthquake, or in a pest-house. But I beseech you, do not sleep while you have evil hearts! Watch your hearts. You may think they are very good but they will be your ruin if Grace prevents not. Watch daily. Watch perpetually—guard yourselves, lest you sin. Above all, my dear Brothers and Sisters, if our hearts are, indeed, still full of vileness, how necessary it is that we should still exhibit faith in God. If I must trust my God when I first set out, because of the difficulties in the way, if those difficulties are not diminished, I ought to trust God just as much as I did before! Oh, Beloved, yield your hearts to God. Do not become selfsufficient. Self-sufficiency is Satan’s net wherein he catches men, like poor silly fish, and destroys them! Be not self-sufficient. Think yourselves as nothing—for you are nothing and live by God’s help. The way to grow strong in Christ is to become weak in yourself! God pours no power into man’s heart till man’s power is all poured out. Live, then, daily, a life of dependence on the Grace of God. Do not set yourself up as if you were an independent gentleman. Do not start in your own concerns as if you could do all things yourself. But live always trusting in God. You have as much need to trust Him, now, as ever you had. Mark you—although you would have been damned without Christ, at first, you will be damned without Christ, now, unless He still keeps you, for you have as evil a nature, now, as you had then!

Dearly Beloved, I have just one word to say, not to the Believer, but to the ungodly—one cheering word—Sinner, poor lost Sinner! You think you cannot come to God because you are vile. Now let me tell you, that there is not a Believer in this place but is vile, too! If Job and Isaiah and Paul were all obliged to say, “I am vile,” oh, poor Sinner, will you be ashamed to join the confession and say, “I am vile,” too? If I go to God this night, in prayer—when I am on my knees by my bedside, I shall have to come to God as a sinner—vile and full of sin! My fellow Sinner, do you want to have any better confession than that? You want to be better, do you? Why, saints in themselves are no better! If Divine Grace does not eradicate all sin in the Believer, how do you hope to do it, yourself? And if God loves His people while they are yet vile, do you think your vileness will prevent His loving you? No, vile Sinner, come to Jesus! Vilest of the vile, believe on Jesus! You offcasts of the world’s society—you who are the dung and dross of the streets—I bid you come to Christ! Christ bids you believe on Him—

*“Not the righteous, not the righteous!  
Sinners, Jesus came to save.”*

Come now—say, “Lord, I am vile, give me faith. Christ died for sinners. I am a sinner. Lord Jesus, sprinkle Your blood on me.” I tell you, Sinner, from God, if you will confess your sins, you shall find pardon. If now, with all your heart, you will say, “I am vile. Wash me.” You shall be washed now! If the Holy Spirit shall enable you to say with your heart, now, “Lord, I am sinful—

*‘Just as I am, without one plea  
But that Your blood was shed for me,  
And that You bid’st me come to You,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.’”*

You shall go out of this place with all your sins pardoned! And though you come in here with every sin that man has ever committed on your head, you shall go out as innocent—more innocent than the new-born babe! Though you come in here all covered with sin, you shall go out with a robe of righteousness, white as angels are, as pure as God, Himself, so far as justification is concerned. For “now,” mark it—“now is the accepted time,” if you believe on Him who justifies the ungodly. Oh, may the Holy Spirit give you faith that you may be saved, now, for then you will be saved forever! May God add His blessing to this feeble discourse for His name’s sake! Amen

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1262 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Job 42.10

THE TURNING OF JOB’S CAPTIVITY  
NO. 1262

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

**“The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.” Job 42:10.**

**SINCE God is immutable, He acts always upon the same principles and, therefore, His course of action in the olden times to a man of a certain sort will be a guide as to what others may expect who are of like character. God does not act by caprice, nor by fits and starts. He has His usual modes and ways. The Psalmist David uses the expression, “Then will I teach transgressors *Your ways*,” as if God had well-known ways, habits and modes of action. And so He has, or He would not be the unchangeable Jehovah. In that song of Moses, the servant of God and the song of the Lamb, which is recorded in the 15th chapter of Revelation, we read, “Just and true are Your ways, You King of saints.” The Lord has ways as high above our ways as the heavens are above the earth—and these are not fickle and arbitrary.**

**These ways, although very different if we view them superficially, are really always the same when you view them with understanding. The ways of the Lord are right, though transgressors fall therein by not discerning them. But the righteous understand the ways of the Lord, for to them He makes them known and they perceive that grand general principles govern all the actions of God. If it were not so, the case of such a man as Job would be of no service to us. It could not be said that the things which happened before happened unto us for an example, because if God did not act on fixed principles we could never tell how He would act in any fresh case—and that which happened to one man would be no rule whatever—and no encouragement whatever to another.**

**We are not all like Job, but we all have Job’s God. Though we have neither risen to Job’s wealth, nor will, probably, ever sink to Job’s poverty, yet there is the same God above us if we are brought high and the same God with His everlasting arms beneath us if we are brought low. And what the Lord did for Job, He will do for us, not precisely in the same form, but in the same spirit and with same design. If, therefore, we are brought low tonight, let us be encouraged with the thought that God will turn our captivity around and let us entertain the hope that after the time of trial shall be over, we shall be richer, especially in *spiritual* things, than ever we were before.**

**There will come a turning point to the growing heat of affliction and the fire shall cool. When the ebb has fallen to its lowest, the sea will return to its strength. When mid-winter has come, spring will be near and when midnight has struck, then the dawning will not be far away. Perhaps, too, the signal of our happier days shall be the very same as that of the patient Patriarch—when we pray for our friends, blessings shall be poured into our own bosoms.**

**Our text has in it three points very clearly. First, *the Lord can soon turn His people’s captivity—* “The Lord turned the captivity of Job.” Second, *there is generally some point at which He does this—*in Job’s case He turned his captivity when he prayed for his friends. And, third, *Believers shall never be losers by God*, for He gave Job twice as much as he had given him before.**

I. **First, then, THE LORD CAN SOON TURN HIS PEOPLE’S CAPTIVITY. That is a very remarkable expression—“captivity.” It does not say, “God turned Job’s *poverty*,” though Job was reduced to the extremity of penury, having lost all his property. We do not read that the Lord turned his sickness, though he was covered with boils. It does not say that He turned away the sting of bereavement, reproach and calumny, although all those are included. But there is something more meant by the word *captivity*. A man may be very poor and yet not in captivity. His soul may sing among the angels when his body is on a dunghill and dogs are licking his sores.**

**A man may be very sick and yet not be in captivity. He may be roaming the broad fields of Covenant mercy though he cannot rise from his bed. His soul may never enjoy greater liberty than when his body is scarcely able to turn from side to side. Captivity is bondage of *mind*—the iron entering into the soul. I suspect that Job, under the severe mental trial which attended his bodily pains, was, as to his spirit, like a man bound hand and foot and fettered—and then taken away from his native country—banished from the place which he loved, deprived of the associations which had cheered him and confined in darkness. I mean that together with the trouble and trial to which he was subjected, he had lost, somewhat, the Presence of God. Much of his joy and comfort had departed. The peace of his mind had gone and the associations which he had formed with other Believers were now broken. He was, in all these respects, like a lone captive.**

**His three friends had condemned him as a hypocrite and would not have association with him except to censure him. And thus he felt like one who had been carried into a far country and banished both from God and man. He could only follow the occupation of a captive, that is, to be oppressed, to weep, to claim compassion and to pour out a dolorous complaint. He hung his harp on the willows and felt that he could not sing the Lord’s song in a strange land. Poor Job! He is less to be pitied for his bereavements, poverty and sickness than for his loss of that candle of the Lord which once shone about his head!**

**That is the worst point of all when trouble penetrates to the heart. All the bullets in the battle, though they fly thick as hail, will not distress a soldier like one which finds a lodging in his flesh. “To take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them,” is a grand and manly thing. But when that sea of trouble fills the cabin of the heart, puts out the fires of inward energy, washes the judgement from the wheel and renders the pumps of resolution useless, the man becomes very nearly a wreck. “A wounded spirit who can bear?” Touch a man in his bone and in his flesh, and yet he may exult—but touch him in his mind—let the finger of God be laid upon his *spirit*—and then, indeed, he is in captivity!**

**I think the term includes all the temporal distress into which Job came, but it chiefly denotes the bondage of spirit into which he was brought as the combined result of his troubles, his sickness, the taunts of his friends and the withdrawal of the Divine smile. My point is that God can deliver us out of that captivity—He can deliver us from both the spiritual and the temporal captivity and give us a joyful release.**

***The Lord can deliver us out of spiritual captivity and that very speedily* . I may be addressing some, tonight, who feel everything except what they want to feel. They enjoy no sweetness in the means of Grace and yet for all the world they would not give them up. They used to, at one time, rejoice in the Lord. But now they cannot see His face and the utmost they can say is, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” It little matters that some live in perpetual joy—the triumphs of others cannot cheer a man who is, himself, defeated. It is idle to tell a distressed soul that it ought to rejoice as others do. What one ought to do and what one *can* do are sometimes very different, for how to perform that which we would, we find not.**

**In vain do you pour your glad notes into a troubled ear. Singing songs to a sad heart is like pouring vinegar upon gunpowder—the elements are discordant and cause a painful effervescence. There are true children of God who walk in darkness and see no light. Yes, some who are the excellent of the earth, nevertheless are compelled to cry aloud, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” Throughout all time some of these have been in the Church and there always will be such, let our perfect Brethren condemn them as they please. The Lord will always have His mourners. His Church shall always have an afflicted and poor people in her midst. Let us all take warning, for we, also, may be tried and cast down before our day is over.**

**It may be that the brightest eye among us may yet be dimmed and the boldest heart may yet be faint—and he that dwells nearest to his God at this moment may yet have to cry out in bitterness of soul, “O God, return unto me, and lift up the light of Your countenance upon me.” Therefore mark well this cheering Truth of God—God can turn your captivity and turn it at once!**

**Some of God’s children seem to think that to recover their former joy has to take a long period of time. It is true, dear Brother, that if you had to work your passage back to where you came from it would be a weary voyage. There would have to be most earnest searching of heart and purging of spirit, struggling with inbred lusts and outward temptations and all that, if joy were always the result of *inward* condition. There must be a great deal of scrubbing and cleansing and furbishing up of the house before you could invite your Lord to come, if He and you dwelt together on terms of Law. But albeit that all this cleansing and purifying will have to be done, it will be done far better when you have a sense of His love than it ever can be if you do it in order to make yourself fit for it!**

**Do you not remember when first you sought Him? You wanted Him to deal with you on the legal ground of making yourself better and you prepared the house for Him to come and dwell in it, but He would not come on such terms. He came to you just as you were—and when He came, He, Himself, drove out the intruders which profaned the temple of your soul! And He dwelt with you in order to perfect the cleansing. Now He will vouchsafe to you the conscious enjoyment of His Presence on the same terms as at first, that is, on terms of free and Sovereign Grace! Did you not, at that time, admit the Savior to your soul because you could not do without Him? Was not that the reason? Is it not a good reason for receiving Him again?**

**Was there anything in you when you received Him, which could commend you to Him? Say, were you not, all over, defilement and full of sin and misery? And yet you opened the door and said, “My Lord, come in. In Your Free Grace, come in, for I must have You or I perish.” My dear Friend, dare you invite Him, now, on any other terms? Having begun in the Spirit, would you be made perfect in the flesh? Having begun to live by Grace, would you go on to live by *works*? When you were a stranger, did you trust in His love and now that you are His friend, will you appeal to the Law? God forbid! Oh, Brother, Jesus loves you, still, and in a *moment* He will restore you!**

**Oh, Sister, Jesus would gladly come back to your heart, again, and that in an instant! Have you never read that joyful exclamation of the spouse, “Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib”? Why can He not do the same with you now and quicken you, even in a moment? After all, you are not worse than you were when He first visited you—you are not in so sorry a plight, after all, as your first natural state—for then you were dead in trespasses and sins altogether! But He quickened you and now, though you say you feel dead, yet the very expression proves that there is some life lingering in you! Did I not hear you say—**

*“Return, O Sacred Dove, return,   
Sweet Messenger of rest,   
I hate the sins that made You mourn,   
And drove You from my breast.”*

**Why, Friend, those sighs and groans are sweet to the Lord and they would not have been in you if He had not put them there! They are sure tokens that His Grace has not been altogether taken from you! Do you not know, O child of God, that the Grace of God is intended to meet all your sins after conversion as well as before conversion? Do you not know that the Lord loved you of old, despite your sins and He loves you still? Don’t you understand that the ground of your salvation is not *your* standing, or *your* character, but the standing of Christ before God and the Character and work of Christ in the Presence of God? Believe firmly that He still loves you, for so, indeed, He does! Cast your eyes upon those dear wounds of His and read His love still written there. Oh, unbelieving Thomas, do not put your finger into your *own* wounds, for that will not help you! Place them in the wounds of Jesus! Come close to Him and you shall cry with ecstasy of spirit, “My Lord and my God.”**

**Well do I know what it is to feel this wondrous power of God to turn our captivity! When one is constantly engaged in ministry, it sometimes happens that the mind wanders, the spirit flags and the energy is dampened. Yet, all in a minute the Lord can quicken us into vigorous activity! The heart catches fire and blazes gloriously when the Holy Spirit applies the fire. We have heard a hymn sung and we have said, “I cannot join in that as I could wish,” and yet, all of a sudden a mighty rushing wind has borne us away with the song right into Heaven! The Lord does not take days, months, weeks, or even hours to do His work of revival in our souls! He made the world in six days, but He lit it up in an instant with one single word. He said, “light be,” and light was! And cannot He do the same for us and chase away our gloom before the clock ticks again? Do not despair, no, do not even *doubt* your God. He can turn your captivity as the streams in the south.**

**Beloved, *He can do the same as to our temporal captivity*. We do not often say much about temporals when we are preaching. I fear we do not say enough about them, for it is wonderful how the Old Testament is taken up with the narration of God’s dealings with His people as to temporal things. Many people imagine that God has a great deal to do with their prayer closet, but nothing to do with their pantry. It would be a dreadful thing for us if it were so. Indeed, my Brothers and Sisters, we ought to see as much the hand of our Lord on the table in the kitchen when it is loaded as we do at the communion table, for the same love that spreads the table when we commemorate our Savior’s dying love spreads the table which enables us to maintain the bodily life without which we could not come to the other table at all.**

**We must learn to see God in everything and praise Him for all that we have. Now, it may be I address some friend who has been a great sufferer through pecuniary losses. Dear Friend, the Lord can turn your captivity. When Job had lost everything, God readily gave it all back to him. “Yes,” you say, “but that was a very remarkable case.” I grant you that, but then we have to do with a remarkable God who still works wonders! If you consider the matter, you will see that it was quite as remarkable a thing that Job should lose all his property as it was that he should get it back again!**

**If you had walked over Job’s farm, at the first, and seen the camels and the cattle. If you had gone into his house and seen the furniture and the grandeur of his estate—if you had seen how those who passed him in the street bowed to him, for he was a highly respected man—and if you had gone to his children’s houses and seen the comfort in which they lived, you would have said, “Why, this is one of the best-established men in all the land of Uz.” There was scarcely a man of such substance to be found in all that region! And if somebody had foretold that he would, in one day, lose all this property—all of it—and lose all his children, why you would have said, “Impossible! I have heard of great fortunes collapsing, but then they were built on speculations.**

**“They were only paper riches, made up of bills and the like. But in the case of this man there are oxen, sheep, camels and land—and these cannot melt into thin air! Job has a good substantial estate, I cannot believe that he will ever come to poverty.” Remember, when he went out into the gate where the magistrates sat to administer justice, they rose up and gave him the chief seat on the bench! He was a man whose flocks could not be counted, so great were his possessions— possessions of real property, not of merely nominal estate. And yet suddenly, marvelously, it all took to itself wings and disappeared. Surely, if God can scatter, He can gather. If God could scatter such an estate as that, He could, with equal ease, bring it back again!**

**But this is what we do not always see. We see the *destructive* power of God, but we are not very clear about the building power of God. Yet, my Brothers and Sisters, surely it is more consonant with the Nature of God that He should give than take, and more like He that He should caress than chastise. Does He not always say that judgement is His strange work? I feel persuaded that it was strange work with God to take away all Job’s property from him and bring him into that deep distress. But when the Lord went about to enrich His servant Job, again, He went about that work, as we say, *con amore—*with heart and soul! He was doing, then, what He delights to do, for God’s happiness is never more clearly seen than when He is distributing the liberality of His love.**

**Why can you not look at your own circumstances in the same light? It is more likely that God will bless you and restore to you, than it is ever likely that He will chasten you and take away from you. He can restore all your wealth and even more. This may seem to be a very trite observation, commonplace and such as everybody knows, but, Beloved, the very things that everybody knows are those which we need to hear if they are most suitable to our case. Those old things which we did not care about in our prosperity are most valued when we are cast down by the terrible blows of tribulation. Let me, then, repeat the truism, the Lord who takes away can as easily restore. “The Lord makes sore *and binds up.* He wounds *and His hands make whole*. He kills *and He makes alive*.”**

**Believe that He will put forth His right hand soon if the left has been long outstretched and, if you can believe it, it will not be long before you will be able to say He has regarded the low estate of His servant. He has lifted the poor from the dunghill and set him among princes, even the princes of His people. For the Lord puts down the mighty from their seat, but He exalts them that are of low degree. I leave you with this simple Truth of God. The Lord can turn the captivity of His people! You may apply the Truth to a thousand different things. You Sunday school teachers, if you have had a captivity in your class and no good has been done, God can change that!**

**You ministers, if for a long time you have plowed and sowed in vain, the Lord can turn your captivity! You dear wives who have been praying for your husbands. You fathers who have been pleading for your children and have seen no blessing, yet, the Lord can turn your captivity in those respects! No captivity is so terrible but God can bring us back from it! No chain is so fastened but God can strike it off and no prison is so strong but God can break the bars and set His servants free!**

II. **I pass on to our second remark, which is this. THERE IS GENERALLY SOME POINT AT WHICH THE LORD INTERPOSES TO TURN THE CAPTIVITY OF HIS PEOPLE. In Job’s case, I have no doubt, the Lord turned his captivity, as far as the Lord was concerned, because *the grand experiment which had been tried on Job was now over***. The suggestion of Satan was that Job was selfish in his piety—that he found honesty to be the best policy and, therefore, he was honest—that godliness was gain and, therefore, he was godly. “Have You not set a hedge about him and all that he has?” said the old accuser of the Brethren.

The devil generally does one of two things. Sometimes he tells the righteous that there is no reward for their holiness and then they say, “Surely, I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocence.” Or else he tells them that they only obey the Lord because they have a selfish eye to the reward. Now, it would be a calamity if the devil could charge the Lord with paying His servants badly. It would have been an ill thing if Satan had been able to say, “There is Job, a perfect and an upright man, but You have set no hedge about him. You have given him no reward whatever.” That would have been an accusation against the goodness and justice of God! But, as the devil cannot say *that*, he takes the other course, and says—“You have set a hedge about him and all that he has; he serves You for gain and honor. He has a selfish motive in his integrity.”

By God’s permission the matter was tested. The devil had said, “Put forth, now, Your hand, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face.” But Job did no such thing. In his extremity he said, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.” God puts His servants, sometimes, into these experiments that He may test them—that Satan, himself, may know how true-hearted God’s Grace has made them and that the world may see how they can play the man. Good engineers, if they build a bridge, are glad to have a train of enormous weight go over it. You remember when the first Great Exhibition was built, they marched regiments of soldiers, with a steady tramp, over the girders that they might be quite sure that they would be strong enough to bear any crowd of men—for the regular tramp of well-disciplined soldiers is more trying to a building than anything else.

So our wise and prudent Father sometimes marches the soldiers of trouble right over His people’s supports to let all men see that the Grace of God can sustain every possible pressure and load. I am sure that if any of you had invented some implement requiring strength you would be glad to have it tested—and the account of the successful trial published abroad. The gunsmith does not object to a charge being fired from the barrel at the proof house greater than any strain which it ought ordinarily to bear, for he knows that it will endure the proof. “Do your worst or do your best. It is a good instrument. Do what you like with it.” So the maker of a genuine article is accustomed to speak—and the Lord seems to say the same concerning His people. “My work of Grace in them is mighty and thorough. Test it Satan! Test it world! Test it by bereavements, losses and reproaches—it will endure every ordeal.” And when it is tested, and bears it all, then the Lord turns the captivity of His people, for the experiment is complete.

*Most probably there was, in Job’s character, some fault from which his trial was meant to purge him* . If he erred at all, probably it was in having a somewhat elevated idea of himself and a stern manner towards others. A little of the elderbrother spirit may, perhaps, have entered into him. A good deal that was sour came out of Job when his miserable comforters began to tease him—not a hundredth part as much as would come out of me, I guarantee you, or, perhaps, out of you. But, still, it would not have come out if it had not been in him. It must have been in him or otherwise all the provocation in the world would not have brought it out—and the Lord intended, by his trials, to let Job have a view of himself from another standpoint—and discover imperfections in his character which he would never have seen if he had not been brought into a tried condition.

When, through the light of trial and the yet greater light of God’s glorious Presence, Job saw himself unveiled, he abhorred himself in dust and ashes. Probably Job had not humbled himself of late, but he did it then! And now, if any sort of selfishness lurked in him it was put away, for Job began to pray for his cruel friends. It would take a good deal of Grace to bring some men to pray for such friends as they were. To pray for one’s *real* friends, I hope, comes natural to us. But to pray for that Bildad and the other two, after the abominable things they had spoken and insinuated—well, it showed that there was a large amount of sweetness and light in Job’s character—and abounding Grace deep down in his soul or he would scarcely have interceded for such ungenerous stumpers upon a fallen friend.

Now, behold, Job has discovered his fault and he has put it away. And the grand old man bows his knee to pray for men who called him a hypocrite—to pray for men who cut him to the very soul! He pleads with God that He would look in mercy upon men who had no mercy upon him but had pitilessly heaped all kinds of epithets upon him and stung him in his most tender places, just when they ought to have had pity upon him. His misery, alone, ought to have stopped their mouths, but it seems as if that misery egged them on to say the most cruel things that could possibly have been conceived—the more cruel because they were, all of them, so undeserved. But now Job prays for his friends! You see the trial had reached its point. It had evidently been blessed to Job and it had proved Satan to be a liar. And so now the fire of the trial goes out and like precious metal the Patriarch comes forth from the furnace brighter than ever!

Beloved Friends, the point at which God may turn your captivity may not be the same as that at which He turned Job’s, for yours may be a different character. I will try and indicate, briefly, when I think God may turn *your* trial. Sometimes He does so *when that trial has revealed to you your special sin*. You have been putting your finger upon many faults, but you have not yet touched the spot in which your greatest evil is concentrated. God will now help you to know yourself. When you are in the furnace you will begin to search yourself and you will cry, “Show me why You contend with me.”

You will find out three or four things, perhaps, in which you are faulty, and you will commit yourself to the Lord and say, “Give me Grace, good Lord, to put away these evil things.” Yes, but you have not come to the point, yet, and only a greater trial will guide you to it. The anger of the Lord smokes against your house, not for this or that, but for another evil and you have need to institute another search, for the images may be under the seat whereon a beloved Rachel sits. The evil in your soul may be just at the point where you think that you are best guarded against temptation. Search, therefore, and look, dear Brother, dear Sister, for when the sin has been found out and the Achan has been stoned, then the valley of Achor shall be a door of hope and you shall go up to victory, the Lord going with you.

Perhaps, too, your turning point will be *when your spirit is broken*. We are, by nature, a good deal like horses that need breaking in, or, to use a scriptural simile, we are as “bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke.” Well, the horse has to go through certain processes in its management until, at last, it is declared to be “thoroughly broken in.” And we need similar training. You and I are not yet quite broken in, I am afraid. We go very merrily along and yield to the rein in certain forms of service, but if we were called to other sorts of work, or made to suffer, we should need the kicking strap put on and require a sharper bit in our mouths. We should find that our spirit was not perfectly broken.

It takes a long time of pain and sickness to bring some down to the dust of complete resignation to the Divine will. There is a something, still, in which they stick out against God and of many it is true, “Though you should crush a fool in mortar among wheat with your pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.” We have been mixed in that mortar and with that pestle day after day, and week after week, and yet we are still foolish! When our soul shall cheerfully say, “Not as I will, but as You will,” then our captivity will be almost over! While we cry, “It must not be so, I will not have it so,” and we struggle and rebel, we shall only have to feel that we are kicking against the pricks and wounding our foot every time we kick! But when we give up all that struggling, and say, “Lord, I leave it entirely with You. Your will be done”—then will the trial cease, because there will be no necessity for it any longer! That is with some the culmination and turning point of trouble. Their Gethsemane ends when, like the Lord Jesus, they cry, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

Sometimes, again, trial may cease *when you have learned the lesson which it was intended to teach you, as to some point of Gospel Truth*. I think I have sometimes said that many Truths of the Gospel are like letters written with sympathetic ink. If you have ever had a letter written with that preparation, when you look at it you cannot see anything whatever— it is quite illegible. The proper thing to do is to hold the writing up to a fire. As it warms at the fire, the writing becomes manifest and the letters are before you. Many of God’s promises need to be held before the scorching fires of adversity and personal trouble—and then we read the precious secret of the Spirit’s consolation.

You cannot see the stars in the day time upon the surface of the earth. But if you go down into a well you can and when you go down a deep well of trouble it often happens that you see a beauty and luster in the promise which nobody else can see. And when the Lord has brought you into a certain position in which you can see the Glory of His Grace as you could never have seen it anywhere else, then He will say, “It is enough. I have taught My child the lesson and I will let him go.” I think, too, it may be with some of us that *God gives us trouble until we obtain a sympathetic spirit*. I should not like to have lived 40 years in this world without ever having suffered sickness. “Oh,” you say, “that would have been very desirable.” I grant you it *appears* so. When I met with a man that never had an ache or a pain or a day’s sickness in his life, I used to envy him, but I do not, now, because I feel very confident that he is a loser by his unvarying experience.

How can a man sympathize with trouble that he never knew? How can he be tender in heart if he has never been touched with infirmity, himself? If one is to be a comforter to others, he must know the sorrows and the sicknesses of others in his measure. It was essential to our Lord and, certainly, what was essential to Him is necessary to those who are to be shepherds of others, as He was. Now, it may be that by nature some of us are not very sympathetic. I do not think Job was—it is possible that though he was kind and generous to the poor, yet he was rather hard—but his troubles taught him sympathy. And, perhaps, the Lord may send you trouble till you become softer in heart so that afterwards you will be one who can speak a word in season to the weary. As you sit down by the bedside of the invalid, you will be able to say, “I know all the ins and outs of a sick man’s feelings, for I have been sorely sick myself.” When God has worked that in you, it may be He will turn your captivity.

In Job’s case, the Lord turned his captivity *when he prayed for his friends*. Prayer for ourselves is blessed work, but for the child of God it is a higher exercise to become an intercessor and to pray for others. Prayer for ourselves, good as it is, has just a touch of selfishness about it. Prayer for others is delivered from that ingredient. Herein is love, the love which God, the Holy Spirit, delights to foster in the heart when a man’s prayers go up for others. And what a Christ-like form of prayer it is when you are praying for those who have ill-treated you and despitefully used you! Then are you like your Master!

Praying for yourselves, you are like those for whom Jesus died. But praying for your *enemies*, you are like the dying Jesus, Himself. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” has more of Heaven in it than the songs of seraphs. And your prayer, when offered for those who have treated you ill, is somewhat akin to the expiring prayer of your Lord. Job was permitted to take a noble revenge—I am sure the only one he desired—when he became the means of bringing them back to God. God would not hear them, He said, for they had spoken so wrongly of His servant Job. And now Job is set to be a mediator, or intercessor on their behalf! Thus was the contempt poured upon the Patriarch turned into honor! If the Lord will only save the opposers’ souls through your prayer, it will be a splendid way of returning bitter speeches. If many unkind insinuations have been thrown out and wicked words said, if you can pray for those who used such words and God hears you and brings them to Jesus, it will be such a triumph as an angel might envy!

My Brothers and Sisters, never use any other weapon of retaliation than the weapon of love! Avenge not yourself in any way by uttering anything like a curse, or desiring any hurt or mischief to come to your bitterest foe. But inasmuch as he curses, overwhelm him with blessings! Heap the hot coals of your good wishes and earnest prayers upon his head and if the Lord uses you to bring him to a state of salvation, He shall be praised and you shall have happiness among the sons of men. Perhaps some of you are in trouble now because you cannot be brought, sincerely, to pray for your enemies. It is a grievous fault when Christians harbor resentments. It is always a sad sign when a man confesses, “I could not heartily pray for So-and-So.”

I would not like to live an hour at enmity with any man living, be he who he may! Nor should any Christian, I think. You should, by the Grace of God, feel that however treacherous, dishonorable, unjust and detestable the conduct of your enemy may have been to you, yet, still, it is forgiven, quite forgiven in your heart and, as far as possible, forgotten, or in which remembered, remembered with regret that it should have occurred. But with no resentment to the person who committed the wrong. When we get to that state, it is most probable that the Lord will smile upon us and turn our captivity.

III. The last word I have to say—the third word—is that BELIEVERS SHALL NOT BE LOSERS FOR THEIR GOD. God, in the experiment, took from Job all that he had. But at the end He gave him back twice as much as he had— twice as many camels and oxen—and twice as many of everything, even of children. I heard a very sweet remark about the children the other day, for somebody said, “Yes, God did give him twice as many children, because his first family were still his. They were not lost but gone before.” So the Lord would have His people count their children that are gone to Heaven and reckon them as still belonging to the family, as the child did in Wordsworth’s pretty poem, “Master, we are seven.”

And so Job could say of his sons and daughters, as well as of all the other items, that he had twice as many as before. True, the first family were all gone, but he had prayed for them in the days of their feasting. He had brought them together and offered sacrifices and so he had a good hope about them and he reckoned them as still his own. Tried Brother, the Lord can restore to you double in temporal things if He pleases. If He takes away, He can as certainly give, and that right early. He certainly can do this in spiritual things. And if He takes away temporals and gives spirituals we are exceedingly great gainers! If a man should take away my silver and give me twice the weight in gold in return, should I not be thankful? And so, if the Lord takes away temporals and gives us spirituals, He thus gives us a hundred times more than He takes away!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, you shall never lose anything by what you suffer for God. If, for Christ’s sake, you are persecuted, you shall receive in this life your reward. But if not, rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in Heaven! You shall not lose anything by God’s afflicting you. You shall, for a time, be an *apparent* loser—but a real loser in the end you shall never be. When you get to Heaven you will see that you were a priceless gainer by all the losses you endured. Shall you lose anything by what you give to God? Never! Depend on it, He will be no man’s debtor. There dwells not on earth or Heaven any man who shall be a creditor to the Most High. The best investment a man makes is that which he gives to the Lord from a right motive. Nothing is lost which is offered to the cause of God.

The breaking of the alabaster box of precious ointment was not a wasteful thing and he who would give to the Lord all that he had would have made a prudent use of his goods. “He that gives to the poor lends to the Lord.” And he that gives to the Lord’s Church and to the Lord, Himself, lays up his treasure in Heaven where it shall be his forever. Beloved, we serve a good Master and if He chooses to try us for a little while, we will bear our trial cheerfully, for God will turn our captivity before long!

In closing, I wish I could feel that this subject had something to do with you all, but it is not the case. Oh, no, there are some of you who have felt no captivity, but you have a dreadful captivity to come—and there is no hope of God’s ever turning that captivity when once you get into it! Without God! Without Christ and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, you are in bondage until now and there will, before long, come upon you bondage that will never end! You cannot pray for your friends—you have never prayed for yourself. God would not hear you if you did pray for others, for, first of all, you must be, yourself, reconciled to Him by the death of His Son.

Oh, that you would mind these things and look to Jesus Christ, alone, for your salvation! If you do, He will accept you, for He has promised to cast out none who come to Him. And then look at this—after all is right between God and your soul, you need not fear what happens to you in the future, for, come sickness or health, come poverty or wealth, all is right, all is safe, all is well! You have put yourself into the hands of *God* and wherever God may lift those hands you are still within them and, therefore, you are always secure and always blessed! And, if not always consciously happy, yet you have always the right to be so, seeing you are true to God and He delights in you. God bless you and give you all salvation, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—[Psalm 18](tw://bible.*?id=19.18.0|_AUTODETECT_|).* HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—7, 48, 30. Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER  
NO. 404

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 11, 1861, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends.” Job 42:10.**

**“THE Lord restored Job’s losses.” So, then, our longest sorrows have a close and there is a bottom to the most profound depths of our misery. Our winters shall not frown forever. Summer shall soon smile. The tide shall not eternally ebb out. The floods retrace their march. The night shall not hang its darkness forever over our souls. The sun shall yet arise with healing beneath his wings—“The Lord restored Job’s losses.” Our sorrows shall have an end when God has gotten His end in them.**

**The ends in the case of Job were these—that Satan might be defeated, foiled with his own weapons, blasted in his hopes when he had everything his own way. God, at Satan’s challenge, had stretched forth His hand and touched Job in his bone and in his flesh and yet the Tempter could not prevail against him, but received his rebuff in those conquering words, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” When Satan is defeated then shall the battle cease. The Lord aimed also at the trial of Job’s faith. Many weights were hung upon this palm tree but it still grew up rightly. The fire had been fierce enough—the gold was undiminished—and only the dross was consumed.**

**Another purpose the Lord had was His own glory. And God was glorified abundantly. Job had glorified God on his dunghill. Now let him magnify his Lord again upon his royal seat in the gate. God had gotten unto Himself eternal renown through that grace by which He supported His poor afflicted servant under the heaviest troubles which ever fell to the lot of man. God had another end and that also was served. Job had been sanctified by his afflictions. His spirit had been mellowed. That small degree of tartness towards others which may have been in Job’s temper, had been at last removed and any self-justification which once had lurked within was fairly driven out.**

**Now that God’s gracious designs are answered He removes the rod from His servant’s back and takes the melted gold from the midst of the gloving coals. God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nothing and He shows this by the fact that He never afflicts them longer than there is need for it. He never suffers them to be one moment longer in the furnace than is absolutely requisite to serve the purposes of His wisdom and of His love. “The Lord restored Job’s losses.”**

**Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you have had a long captivity in affliction. God has sold you into the hand of your adversaries and you have wept by the waters of Babylon, hanging your harp upon the willows. Despair not! He that restored Job’s losses can turn you as the streams in the south. He shall make again your vineyard to blossom and your field to yield her fruit. You shall again come forth with those that make merry and once more shall the song of gladness be on your lips. Let not Despair rivet his cruel fetters about your soul. Hope yet, for there is hope. So shall He bring you up again rejoicing, from the land of your captivity and you shall say of Him, “He has turned my mourning into dancing.”**

**The circumstance which attended Job’s restoration is that to which I invite your particular attention. “The Lord restored Job’s losses, when he prayed for his friends.” Intercessory prayer was the means of his returning greatness. It was the bow in the cloud, the dove bearing the olive branch, the voice of the turtle announcing the coming summer. When his soul began to expand itself in holy and loving prayer for his erring brethren, then the heart of God showed itself to him by returning to him his prosperity without and cheering his soul within.**

**Brethren, it is not a fantasy when from such a text as this I address you upon the subject of prayer for others. Let us learn today to imitate the example of Job and pray for our friends and perhaps if we have been in trouble, our captivity shall be turned.**

**Four things I would speak of this morning and yet but one thing. I would speak upon intercessory prayer thus— first, *by way of commending the exercise.* Secondly, *by way of encouraging you to enlist in it.* Thirdly, by way of suggestion, *as to the persons for whom you should especially pray.* And fourthly, *by way of exhortation to all believers to undertake and persevere in the exercise of intercessions for other*s.**

I. **First then, BY WAY OF COMMENDING THE EXERCISE, let me remind you that intercessory prayer has been *practiced by all the best of God’s saint*s. We may not find instances of it appended to every saint’s name but beyond a doubt there has never been a man eminent for piety personally who has not always been pre-eminent in his anxious desires for the good of others and in his prayers for that end. Take Abraham the father of the faithful. How earnestly did he plead for his son Ishmael! “O that Ishmael might live before You!”**

**With what importunity did he approach the Lord on the plains of Mamre when he wrestled with Him again and again for Sodom. How frequently did he reduce the number, as though to use the expression of the old Puritan, “He were bidding and beating down the price at the market.” “Perhaps there be fifty, perhaps there lack five of the fifty, perhaps there be twenty found there, perhaps there be ten righteous found there—will You not spare the city for the sake of ten?” Well did he wrestle and if we may sometimes be tempted to wish he had not paused when he did, yet we must commend him for continuing so long to plead for that doomed and depraved city.**

**Remember Moses, the most royal of men, whether crowned or uncrowned, how often did he intercede? How frequently do you meet with such a record as this—“Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before God”? Remember that cry of his on the top of the mount, when it was to his own personal disadvantage to intercede. And yet when God had said, “Let Me alone, I will make of you a great nation,” yet how he continued, how he thrust himself in the way of the axe of Justice and cried, “Spare them Lord, and if not,” (and here he reached the very climax of agonizing earnestness) “blot my name out of the Book of Life.”**

**Never was there a mightier Prophet than Moses and never one more intensely earnest in intercessory prayer. Or pass on, if you will, to the days of Samuel. Remember his words, “God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.” Or think of Solomon and of his earliest intercession at the opening of the temple, when, with outstretched hands he prayed for the assembled people. Or if you want another royal example, turn to Hezekiah with Sennacherib’s letter spread out before the Lord—when he prayed not only for himself but for God’s people of Israel in those times of straits.**

**Think too, of Elijah, who for Israel’s sake would bring down the rain that the land perish not. As for himself— miracles gave him his bread and his water—it was for others that he prayed. It was for others that he said to his servant, “Go again seven times.” Forget not Jeremiah, whose tears were prayers—prayers coming too intensely from his heart to find expression in any utterance of the lip. He wept himself away—his life was one long shower—each drop a prayer and the whole deluge a flood of intercession.**

**And if you would have an example taken from the times of Christ and his Apostles remember how Peter prays on the top of the house and Stephen amidst the falling stones. Or think, if you will, of Paul, of whom even more than of others it could be said that he never ceased to remember the saints in his prayers, “making mention of you daily in my prayers,” stopping in the very midst of the Epistle and saying, “For which cause I bow my knee unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

**As for the cloud of holy witnesses in our own time, I will hazard the assertion that there is not a single child of God who does not plead with God for his children, for his family, for the Church at large and for the poor ungodly perishing world. I deny his saintship if he does not pray for others.**

**But further, while we might commend this duty by quoting innumerable examples from the lives of eminent saints, it is enough for the disciple of Christ if we say that *Christ in His holy Gospel has made it your duty and your privilege* to intercede for others. When He taught us to pray He said, “*Our* Father,” and the expressions which follow are not in the singular but in the plural—“Give *us* this day *our* daily bread.” “Forgive *us our* debts.” “Lead *us* not into temptation.” Evidently intending to set forth that none of us are to pray for ourselves alone. That while we may have sometimes prayers so bitter that they must be personal like the Savior’s own—“Father if it be plausible, let this cup pass from Me”—yet, as a rule, our prayers should be public prayers.**

**Your prayers offered in private and even in secret should not forget the Church of the living God. By the mouth of Paul how frequently does the Holy Spirit exhort us to pray for ministers! “Brethren,” says Paul, “pray for us.” And then after exhorting them to offer prayers and supplications for all classes and conditions of men, he adds, “And for us also that we may have boldness to speak as we ought to speak.” James, who is ever a practical Apostle, bids us pray for one another. In that same verse, where he says, “Confess your sins the one to the other,” he says “and pray for one another,” and adds the privilege “that you may be healed.” As if the healing would not only come to the sick person for whom we pray, but to us who offer the prayer—we, too, receiving some special blessing when our hearts are enlarged for the people of the living God.**

**But, Brethren, I shall not stay to quote the texts in which the duty of praying for others is definitely laid down. Permit me to remind you of *the high example of your Master.* He is your pattern—follow His leadership. Was there even one who interceded as He did? Remember that golden prayer of His, where he cried for His own people, “Father, keep them, keep them from the Evil One!” Oh, what a prayer was that! He seems to have thought of all their wants, of all their needs, of all their weaknesses and in one long stream of intercession He pours out His heart before His Father’s Throne.**

**Think how even in the agonies of His crucifixion, He did not forget that He was still an intercessor for man. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Oh, remember, Brethren, it is your Savior’s example to you today—for there before the Throne, with outstretched hands—He prays not for Himself, for He has attained His glory. Not for Himself, for He rests from His labors and has received His everlasting recompense. But for *you*, for the purchase of His blood, for as many as are called by His grace. Yes, and for those who shall believe on Him through our word—**

*“For all that co me to God by Him,   
Salvation He demands;   
Points to the wounds upon Hisheart,   
And spreads His bleeding hands.”*

**Come Brethren, with such an example as this, we are verily guilty if we forget to plead for others.**

**But I will go a little further. If in the Bible there were no example of intercessory supplication. If Christ had not left it upon record that it was His will that we should pray for others—and even if we did not know that it was Christ’s practice to intercede—yet *the very spirit of our holy religion* would demand us to plead for others. Do you go up into your closet and in the Face and Presence of God and think of none but yourself? Surely the love of Christ cannot be in you— for the spirit of Christ is not selfish. No man lives unto himself when once he has the love of Christ in him.**

**I know there are some whose piety is comfortably tethered within the limits of their own selfish interests. It is enough for them if *they* hear the Word, if *they* be saved, if *they*** get to Heaven. Ah, miserable spirit, you shall not get there! It would need another Heaven for you, for the Heaven of Christ is the Heaven of the unselfish, the temple of the largehearted, the bliss of loving spirits, the Heaven of those who, like Christ, are calling to become poor that others may he rich.

I cannot believe—it were a libel upon the Cross of Christ, it were a scandal upon the doctrine which He taught—if I could ever believe that the man whose prayers are selfish has anything of the spirit of Christ within him. Brethren, I commend intercessory prayer because it opens man’s soul, gives a healthy play to his sympathies, compels him to feel that he is not above everybody and that this whole wide world and this great universe were not after all made that he might be its petty lord—that everything might bend to his will and all creatures crouch at his feet.

It does him good, I say, to make him know that the Cross was not uplifted alone for him, for its far-reaching arms were means to drop with benedictions upon millions of the human race. You lean and hungry worshipper of self, this is an exercise which would make another man of you—a man more like the Son of Man and less like Nabal the churl.

But again—I commend the blessed privilege of intercession because of its sheer brotherly nature. You and I may be naturally hard and harsh and unlovely of spirit—but praying much for others will remind us we have indeed a relationship to the saints—that their interests are ours, that we are jointly concerned with them in all the privileges of grace. I do not know anything which, through the grace of God, may be a better means of uniting us the one to the other than constant prayer for each other. You cannot harbor enmity in your soul against your brother after you have learned to pray for him.

If he has done you ill, when you have taken that ill to the mercy-seat and prayed over it, you must forgive. Surely you could not be such a hypocrite as to invoke blessings on his head before God and then come forth to curse him in your own soul. When there have been complaints brought by brother against brother it is generally best to say, “Let us pray before we enter into the matter.” Wherever there is a case to be decided by the pastor, he ought always to say to the Brethren who contend, “Let us pray first,” and it will often happen that through prayer the differences will soon be forgotten.

They will become so slight, so trivial, that when the Brethren rise from their knees they will say, “they are gone, we cannot contend now after having been one in heart before the Throne of God.” I have heard of a man who had made complaints against his minister and his minister wisely said to him, “Well don’t talk to me in the street. Come to my house and let us hear it all.” He went and the minister said, “My brother, I hope that what you have to say to me may be greatly blessed to me. No doubt I have my imperfections as well as another man and I hope I shall never be above being told of them. But in order that what you have to say to me may be blessed to me let us kneel down and pray together.”

So our quarrelsome friend prayed first and the minister prayed next, both briefly. When they rose from their knees, he said, “Now, my Brother, I think we are both in a good state of mind. Tell me what it is that you have to find fault with.” The man blushed and stammered and stuttered and said he did not think there was anything at all except in himself. “I have forgotten to pray for you, Sir,” said he, “and of course I cannot expect that God will feed my soul through you when I neglect to mention you at the Throne of Grace.”

Ah, well, Brethren, if you will exercise yourselves much in supplication for your brethren you will forgive their tempers. You will overlook their rashness, you will not think of their harsh words. But knowing that you also may be tempted and are men of like passions with them, you can cover their fault and bear with their infirmities.

Shall I need to say more in commendation of intercessory prayer except it be this—that it seems to me that when God gives any man much grace, it must be with the design that he may use it for the rest of the family? I would compare you who have near communion with God to courtiers in the king’s palace. What do courtiers do? Do they not avail themselves of their influence at court to take the petitions of their friends and present them where they can be heard? This is what we call patronage—a thing with which many find fault when it is used for political ends, but there is a kind of heavenly patronage which you ought to use right diligently.

I ask you to use it on my behalf. When it is well with you, then think of me. I pray you use it on the behalf of the poor, the sick, the afflicted, the tempted, the tried, the desponding, the despairing. When you have the King’s ear, speak to Him for us. When you are permitted to come very near to His Throne and He says to you, “Ask and I will give you what you will.” When your faith is strong, your eye clear, your access near, your interest sure and the love of God sweetly shed abroad in your heart—then take the petitions of your poor Brethren who stand outside at the gate and say, “My Lord, I have a poor Brother, a poor child of Yours, who has desired me to ask of You this favor. Grant it unto me. It shall be a favor shown unto myself. Grant it unto him, for he is one of Yours. Do it for Jesus’ sake!”

Now, to come to an end in this matter of commendation, it is utterly impossible that you should have a large measure of grace unless it prompts you to use your influence for others. Soul, if you have grace at all and are not a mighty intercessor—that grace must be but as a grain of mustard-seed—a shriveled, uncomely, puny thing. You have just enough grace to float your soul clear from the quicksand—but you have no deep floods of grace—or else you would carry in your joyous boat a rich cargo of the wants of others up to the Throne of God. And you would bring back for them rich blessings which but for you they might not have obtained. If you are like an angel with your foot upon the golden ladder which reaches to Heaven, if you are ascending and descending—know that you will ascend with others’ prayers and descend with others’ blessings—for it is impossible for a full-grown saint to live or to pray for himself alone. Thus much on commendation.

II. We turn to our second point and endeavor to say something BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT, that you may cheerfully offer intercessory supplications.  
First, remember that intercessory prayer is the sweetest prayer God ever hears. Do not question it, for the prayer of Christ is of this character. In all the incense which now our Great High Priest puts into the censor, there is not a single grain that is for Himself. His work is done. His reward obtained. Now you do not doubt but that Christ’s prayer is the most acceptable of all supplications, do you? Very well, my Brethren, the more like your prayer is to Christ’s, the more sweet it will be—and while petitions for yourself will be accepted—yet your pleadings for others, having in them more of the fruits of the Spirit—more love, perhaps more faith, certainly more brotherly kindness—they will be as the sweetest oblation that you can offer to God, the very fat of your sacrifice.   
Remember, again, that intercessory prayer is exceedingly prevalent. What it has wrought! Intercessory prayer has stopped plagues. It removed the darkness which rested over Egypt. It drove away the frogs which leaped upon the land. It scattered the lice and locusts which plagued the inhabitants of Zoan. It removed the pestilence and the thunder and the lightning. It stayed all the ravages which God’s avenging hand did upon Pharaoh and his people. Intercessory prayer has healed diseases—we know it did in the early Church. We have evidence of it in old Mosaic times.   
When Miriam was smitten with leprosy, Moses prayed and the leprosy was removed. It has restored withered limbs. When the king’s arm was withered, he said to the Prophet, “Pray for me.” And his arm was restored as it was before. Intercessory prayer has raised the dead. Fair Elijah stretched himself upon the child seven times and the child sneezed and the child’s soul returned. As to how many souls intercessory prayer has instrumentally saved, Recording Angel, you can tell! Eternity, you shall reveal! There is nothing which intercessory prayer cannot do. Oh, Believer, you have a mighty engine in your hand—use it well—use it constantly! Use it now with faith and you shall surely prevail.   
But perhaps you have a doubt about interceding for someone who has fallen far into sin. Brethren, did you ever hear of men who have been thought to be dead while yet alive? Have you ever heard around the farmer’s hearth some oldfashioned story of one who was washed and laid out and wrapped up in his shroud to be put into his coffin and yet he was but in a trance and not dead? And have you not heard old legends of men and women who have been buried alive? I cannot vouch for the accuracy of those tales, but I can tell you that spiritually there has been many a man given up for dead that was still within reach of grace.   
These has been many a soul that has been put into the winding sheet even by Christian people, given up to damnation even by the ministers of Christ, consigned to perdition even by their own kinsfolk. But yet into perdition they did not go—God found them—and took them out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and set their living feet upon His living Rock. Oh, give up on nobody! Still pray, lay none out for spiritually dead until they are laid out for dead naturally. But perhaps you say, “I cannot pray for others, for I am so weak, so powerless.” You will get strength, my Brethren, by the exertion.   
But besides, the prevalence of prayer does not depend upon the strength of the man who prays, but upon the power of the argument he uses. Now, Brethren, if you sow seed you may be very feeble, but it is not your hand that puts the seed into the ground which produces the harvest—it is the vitality in the seed. And so in the prayer of faith. When you can plead a promise and drop that prayer into the ground with hope, your weakness shall not make it miscarry. It shall still prevail with God and bring down blessings from on high.   
Job! You come from your dunghill to intercede and so may I comes from my couch of weakness! You came from your poverty and your desertion to intercede for others—and so may we. Elijah was a man of like passions—sweet word!—of like passions—like infirmities, like tendencies to sin—but he prevailed and so shall we! Only see to it that you are not negligent in these exercises, but that you pray much for others even as Job prayed for his friends.   
Now that the air is very hot and the atmosphere heavy and becalmed, our friends find it difficult to listen—more difficult even than the speaker finds it to preach. Now may I have your attention yet once again—and a change of position may do us all good—will you stand up and put the text into use by offering an intercessory prayer and then I will go on again? It shall be this one—  
*“Pity the nations, O our God,   
Compel the earth to come;   
Send Your victims word abroad,   
And bring the strangers home!”*[*The congregation here rose and sung the verse.*]  
III. The third head is A SUGGESTION AS TO THE PERSONS FOR WHOM WE SHOULD MORE PARTICULARLY PRAY. It shall be but a suggestion and I will then turn to my last point.   
In the case of Job, he prayed for his *offending* friends. They had spoken exceedingly harshly of him. They had misconstrued all his previous life and there had never been a part of his character which was not censured. But the Lord witnessed concerning him that he was a perfect and an upright man—yet they accused him of hypocrisy and supposed that all he did was for the sake of gain. Now, perhaps there is no greater offense which can be given to an upright and a holy man, than to his face to suspect his motives and to accuse him of self-seeking.   
And yet, shaking off everything, as the sun frets the darkness that has hidden its glory and scatters it by its own beams, Job comes to the mercy-seat and pleads. He is accepted himself and he begs that his friends may be accepted, too. Carry your offending ones to the Throne of God—it shall be a blessed method of proving the trueness of your forgiveness. Do not do that however, in a threatening way. I remember having to deal faithfully with a hypocrite, who told me, by way of threat, he should pray for me. It was a horrid threat—for who would wish to have his name associated with a prayer which would be an abomination to the Lord?   
Do not do it in that sense, as though like a supercilious hypocrite, you would make your prayer itself a stalking horse for your vain-glory. But do it when you are alone before God and in secret not that you may gratify your revenge by telling the story again—for that were abominable indeed—but that you may remove from your erring Brother any sin which may have stained his garments, by asking the Lord to forgive him.   
Again—be sure you take there your *argumentative* friends. These Brethren had been arguing with Job and the controversy dragged its weary length along. Brethren, it is better to pray than it is to argue. Sometimes you think it would be a good thing to have a public discussion upon a doctrine. It would be a better thing to have prayer over it. You say, “Let two good men, on different sides, meet and fight the matter out.” I say, “No! let the two good men meet and pray the matter out.” He that will not submit his doctrine to the test of the mercy-seat, I should suspect is wrong.   
I can say that I am not afraid to offer prayer that my Brethren who do not see “Believers’ baptism” may be made to see it. If they think I am wrong, I wish that they would pray to God to set us right. But I have never heard them do that. I have never heard them say to the Lord to convince us of the truth of infant sprinkling. I wish they would if they believe it to be Scriptural—and I am perfectly willing to put it to the old test—the God that answers by fire, let Him be God. And whichever shall prevail, when prayer shall be the ultimate arbiter, let that stand.   
Carry your dear friends who are wrong in practice, not to the discussion-room, or to the debating-club, but carry them before God and let this be your cry, “Oh, You that teaches us to our profit, teach me if I am wrong and teach my friend wherein he errs and make him right.”   
This is the thing we ought also to do with our *haughty* friends. Eliphaz and Bildad were very high and haughty. Oh, how they looked down upon poor Job! They thought he was a very great sinner, a very desperate hypocrite. They stayed with him but doubtless they thought it very great condescension. Now you sometimes hear complaints made by Christians about other people being proud. It may not make them humble for you to grumble about that. What if there is a Mrs. So-and-So who wears a very rustling dress and never takes any notice of you because you cannot rustle too?   
What if there is a Brother who can afford to wear creaking boots and will not notice you in the street because you happen to be poor? Tell your Father about it—that is the best way. Why, you would not be angry, I suppose, with a man for having the gout, or a torpid liver, or a cataract in the eye—you would pity him. Why be angry with your Brother because of his being proud? It is a disease, a very bad disease—that scarlet fever of pride. Go and pray the Lord to cure him—your anger will not do it. It may puff him up and make him worse than ever he was before, but it will not set him right.   
Pray him down, Brother, pray him down. Have a duel with him and have the choice of weapons yourself. And let that be the weapon of all-prayer and if he is proud, I know this, if you prevail with God, God will soon take the pride out of His own child and remake him humble as he should be. But particularly let me ask you to pray most for those who are *disabled from praying* for themselves. Job’s three friends could not pray for themselves because the Lord said He would not accept them if they did. He said He was angry with them. But as for Job, said He, “Him will I accept.”   
Do not let me shock your feelings when I say there are some, even as God’s people, who are not able to pray acceptably at certain seasons. When a man has just been committing sin, repentance is his first work, not prayer. He must first set matters right between God and his own soul before he may go and intercede for others. And there are many poor Christians that cannot pray—doubt has come in, sin has taken away their confidence—and they are standing outside the gate with their petitions, they dare not enter within the veil. There are many tried believers, too, that are so desponding that they cannot pray with faith and therefore they cannot prevail.   
Now, my dear Brethren, if you can pray, take their sins into court with you and when you have had your own hearing, then say, “But, my Lord, inasmuch as You have honored me and made me to eat of Your bread and drink from Your cup, hear me for Your poor people who are just now denied the light of Your countenance.” Besides, there are millions of poor sinners who are dead in sin and they cannot pray for *themselves.* It is a blessed thing—that vicarious repentance and vicarious faith which a saint may exert towards sinners.   
“Lord, that sinner does not feel. Help me to feel for him because he will not feel. Lord, that sinner will not believe in Christ, he does not think that Christ can save him but I know He can and I will pray believingly for that sinner and I will repent for him. And though my repentance and my faith will not avail him without his personal repentance and faith, yet it may come to pass that through me he may be brought to repentance and led to prayer.”   
IV. Now, lest I should weary you, let me come to the closing part of my discourse. And, O God, lend us Your strength now that this duty may come forcibly home to our conscience and we may at once engage in this exercise!   
Brethren, I have to EXHORT YOU TO PRAY FOR OTHERS. Before I do it, I will ask you a personal question. Do you always pray for others? Guilty or not guilty, here? Do you think you have taken the case of your children, your church, your neighborhood and the ungodly world before God as you ought to have done? If *you* have, *I* have not. For I stand here a chief culprit before the Master to make confession of the sin. And while I shall exhort you to practice what is undoubtedly a noble privilege, I shall be most of all exhorting myself.   
I begin thus, by saying, Brethren, how can you and I repay the debt we owe to the Church unless we pray for others? How was it that you were converted? It was because somebody else prayed for you. I, in tracing back my own conversion, cannot fail to impute it, through God’s Spirit, to the prayers of my mother. I believe that the Lord heard her earnest cries when I knew not that her soul was exercised about me. There are many of you that were prayed for when you were asleep in your cradles as unconscious infants. Your mothers’ liquid prayer fell hot upon your infant brows and gave you what was a true *christening* while you were still but little ones.   
There are husbands here who owe their conversion to their wives’ prayers. Brothers who must acknowledge that it was a sister’s pleading. Children who must confess that their Sunday-School teachers prayed for them. Now, if by others’ prayers you and I were brought to Christ, how can we repay this Christian kindness but by pleading for others? He who has not a man to pray for him may write himself down a hopeless character.   
During one of the revivals in America a young man was going to see the minister but he did not, because the minister had avoided him with considerable coldness. A remark was made to the minister upon what he had done and he said, “Well, I did not want to see him. I knew he had only come to mock and scoff. What should I ask him for? You do not know him as well as I do, or else you would have done the same.” A day or two after, there was a public meeting where the preaching of the Word was to be carried on in the hope that the revival might be continued.   
A young man who had been lately converted through the prayers of another young man was riding to the worship on his horse and as he was riding along he was overtaken by our young friend whom the minister thought so godless. He said to him, “Where are you going today, William?” “Well, I am going to the meeting and I hear that you have been converted.” “I thank God I have been brought to a knowledge of the Truth,” he answered. “Oh,” said the other, “I shall never be, I wish I might.” His friend was surprised to hear him whom the minister thought to be so hard say that and he said, “But why cannot you be converted?”   
“Why?” said the other, “You know you were converted through the prayers of Mr. K—.” “Yes, so I was.” “Ah,” said the other, “There is nobody to pray for me. They have all given me up long ago.” “Why,” said his friend, “It is very singular, but Mr. K—, who prayed for me, has been praying for you, too. We were together last night and I heard him.” The other threw himself back in his saddle and seemed as if he would fall from his horse with surprise. “Is that true?” said he. “Yes, it is.” “Then blessed be God, there is hope for me now and if he has prayed for me, that gives me a reason why I should now pray believingly for myself.” And he did so and that meeting witnessed him confessing his faith in Christ.   
Now let no man your know say that there is nobody to pray for him. But as you had somebody to plead for you, you find someone to plead for. Then, again, permit me to say, how are you to prove your love to Christ or to His Church if you refuse to pray for men? “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren.” If we do not love the Brethren, we are still dead. How can a man say he loves the Brethren if he does not pray for them? What? It is the very least thing you can do and if you do not perform the least, you certainly will fail in the greater. You do not love the Brethren unless you pray for them and then it follows you are dead in trespasses and sins.   
Let me ask you again how is it you hope to get your own prayers answered if you never plead for others? Will not the Lord say, “Selfish wretch, you are always knocking at My door, but it is always to cry for your own welfare and never for another’s. Inasmuch as you have never asked for a blessing for one of the least of these My Brethren, neither will I give a blessing to you. You love not the saints. You love not your fellow men—how can you love Me whom you have not seen—and how shall I love you and give you the blessing which you ask at My hands?”   
Brethren, again I say I would earnestly exhort you to intercede for others, for how can you be Christians if you do not? Christians are priests but how can they be priests if they offer no sacrifice? Christians are lights but how can they be lights unless they shine for others? Christians are sent into the world even as Christ was sent into the world, but how can they be sent unless they are sent to pray? Christians are meant not only to be blessed themselves, but in them shall all the nations of the earth be blessed—but how if you refuse to pray? Give up your profession—cast down, I pray you—the ephod of a priest if you will not burn the incense.   
Renounce your Christianity if you will not carry it out. Make not a mockery and sport of solemn things. And you must do so if you still refuse selfishly to give to your friends a part and a lot in your supplication before the Throne. O Brethren, let us unite with one heart and with one soul to plead with God for this neighborhood! Let us carry “London” written on our breasts just as the high priest of old carried the names of the tribes. Mothers, bear your children before God! Fathers, carry your sons and your daughters! Brothers and Sisters let us take a wicked world and the dark places thereof which are full of the habitations of cruelty!   
Let us cry aloud and keep no silence and give to the Lord no rest till He establishes and makes His Church a praise in the earth. Evoke, you watchmen upon Zion’s walls and renew your shouts! Wake you favorites of Heaven and renew your prayers! The cloud hangs above you, it’s yours to draw down its sacred floods in genial showers by earnest prayers. God has put high up in the mountains of His promise springs of love—it is yours to bring them down by the divine channel of your intense supplications. Do it, I pray you, lest inasmuch as you have shut your heart of compassion and have refused to plead with God for the conversion of others, He should say in His wrath: “These are not My children. They have not My spirit. They are not partakers of My love, neither shall they enter into My rest.”   
Why, there are some of you that have not prayed for others for months, I am afraid, except it be at a prayer meeting. You know what your night prayers are. It is, “Lord, take care of my family.” You know how some farmers pray, “Lord, send fair weather in this part of the country. Lord, preserve the precise fruits of the field all round this neighborhood. Never mind about their being spoilt anywhere else, for that will send the markets up.” And so there are some who make themselves special objects of supplication and what care they for the perishing crowd?   
This is the drift of some men’s wishes, “Lord, bless the Church, but don’t send another minister into our neighborhood lest he should take our congregations from us. Lord, send laborers into the vineyard but do not send them into our corner lest they should take any of our glory from us.” Let us have done with that kind of supplication. Let us be Christians. Let us have expanded souls and minds that can feel for others. Let us weep with them that weep and rejoice with them that rejoice. And as a Church and as private persons we shall find the Lord will restore our losses when we pray for our friends.   
God help us to plead for others! And as for you that have never prayed for yourselves, God help you to believe in the Lord Jesus!

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Job 42.5

JOB AMONG THE ASHES  
NO. 2009

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 19, 1888, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Job 42:5, 6.**

JEHOVAH had spoken, Job had trembled. The Lord had revealed Himself, Job had seen Him. Truly, God did but display the skirts of His robe and unveil a part of His ways. But therein was so much of ineffable glory that Job laid his hand upon his mouth in token of his silent consent to the claims of the Everlasting One. God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind concerning the greatness of His power, the wonders of His workings, the splendor of His skill, the infinity of His wisdom. Carefully read that wonderful speech of the Most High to the trembling Patriarch. I dare not call it poetry. For it rises as much above human poetry as the most sublime poetry stands above the poorest prose.

It is simply a statement of facts and these are mentioned in language of the simplest kind. But the overpowering glory of the utterance lies in the facts themselves. These sublime stanzas are spoken in the idiom of God. Those only know the peculiar style of the living God who have become familiar with the sacred Word in Spirit and in Truth and such persons can at once distinguish the speech of Jehovah from that of men. Read the Divine address, that you may see how Jehovah caused the afflicted Patriarch to feel Him near.

In the confession which now lies before us, Job acknowledges God’s boundless power. For he exclaims, “I know that You can do everything, and that no thought can be withheld from You.” He felt that whatever the Lord chose to think or desire He could at once accomplish. Job had a glimpse of that omnipotence of which the height and depth no mind can ever measure.

Job sees his own folly. He speaks like a man in a maze or a muse and he says, “Who is He that hides counsel without knowledge?” Look at the second verse of chapter thirty-eight and you will see that he is quoting what God had said to him. The Lord’s words are ringing in his ears and in his anguish he repeats them, accepting them as justly applicable to himself. It is not far from being right with us when the Words of God can fitly become our words. “The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”

And now Job replies, “I am that foolish one—I uttered what I understood not—things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.” Job felt that what he had spoken concerning the Lord was, in the main, true. And the

Lord Himself said to Job’s three friends, “You have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has.” But under a sense of the Divine Presence Job felt that even when he had spoken aright, he had spoken beyond his own proper knowledge, uttering speech whose depths of meaning he could not himself fathom. Many a holy Prophet has done this, for inspired men are described as those who “enquired and searched diligently; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.”

It is not the thoughts of the Prophet which have been inspired of God so much as their words. For frequently they were moved to speak prophecies which were quite beyond their own understanding—in fact, my Brethren, are not all the great mysteries of the faith above human thought? And may we not fearlessly assert that no inspired man has ever known all the depth of God’s meaning treasured up in the words which he himself has been led by the Spirit of God to write? Hence I assert that there is a verbal inspiration, or no inspiration at all worthy of the name. Job, as he comes before us in the text, is impressed with his own folly. He had, to a large degree, spoken what he felt sure was true but he now feels that he did not understand what he said.

And he at the same time tacitly confesses that he may have said in his bitterness many an unwise and unseemly thing, and therefore he bows his head before the Lord his God and confesses that he has darkened counsel by words without knowledge and uttered things that he understood not.

Notwithstanding, the man of God proceeds to draw near unto the Lord, before whom he bows himself. Foolish as he confesses himself to be, he does not, therefore, fly from the supreme wisdom. Although he knows that he has babbled ignorantly, he does not seek to hide from the Lord as Adam did when he sought the shade of the trees of the garden. No, he takes up the Lord’s Words again and is emboldened by them to approach. Read the thirty-eighth chapter, third verse. The Lord there says, “Gird up now your loins like a man—for I will demand of you and you shall answer Me.”

Like a man in a dream, Job accepts the invitation and answers, “Behold I am vile, what shall I answer You? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken. But I will not answer—yes, twice. But I will proceed no further.” This was brave and wise action. Whatever Job might be or might not be, he was a firm believer in his God and in every Word which the Lord was pleased to speak. He held even to discouraging words with desperate tenacity and even learned to find honey in Words which roared like lions upon him. Hence, when he is humbled in the dust, he recollects that God had bid him draw near to Him. And albeit to his fears that bidding may have sounded like a challenge, yet to his faith it becomes an encouragement and he, in effect, replies, “My God, I will venture to take You at Your Word. You bid me come and come I will. Dust and ashes though I am, I will do as You allow me and make my humble appeal to You.”

Dear Friends, it is altogether wrong to allow our sense of folly or of sin to drive us away from God. But it is altogether right when our humiliation draws us to the Lord and our conscious need drives us to the Throne of Grace. The more foolish and sinful we are, the more urgent is our need to come to God, who alone can make us clean and instruct us in the way of heavenly wisdom. I commend to you, therefore, God’s servant Job, of whom we may say, whatever fault we may perceive in him, none of us could have behaved so gloriously as he did—unless, indeed, the Lord should give us like Divine Grace.

The Lord led Job to find fault with Him, yet God does not complain but even commends him. The three carping friends are commanded to bring a costly sacrifice but this was not demanded from Job. And even when they brought their seven bullocks the Lord did not accept them till Job, whom they had condemned, had made intercession for them. Job bore away the palm from the conflict. So let us do as Job did and make our approach unto the Lord in childlike confidence even when He seems to frown. Let us get where Job was when he said, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

When we bow lowest before His Throne, let not our humble bending have anything of distance in it. Lower before You, O Lord, would we be. But at the same time our cry is, “Nearer to You.”

Thus we come to the text, having used the connection as a step to its door. On the text I make three observations—first, we have sometimes very vivid impressions of God. Job said, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You.” In the second place, when we are favored with these clearer views of God, we have lower thoughts of ourselves—“wherefore I abhor myself.” And thirdly, whenever we are thus made low, our heart is filled with repentance—“I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” May the Holy Spirit aid us in this experimental meditation!

I. First, then, WE HAVE SOMETIMES VERY VIVID IMPRESSIONS OF GOD. Job had long before heard of God and that is a great matter. I do not think he meant merely that he had heard men speak of God but that he had really, for himself, heard God’s voice. He had been a reverent Believer in the teachings of God and an obedient servant to His commands— thus he had really heard God. The man who can say this can say a great deal. If God has ever been on speaking terms with you, you have much cause for gratitude. It is clear that you are not dead in sin, or if you were so when the Lord spoke to you, you are now alive. For His voice causes the dead to live.

If you have heard God in the secret of your soul, you are a spiritual man—only a spirit can hear the Spirit of God—none can discern the Lord but the man to whom He has given spiritual life. Job had heard God, but now he has a more vivid apprehension of Him. It is sometimes said that one eyewitness is better than ten ear-witnesses and there is much truth in the saying—certainly, facts perceived by the eye make a far more vivid

impression upon the mind than the same facts heard by the ear. If we witness a sad scene of poverty, it has far more effect upon our heart than the most graphic description. Word paintings can never bring out the reality of a thing so well as the actual sight of it.

Of course, Job could not literally see God—he does not mean to assert that he did. For “no man has seen God at any time.” But Job means that he now had a view of God very much more clearly than any which he had obtained before. In fact, as much clearer as eyesight is more clear than hearing.

Notice that in order to this close vision of God, affliction had overtaken him. It was not till after he had scraped himself with the potsherd, nor till his friends had scraped him with something worse than potsherds, that Job could say, “My eye sees You.” Not till every camel and every sheep had been stolen and every child was dead could the afflicted Patriarch cry, “Now my eye sees You.” Happy is that man who in prosperity can hear the voice of God in the tinkling of the sheep-bells of his abundant flocks, can hear Him in the lowing of the oxen which cover his fields and in the loving voices of dear children around him.

But, mark—prosperity is a painted window which shuts out much of the clear light of God and only when the blue and the crimson and the golden tinge are removed is the glass restored to its full transparency. Adversity thus takes away tinge and color and dimness and we see our God far better than before—if our eyes are prepared for the light. The Lord had taken everything away from Job, and this paved the way to His giving him more of Himself. In the absence of other goods the good God is the better seen. In prosperity God is heard and that is a blessing. But in adversity God is seen and that is a greater blessing.

Sanctified adversity quickens our spiritual sensitiveness. Sorrow after sorrow will wake up the spirit and it will infuse into it a delicacy of perception which, perhaps, does not often come to us in any other way. I purposely say, “perhaps,” for I believe that some choice saints are favored to reach it by smoother ways. But I think they are very few. The most of us are of such coarse material that we need melting before we attain to that sacred softness by which the Lord God is joyfully perceived. O child of God, if you are to suffer as much as Job suffered, if you get to see the Lord with a spiritually enlightened eye, you may be thankful for the sorrowful process! Who would not go to Patmos if he might see the visions of John and who would not sit on the dunghill with Job to cry with him, “Now my eye sees You”?

Possibly, Job’s desertion by his friends was also helpful. Job’s three friends! Ah me, I know their kind! They were most devotedly attached to him, no doubt. And how warmly they proved it! They had met together with him and said soft and sweet things to him in those days when he moved like a prince among the nobles of his people and every eye that saw him blessed him. But when they found him sitting “down among the ashes,” they had altered thoughts of him. They suspected him. And though they knew nothing against him, yet they perceived that he was not in the same honor as before.

Between a prince in ermine and the same man in sackcloth there is, to some minds, a great difference. Besides, the instinct of self-preservation leads men to hold off from one who is sinking, lest they sink with him. After sitting in silence for a week, these excellent men found it in their hearts to assail him with their judicious observations. Here and there they inserted nice little bits of cruelty, all meant for his good. Was he not covered with sores? Was there not a cause for all this? By this torture God delivered Job from men—he was not likely after that to incur the curse which comes through making flesh your arm. He was also strengthened in personal independence of mind. He could clearly see that his breath was in his own nostrils and not in other people’s, and that he could stand alone by God’s help, yes, even stand against those eminent men who had contended with him.

Friends are all too apt to block out our view of our best Friend. When gracious minds are driven from men, they are drawn to God and learn to sing with David, “My Soul, wait you only upon God. For my expectation is from Him.” I do not doubt, therefore, that the desertion and upbraiding endured by Job from his friends were a great help towards his being able to say to the Lord his God, “Now my eye sees You.” Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar might have interposed between Job and God and their kindly help might have placed Job under lasting obligations to them—but now he looks alone to God and honors Him only.

Still, before Job could see the Lord, there was a special manifestation on God’s part to him. “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind.” God must really come, and in a gracious way make a display of Himself to His servants, or else they will not see Him. Your afflictions will not of themselves reveal God to you. If the Lord Himself does not unveil His face, your sorrow may even blind and harden you and make you rebellious. The desertion and unkindness of friends is, also, no help to Divine Grace—its tendency is to sour and imperil your piety if it acts out its natural influence—there must be a special revealing of the Lord to our own souls before we shall get such a clear apprehension of Him as Job intended by the words, “Now my eye sees You.”

Read through the thirty-eighth chapter and see how Jehovah declares His wisdom and His power—“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if you have understanding. Who has laid the measures thereof, if you know? Or who has stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the cornerstone thereof when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Have you entered into the treasures of the snow? Or have you seen the treasures of the hail? Can you bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Can you bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? Or can you guide Arcturus with his sons?”

Here was a marvelous field for thought. The Lord speaks in nature and it is done. His glory is seen in Heaven and earth, in the sea and all deep places. God is and there is none beside Him. Yes, Jehovah is God alone.

Nor did the Lord fail to show to Job His justice, defying him to emulate it. See the fortieth chapter, eleventh and twelfth verses—“Cast abroad the rage of your wrath. And behold everyone that is proud and abase him. Look on everyone that is proud and bring him low. And tread down the wicked in their place.” God is the supreme governor and He bears not the sword in vain. He is impartial and infallible and none can disannul His judgment, or condemn His acts.

I need not tarry to say to you that all through that wonderful address of the Lord to His servant, He is saying, in so many words, “I am God. But who are you?” The Lord is proving that nothing is impossible to His power and His wisdom. He had, after all, not allowed His servant to sink out of His reach. He was always able to rescue him. You learn here, also, that God is not amenable to our judgment. He gives no account of His matters. He makes Job feel that He is God, and that is the end of the matter. No apology is made to Job and no explanation is given him—he must bow in unreserved submission and surrender unconditionally. And he does so.

Notice how by the Lord’s first words Job was silenced and could only whisper,” Behold I am vile, what shall I answer You? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken. But I will not answer: yes, twice. But I will proceed no further.” Thus far he worshipped. But he must yet go further, until he cries, “I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

II. We have now reached our second point—WHEN WE HAVE THESE VIVID APPREHENSIONS OF GOD, WE HAVE LOWER VIEWS OF OURSELVES.

Why are the wicked so proud? It is because they forget God. Why did Pharaoh dare to say, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?” It was because he did not know Jehovah. But after those ten plagues, he altered his tone and cried out, “Entreat the Lord” (for it is enough). Even his great pride was forced to bow before Jehovah when judgments were let loose upon him. If men knew God, how it would change their thoughts and talk! If they could have even an indistinct idea, “by the hearing of the ear,” many of them would never be so irreverent as they now are, nor so lofty in their ideas of their own wisdom. If they could “see” Him as Job did and behold His inexpressible glory, they would become far more meek and lowly.

Here let me observe that God Himself is the measure of rectitude, and hence, when we come to think of God, we soon discover our own shortcomings and transgressions. Too often we compare ourselves among ourselves and are not wise. A man says, “I am not so bad as many and I am quite as good as such a one, who is in high repute.” What if it is so? Do you judge yourself by other erring ones? Your measuring line is false. It is not the standard of the sanctuary. If you would be right, you must measure yourself with the holiness of God—God Himself is the standard of perfect holiness, Truth, love and justice. And if you fall short of His glory, you have fallen short of what you ought to be.

When I think of this, self-righteousness seems to me to be a wretched insanity. If you want to know what God is, He sets Himself before us in the Person of His dear Son. In every respect in which we fall short of the perfect character of Jesus, in that respect we sin. There is no better description of sin that I know of than this—“Sin is any want of conformity to the Law of God,” and God’s Law is the transcript of His own mind. Wherein in any moral or spiritual respect we fall short of the Divine Character, we to that extent fall into sin. No, my Brethren, we cannot hear the ceaseless cry of the cherubim, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth,” without at once sinking, sinking, sinking, till we abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes.

Permit me to suggest to each one here who has a high idea of himself and has no sense of self-abhorrence that such self-honor must arise from ignorance of God. For there is such an immeasurable distance between the perfection of God and our faultiness that our true position is that of penitent humility.

Our next reflection is this—God Himself is the object of every transgression—and this sets sin in a terrible light. Sin frequently has our fellow men as its object. But even then I am not incorrect in what I have said, for sins against our fellow men are still sins against God. It would be well if we felt with David—“Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight.” Think, then, of sin as an offense against God, committed in God’s Presence, committed while He is looking on. My beloved Friends, in this light observe the wantonness of sin. For who could wish to offend against a perfectly holy and entirely loving God? If God is all He should be, why do we not agree with Him?

If in God we see every possible and conceivable good, why do we set up ourselves, our wills, our desires in opposition to Him? He is so gracious towards man that He may be described by that one Word, “love.” And if it is so, why do we not love Him with all our heart and all our soul and all our strength? Every shortcoming and every transgression, therefore, is a wanton offense against infinite goodness. If Jehovah were a tyrant, there might be some excuse for rebellion. But since He is infinitely just and loving, it is atrocious that His own creatures, yes, His own children, should offend Him.

Note, next, the impertinence of sin. How dare we transgress against God? O Man, who are you that rebels against God? How dare you to do to His face that which He forbids you? How dare you to leave undone in His very presence that which your Lord commands you to do? This makes sin a piece of presumption, a daring and glaring provocation of the Lord God. Thus it is evident that in the immediate Presence of God sin does like itself appear.

The fact that sin is leveled at God makes us bow in lowliness. Although some of us can hold our heads high among our fellow men and we can say, “I am neither a drunkard, nor a thief, nor a liar, neither have I offended against the laws of integrity and charity,” yet when we come before God, we perceive that we have not dealt towards Him as we ought to have done. To Him we have been thieves, robbing Him of His glory. “Will a man

rob God?” To Him we have been liars—we have dealt treacherously and have broken our promises. To Him we have been ingrates. To Him we have been worse than brutes. Instead of equity, we have dealt towards God iniquity. Instead of love, we have dealt out enmity.

The Lord has nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Him. Even our holy things have been defiled. Our best tears need to be wept over and our truest faith is spoiled with unbelief. Oh, when we think of this, we can understand why Job says, “Now my eye sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself.”

Once more—when God is seen with admiration, then of necessity we are filled with self-loathing. The more you appreciate God, the more you will depreciate yourself. While the thought of God rises higher and higher and higher, you also will sink lower and lower in your own esteem. The word used by Job, “I abhor myself,” is a strong one. It might be paraphrased thus, “I nauseate myself. I am disgusted with myself. I cast forth from my soul every proud thought of myself—cast it out from me as a sickening and intolerable thing.”

Ah, dear Friends, you have not seen God aright if your abhorrence turns upon your fellow men. But if the one man you abhor is yourself, you are not mistaken! A sight of God will make us regard our fellow creatures with sympathy, as involved in the same sin and misery as ourselves. As a common danger in a sinking ship makes every man a brother to his fellow, so a clear sense of our common guilt and ruin will make us feel the brotherhood of man—but, on the other hand, a sight of God will prevent our dreaming of personal excellence and will compel us to take the lowest place. Since God is glorious in our eyes, we become ashamed. We adore God and in contrast, we abhor self.

Do you know what self-loathing means? Some of you do, I know. And I am sure that in proportion as you truly love, reverence and worship God, in that proportion you are full of abhorrence of self. You fine gentlemen, who hold your heads so high that you can scarcely get through common doorways, you know nothing of this! You high and mighty ladies, who cannot condescend to associate with any who are not of your superior rank. And you purse proud men, who expect all to worship the golden calf which you have set up, you know nothing about this.

O you wonderfully wise men, you intellectual persons, who so modestly dub yourselves “thoughtful and cultured,” you snuff out a poor evangelical Believer as if he were an idiot. May the Lord give you an hour of Job’s, “I abhor myself,” and then you will be bearable. But as you now are, you are a thief! While the dunghill is your proper place, you covet the Throne of the Almighty. But He will not yield it to you—you would improve upon Divine Revelation and revise infallible inspiration. But your boasting is vain. Oh that you had a manifestation of God and then you would know yourselves! God grant it to you for His mercy’s sake!

III. Thirdly, I have to show you that SUCH A SIGHT FILLS THE HEART WITH TRUE REPENTANCE. Job says, “I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” The word “myself” has been added by the translators. And they could hardly have done otherwise. Job’s expression, however, refers to all that had come out of himself or had lurked within himself. He abhorred all that he had been doing and saying. He says, “I abhor and repent in dust and ashes.” What did he repent of? I think Job repented, first, of that tremendous curse which he had pronounced upon the day of his birth. It was terrible. See the third chapter.

“Let the day perish wherein I was born and the night in which it was said, There is a man-child conceived. Let that day be darkness. Let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months.” He wished he had perished from the womb, that his birth cry had been his first and his last. “For now should I have lain still and been quiet.” Before God Job has to eat his bitter words. It is always a pity to say too much in moments of agony, because we may have to unsay that which escapes us. He would not curse God but he did curse the day of his birth and it was unseemly. Of this he unfeignedly repents.

Next, Job heartily repented of his desire to die. In the sixth chapter he expresses it as he did several times—he says, “Oh, that I might have my request. And that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me. That He would let loose His hand and cut me off!” Do you wonder that he said this? Was ever man so tried? I do not wonder at all, even at his cursing the day of his birth considering all the bodily pain and mental irritation which he was enduring at the time. I wonder that he played the man as well as he did.

But still he must have looked back with deep regret upon his impatience. The last verses of the book run thus—“After this lived Job an hundred and forty years and saw his sons and his sons’ sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days.” This is the same man who begged to die. Elijah also said, “Let me die, I am not better than my fathers,” and yet he never died at all. What poor creatures we are! What haste impatience breeds!

Job had to repent, next, of all his complaints against God. These had been very many. In the seventh chapter he turns to God and says, “I will speak in the anguish of my spirit. I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me? When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint. Then You scare me with dreams and terrify me through visions—so that my soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life. I loathe it. I would not live always—let me alone. For my days are vanity. How long will You not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?”

Ah! poor Job had to swallow his murmuring as well as his spittle, for he repents of every rebellious thought. He complains of his having complained and with self-abhorrence he repents in dust and ashes. I do not doubt but what Job repented of his despair. The ninth and tenth chapters and many other passages wherein Job speaks are tinged with hopelessness. He felt as if God had left him a prey to the enemy. But this was not true. The Lord has never deserted any of His people. There is not on record in all the history of the ages a case in which God has failed them that trust Him.

Has He not said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you”? And He never has left nor forsaken any Believer. Yet Job evidently thought that He had done so, and he was greatly troubled. Job had uttered rash challenges of God—in the ninth chapter, at the thirty-third verse, he says that there is no mediator between him and God, or else he would plead his cause—“Let Him take His rod away from me and let not His fear terrify me—then would I speak and not fear Him—but it is not so with me.” This was wrong and Job abhorred himself for having fallen into so ill a temper and so little becoming in a man of God.

His critics goaded him by cruelly charging him with hypocrisy and wickedness and Job vindicated himself with great earnestness, appealing to God and saying, “You know that I am not wicked.” This was true. The indignation of an honest heart cannot be blamed for speaking thus to men. But Job felt that he could not speak thus before the Lord. He could plead his innocence in the common courts of men and there he could well enough defend himself. But when the matter came into the King’s own court, he could not answer in the same strain but felt compelled to plead guilty. Job has to retract all his pleadings and challenges. If the case is to be heard as “Jehovah versus Job,” then Job yields the point unreservedly. Who is he that can contend with his Maker over a matter of holiness? We are wrong, God must be right!

Job had also to confess that his statements had been a darkening of wisdom by words without knowledge. Sometimes we say, “I perfectly understand that. I could clear up that mystery.” We define this and define that to our Brethren. But when we get into the Presence of God we find that our definitions are the proofs of our ignorance. “Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass’s colt.” Job drops his wisdom as well as his righteousness, although he was one of the wisest and holiest of men. While we see not God, we fancy that we can read all the riddles of His Word. But when we behold Him more clearly, we say with David, “So foolish was I and ignorant—I was as a beast before You.”

We are apt to judge the Lord by feeble sense instead of trusting Him for His Divine Grace. This comes of evil. In the Presence of God, Job bowed his head and repented of all his suspicions and mistrusts. And this is what we must do if, in the day of our sorrow, we have been petulant and unbelieving.

Let me pass on. According to our text, repentance puts man into the lowest place. He says, “I repent in dust and ashes.” “Dust and ashes”— that signifies the dust heap, or what in Scotland they call the “midden.” Job had made dust and ashes his headquarters. The dunghill, the refuse place, was now the spot which he felt to be fitted for him. Repentance puts us in a lowly seat. You have heard sometimes, I dare say, among the beautiful nothings of the modern school, the mention of, “the dignity of human nature.” Behold a throne for the “dignity of human nature.” Yonder dust and ashes are for this proud royalty. The dust heap is for human nature in its glory, when it has on its richest robes.

When it takes its worst place, where is it? The lowest pit of Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels, is the fit place for man when he has at last come to his true estate. I say that when man wears his best Sunday righteousness he is even then only fit for the midden. And every man of God that has been brought to true repentance, owns that it is so. Alas, says the man that sees his sinfulness, I should be a disgrace to any dust shoot. If I were cast away with the rotten refuse of the house, it might creep away from me because my sin is a worse corruption than physical nature knows—an insult even to the worm of decay—since in common putridity there is not the foul offense of moral evil. Repentance, you see, makes a man take the lowest place.

Next, note that all real repentance is joined with holy sorrow and selfloathing. I have read in the sermons of certain teachers that, “Repentance is only a change of mind.” That may be true. But what a change of mind it is! It is not such a change of mind as some of you underwent this morning when you said, “It is really too cold to go out,” but afterwards you braved the snow and came to the Tabernacle. Oh, no! Repentance is a thorough and radical change of mind and it is accompanied with real sorrow for sin, and self-loathing. A repentance in which there is no sorrow for sin will ruin the soul. Repentance without sorrow for sin is not the repentance of God’s elect. If you can look upon sin without sorrow, then you have never looked on Christ. A faith-look at Jesus breaks the heart, both for sin and from sin. Try yourself by this test.

But, next, repentance has comfort in it. It is to my mind rather extraordinary that the Hebrew word which is justly translated “repent,” is also used in two or three places, at least in the Old Testament, to express comfort. Isaac, it is said, took Rebekah to his mother’s tent and was “comforted after his mother’s death.” Here the word is the same as that which is here rendered “repent.” Isaac’s mind was changed as to the death of his mother. As, then, there is in the Hebrew word just a tinge of comfort. So in repentance itself, with all its sorrow, there are traces of joy. Repentance is a bitter-sweet or a sweet-bitter. After you have tasted it in your mouth as gall, it will go down into your belly and be sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

The door of repentance opens into the halls of joy. Job’s repentance in dust and ashes was the sign of his deliverance. God turned His wrath upon the three critics but justified Job and gave him the honorable office of intercessor on their behalf. Then “the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends.” “The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning,” and the turning point was that sitting down in the dust and ashes. When you are brought as low as you can be, the next turn must be upward. Down with you, then! Off with the feathers of your pride and the finery of your self-righteousness! Down with you among the useless and worthless things! From that point you will ascend. The more crushed, humbled, exhausted and near to death you are, the more prepared you are for God to raise you up.

Job was an unrivalled saint—none of us can compare with him. And if that perfect and upright man had to say, “I abhor myself,” what will you and I say when we see God? We shall by-and-by behold Him on the Judgment Seat—how shall we endure it? If you have no righteousness but your own, you will stand naked to your shame in the day when the Lord appears. You self-righteous men—dare you go before God in your own righteousness? If you dare, I marvel at your presumption. Job dared not. He could stand up boldly before his accusers but when before God he was in another attitude.

When it comes to dying and appearing before the Most High, you that have no righteousness but one of your own spinning, what will you do? If God should take away your soul at once, could you dare to go before Him in that fine character of yours, that wonderful morality, that large generosity? If you have any sense left, you dare not attempt such a thing. What shall you and I do?

Brethren, we are not afraid. For there is a righteousness of God which is given to us by faith through Jesus Christ. God Himself cannot find any fault with His own righteousness. And if He gives me His own righteousness, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ— which is to all and upon all them that believe—then I may hope to sit at last, not on the midden but on the Throne!

Then I will find myself rejoicing in Christ Jesus, crowned with a crown which I shall delight to cast at His feet. How happy are we if we can sing— *“Jesus, Your blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head”!*

÷Pro 4.13

**THE HOLDFAST**  
NO. 1418

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 9, 1878, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is your life.” Proverbs 4:13.**

FAITH may be well described as taking hold upon Divine instruction. God has condescended to teach us and it is ours to hear with attention and receive His words. And while we are hearing, faith comes, even that faith which saves the soul. To take “fast hold” is an exhortation which concerns the strength, the reality, the heartiness and the truthfulness of faith—and the more of these the better. If to take hold is good, to take fast hold is better! Even a touch of the hem of Christ’s garment causes healing to come to us, but if we want the full riches which are treasured up in Christ, we must not only touch but take hold. And if we would know from day to day the very uttermost of the fullness of His Grace, we must take fast hold and so maintain a constant and close connection between our souls and the eternal Fountain of Life.

It were well to give such a grip as a man gives to a plank when he seizes hold of it for his very life—that is a fast hold, indeed! We are to take fast hold of instruction and the best of instruction is that which comes from God. The truest wisdom is the Revelation of God in Christ Jesus—of that, therefore, we are to take fast hold. The best understanding is obedience to the will of God and a diligent learning of those saving Truths which God has set before us in His Word so that, in effect, we are exhorted to take hold of Christ Jesus our Lord, the Incarnate Wisdom in whom dwells all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We are not to let Him go, but to keep Him and hold Him, for He is our life.

Does not John, in his Gospel, tell us that the Word is our light or instruction and at the same time our life? “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” The more we abide in the Lord Jesus and the more firmly we take hold upon Him, the better will it be for us in a thousand ways. I intend at this time to speak, as the Holy Spirit shall enable me, upon this fast hold and I reckon that the subject is one of the most important which can occupy your attention at this particular crisis in the history of the Church.

Many there are around us who believe in Christ, but it is with a very trembling faith. Their hold is unsteady! We need to have among us men of tighter grip who really believe what they profess to believe. We need men who know the Truth in its living power and are persuaded of its certainty so that they cannot, by any means, be moved from their steadfastness. Among the vacillating crowd we long to see fast-holders who are pillars in the House of our God, whose grasp of Divine Truth is not that of babies or boys, but of men full grown and vigorous! We shall handle our subject by speaking, first, upon the method by which we may take fast hold. Then upon the difficulties which will lie in our way in so doing. Thirdly, upon the benefits of such a firm grasp. And, lastly, upon the arguments for our

holding fast mentioned in the text.

I. First, then, THE METHOD of taking fast hold upon true religion, upon the Gospel—in fact—upon Christ. At the outset, my Brothers and Sisters, much must depend upon the intense decision which a man feels in his soul with regard to eternal things. If he intends trifling, he will trifle, but if he means taking fast hold he will, by God’s Grace, do so. Under God, this, in many cases, depends very much upon a man’s individuality and force of character. Some men are naturally thorough and wholehearted in all things upon which they enter, whether of this world or the next. When they serve the devil they are among his lifeguards and they rush to the front in all kinds of iniquity. Among sinners they become the chief, for they have no fear and no hesitancy—they are daredevils, defying both God and man—sinning greedily with both hands.

Such men, when converted, often become eminent saints, being just as thorough and resolute in their following after God as they were in the pursuit of evil! They are determined to vindicate His holy cause and spread abroad the knowledge of His love. I must confess an earnest longing that many such may be brought into the Church of Christ at this time to brace her up and inspire her with new energy. Many in our Churches appear to have no depth of earth. With joy they receive the Word of God, from the very fact that they are so shallow, but as soon as the sun rises with burning heat, it is discovered that they have no root, for they wither away. Others are truly religious and probably will remain so, but they are not zealous. In fact, they are not intense about anything, but are lukewarm, weak and unstable. These are mere chips in the porridge, neither sour nor sweet—they give forth no flavor—they take the flavor of that which surrounds them.

They are the creatures of circumstances, not helmsmen who avail themselves of stream and tide, but mere driftwood carried along by any and every current which may take hold of them. They have no fullness of manhood about them, they are mere children. They resemble the sapling which can be bent and twisted and not the oak which defies the storm. There are certain persons of this sort who in other matters have purpose enough and strength of mind enough, but when they touch the things of God, they are loose, flimsy, superficial, half-hearted. You see them earnest enough in hunting after wealth, but they show no such zeal in the pursuit of godliness! The force of their character comes out in a political debate, in the making of a bargain, in the arrangement of a social gathering—but you never see it in the work of the Lord. The young man comes to the front as a volunteer, or as a member of a club, or in the house of business—but who ever hears of him in Sunday school, the Prayer Meeting, or the home mission? In the things of God such persons owe any measure of progress which they make to the influence of their fellows who bear them along as so much dead weight! They, themselves, never throw enough weight into the matter to add a single half-ounce of spiritual power to the Church!

Now, all this is mischievous and wrong. My dear Friends, we must all confess that if the religion of Christ is true, it deserves that we should give our whole selves to it. If it is a lie, let it be eradicated from creation! But if it is true, it is a matter concerning which we cannot be neutral or lukewarm, for it demands our soul, our life, our all—and its claim cannot be denied. There must be a determination worked in our souls by the Holy Spirit to be upright and downright in the work of the Lord or else we shall be of little worth. We come, however, to closer matters of fact when we observe, next, that our taking fast hold of the things of God must depend upon the thoroughness of our conversion. In this Church we try, as far as we can, in receiving Church members, to receive none but those who give clear evidence of a change of heart.

But this evidence can be imitated so skillfully that the best examination and the most earnest judgment cannot prevent self-deceived persons from making a profession of religion. This we cannot help, but woe to those who willfully deceive! Many exhibit flowers and fruits which never grew in their own gardens. Their experience is borrowed and does not spring from the essential root of the Holy Spirit’s work within their souls. This is sad, indeed. Our condition before God is a personal matter and can never be settled by the judgment of our fellows, for what can others know of the workings of our hearts? Each man must judge himself and examine himself, for whatever a Church may attempt in its zeal for purity, it can never take the responsibility of his own sincerity from any man. We do not pretend to give certificates of salvation! If we did, they would be worthless— you must, yourselves, know the Lord and be really converted or else your profession is a forgery and you are counterfeits.

If a man shall, in later life, hold fast to the things of God, he must be soundly converted at first. Very much of his later life depends upon the thoroughness of his beginning. There must at the very first be a deep sense of sin, a consciousness of guilt, a holy horror of evil, or he will never make much of a Christian. I do not say that all or even any of those doubts and temptations and Satanic suggestions which some have had to struggle with are necessary to make a true conversion. But I must confess that I am not at all displeased when I meet with a good deal of battling and struggling in the experience of the newly awakened. It is not pleasant for them, but we hope it will be profitable. Those whose souls are plowed and plowed and plowed again before the seed is sown upon them often yield the best crop.

John Bunyan’s, “Grace Abounding,” very much accounts for John Bunyan’s, “Pilgrim’s Progress.” If it had not been for his terrible conflicts of soul, he might not have known how to hold fast to his confidence when shut up for 12 years in prison. Nor would he have seen visions of the Celestial City, when all around him was as the valley of the shadow of death! I do not wish to see seeking souls distressed by Satan, but I do press for this—that there shall be an end of self-trust, a total destruction of self- righteousness, a complete giving up of all legal and carnal hopes. If not, the conversion will be a mere show and he who is the subject of it will be like Ephraim—a silly dove without a heart. Unless repentance of sin is real in you, you will never take fast hold of the Truth of God.

And there must be, dear Friends, a very sincere laying hold upon Christ Jesus. If you have any doubt about the doctrine of Atonement, I am not surprised if your religion soon wears into shreds. No, you must, without question, accept the Substitutionary Sacrifice. Your soul must feel that the precious blood is her only hope—that this, and this alone—can make

her clean before the living God! You must fly to Christ in desperation and cling to Him as all your salvation and all your desire—there can be no hesitancy here. At the very outset of the Christian life these two things should be very distinct with you—sin which has ruined you and Christ who has saved you! Make a muddle at first and your life will be a tangle.

Some tradesmen never carry on their business well. They evidently do not more than half understand it and are mere bunglers. Now, if you come to enquire, you will find that they were never thoroughly grounded in their calling. Either they never served an apprenticeship, or else they were lazy lads and never became masters of their trade. This bad commencement sticks to them all their lives. It is the same with the higher learning. A man may go a long way in the classics, but if he is not grounded in the grammar, he will be everlastingly making mistakes which a sound scholar will soon discover. Every teacher must work hard at the elements if his pupils are to succeed. Whatever you do with the higher forms, do teach that little boy his grammar and ground him in the rudiments or he will be injured for life.

To borrow another illustration, we have heard of a bridge which spanned a stream and for some years stood well enough, but, by-and- by, through the force of the current, it began to show signs of giving way. When it came to be examined it was soon seen that the builders never went deep enough with the foundations. There is the mischief of thousands of other things besides bridges! We must have good and deep foundations, or otherwise the higher we build, the sooner the fabric will fall. Look at many of the wretched houses in the streets around us—they are the disgrace of the city—you will see settlements and cracks everywhere because of bad foundations and bad materials. The same is true in the characters of many professed Christians—for lack of a good commencement you can see innumerable flaws and cracks—and you wonder that they do not come down in sudden ruin!

So indeed they would, but, like those wretched houses, they hold one another up! Many professors only keep upright because they stand in a row and derive support from their associations. I wish we could see more Christian men of the sort who dare to stand alone, like those old family mansions which stand, each one in its own garden, so well built that when we begin to take them down, each brick is found to be solid as granite and the mortar is as hard as a rock. Such buildings and such men become more rare every day—we must come back to the old style—and the sooner the better! Those of you who are yet in the early days of your piety should see to this. See that you are right, sound and thorough—and take fast hold of the Truth of God in the days of your first love, or yours will be but a sickly life in years to come.

This being taken for granted, the next help to a fast hold of Christ is hearty discipleship. Brothers and Sisters, as soon as you are converted, you become the disciples of Jesus! And if you are to become fast-holding Christians you must acknowledge Him to be your Master, Teacher and Lord in all things! You must resolve to be good scholars in His school. He will be the best Christian who has Christ for His Master and truly follows Him. Some are disciples of the Church, others are disciples of the minister and a third sort are disciples of their own thoughts. He is the wise man who sits at Jesus’ feet and learns of Him with the resolve to follow His teaching and imitate His example. He who tries to learn of Jesus, Himself, taking the very words from our Lord’s own lips, binding himself to believe whatever the Lord has taught and to do whatever He has commanded— he, I say, is the stable Christian!

Follow Jesus, my Brothers and Sisters, and not the Church, for our Lord has never said to His disciples, “Follow your Brethren,” but He has said, “Follow Me.” He has not said, “Abide by the denominational confession,” but He has said, “Abide in Me.” Nothing must come between our souls and our Lord! What if fidelity to Jesus should sometimes lead us to differ from our Brethren? What does it matter so long as we do not differ from our Master? Crochets and quibbles are evil things, but a keenly sensitive conscientiousness is invaluable. Be true disciples of Christ and let His least Word be precious to you! Remember that if a man loves Him, he will keep His Commandments. He has said, “He that shall break one of the least of these, My Commandments, and shall teach men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of Heaven.” Shun all compromises and abatements of the Truth! Be thorough and determined, holding fast your Savior’s Words! Follow the Lamb where ever He goes! If such is your resolve, by the Grace of God, you will take fast hold of instruction and will never let it go.

It will help you to do this if, in the next place, you have a studious consideration of the Word of God and meditate much upon the Truth which you have received. I am persuaded there is too little studying of the Scriptures nowadays. Books, magazines, papers and the like, bury the Bible under heaps of rubbish, but he who means to be a man of God to the fullness of his manhood will feed upon the Word of God at first hand. Like the Bereans, he will be of a noble spirit and he will search the Scriptures daily. “I want,” says he, “to obtain my creed, not secondhand from others, but directly for myself from the very Word of God itself—the pure well of undefiled Gospel.” This is a very important point. I have heard often, of late, a misused expression—“I do my own thinking.” Let us correct it and then adopt it by saying, “I do my own searching of the Word of God.”

Remember, we are not called to think out a new Gospel, as some imagine, but we are called to be thinkers upon the old Gospel, that we may know and understand its principles and its bearings and become confirmed in the belief of it. We need to think over the Word of God till we are thoroughly permeated with it. The silk of certain insects takes its color from the leaves on which they feed—and a Christian’s life will always take its color from that which his soul feeds upon. Oh, to live upon the Word of God, even upon the deep things of God, for so shall we be rooted and grounded in the faith and shall take fast hold of eternal wisdom! An established Christian is one who not only knows the doctrines, but who also knows the authority for it, having looked around it and pondered it in his heart. By careful meditation he is taught in the Truth of God and is able to give a reason for the hope that is in him with meekness and fear.

Nor is he merely a man of the letter—his study in the power of the Holy Spirit has carried him into the essence of the Word. He has asked the Spirit of God to make him acquainted with Divine Truth so that he has not only read it, but he has communed with it and now lives upon it, eats

it, drinks it, receives it into the inward parts of his soul and retains it there as a living and incorruptible seed! A man who does this year after year is the kind of man who, by God’s Grace, will take fast hold of instruction and will prove a faithful witness for his Lord. Add to this, also, an earnest seriousness of character and you go a long way towards maintaining a fast hold of Christ. We do not mean, by this, that we are to dismiss cheerfulness—may the Lord give us more of it, for it is as oil to wheels and is a high recommendation of religion to the unconverted. There are some who are a deal too gloomy in their religion and seem to think that the Grace of God is never displayed by them unless they are sullen and doleful.

But at the same time there is a flippancy which is not commendable and a levity which is far from the mind of Christ! Christian life is not child’s play. We, above all men, ought to make our lives sublime and not ridiculous. We are not called into this world to trifle away the hours and kill time in doing nothing, for this life links itself to eternity and that eternity, in spite of all that is said to the contrary, will be one of endless misery or of endless joy! It is, therefore, no small thing to possess an immortal mind and to be responsible before God. Sin is no trifle, pardon is no trifle and condemnation is no trifle! Eternal life is precious beyond all things, but to lie under the wrath of God is dreadful beyond conception! I love to see, especially in young Christians, with regard to the things of God, deep seriousness of purpose and spirit, showing that they feel it to be a weighty thing to be a Christian and that they cannot afford to have their Christianity put under the shadow of suspicion, nor dare they appear to be mere players upon a stage, for they fear and tremble at His Word.

Now, if all these things are in you and abound, there will grow around them an experimental verification of the things of God. I mean that you will not only read of the love of God, but you will feel it from day to day and so be assured of it. You read in the Scriptures of the power of sin and you believe what you read—but to this will be added the confirmatory fact that you feel it in your members and, therefore, cannot doubt it! You read of the efficacy of the precious blood of Jesus—but you do more, for you feel its cleansing power upon your heart and its consoling influence over your conscience—and so you are established in the blessed Truth of God! We hardly know anything till we have lived it! You must get the Truth of God burnt into you with the hot iron of experience, or you will forget it.

I believe that the pains and grief and afflictions of many of God’s children have been absolutely necessary to establish them in the faith. And I can only hope that you who are the children of joy may derive as much benefit from your gladness as mourners have found in their sorrows—it might be so and should be so—but I fear it seldom is. The whole of our life should be a daily testing of the Gospel and a continuous verification of the eternal Truth thereof. Our life should agree with this Book of Life—just as the book of Nature, being written by the same Author as the Book of Revelation, shows the same hand and style—so the book of the new creation within us, being inscribed by the same Spirit who has written these Scriptures, will display the same style and manner. And we shall thus be growingly assured of the things which are verily revealed to us by God.

Go on, dear Friends, and may the Lord grant that whatever your experience may be, whether it shall abound in bitterness or in sweetness, the testimony of God may be confirmed in you and your grip of it may be intensified by every year’s experience. I must add one other word. I believe that in the mode of taking fast hold upon the Gospel, practical Christianity has a great influence. I refer especially to practical usefulness. Some members enter the Church and never do a hand’s turn. We have the distinguished privilege of seeing them sit in their pews and that is all we know about them. We cannot bring them under Church censure, for they are punctual in religious observances—but they are barren limbs. Give me the young man who, when he joins the Church, says, “I shall take a little time to study the Gospel till I know more of it by the teaching of God’s Spirit.” And then, having done so, says, “I have not learned this for myself. There is something for me to do in connection with the Church of God and I am determined to find out what it is and to do it.”

You see such a young Believer teaching in Sunday school, or you find him beginning to speak in a cottage, or becoming a visitor and seeking to speak personally to individuals about their souls. If he is a man of the right kind, his work will be another holdfast to his mind. Look at him, how he keeps to the Gospel—how he clings to the old, old Truth of God! He is not the man to run after new theories and modern doubts, for he is helped to keep right by his practical connection with spiritual disease and its remedy. Go into the back slums of London and see if you will doubt the doctrine of Human Depravity! Oh no, it is your ladies and gentlemen that wear lavender kid gloves who doubt that doctrine! Try to rescue a harlot from her sin and if you are enabled to lead her to Jesus, you cannot doubt the power of the precious blood of Jesus to cleanse the heart!

Not those who battle with vice, but those who practice it, themselves, are the ones who quibble at the doctrine of the Atonement. Those who are busy plucking brands out of the fire are little given to speculation, but are firm abiders in the Gospel. I think there are few exceptions to the rule that the “advanced thought” gentlemen are not engaged in practical work for the salvation of souls. They are grand talkers, but very poor workers. I am not hypercritical when I say that if you will mention a “modern thought” professor, it will generally turn out that he is not worth his salt as to practical usefulness—not he—he has the parrot faculty of pulling things to pieces, but what positive work has he ever done? He may be a distinguished dignitary or a noble scholar, but as to actually grappling with the hearts and consciences of men and entering into the dark and troublous experience of tempted souls, he is quite at sea, for he knows nothing about it!

He would talk after another fashion if his hands had ever been laid to hard work among sinful men and afflicted consciences! I tell you, Sirs, that to argue with a poor distressed conscience and to try to bring it to peace in Christ soon lets you know the truth of the Gospel! To stand by a dying bed and hear the holy triumph of even the most illiterate of the children of God, or what is equally efficacious, to watch the last sad hours of an impenitent sinner dying without hope—will make you know that there is a world to come, joyful or terrible as the case may be—and you

will also learn that sin is a great evil and that the Atonement is a great reality!

Young convert, if you want to be one of the firm holders of the Gospel, you must get to work as well as to study, for this, by the overruling power of the Holy Spirit, will strengthen you in the faith of God’s elect! Thus I have brought forward the method, may it prove to be instructive.

II. Very briefly, I want, now, to show THE DIFFICULTIES of taking fast hold of instruction. And every difficulty I mention will tend to show, all the more clearly, the necessity of it. The first difficulty is that this is the age of questioning. Everybody questions! Our friends over in Germany have pushed the questioning business to the furthest point and in their thorough way they have produced its legitimate fruit in cold-blooded attempts to murder a venerable monarch. Professed ministers of the Gospel have taught the German mind to doubt everything—and now the basis of society is shaken and law and order are undermined. What could they expect otherwise? He who does not fear God is not likely to honor their king!

When men give up their Bibles, they will care but little for human laws. We have plenty of the same evil here in England and certain clergymen and dissenting divines are spreading it with hideous industry! Young gentlemen, whose whiskers have not yet developed, are authoritatively deciding that nothing can be decided and dogmatically denouncing all dogmas! We meet them every day and we notice that in proportion to their ignorance is their confidence in sneering at every holy thing! According to them, nobody is sincere, nothing is sacred. These great men, who would never have been heard of if they had not been heretical, know better by far than God Himself! As for Apostles and Prophets, they are just nothing at all to these infallibles! Their own “thought” is more precious than Inspiration itself! This conceited skepticism is in the air—it seems to be everywhere and you cannot help encountering it—therefore let us be the more earnest to hold fast the faith!

Worse than this, this is an age of worldliness. Everybody wants to be rich and nobody is rich now at the point at which his forefathers were content to stop! Our good old deacons and respected Church members were content with very moderate incomes. They were satisfied and happy with thrift and prudence and would have been deeply grieved with the extravagance which is seen on all sides at this time. They not only considered their shops and their fields, but they planned to have time to look after the Sunday schools in which they were proud to serve and the Prayer Meetings which they delighted to attend. But, dear me, Prayer Meetings, lectures, sermons, Sunday schools—these are all despised, now! If a man can make an extra guinea or two by putting himself where they are out of the question, he jumps at the chance!

We must be rich, we must cut a dash, we must spend more than our neighbors and for this the work of the Church may go to the dogs! Oh for a few simple, earnest Christians who will judge their Lord and His cause to be worth some consideration and will lay themselves out to serve His Church! When worldliness is so predominant, it becomes so much the harder to take fast hold of eternal things! One needs to hear the Word of God, “Seek you, first, the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Unless we hear it, we shall be tempted to take fast hold on the world and let the things of eternity slip by us!

Then, besides this, there is and always has been a great desire for novelty. We are all the subjects of it. We all like something fresh. But there are some who are sick of the changeable disease—you see them zealots for a creed today, but all of a sudden you find them deeply immersed in the opposite teaching! Ah, now they have discovered something very wonderful—just as the idiot who saw the rainbow and believed that there was a pot of gold at the end of it and ran for miles to seize a glittering sapphire and grasped a piece of glass bottle—so they forever pursue and never attain! We have a few of these gentlemen in most of our Churches, but you will find them nowhere very long! Another inventor starts a new system and away they go—pining always to be the first disciples of each new prophet! May God save us from the Athenian spirit which forever hungers for something new!

Another difficulty, and the worst of all, is the corruption of our own hearts. “Take fast hold of instruction,” says the text. “Why,” I hear a Brother say, “my dear Sir, sometimes it is as much as I can do to take hold of it at all. I have to question whether I have been converted! I go down into such depths of despondency that unless the Truth of God holds me, I shall never hold it.” Well, but I hope this is all a means of helping you to hold it all the more firmly! You now see that salvation must be by Grace from first to last! By this very process you will be compelled to hold the Doctrines of Grace the more intensely, because you are made to see how utterly unable you are, in and of yourself, to think a good thought, much less to remain steadfast in the whole Truth of Christ!

And then there is Satan, too—how busy he is in trying to undermine the fundamentals of the faith! Has he not suggested to some of us all kind of doubts? Yes. I said to a man, one day, who had uttered some blasphemy in my presence against a certain Truth of God, “You think you stagger me? My dear Man, I have had more doubts pass through my thoughts than you could tell me, or 50 like you!” The doubts which the devil insinuates into the minds of the people of God are at times quite as horrible as any which a Voltaire or a Tom Paine was ever able to invent! And yet, by God’s Grace, we have not given up the Gospel, nor shall we though Heaven and earth shall pass away! Because we are one with Christ we shall live in the Truth of Christ, for He will keep and preserve us even to the end.

III. Thirdly, let us consider THE BENEFITS of taking fast hold. I wish I had an hour in which to dilate upon the benefit of so doing, but I must briefly say that it gives stability to the Christian character to have a firm grip of the Gospel. Men who take fast hold are the backbone of a Church. All through the dark reign of moderates in Scotland, who kept up the testimony for the Truth of God? Why, those solid Christians who were known as, “the men,” who held the faith and walked with God in the power of it. These were men much in prayer and much in meditation. They lived on when all sound teaching had left the pulpits! Their souls were sustained by secret communion with God on the hillside. When the time came for the pure Truth of God to revive in Scotland, these men came to the front

and were honored as the men who had kept the flame alive in the land.

What was it that delivered our country, in still earlier times, from being altogether under the hoof of Rome? When prelates forsook Christ and preachers by the hundreds in Mary’s day turned from Protestantism to Popery, the true faith lived on in the hearts of poor men and women— weavers and cobblers who believed what they did believe and could not deny the Truth of God. Everybody in the parish knew them as the, “stubborn heretics,” who could not be frightened or argued down! They knew. They were sure. They were confident and, therefore, they spoke. It did not matter to them that they were in a minority, for they knew that a minority of one, on God’s side, is a majority!

“I, Athanasius, against the world,” said that grand old confessor when they told him everybody had gone over to Arianism and that nobody believed in the Deity of Christ! “The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved. I bear up the pillars of it,” said one of old—and happy is that man to whom such an office is given! A firm grip of the Gospel will give you strength for service. The man who can “hold the fort,” at one time, is the very man who can capture a fort at another! He who can stand well can march well! The hands of the Church are made of the same material as its backbone! It is of no use sending poor hesitating professors into the field of holy labor. If you hardly know what you believe, how can you teach other people? But when the Truth of God is written upon your very soul and engraved as with the point of a diamond upon your heart—you will speak with confidence and there will be a power about your utterances which none shall be able to withstand or deny!

For the sake, then, of your spiritual strength, I press the exhortation of the text, “Take fast hold of instruction.” And this, too, will bring you joy. The outskirts of our Jerusalem are dreary—her Glory lies within. Where shines the brightest light? It is in the Holy of Holies in the innermost shrine! The skin and husks of religion are poor things, but the juice, the life, the vital power of religion—therein lies the sweetness! You must not be satisfied with the “name to live”—it will never comfort you—it will even distress you. The life of Christ mightily developed in you must be the joy of your heart! Multitudes of Christian professors get next to nothing out of Christianity. How can they? They hold their religion as some rich farmers hold “off-hand farms.” Nobody ever makes anything out of off-hand farms—the man who makes farming pay lives on the spot and gives his whole time and energy to it!

So is it in the things of God! If you make your minister your bailiff in religion, you will get nothing out of it. You must live in it and upon it—and then you will prosper! I want you to say, “If there is anything in godliness I am going to know it. If prayer has power I am going to pray. If there is such a thing as communion with God I will enjoy it! If there is such a thing as likeness to Christ I will obtain it. Godliness shall not be an addition to my life, but it shall be my life itself.” Ah, Brothers and Sisters, then you are the man of the shining countenance, you are the man of the sparkling eyes! You drink deep and you find that the deeper you drink the sweeter the draught becomes!

Lastly, with regard to this summary of benefits—persons of this kind are the very Glory of the Church—they are the persons in whom true religion displays its brightest beams! They may be humble cottagers, or obscure members of a large Church who are scarcely known. But those who live with them—those who are at all acquainted with them, say of them— “These men and women are a credit to the Church and an honor to the name of Christianity.” Not your frothy talkers, not your flimsy professors, but your deep taught, Grace-instructed men and women—these are they who are the beauty of the Church and the Glory of Christ!

I would to God we had many more! I look around and see that the cause does not prosper as I would wish throughout the land. And then I remember in one spot an earnest village preacher—in another a holy laborious deacon, in a third a gracious woman, zealous in every good work— and I am comforted! Thank God there is life in the old Church yet! There is still hope for her because of her fast-holding people! If I study the statistics of the Churches, I have to say, “What is the good of these figures? Probably a Church of 200 members might be cut down to 20 earnest effectives.” For my part, I would sooner stand on this platform with 12 holy men and women to back me up than with 12,000 mere pretenders to religion such as can be found in crowds anywhere! No, it is the fast grip of faith—it is vital godliness which makes a man to be a real power in the Church!

IV. Now, lastly, I have to mention THE ARGUMENTS of the text, which are three. All through the sermon I have been using arguments, therefore I shall be the more brief and draw to a close. The first argument is, take fast hold of true religion because it is your best friend. Read the text— “Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go.” You cannot find your way to Heaven without this guide, therefore do not suffer it to leave you. Do as Moses did, who, when his father-in-law, Hobab, was with him, would not suffer him to depart, “for,” he said, “you shall be to us instead of eyes, for you know where to encamp in the wilderness.” As Moses kept Hobab, so you keep the faith, for you cannot find your road except by holding the true Gospel with a true heart.

What a sweet companion the Gospel is! How often it has cheered you! How easy has the road become while you have been in communion with it! Do what the disciples at Emmaus did when Jesus talked with them—they constrained Him, saying, “Abide with us.” Do not let Him go! You will be a lonely pilgrim if you do. No, if you could be led by an angel, but must lose the Presence of your God, you would be wise to cry out against such an evil and, like Moses, plead—“If Your Spirit go not with us, carry us not up hence.”

The next argument is that true godliness should be held fast, for it is your treasure. “Keep it,” says our text. It is your best inheritance at the present moment and it is to be your eternal inheritance—keep it, then! Let everything else go, but do not part with a particle of the Truth of God. The slightest fragment of Truth is more valuable than a diamond! Hold it, then, with all firmness. You are so much the richer by every Truth of God you know—you will be so much the poorer by every Truth of God you forget! Hold it then and hide it in your heart. A certain king who had a rare diamond sent it to a foreign court, entrusting it to a very faithful servant.

This servant was attacked, however, on the road by a band of robbers and, as they could not find the diamond, they drew their swords and killed him. He was found dead, but his master exclaimed, “He has not lost the diamond, I am sure!” He judged rightly, for the trusty servant had swallowed the gem and so preserved it with his life.

We, also, should thus place the Truth of God in our inward parts and then we shall never be deprived of it. A priest took a Testament from an Irish boy. “But,” cried the boy, “you cannot take away those six chapters of Matthew that I learned by heart.” They may take away our books, but they cannot take away what we have fed upon and made our own! “His flesh is meat, indeed. His blood is drink, indeed,” for when we have fed upon Him, our Lord Jesus remains in us the hope of Glory. Hold fast the truth, O believers in Jesus, for it is your treasure! Lastly, it is your “lift.” Mr. Arnot, in His very beautiful book upon the Proverbs, tells a story to illustrate this text. He says that in the Southern seas an American vessel was attacked by a wounded whale.

The huge monster ran out for the length of a mile from the ship and then turned round. And with the whole force of its acquired speed struck the ship and made it leak at every timber, so as to begin to go down. The sailors got out all their boats, filled them as quickly as they could with the necessaries of life and began to pull away from the ship. Just then two strong men were seen leaping into the water who swam to the vessel, scrambled on board, disappeared for a moment and then came up, bringing something in their hands. Just as they sprang into the sea down went the vessel, and they were carried round in the vortex, but they were observed to be both of them swimming, not as if struggling to get away, but as if looking for something, which at last they both seized and carried to the boats.

What was this treasure? What article could be so valued as to lead them to risk their lives? It was the ship’s compass which had been left behind—without which they could not have found their way out of those lonely southern seas into the high road of commerce! That compass was life to them and the Gospel of the living God is the same to us! You and I must venture all for the Gospel! This Infallible Word of God must be guarded to the death! Men may tell us what they please and say what they will, but we will risk everything sooner than give up those eternal principles by which we have been saved! The Lord give all of us His abundant Grace that we may take fast hold of Divine instruction. Amen.

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Sermon #179 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

÷Pro 4.23

THE GREAT RESERVOIR  
NO. 179

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 21, 1858, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“Keep your heart with all diligence. For out of it are the issues of life.” Proverbs 4:23.**

IF I should vainly attempt to fashion my discourse after lofty models, I should this morning compare the human heart to the ancient city of Thebes out of whose hundred gates multitudes of warriors were likely to march. As was the city such were her armies. As was her inward strength such were they who came forth out of her. I might then urge the necessity of keeping the heart because it is the metropolis of our manhood, the citadel and armory of our humanity. Let the chief fortress surrender to the enemy and the occupation of the rest must be an easy task. Let the principal stronghold be possessed by evil and the whole land must be overrun. Instead, however, of doing this, I shall attempt what possibly I may be able to perform by a humble metaphor and a simple figure which will be easily understood. I shall endeavor to set forth the wise man’s doctrine that our life issues from the heart and thus I shall labor to show the absolute necessity of keeping the heart with all diligence.

You have seen the great reservoirs provided by our water companies from which the water which is to supply hundreds of streets and thousands of houses is kept. Now, the heart is the reservoir of man and our life is allowed to flow in its proper season. That life may flow through different pipes—the mouth, the hand, the eye—but still all the issues of hand, of eye, of lip derive their source from the great fountain and central reservoir, the heart. And hence there is no difficulty in showing the great necessity that exists for keeping this reservoir, the heart, in a proper state and condition since otherwise that which flows through the pipes must be tainted and corrupt. May the Holy Spirit now direct our meditations.

Mere moralists very often forget the heart and deal exclusively with the lesser powers. Some of them say, “If a man’s life is wrong it is better to alter the principles upon which his conduct is modeled—we had better adopt another scheme of living. Society must be remodeled so that man may have an opportunity for the display of virtues and less temptation to indulge in vice.” It is as if when the reservoir was filled with poisonous or polluted fluid some sage counselor should propose that all the piping had better be taken up and fresh pipes laid down so that the water might run through fresh channels. But who does not perceive that it would be all in

vain—if the fountainhead were polluted—no matter how good the channels?

So in vain are the rules by which men hope to fashion their lives. In vain is the regimen by which we seek to constrain ourselves to the semblance of goodness—unless the heart is right the very best scheme of life shall fall to the ground and fail to effect its design. Others say, “Well, if the life is wrong, it would be better to set the understanding right. You must inform man’s judgment, educate him, teach him better and when his head is well-informed, then his life will be improved.” Now, understanding is, if I may use such a figure, the stopwatch which controls the emotions, lets them flow on, or stops them.

And it is as if some very wise man, when a reservoir had been poisoned, proposed that there should be a new person employed to turn the water off or on in hope that the whole difficulty would thus be disposed of. If we followed his advice, if we found the wisest man in the world to have the control of the fountain, Mr. Understanding would still be incapable of supplying us with healthy streams until we had first of all purged the cistern from where they flowed. The Arminian Divine, too, sometimes suggests another way of improving man’s life. He deals with the will. He says, the will must first of all be conquered and if the will is right, then everything will be in order.

Now, will is like the great engine which forces the water out of the fountainhead along the pipes, so that it is made to flow into our dwellings. The learned counselor proposes that there should be a new steam engine employed to force the water along the pipes. “If,” says he, “we had the proper machinery for forcing the fluid, then all would be well.” No, Sir, if the stream is poisonous, you may have axles to turn on diamonds and you may have a machine that is made of gold and a force as potent as Omnipotence, but even then you have not accomplished your purpose until you have cleansed the polluted fountain and purged the issues of life which flow from there.

The wise man in our text seems to say, “Beware of misapplying your energies, be careful to begin in the right place.” It is very necessary the understanding should be right. It is quite needful the will should have its proper predominance. It is very necessary that you should keep every part of man in a healthy condition—“but,” says he, “if you want to promote true holiness, you must begin with the heart—for out of it are the issues of life. And when you have purged it, when you have made its waters pure and clear, then shall the current flow and bless the inhabitants with clear water. But not till then.”

Here let us pause and ask the solemn and vital question, “Is my heart right in the sight of God?” For unless the inner man has been renewed by the grace of God through the Holy Spirit, our heart is full of rottenness, filth and abominations. And if so, here must all our cleansing begin—if it is real and satisfactory. Unrenewed men, I beseech you ponder the words of an ancient Christian which I here repeat in your ear—

“It is no matter what is the sign, though an angel hangs without, if the devil and sin dwell within. New trimmings upon an old garment will not make it new, only give it a new appearance. And truly it is no good husbandry to bestow a great deal of cost in mending up an old suit that will soon drop to tatters and rags when a little more might purchase a new one that is lasting. And is it not better to labor to get a new heart, that all you do may be accepted and you saved, than to lose all the pains you take in religion and yourself also for want of it?”

Now, you who love the Lord, let me take you to the reservoir of your heart and let me urge upon you the great necessity of keeping the heart right if you would have the streams of your life happy for yourselves and beneficial to others.

I. First, keep the heart full. However pure the water may be in the central reservoir, it will not be possible for the company to provide us with an abundant supply of water unless the reservoir itself is full. An empty fountain will most assuredly beget empty pipes. And let the machinery be ever so accurate, let everything else be well ordered, yet if that reservoir is dry we may wait in vain for any of the water that we require. Now, you know many people—(you are sure to meet with them in your own society and your own circle. For I know of no one so happy as to be without such acquaintances)—whose lives are just dry, good-for-nothing and empty. They never accomplish anything. They have no mental force. They have no moral power. What they say, nobody thinks of noticing. What they do is scarcely ever imitated.

We have known fathers whose moral force has been so despicable that even their children have scarcely been able to imitate them. Though imitation was strong enough in them, yet have they unconsciously felt, even in their childhood, that their father was, after all, but a child like themselves and had not grown to be a man. Do you not know many people who if they were to espouse a cause and it were entrusted to them, would most certainly pilot it to shipwreck? Failure would be the total result. You could not use them as clerks in your office without feeling certain that your business would be nearly murdered. If you were to employ them to manage a concern for you, you would be sure they would manage to spend all the money, but could never produce a profit.

If they were placed in comfortable circumstances for a few months, they would go on carelessly till all was gone. They are just dupes preyed on by the con artists in the world. They have no manly strength, no power at all. See these people in religion—it does not matter much what are their doctrinal sentiments—it is quite certain they will never affect the minds of

others. Put them in the pulpit. They are the slaves of the deacons, or else they are overridden by the Church. They never have an opinion of their own, cannot come out with a thing. They have not the heart to say, “Such a thing is and I know it is.”

These men just live on, but as far as any utility to the world is concerned they might almost as well never have been created—except it were to be fed upon by other people. Now, some say that this is the fault of men’s heads—“Such a one,” they say, “could not get on. He had a small head. It was clean impossible for him to prosper. His head was small. He could not do anything. He had not enough force.” Now, that may be true. But I know what was truer still—he had a small heart and that heart was empty. For, mark you, a man’s force in the world, other things being equal, is just in the ratio of the force and strength of his heart. A fullhearted man is always a powerful man—if he is erroneous, then he is powerful for error. If the thing is in his heart, he is sure to make it notorious even though it may be a downright falsehood.

Let a man be ever so ignorant, still if his heart is full of love to a cause, he becomes a powerful man for that object because he has got heartpower, heart-force. A man may be deficient in many of the advantages of education, in many of those niceties which are so much looked upon in society. But once give him a good strong heart that beats hard and there is no mistake about his power. Let him have a heart that is right full up to the brim with an object and that man will do the thing, or else he will die gloriously defeated and will glory in his defeat. HEART IS POWER. It is the emptiness of men’s hearts that makes them so feeble. But the man in business that goes heart and soul into his business is more likely to prosper than anybody else.

That is the preacher we want, the man that has a full soul. Let him have a head—the more he knows the better. But, after all, give him a big heart. And when his heart beats, if his heart is full it will under God either make the hearts of his congregation beat after him—or else make them conscious that he is laboring hard to compel them to follow. Oh, if we had more heart in our Master’s service, how much more labor we could endure? You are a Sunday-School teacher, young man, and you are complaining that you cannot get on in the Sunday-School. Sir, the main pipe would give out plenty of water if the heart were full. Perhaps you do not love your work. Oh, strive to love your work more and then when your heart is full, you will go on well enough. “Oh,” says the preacher, “I am weary of my work. In preaching I have little success. I find it a hard toil.”

The answer to that question is, “Your heart is not full of it, for if you loved preaching, you would breathe preaching, feed upon preaching and find a compulsion upon you to follow preaching. And your heart being full of the thing, you would be happy in the employment.” Oh for a heart that is full and deep and broad! Find the man that has such a soul as that and that is the man from whom the living waters shall flow to make the world glad with their refreshing streams.

Learn, then, the necessity of keeping the heart full. And let the necessity make you ask this question—“But how can I keep my heart full? How can my emotions be strong? How can I keep my desires burning and my zeal inflamed?” Christian, there is one text which will explain all this. “All my springs are in You,” said David. If you have all your springs in God, your heart will be full enough. If you go to the foot of Calvary—there will your heart be bathed in love and gratitude. If you frequent the vale of retirement and there talk with your God—it is there that your heart shall be full of calm resolve.

If you go out with your Master to the hill of Olivet and with Him look down upon a wicked Jerusalem and weep over it with Him, then will your heart be full of love for never-dying souls. If you continually draw your impulse, your life—the whole of your being from the Holy Spirit, without whom you can do nothing—and if you live in close communion with Christ—there will be no fear of your having a dry heart. He who lives without prayer—he who lives with little prayer—he who seldom reads the Word—he who seldom looks up to Heaven for a fresh influence from on high—he will be the man whose heart will become dry and barren.

But he who calls in secret on his God—who spends much time in holy retirement—who delights to meditate on the Words of the Most High— whose soul is given up to Christ—who delights in His fullness, rejoices in His all-sufficiency, prays for His second coming and delights in the thought of His glorious advent—such a man, I say, must have an overflowing heart. And as his heart is, such will his life be. It will be a full life. It will be a life that will speak from the sepulcher and wake the echoes of the future. “Keep your heart with all diligence,” and entreat the Holy Spirit to keep it full, for otherwise the issues of your life will be feeble, shallow and superficial—and you may as well not have lived at all.

2. Secondly, it would be of little use for our water companies to keep their reservoirs full if they did not also keep them pure. I remember reading a complaint in the newspaper of a certain provincial town where a tradesman had been frequently supplied with fish from the water company. Large eels having crept down the pipes and sometimes creatures a little more loathsome. We have known such a thing as water companies supplying us with solids when they ought to have given us nothing but pure crystal. Now, no one likes that. The reservoir should be kept pure and clean. And unless the water comes from a pure spring and is not impregnated with harmful substances, however full the reservoir may be, the company will fail to satisfy or benefit its customers.

Now it is essential for us to do with our hearts as the company must do with its reservoir. We must keep our hearts pure. For if the heart is not pure, the life cannot be pure. It is quite impossible that it should be so. You see a man whose whole conversation is impure and unholy. When he speaks he fills his language with oaths. His mind is low and groveling. None but the things of unrighteousness are sweet to him for he has no soul above the kennel and the dunghill. You meet with another man who understands enough to avoid violating the decencies of life. But still, at the same time he likes filthiness. Any low joke, anything that will in same way stir unholy thoughts is just the thing that he desires.

For the ways of God he has no relish. In God’s house he finds no pleasure. In His Word no delight. What is the cause of this? Say some, it is because of his family connections—because of the situation in which he stands—because of his early education and all that. No, no. The simple answer to that is the answer we gave to the other enquiry—the heart is not right. For, if the heart were pure, the life would be pure, too. The unclean stream betrays the fountain. A valuable book of German parables, by old Christian Scriver, contains the following homely metaphor—“A drink was brought to Gotthold, which tasted of the vessel in which it had been contained. And this led him to observe—we have here an emblem of our thoughts, words and works. Our heart is defiled by sin and hence a taint of sinfulness cleaves unfortunately to everything we take in hand. And although, from the force of habit, this may be imperceptible to us, it does not escape the eye of the Omniscient, Holy and Righteous God.”

From where does our carnality, covetousness, pride, sloth and unbelief come? Are they not all to be traced to the corruption of our hearts? When the hands of a clock move in an irregular manner and when the bell strikes the wrong hour, be assured there is something wrong within. Oh, how needful that the mainspring of our motives be in proper order and the wheels in a right condition!

Ah, Christian, keep your heart pure. You say, “How can I do this?” Well, there was of old the stream Marah to which the thirsty pilgrims in the desert came to drink. And when they came to taste of it, it was so brackish that though their tongues were like torches and the roofs of their mouths were parched with heat, yet they could not drink of that bitter water. Do you remember the remedy which Moses prescribed? It is the remedy which we prescribe to you this morning. He took a certain tree and he cast it into the waters and they became sweet and clear.

Your heart is by nature like Marah’s water, bitter and impure. There is a certain tree—you know its name—that tree on which the Savior hung, the Cross. Take that tree, put it into your heart and though it were even more impure than it is, that sweet Cross, applied by the Holy Spirit, would soon transform it into its own nature and make it pure. Christ Jesus in the heart is the sweet purification. He is made unto us sanctification. Elijah cast salt into the waters. But we must cast the blood of Jesus there.

Once let us know and love Jesus, once let His Cross become the object of our adoration and the theme of our delight—the heart will begin its cleansing and the life will become pure also. Oh, that we all did learn the sacred lesson of fixing the Cross in the heart! Christian Brothers and Sisters! Love your Savior more. Cry to the Holy Spirit that you may have more affection for Jesus. And then, however gainful may be your sin, you will say with the poet,

*“Now for the love I bear His name,  
What was my gain I count my loss.  
My former pride I call my shame,  
And nail my glory to His Cross.”*

The Cross in the heart is the purifier of the soul. It purges and it cleanses the chambers of the mind. Christian, keep your heart pure, “for out of it are the issues of life.”

3. In the third place, there is one thing to which our water companies need never pay much attention. That is to say, if their water is pure and the reservoir is full they need not care to keep it peaceable and quiet, for let it be stirred by a storm, we should receive our water in just the same condition as usual. It is not so, however, with the heart. Unless the heart is kept peaceable, the life will not be happy. If calm does not reign over that inner lake within the soul which feeds the rivers of our life, the rivers themselves will always be stormy. Our outward acts will always tell that they were born in tempests, by rolling in tempests themselves.

Let us just understand this, first, with regard to ourselves. We all desire to lead a joyous life—the bright eye and the elastic foot are things which we each of us desire. To carry about a contented mind is that to which most men are continually aspiring. Let us all remember that the only way to keep our life peaceful and happy is to keep the heart at rest. For come poverty, come wealth, come honor, come shame, come plenty, or come scarcity—if the heart is quiet—there will be happiness anywhere. But whatever the sunshine and the brightness—if the heart is troubled—the whole life must be troubled, too.

There is a sweet story told in one of the German martyrologies well worth both my telling and your remembering. A holy martyr who had been kept for a long time in prison and had there exhibited to the wonderment of all who saw him the strongest constancy and patience, was at last, upon the day of his execution brought out and tied to the stake preparatory to the lighting of the fire. While in this position, “He craved permission to speak once more to the judge, who, according to the Swiss custom, was required to be present at the execution. After repeatedly refusing, the judge, at last came forward, when the peasant addressed him thus—“You have this day condemned me to death. Now, I freely admit that I am a

poor sinner, but positively deny that I am a heretic, because from my heart I believe and confess all that is contained in the Apostles’ Creed (which he thereupon repeated from beginning to end).

“Now, then, Sir,” he proceeded to say, “I have but one last request to make, which is that you will approach and place your hand, first upon my breast and then upon your own and afterwards frankly and truthfully declare, before this assembled multitude, which of the two, mine or yours, is beating most violently with fear and anxiety. For my part, I quit the world with eagerness and joy, to go and be with Christ in whom I have always believed. What your feelings are at this moment is best known to yourself.” The judge could make no answer and commanded them instantly to light the pile. It was evident, however, from his looks, that he was more afraid than the martyr.

Now, keep your heart right. Do not let it smite you. The Holy Spirit says of David, “David’s heart smote him.” The smiting of the heart is more painful to a good man than the rough blows of the fist. It is a blow that can be felt. It is iron that enters into the soul. Keep your heart in good temper. Do not let that get to fighting with you. Seek that the peace of God which passes all understanding may keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. Bend your knee at night and with a full confession of sin express your faith in Christ. Then you may “dread the grave as little as your bed.” Rise in the morning and give your heart to God and put the sweet angels of perfect love and holy faith therein and you may go into the world and were it full of lions and of tigers you would no more need to dread it than Daniel when he was cast into the lion’s den. Keep the heart peaceable and your life will be happy.

Remember, in the second place, that it is just the same with regard to other men. I should hope we all wish to lead quiet lives and as much as lies in us to live peaceably with all men. There is a particular breed of men—I do not know where they come from, but they are mixed up now with the English race and to be met with here and there—men who seem to be born for no other reason whatever but to fight—always quarreling— and never pleased. They say that all Englishmen are a little that way— that we are never happy unless we have something to grumble at and that the worst thing that ever could be done with us would be to give us some entertainment at which we could not grumble—because we should be mortally offended because we had not the opportunity of displaying our English propensities.

I do not know whether that is true of us all, but it is true of some. You cannot sit with them in a room but they introduce a topic upon which you are quite certain to disagree with them. You could not walk with them half a mile along the public streets but they would be sure to make an observation against everybody and everything they saw. They talk about ministers—one man’s doctrine is too high—another’s is too low. One man, they think, is a great deal too effeminate and precise. Another, they say, is vulgar—they would not hear him at all. They say of another man that they do not think he attends to visiting his people. Of another, that he visits so much that he never prepares for the pulpit. No one can be right for them.

Why is this? From where does this continual snarling come? The heart must again supply the answer. They are morose and sullen in the inward parts—and hence their speech betrays them. They have not had their hearts brought to feel that God has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth. Or if they have felt that, they have never been brought to spell it in their hearts—“By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.” Whichever may have been put there of the other ten, the Eleventh Commandment was never written there. “A new commandment give I unto you, that you love one another.” That they forgot.

Oh, dear Christian people, seek to have your hearts full of love and if you have had little hearts till now that could not hold love enough for more than your own denomination, get your hearts enlarged. Honor God so that you may have enough to send out service pipes to all His people throughout the habitable globe so that whenever you meet a man who is a true born heir of Heaven he has nothing to do but to turn the tap and out of your loving heart will begin to flow issues of true, fervent, unconstrained, willing, living love. Keep your heart peaceable, that your life may be so. For out of the heart are the issues of life.

How is this to be done? We reply again we must ask the Holy Spirit to pacify the heart. No voice but that which on Galilee’s lake said to the storm, “Be still,” can ever lay the troubled waters of a stormy heart. No strength but Omnipotence can still the tempest of human nature. Cry out mightily unto Him. He still sleeps in the vessel with His Church. Ask Him to awake lest your piety should perish in the waters of contention. Cry unto Him that He may give your heart peace and happiness. Then shall your life be peaceful, spend it where you may, in trouble or in joy.

4. A little further. When the waterworks company has gathered an abundance of water in the reservoir, there is one thing they must always attend to. That is, they must take care they do not attempt too much, or otherwise they will fail. Suppose they lay on a great main pipe in one place to serve one city and another main pipe to serve another. And the supply which was intended to fill one channel is diverted into a score of streams. What would be the result? Why nothing would be done well, but everyone would have cause to complain. Now, a man’s heart is, after all, so little that there is only one great direction in which its living water can ever flow.

And my fourth piece of advice to you from this text is, keep your heart undivided. Suppose you see a lake and there are twenty or thirty streamlets running from it. Why, there will not be one strong river in the whole country. There will be a number of little brooks which will be dried up in the summer and will be temporary torrents in the winter. They will every one of them be useless for any great purposes, because there is not water enough in the lake to feed more than one great stream.

Now, a man’s heart has only enough life in it to pursue one object fully. You must not give half your love to Christ and the other half to the world. No man can serve God and mammon because there is not enough life in the heart to serve the two. Alas, many people try this and they fail both ways. I have known a man who has tried to let some of his heart run into the world and another part he allowed to drip into the Church and the effect has been this—when he came into the Church he was suspected of hypocrisy. “Why,” they said, “if he were truly with us, could he have done yesterday what he did and then come and profess so much today?”

The Church looks upon him as a suspicious one. Or if he deceives them they feel he is not of much use to them because they have not got all his heart. What is the effect of his conduct in the world? Why, his religion is a fetter to him there. The world will not have him and the Church will not have him. He wants to go between the two and both despise him. I never saw anybody try to walk on both sides of the street but a drunken man. He tried it and it was very awkward work, indeed. But I have seen many people in a moral point of view try to walk on both sides of the street and I thought there was some kind of intoxication in them—or else they would have given it up as a very foolish thing.

Now, if I thought this world and the pleasures thereof worth my seeking, I would just seek them and go after them and I would not pretend to be religious. But if Christ is Christ and if God is God, let us give our whole hearts to Him and not go shares with the world. Many a Church member manages to walk on both sides of the street in the following manner. His sun is very low indeed—it has not much light, not much heat and is come almost to its setting. Now sinking suns cast long shadows and this man stands on the world’s side of the street and casts a long shadow right across the road—to the opposite side of the wall just across the pavement.

Yes, it is all we get with many of you. You come and you take the sacramental bread and wine. You are baptized. You join the Church and what we get is just your shadow. There is your substance on the other side of the street, after all. What is the good of the empty chrysalis of a man? And yet many of our Church members are little better. They just do as the snake does that leaves its skin behind. They give us their skin, the chrysalis case in which life once was and then they go themselves here and there after their own wanton wills. They give us the outward and then give the world the inward. O how foolish this is, Christian! Your Master gave Himself wholly for you. Give yourself unreservedly to Him. Keep not back part of the price. Make a full surrender of every motion of your heart—labor to have but one object and one aim.

And for this purpose give God the keeping of your heart. Cry out for more of the Divine influences of the Holy Spirit so that when your soul is preserved and protected by Him, it may be directed into one channel and one only—that your life may run deep and pure and clear and peaceful. Its only banks being God’s will, its only channel the love of Christ and a desire to please Him. Thus wrote Spencer in days long gone by—“Indeed, by nature, man’s heart is a very divided, broken thing—scattered and parceled out a piece to this creature and a piece to that lust. One while this vanity hires him (as Leah did Jacob of Rachel), another when he has done some drudgery for that. He lets out himself to one or the other—thus divided is man and his affections.

“Now the elect, whom God has decreed to be vessels of honor, consecrated for His holy use and service—He throws into the fire of His Word that being there softened and melted—He may by His transforming Spirit cast them anew as it were, into a holy oneness. So that he who before was divided from God and lost among the creatures and his lusts that shared him among them—now his heart is gathered into God from them all. It looks with a single eye on God and acts for Him in all that he does. If therefore you would know whether your heart is sincere, inquire whether it is thus made anew.”

5. Now, my last point is rather a strange one, perhaps. Once upon a time, when one of our kings came back from captivity, old historians tell us that there were fountains in Cheapside that did run with wine. So bounteous was the king and so glad the people, that instead of water they made wine flow free to everybody. There is a way of making our life so rich, so full, so blessed to our fellow men, that the metaphor may be applicable to us. And men may say that our life flows with wine when other men’s lives flow with water.

You have known some such men. There was a Howard. John Howard’s life was not like our poor common lives—he was so benevolent, his sympathy with the race so self-denying that the streams of his life were like generous wine. You have known another, an eminent saint, one who lived very near to Jesus. When you talked yourself you felt your conversation was poor watery stuff. But when he talked to you there was an unction and a savor about his words, a solidity and a strength about his utterances, which you could appreciate, though you could not attain unto it. You have sometimes said, “I wish my words were as full, as sweet, as mellow and as unctuous as the words of such an one! Oh, I wish my actions were just as rich, had as deep a color and as pure a taste as the acts of

So-and-So. All I can do seems but little and empty when compared with his high attainments. Oh, that I could do more! Oh, that I could send streams of pure gold into every house instead of my poor dross.”

Well, Christian, this should teach you to keep your heart full of rich things. Never, never neglect the Word of God that will make your heart rich with precept, rich with understanding. And then your conversation, when it flows from your month, will be like your heart—rich and savory. Make your heart full of rich, generous love and then the stream that flows from your hand will be just as rich and generous as your heart. Above all, get Jesus to live in your heart and then out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water—more rich, more satisfying than the water of the well of Sychar of which Jacob drank.

Oh, go, Christian, to the great mine of riches and cry unto the Holy Spirit to make your heart rich unto salvation. So shall your life and conversation be a gift to your fellows. And when they see you your face shall be as the angel of God. You shall wash your feet in butter and your steps in oil. They that sit in the gate shall rise up when they see you and men shall do you reverence.

But one single sentence and we have done. Some of your hearts are not worth keeping. The sooner you get rid of them the better. They are hearts of stone. Do you feel today that you have a stony heart? Go home and I pray the Lord hears my desire that your polluted heart may be removed. Cry unto God and say, “Take away my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh.” A stony heart is an impure heart, a divided heart, a warring heart. It is a heart that is poor and poverty stricken, a heart that is void of all goodness and you can neither bless yourself nor others, if your heart is such. O Lord Jesus! Will You be pleased this day to renew many hearts? Will You break the rock in pieces and put flesh instead of stone? And You shall have the glory, world without end!

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÷Pro 4.25

“EYES RIGHT”  
NO. 2058

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, DECEMBER 23, 1888, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 14, 1887. **“Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you.” Proverbs 4:25.**

THESE words occur in a passage wherein the wise man exhorts us to take care of all parts of our nature which he indicates by members of the body. “Keep your heart,” says he, “with all diligence. For out of it are the issues of life. Put away from you a disobedient mouth, and perverse lips put far from you. Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet and let all your ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove your foot from evil.”

It is clear that every part of our nature needs to be carefully watched, lest in any way it should become the cause of sin. Any one member or faculty is readily able to defile all the rest, and therefore, every part must be guarded with care. We have selected for our meditation the verse which deals with the eye. These windows of light need to be watched in their incomings, lest that which we take into our soul should be darkness rather than light. And they need to be watched in their outgoings, lest the glances of the eye should be full of iniquity, or should suggest foolish thoughts. Hence the wise man advises, “Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you.” Have eyes and use them. Using them, take care to use them honestly.

Some persons are always as if they were asleep. They go though the world moping about, seeing nothing or seeing men as if they were trees, with a sight which is not sight but blindness. The shadows of this transient life impress them and that is all—they have never awakened yet to the true life and its solemn realities. They have never seen anything in very truth—for it is faith that sees and of faith they have none. That which is apart from faith is not visible to the soul, however clear it may be to the eye. We have thousands around us who need to be startled out of that slumber in which they see the fabrics of their dreams and the unsubstantial fancies of the hour.

They say, “We see,” but scales are on their eyes. I fear we have such in all our congregations, lulled to sleep even by the preacher’s tones, to whom the fact of coming to their accustomed seat and listening to the usual hymns tends rather to confirm them in a sluggard’s slumber than to stir their souls to action. O you Sluggards, may God awaken you by Divine Grace, lest He arouse you by the thunderbolts of His vengeance! It is

time that your eyes began to look right on and your eyelids straight before you.

Many others are somewhat awake mentally but they are not looking right on, neither do their eyelids look straight before them. They are staring about them, star-gazing, wondering what will be seen next—always ready, like the Athenians, to hear and see some new thing. They move, it is true, but it is in a labyrinth which leads to nothing—in a circle which ends where it began. They toil and slave but it is all in the shadow land— of substantial work they do nothing. An active idleness, a diligent laziness is all that their life is made up of. For, as yet, they have no purpose—no purpose worth being the aim of an immortal soul.

An arrow will never strike the mark if it travels in a zigzag direction. And the man whose life has no aim whatever, who pursues this, and then that, and then the other, what will he achieve? Are not many like “dumb driven cattle,” going, they know not where? They have never yet discovered that this life is a preface to a life of a more Divine mold. They do not regard the present as the lowly porch of the glorious edifice of the future. They have not thought that time is but the doorstep of eternity, a thing of small account, save that it is linked with the endless ages.

And so they seek after this, and then after that, and then after the other. And always after that which is too poor, too trifling to be the object of a mind capable of fellowship with God. How many there are whose spirit is agitated by a mere nothing, resembling—

*“Ocean into tempest tossed*

*To float a feather or to drown a fly”!*  
To beings who lead such purposeless lives we would address the words of the wise man, “Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you.” Have something to do and do it. Have something to live for and live for it. Get to know the right way and, knowing the right way, keep to it with full purpose of heart and concentration of faculty.

O Man, see where you are going and go that way with your eyes open, resolutely marking every step as you take it. Look where you ought to look and then follow your eyes which shall thus be useful outriders to your life and help to make your way safe and wise. When you have sent your eyes before you to make sure of the way, it will be safe to follow. Look before you leap and only leap when looking bids you do so. If a man is to let his eyes look right on and his eyelids straight before him, then he is to have a way, and that way is to be a straight way—and in that straight way he is to persevere.

You cannot see to the end of a crooked way. You can only see a small part of a way that twists and winds. Choose, then, a direct path which has an end which you dare think of and look upon. Some men’s lives are such that they dare not think of what the end of them must be. They would not long pursue their present track if they were forced to gaze into that dread abyss which is the only possible close of an evil course. The way of transgressors is hard in itself but it is hardest of all when we behold their dreadful end. “Surely you have set them in slippery places. You cast them down into destruction.” You need to have a way and a straight way and a way whose end you dare contemplate or else you cannot carry out the advice of Solomon, “Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you.”

Every wise man will conclude that the best way for a man is the way which God has made for him. He that made us knows what He made us for, and He knows by what means we may best arrive at that end. According to Divine teaching, as gracious as it is certain, we learn that the way of eternal life is Jesus Christ. Christ Himself says, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” And he that would pursue life after a right fashion must look to Jesus and must continue looking unto Jesus—not only as the Author but as the Finisher of his faith. It shall be to him a golden rule of life, when he has chosen Christ to be his Way, to let his eyes look right on and his eyelids straight before him. He need not be afraid to contemplate the end of that way, for the end of the way of Christ is life and glory with Christ forever.

“It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like He. For we shall see Him as He is.” A friend said to me the other day, “How happy are we to know that whatever happens to us in this life it is well!” “Yes,” I added, “and to know that if this life ends it is equally well, or better.” Then we joined hands in common joy to think that we were equally ready for life or death and did not need five minutes’ anxiety as to whether it should be the one or the other. Brethren, when you are on the King’s Highway—that way which is a perfectly straight one—you may go ahead without fear and sing on the road.

With all my heart I invite any who have never yet begun to live after a right fashion, to take Christ to be the way of life to them. And then I entreat them to let their eyes look straight on and their eyelids straight before them and to follow Jesus without giving a glance either to the right hand or to the left till it shall be said of them, even in glory, “These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes.”

I. I shall make my earnest appeals to the heart and conscience by beginning with this first exhortation—LET CHRIST BE YOUR WAY. You that are young, let Him be your way from your youth. You that have up to now gone the wrong road until your hairs have grown gray in the service of iniquity, turn, I beseech you, and take to the way of salvation. May His Spirit turn you and you will be turned—then will Jesus become your way from henceforth.

If Christ is your way, you will begin first to seek to have Christ. “How shall I have Him?” says one. Do you desire Him? Will you accept Him? He is yours. The act of accepting Christ secures Christ to us. For the Father freely gives Him to all who freely accept Him. Some are troubled through ignorant and unbelieving fears and are saying, “I wish I could lay hold on Jesus! I wish I knew that Christ were mine!” Are you willing to have Him? Who made you willing? Do you desire Him? Who made you desire Him? Who but the Spirit of the Lord? Will you now take Jesus to be your Savior, to save you from your sin? Then depend on it He is yours. There was

never any difficulty with Him to give Himself to you.

The difficulty was to bring you to receive Him. And now that you do receive Him, remember this—“As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” Jesus Himself has said it, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” And therefore, since you come, you shall never be cast out. Jesus has accepted you, for you have accepted Him. But I pray that none of you will rest until you have Christ. Let your eyes look right on and your eyelids straight before you, till you find Him. Look nowhere else but to Him and after Him. Shut yourself up in your room—determine not to come out again until you have Him and it shall not be long before you find Him.

Concentrating all your gaze upon the Crucified, light shall come from Him, causing the scales to fall from your eyes and you shall see Him, even you that could not see. And you shall cry in delight, “He is mine, He is mine.” Remember how David said to his son, “If you seek Him, He will be found of you.” Think of the words of the Prophet, “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near.” When you have Christ, the next business of your life must be to know Christ. Seek to know more of Him, to know Him better, to know Him more practically, to know Him more assuredly. “That I may know Him,” said the Apostle, after he had been a believer in Him for fifteen years.

That same man of God speaks of “the love of Christ, which passes knowledge,” even his knowledge, which was of the fullest sort—so that he meant to go on learning more and more of Christ and he did not count himself to have attained. Christian Men and Women, you do not know your great Master yet. Here have some of us been nearly forty years in His service and yet we could not describe Him to our own satisfaction. Why, we hardly know the power of the hem of His garment yet. We have not descended far down into the mines of His perfections. How little we know of our hidden wealth in Christ Jesus!

Oh, that we studied Scripture more, that we were more teachable and waited more humbly upon the Lord for the light of His Spirit from day to day! Well says our singer—

*“Hoard up His sacred Word,  
And feed thereon and grow;  
Go on to seek to know the Lord,  
And practice what you know.”*

In this matter let your eyes look right on and your eyelids straight before you. Other men may have their pursuits, this is yours—stick to it earnestly. The science of a crucified Savior shines like the moon in the midst of the stars as compared with all the other sciences which men may know—study it with your whole power of mind and heart. The angels on the Mercy Seat of the ark stood always looking downward and bending over. Hence the Apostle says, “Which things the angels desire to look into.” And if they desire to look into the Ark of the Covenant and its sacred mysteries, how much more should we!  
When you come to know somewhat of what He is, then go on to obey

Christ. Is there anything that He has bid you do? Do it. Some Christians have never yet been baptized—how will they answer for willful neglect of a known duty? Others have been Christians for years and yet have never communed at the Lord’s Table. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Do they keep His Commandments? It was His dying request, “This do in remembrance of Me,” and yet they will not fulfill it. Even such a tender request they slight, as though it were of no importance whatever, as if their Lord was a mere nobody whose wishes might well be overlooked.

What shall I say of many of the biddings of our holy Gospel, many of those sweet precepts which are to be used in the family and in the business and in the field? What forgetfulness there is of them! What refusing to follow Christ! He might come to us and say, “If I am a Master, where is My honor?” Truly, it ought to be one of the first thoughts of a Christian to find out the Lord’s will. And when he knows it, obedience should follow immediately. His eyes should look right on and his eyelids straight before him. What said the blessed virgin to those who were at the feast? Note the words, “Whatsoever He says unto you, do it.” It was well spoken of the favored mother and it remains as a golden precept for us all—“Whatsoever He says unto you, do it.”

Make no reserve, exercise no choice—obey His command. When you know what He commands, do not hesitate, question, or try to avoid it—“do it”—do it at once, do it heartily, do it cheerfully, do it to the full. It is but a little thing that as our Lord has bought us with the price of His own blood, we should be His servants. The Apostles frequently call themselves the bond slaves of Christ. Where our Authorized Version softly puts it “servant,” it really is “bond slave.” The early saints delighted to count themselves Christ’s absolute property, bought by Him, owned by Him and wholly at His disposal. Paul even went so far as to rejoice that he had the marks of his Master’s brand on him and he cries, “Let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” There was the end of all debate—he was the Lord’s and the marks of the scourges, the rods and the stones were the broad-arrow of the King which marked Paul’s body as the property of Jesus, the Lord.

Now, if the saints of old time gloried in obeying Christ, I pray that you and I, forgetting the sect to which we may belong, or even the nation of which we form a part, may feel that our first object in life is to obey our Lord. Not to follow a human leader, or to promote a religious or political party. This one thing we mean to do and so follow the advice of Solomon as he says, “Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you.” Beloved, let us endeavor to be obedient in the minute as well as in the greater matters, for it is in details that true obedience is best seen. Let us copy the faintest touches in the life of our great Exemplar.

That being attended to, remember, if Christ is your way, you have further to seek to be like He, not only to do as He did but to be as He was. For “as He was, so are we in this world.” What a man does is important, but what a man is, is all-important. The ring of the metal is something

but if its ring could be imitated by a base coin, it would be nothing. It is, after all, the substance of the metal that decides its value. O Man, what are you? If you are a twice-born man, you are a partaker of the nature of Christ. But if not, you are under the curse which cleaves to the old nature as leprosy cleaves to the leper.

“As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” And we must begin to bear that heavenly image even now. As born again into the headship of the Second Adam, we should seek to be as much like the Second Adam as we are already by nature like the first Adam, through our first birth. The second birth should be as operative to produce the image of the second Adam, as the first was to produce the image of the first Adam. Alas, “the earthy” is impressed upon us very distinctly. We cannot spend an hour without discovering the clear stamp of nature’s die. Oh, that “the heavenly” could be quite as clearly discerned!

This, therefore, we must aim at, though as yet we have not attained it. Here is something to be thought of very carefully, and I charge you by the Holy Spirit—let your eyes look right on and your eyelids straight before you, that you may be transformed from glory to glory into the image of the Lord. God grant that it may be so with everyone of us!

Now, supposing that we have attended to all this, if Christ is our way and our model, there is something more, namely, that we seek to glorify Christ, and labor to win others to Him. Here is a grand field for all our energies. O Christian people, what are we left in this world for, except to bring others to Jesus? Are we not left in this wilderness that we may find out more of the good Shepherd’s stray sheep and work for Him and with Him to bring them in? I fear we forget this. Are not some of you indifferent as to whether your fellow men are lost or saved? Have not some of you, in your families, come to this pass—that you see your brother an infidel, your sister frivolous, your parents godless—and yet it does not fret you?

I think that if I had a godless relative, it would break my night’s rest, not now and then, but always. A brother, a father, a child unsaved! What do you mean by taking your ease? If the spirit of Christ is in us, the tears that fell from the eyes of Jesus will find their like upon our cheeks. We shall weep day and night because men are not gathered unto eternal life. Nor will this be a loss to us, for blessed are the mourners in Zion. Blessed are they that mourn because others abide in sin and reject the Lord!

Now, concerning the salvation of our fellow men. We shall never compass it unless our eyes look right on and our eyelids straight before us. Before we win souls, we must live for souls. We need men and women who live to convert others to Christ. The minister had better quit his pulpit if it is not his one burning desire to bring hearts to Jesus’ feet. If a Divine impulse is not upon him, driving him to seek the souls of men, let him go elsewhere with his windy periods. Professors have little right to be in Christ’s Church unless they are passionately in earnest to increase His kingdom by the salvation of their fellow men.

O my Brothers and Sisters, on whom is the blood-mark of redemption, I charge you concerning this matter to “let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you”! Seek souls as dogs hunt their game—eyes, nostrils, ears all open and every muscle strained. Converts are not gained by dreamers. We cannot imitate Jesus as a Savior of men by being dull and heartless. In any point in which we follow our Lord let us do it with all our soul. Thus much upon the first point—let Christ be your way in all things and keep to that way.

II. Following the text again, only working it a little differently, the second exhortation is, SET YOUR EYES ON HIM AS YOUR WAY. If Christ is your way and you follow Him to have Him, to know Him, to obey Him, to be like He and to glorify Him, then set your eyes on Him as the way. Think of Him, consider Him, study Him and in all things regard Him as first and last to you.

First, that you may know the way of life, let your eyes be fixed on Him. Soul, are you in the dark? Kneel down and pray and look Christ-ward. Saint, are you bewildered? Go by the way of the Cross, the way of the Crucified, for that is the true and sure path. Sinner, are you burdened? Would you be rid of your burden? Run Christ-ward. Any direction given you to go anywhere else will misdirect you. I say not to anyone I meet tonight, “Go to the wicket-gate.” Neither will I bid you look to any light within and run that way. My only direction is, “Go to Jesus.” You see that Cross and Him who bled thereon! Stand still and look that way and your burden shall fall from your shoulders.

Where Jesus died, you shall live. Where Christ was wounded, you shall be healed. “Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you.” Know the road. You will never know it too well—the more you know it, the happier you will be in it. “To Christ!” “To Christ!” “To Christ!” That is the sole inscription upon every sign-post of the road to Heaven. Keep to the King’s Highway. Since Christ is the Way, let your eyes be fixed on Him as the way that you may follow Him well, may follow Him wholly. Gather up all your faculties to go after your Lord. Be not like Lot’s wife who longed and looked and lingered and was lost. Away, away, away from Sodom, altogether away—let no eye steal in that direction.

Away, away, away to Christ, to Christ alone. All eyes must be for Jesus, who cries, “Look unto Me and be you saved.” As the plowman looks to the end of the furrow and keeps right on, even so must you look only to Jesus. What have you to do with anything but Christ, Sinner? I tell you that you have nothing even to do with your own sins but to lay them down at His feet. He is All. The Beginning and the End. “Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you.”

Look alone to Jesus and do this to keep your spirits up. Some men’s eyes do not look right on and their eyelids do not look straight before them for they look back upon that part of the road which they have traversed and grow content with that which they have already attained. They live in retrospection. When you begin to look back at what you have done and rub your hands and say with self-satisfaction, “I remember when I did right well,” wisdom warns you that this is not the right kind of look. What

have you to look back upon? Poor, weak creature! Forget that which is behind and press forward to something better and higher. When you sinful souls get to looking back upon your past bad lives, I am glad of that, but still I do not want you to keep your eyes always in that direction. You will get no comfort in looking into the foul ditch of your own transgressions.

Look, look, look before you! Look where the Cross stands. Run that way. Let your eyelids look straight before you to the atoning sacrifice— away from the past, which He will graciously blot out—to Jesus only. Some spend much of their time in what is called introspection. Now introspection, like retrospection, is a useful thing in a measure. But it can readily be overdone—and then it breeds morbid emotions and creates despair. Some are always looking into their own feelings. A healthy man hardly knows whether he has a stomach, or a liver. It is your sickly man who grows more sickly by the study of his inward complaints.

Too many wound themselves by studying themselves. Every morning they think of what they should feel—all day long they dwell upon what they are not feeling. And at night they make diligent search for what they have been feeling. It looks to me like shutting up your shop and then living in the counting-house taking account of what is not sold. Small profits will be made in this way. You may look a long while into an empty pocket before you find a sovereign and you may look a long time into fallen nature before you find comfort. A man might as well try to find burning coals under the ice, as to find anything good in our poor human nature.

When you look within, it should be to see with grief what the filthiness is. But to get rid of that filthiness you must look beyond yourself. I remember Mr. Moody saying that a mirror was a capital thing to show you the spots on your face. But you could not wash in a mirror. You want something very different when you would make your face clean. So let your eyes look right on—

*“To the full atonement made,  
To the utmost ransom paid.”*  
Forget yourself and think only of Christ.

Some not only unduly practice retrospection and introspection but they carry much too far a sort of circumspection. They look all around them— they look upon their past and their present and their fears and their doubts—and from all these things they judge their condition and decide their state of mind. You recollect Peter. He cried to his Lord, “Bid me come unto you on the water.” He receives permission. Down the side, over the boat, goes Peter. To his intense surprise he is standing on a wave. Peter had never done such a thing before in his life as walk on the water.

He might have kept on standing on the wave and he might have walked all the way to Jesus if he had kept his eyes on his Master until he reached Him. The waters would have borne him up as well as a granite pavement. But Peter began to look at the billows and he listened to the howling of the wind and then to the beating of his own heart. And down he went. And then he had to cry to his Master. “Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you”—you can walk the waters all the way to the golden shore if you can but stop your eyes looking to other things.

Surely I may use the text as an illustration of that closing of the eyes. “Let your eyes look right on.” “I understand that,” says one, “for I trust. But you cannot look with your eyelids.” What can that mean? Remember that you can shut your eyes with your eyelids to a great many things and so cease to see them. And in the matter of faith-sight a great many things are best not seen. So when you would otherwise see the danger and all the difficulties and the doubts, do not look with your eyes but look with your eyelids. Not to look at the difficulties at all is all the look they deserve.

Let your eyelids shut out the view which would create distrust. Do not see, do not feel, “only believe.” Believe Christ and believe nothing else. “Let God be true but every man a liar.” If all the sins you have ever done should come rolling up like Atlantic billows and if all the devils in Hell should come riding on the crests of those waves, howling as they come, take no notice of them. Christ has said he that believes in Him has everlasting life. Believe in Him and you have the everlasting life as surely as Christ is the Christ of God. Draw down the blinds and see nothing, know nothing, believe nothing but the living Word of the living Savior. “Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you.”

You must also let your eyes look right on, dear Friends. For if you begin to look two ways at a time, you will miss the Lord Jesus, who is your Way. Under the Jewish Law no man who had a squint was allowed to be a priest. He is described as one who had “a blemish in his eye.” I wish they would make a similar law with regard to spiritual sight in preachers nowadays, for certain of them are sadly cross-eyed. When they preach Free Grace they squint fearfully towards free will. And if they look to the atonement, they must needs see in it more of man than of Christ. See how they look to Moses and to Darwin, to Revelation and to speculation!

A great many people would gladly be saved but they squint—they look a little towards sin and the flesh and the world—and they make provision for personal gain and personal ease. In this case they fail to see Christ’s strait and narrow way of the denial of self and the crucifixion of the flesh. If you would have salvation, “Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you.” Look not a little this way and a little that way, or you will never run aright. “I could believe that I was a Christian,” says one, “if I felt more happy. I could trust Christ if I felt my nature changed.” That is a squint which ruins the faith-look. That is trying to look two ways at once. You cannot do it—it will ruin you.

It would spoil the beauty of the sweetest countenance if we could use our eyes to look otherwise than straight on. We have some friends who, if they wish to see us, look over there and yet we are not there. Avoid this spiritual blemish. It has no advantages—“Let your eyes look right on.” Look to Christ alone, to Him as your whole salvation. Have nothing to do with your good works as a ground of trust, or you are a lost man. I charge you, have nothing to do even with your faith and your repentance as a

ground of trust. Trust not your trust—but trust alone in what Christ has done. If you shall trust your best feelings or your worst feelings, your prayers or your praises, your almsgivings or your consecration in any degree—you have made an antichrist of them.

Strip yourself of your last rag and let Christ clothe you from top to bottom. Be you hungry unto famishing and clean out the last crumb you have in the pantry, for then only will you feed on Christ, the Bread of Life. Let Him be both bread and wine and make up the whole of a feast for you. You shall have salvation surely enough if this is what you do. But let not Jesus bring the bread, and carnal confidence the wine—take a whole Christ to be all your salvation and all your desire and your peace shall be unbroken. Let the Holy Spirit bring you to that oneness of trust which makes both eyes meet at their proper focus and let that focus be the Lord Jesus. “Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you.”

III. But my time has almost expired and I have only to lay emphasis on one more matter. LET YOUR EYES DISTINCTLY AND DIRECTLY LOOK TO CHRIST ALONE. I have gone over this before, but I need to hammer at it again in order to clench the nail. Look not to any human guide but look to Christ Jesus alone. We have no faith in priests. But it is a very easy thing to fix your faith upon a minister and hear what he says and believe it because he says it. I charge you, believe nothing that I tell you if it cannot be supported by the Word of God. I am content to stand or to fall by this— “To the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, there is no light in them.”

I will quote the authority of no other book, whoever may have composed it—no ancient book—let it belong even to the earliest days of the Church. This one inspired volume is the text-book of our religion. Follow Holy Scripture and you have an infallible chart. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the one Apostle and High Priest of our profession—follow Him. Not even mother or father, or the brightest saint that ever lived must divide you from your perfect Guide. “Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you,” and hear the gracious words of Him who bought you with His blood as He cries, “Follow Me.”

Then, again, look to Christ directly and distinctly for yourself. I warn you against putting any trust in national religion, or in family and birthright godliness. A personal Christ must be laid hold of by a personal faith. You must yourself repent, yourself believe, yourself get a grip of Him and of none but Him. You must use your own eyes—“Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you.”

Again—look not to any secondary aims. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. In seeking Christ make no bargain with gain or reputation. Be content to lose all gold and all honor if you may but win Christ. To follow religion for self would be a mean act of hypocrisy and to leave it for the same reason is equally vile. Let your eyes be fixed on following your Lord and as to any worldly consequences, bring your eyelids into use, keep them fast closed and go right on in implicit obedience to your Lord.

Forget all things else when seeking Christ and when you have found Christ. It is no ill thing for a man, when he is under concern of soul, to let his business and everything go till he finds his Savior. I urge no one to such a course but I have noticed many converts who have done this who have soon found rest. If a captain were busy about the comfort of his passengers in their cabins but all the while knew that there was a great leak in the ship and it would soon go down and to this he paid no heed whatever, you would say to him, “How foolish you are to mind the little and neglect the great!” But if he told the passengers, “Breakfast cannot be prepared with our usual care, for all hands are pumping or repairing the vessel,” you could not blame him when you knew that every man’s help was needed to save the ship from going down.

In times of extreme danger, secondary things must give place to the main thing. If this house were to take fire, you would not stay to sing the last hymn, even if I gave it out. May the Holy Spirit lead some of you to feel that you must be saved! You must be saved, and therefore you must put other things into a second place. Remember how Bunyan pictures the man running for his life—when his neighbors called to him to stop—he put his fingers in his ears and as he ran he shouted, “Eternal life! Eternal life! Eternal life!” That man was a wise man. Imitate him. If you have not found eternal life, run for it, with your “eyes right on and your eyelids straight before you.”

And, lastly, take care that you continue gazing upon Christ until you have faith in Him. “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” Go on hearing the Word of God till faith comes. Do you ask me how faith comes? It is the gift of God but it usually comes in a certain way. Thinking of Jesus and meditating upon Jesus, will breed faith in Jesus. I was struck with what one said the other day of a certain preacher. The hearer was in deep concern of soul and the minister preached a very pretty sermon indeed, decorated abundantly with word-painting. I scarcely know any Brother who can paint so daintily as this good minister can.

But this poor soul, under a sense of sin, said, “There was too much landscape, Sir. I did not want landscape. I wanted salvation.” Dear Friend, never crave word-painting when you attend a sermon. But crave Christ. You must have Christ to be your own by faith, or you are a lost man. When I was seeking the Savior I remember hearing a very good doctrinal sermon. But when it was over I longed to tell the minister that there was a poor lad there who wanted to know how he could be saved. How I wished he had given half a minute to that subject! Dr. Manton, who was usually a clear and full preacher of the Gospel, when he preached before the Lord Mayor, gave his lordship something a cut above the common citizens and so the poorer folk missed their portion.

After he had done preaching his sermon, an aged woman cried, “Dr.

Manton, I came here this morning under concern of soul, wanting a blessing and I have not got it, for I could not understand you.” The preacher meekly replied, “The Lord forgive me! I will not so offend again.” He had

overlooked the poor and had thought mainly of my Lord Mayor. Special sermons before Mayors and Queens and assemblies are seldom worth a penny a thousand. The Gospel does not lend itself to show performances. I am not here to give you intellectual treats—my eyes look right on to your salvation. Oh that yours may look that way!

Go after Christ, dear Friend. Seek after Christ with your whole heart and soul. Feel that the one thing you must have is to be reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Keep on with that cry, “None but Christ—none but Christ.” Make this your continual litany—

*“Give me Christ, or else I die;*

*Give me Christ, or else I die.”*  
Then you will soon find Him. “Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you,” and you shall see the Lord of Grace appearing to you through the mist and through the cloud—that same Savior who stands in the midst of us even now and cries, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God and there is none else.”

*LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON*  
BELOVED FRIENDS—We are in our measure partaking in the change of weather which plunged England from an almost summer heat into cold and fog, for we have a cold wind blowing with a force which overpowers the warm sun. This has a depressing influence upon many invalids but does not affect me. Each day I make a little progress. I could not yet stand through a discourse, much less walk a mile. But I can walk further than I could a week ago and I am conscious of renewed vigor. I thank God that the swelling of the feet is also decreasing and so I may look for complete restoration and then for a speedy return to my happy work.

I hope and pray that this week’s sermon may prove useful. Purposely I have made it striking and plain, with the design that it should be suitable for wide distribution. It contains the Gospel in its simplicity, stated in a pleasant manner.

I have prepared three sermons, as a double number, to close the year with and I hope they will be a fit top stone to the thirty-fourth volume, which I am glad to have completed. Receive my sincere love in Christ Jesus. May all Grace abound towards you.  
Yours till death,  
*C. H. SPURGEON.*  
Mentone, Dec. 13TH, 1888

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LAST THINGS

NO. 667

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 31, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“At the last.”  
Proverbs 5:11.**

THE wise man saw the young and simple straying into the house of the strange woman. The house seemed so completely different from what he knew it to be that he desired to shed a light upon it, that the young man might not sin in the dark, but might understand the nature of his deeds. The wise man looked abroad and he saw but one lamp suitable to his purpose. It was named, “At the last.” So, snatching this, he held it up in the midst of the strange woman’s den of infamy and everything was changed from what it had been before—the truth had come to light and the deceptive had vanished.

The young man dreamed of pleasure. In wanton dalliance he hoped to find delight. But when the lamp of “At the last” began to shine, he saw rottenness in his bones, filthiness in his flesh. He saw pains and griefs and sorrows as the necessary consequence of sin and, wisely guided, wisely taught, the simple-minded started back and listened to the admonitions of the teacher, “Come not near the door of her house, for her gates lead down to the chambers of death.”

Now if this lamp of “At the last” was found so useful in this one particular case, I think it must be equally useful everywhere else! And it may help us all to understand the truth of matters if we will look at them in the light which this wonderful lamp yields. I can only compare my text in its matchless power to Ithuriel’s spear with which, according to Milton, he touched the toad and straightway Satan appeared in his true colors. If I can apply my text to certain things today, they will come out in their true light. “At the last,” shall be the rod in my hand with which I shall touch tinsel and it shall disappear, and you will see it is not gold. I will touch varnish and paint and graining and you shall understand that they are really what they are and not what they profess to be—the light of “At the last” shall be the light of Truth—the light of Wisdom to our souls.

It seems to me a fitting occasion for holding up this light this morning, when we have come to the end of the year and shall, in a few short hours, be at the beginning of another. This period, like Janus, has two faces looking back on the year that is past and looking forward on the year that is to come. And my four-sided lamp will, perhaps, gleam afar. I wish that, in the light of the beams of this lamp, “At the last,” you may have courage enough to look down the vista of the years that you have already lived and think of everything that you have thought and spoken and done. And then I hope you will have holy daring enough to let the same light shine forward on the years yet to come, when your hair shall be gray and the teeth shall fail, and they that look out of the windows shall be darkened.

We will, then, examine the past and the future of life in the light of, “At the last.” May it teach us wisdom and make us walk in the fear of God. I have said that my lamp has four sides to it and so it has—we will look at it first in the light which streams from death.

I. DEATH is at the last. In some sense it is the last of this mortal life. It is the last of our period of trial here below. It is the last of the days of Divine Grace. It is the last of the days of mortal sin. The tree falls when we die and it sprouts not again. The house is washed from the foundations and it is built no more if it has been founded on sin. Death is the end of this present life. And how certain is it to all of us! This year we have had many tokens of its certainty. One might almost compose an almanac for the year 1865 and put down the name of someone of note at least to every month—and I should scarcely exaggerate if I said to every week in the year.

All ranks and classes have been made to feel the arrow of the insatiable Archer. From royalty down to poverty the grave has been glutted with its prey. Not late in the year there fell one whose benevolence mingled with wisdom had blessed our land and who, being dead, is still remembered by the needy because he cheapened their bread and broke down the laws which, while they might have fattened the rich, certainly would have impoverished the poor. His wisdom could not spare him, and though he is embalmed in the hearts of thousands, yet to the dust he has returned.

Swiftly after him there fell one who ruled a mighty people in the flush of victory, when what threatened to be a disruption and a separation had ended in triumph to one side and the nation seemed as if it were about to start on a fresh course of prosperity. By the assassin’s hand he fell. Whatever question there might have been about him in his life, all men conspired to honor him in his death. The ruler of a nation who could subdue a gallant and a mighty foe, could not subdue that old foeman who conquers whom he wills. Abraham Lincoln died as well as Cobden!

And there was he who had saved many precious lives by warning mariners of the approaching storm and thus many a ship had remained in harbor and been delivered from the merciless jaws of the deep. But he could not forecast or escape himself the last dread storm. He, too, must go down into that fathomless deep which swallows all mankind. Then, when the year was ripe and the flowers were all in bloom—fit season for his going—there was taken away the man who has garnished our nation with objects of beauty and of joy. A man who loved the flowers and sleeps beneath them now. Like flowers, he withered as all of us must do—Sir Joseph Paxton died.

Then in the month of September, when the year began to wane, three men, at least, who had walked with their staff to Heaven and read the spheres—astronomers who predicted eclipses and told of comets, men of fame and name—three fell at once! They might tell the eclipse, but they, themselves, must be eclipsed. And they might foretell the track of the comet, but they, themselves, are gone from us just as those meteoric stars are gone. Then you will remember well, when the year had waned, grown old, it is but a day or two ago, that all were startled by the death of that young old man who had ruled our nation so long and on the whole so well.

We shall not forget that he was taken away from us, who was, in some respects, a king throughout our land. Wisdom, cheerfulness, youthful strength such as he possessed could not avert the time of death. And then, as if the muster roll were not complete—as if Death could not be satisfied till the year had yielded up yet another grave—we heard that the oldest of monarchs had been taken away. And though his goodness and his wisdom had guided well the little nation over which he ruled and given him an influence far more extensive than his own sphere, yet death spared him not and Leopold must die.

It has been a year of dying rather than of living and you may look upon yourselves and wonder that you are here! Some greener than we are have been cut down. You that are ripe, are you ready? It is marvelous that although so ripe you should have been spared so long. Now in the light of all these deaths, I want you to look upon mortal sins. They sculpture angels upon gravestones sometimes. Then let each angel from the gravestone speak to us this morning and we will listen to his words, for wise and solemn they will surely be and worthy of our notice, as if he had risen from the dead. Let me take you upstairs to your own dying chamber, for there, perhaps, the lamp will burn best for you.

Look at actions which you have thought to be great and upon which you have prided yourself—how will they look at the last? You made money. You made money fast. You did the thing very cleverly. You praised yourself for it, just as others have praised themselves for conquering nations, or forcing their way to fame, or lifting themselves into eminence. Now you are dying and what do you think of all that? Is it so great as it seemed to be? Oh, how you leaped up to it, how you strained yourself to reach it and you have got it and you are dying! What do you think of it now? The greatest of human actions will appear to be insignificant when we come to die and especially those upon which men most pride themselves—these will yield them the bitterest humiliation.

We shall then say what madmen we must have been to have wasted so much time and energy upon such paltry things. When we shall discover that they were not real, that they were but mere bubbles, mere pretences, we shall then look upon ourselves as demented to have spent the whole of our life and of our energy upon them. Let us look at our selfish actions in that light. A man says, “I know how to make money, and I know how to keep it, too—and he prides himself that he is not such a fool as to be generous, nor such a simpleton as to give either to God or to the poor. Now, there he lies.

Ah, do you know how to keep it now? Can you take it with you? Can you bear so much as a single farthing of it across the river of death? You are come to the water’s side—how much of it will you carry through? Ah Fool! How much wiser had you been if you had laid up your treasure in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust does corrupt! You called such men fools when you were living. What do you think of them now, that you are dying? Who is the fool—he that sent his goods beforehand—or he that stored them up here to leave them everlastingly? Everything that is selfish will look beggarly when we come to die! But everything which, in the sight of God we have done for Christ’s sake—that has been generous and selfdenying and noble—will even amidst the vaults of death sparkle with celestial splendor!

Some of you have been, during this week, giving to the cause of God right generously, for which I thank you—I think I may also do it in my Master’s name—and when I have thought of it, I have said to myself, “Surely, when they come to die, they shall, none of them, regret that they have served the cause of God. Ah, if they have even given to the pinching of themselves, it shall be no source of sorrow when they come to the dying bed that they did it unto one of the least of God’s little ones.”

Look at your actions in the light of death and the selfish ones shall soon pass. I would also, dear Friends, that some of you would look at your self-righteousness in the light of death. You have been very good people, very upright, honest, moral, amiable, generous and so on. And you are resting on what you are. Do you think this will bear your weight when you come to die? When you are in good health any form of religion may satisfy, but a dying soul wants more than sand to rest on. You will want the Rock of Ages. Then let me assure you that in the light of the grave, all confidence, except confidence in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, is a clear delusion! Fly from it, I beseech you. Why will you repose beneath a Jonah’s gourd that will die before the worm? Seek a better shelter—cling to the Rock of Ages! Find the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land.

The same, I may say, of all confidence in the efficacy of ceremonies and sacraments. When we are in good health it seems a sufficiently satisfactory thing to have been baptized and to have taken the sacrament and to go to church and read prayers and all that—and one can get some little water out of those wells while one is strong and joyous. But when you come to be sick and to die, let me tell you, sacraments will be nothing to you! Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, will, alike deceive you if you rest on them! When you come to die you will find them to be supports too frail to bear the weight of an immortal soul’s eternal interests. It will be in vain when you lie dying, if God gives you a quickened conscience, to say, “I went to church or to meetings so many times a day.” You will find it a poor bandage to your soul’s wounds to be able to say, “I made a profession of godliness.”

Oh your shams will all be torn away from you by the rough hand of the skeleton, Death! You will need a real Savior, vital godliness, true regeneration—not baptismal regeneration! You will need Christ, not sacraments! And nothing short of this will do “at the last.” And, dear Friends, let me ask as I hold up the light, How will sin appear when we come to die? It is pleasant now and we can excuse it, calling it a peccadillo, a little trivial mistake, a juvenile error and imprudence and so on. But how will sin appear when you come to die? The grim ghosts of our iniquities, if they have not been laid in the grave of Christ Jesus, will haunt our dying bed. That ghastly chamberlain, with fingers bloody and red, will draw the curtain round about us!

What a horrid prospect, to be shut in with our sins forever! To be dying with no comrades about the bed to comfort, but with the remembrances of the past to terrify and to alarm! Think, I pray you, not only upon the root and principle of evil, but upon the fruit of it! Remember that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life! Do not consider what the thing looks like today, but what will it be in the end? You warm the viper in your bosom, but how will you bear its sting when you shall come to lie upon your last bed? The sea, I know, is smooth and calm to you for a moment—but remember, there are storms, there are hurricanes that sweep it—and what will your poor boat do without Christ for its Pilot when the dread storm of Death shall come?

I wish I could, in imagination, take you down, down, down to the waters of death where you shall feel your feet sinking in the dread sand of uncertainty and hear the booming of the distant sea and your spirit shall begin to ask, “What is that ocean that I hear?” And there shall come back an answer, “You hear the breaking of the everlasting waves. The bottomless sea of eternity is that to which you are descending.” You shall feel its chill floods as they come from the ankles to the knees and from the knees to the loins. And you will find it, (if you are without Christ), not a river to swim in, but an ocean to be drowned in forever, forever, FOREVER!

Oh, may God help you to look at present joys and actions and thoughts and doings in the light of death! What a contrast there is often between the life of man and his death! You would praise some men if you only saw their lives, but, when you see their deaths, you change your mind. There is Moses—he may be the King of Egypt, but he gives up royalty and all its tempting joys. On the mount it is offered to him to be made the founder of a mighty race—a desire always prominent in the Eastern mind. But, instead of desiring himself to be made a great nation, he, unselfishly, desires even to be blotted out of the Book of Life if God will but spare his people Israel! And what does Moses get for it all? His only earthly reward is to be the leader of a crew of slaves who are perpetually rebelling against him and vexing the Holy Spirit.

Now there is Balaam, on the other hand. He has visitations from God. And when Balak, the son of Zippor, begs him to curse Israel, he cannot, though he is quite willing to go as far as he can. He is compelled, by the inward Holy Spirit, to bless the people! But, after he has done that, for gain and for reward, he plots a plan against Israel by which they were cursed—he bids them send out the women of Moab to lead astray the children of Israel. Now there he goes, with his treasures of silver and gold, back to his own house! The shrewd and busy worldly man says, “That is the man for me—do not tell me about your meek Moses that is afraid of doing this and that and will not look after the main chance. He has thrown away a kingdom and now he has thrown away the chance of being the head of a nation!  
“That is the man to make money—Balaam—he will be a common counselor, or an alderman, or lord mayor one day! A man must not stick too much at things—he must go ahead and make hay while the sun shines—

*‘There is a tide in the affairs of men,*

*Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.’*That is the man for me who knows when to launch out on the waters and who does not ask if they are dirty or clean if they only waft him onward to wealth and success.” Ah, but they come to die and Balaam dies—where? He had prayed, “Let my last end be like his”—like the righteous—and he died in battle, fighting against the righteous and against the God of the righteous. And hard by that very spot Moses also died and you know how?—With visions of Canaan upon his eyes melting into visions of the Canaan which is above—the New Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all!

In that death, who would not be Moses? Let who will, be Balaam in life. Be it yours and mine to aspire to be like Moses, both living and dying. “At the last!” Think of that and whenever you are tempted by sin, or tempted by gain—look at it—“At the last,” “At the last.” God help you to judge righteous judgment.

II. And now we will turn to the second side of our lantern. The second of these last things is JUDGMENT. After death the judgment. When we die, we die not. When a man dies, shall he live again? Yes, that he shall— for his spirit never dies. God has made us such strange wondrous beings, with such wide reaching hopes and such far darting aspirations, that it is not possible we should die and become extinct! The beast has no longing for immortality. You never hear it sigh for celestial regions—it has no dread of judgment, because there is no second life—no judgment for the beast that perishes.

But the God who gives to man the dread of things to come and makes him feel and long after something better than this small globe affords us— cannot have mocked us, cannot have made us more wretched than the beast that perishes— by giving us passions and desires never to be gratified. We are immortal, every one of us! And when the stars go out and Sol’s great furnace is extinguished for want of fuel, and, like a vesture, God’s wide universe shall be rolled up, we shall still be living a life as eternal as the Eternal God Himself! Oh, when we leave this world we are told that after death there comes a judgment to us. I do not know how it is with you—you may be more accustomed to courts of justice than I am— but there always creeps a solemnity over me, even in a common court of justice among men and especially when a man is being tried for his life.

Laughter seems hushed there and everything is solemn. How much more dread will be that Court where men shall be tried for their eternal lives—where their souls—rather than their bodies, shall be at stake? The judgment of one’s fellows is not to be despised. A bold good man can afford to laugh at the world’s opinion, but still it is trying to him, for one’s fellows may be right. Multitudes of men, if they have really thought upon the matter, may not all be wrong. It is not easy to stand at the bar of public opinion and receive the verdict of condemnation. But what will it be to stand at the bar of God, who is greater than all, and to receive from Him the sentence of damnation? God save us from that!

Let us think of this judgment a moment. We shall rise from the dead. We shall be there in body as well as spirit. These very bodies will stand upon the earth at the last day when Christ shall come and the trumpet shall sound. His people shall rise at the first resurrection, and the wicked shall rise, also. And in their flesh shall they see God. Let me think of all that I have done, then, in the light of that. There will be present every man who has ever lived on earth. How shall I like to have all my doings published there?

My very thoughts! How shall I feel when they are read aloud? What I whispered in the ear in the closet—how shall I like to have that proclaimed with the sound of a trumpet? And what I did in the dark—how shall I care to have that revealed in the light? And yet these things must be made known before the assembled universe. There will be present there my enemies. If I have treated them ill, if I have been a backbiter, a slanderer, it will be then declared—if I have been a hypocrite and a dissembler and made others think me true when I have been false, then I shall be unmasked.

Those I have injured will be there. With what alarm will the debauchee see those whom he has seduced stand with fiery eyes to accuse him! With what horror will the oppressor see the widow and the fatherless, whom he drove to poverty, stand there as swift witnesses against him to condemnation! If I have spread false doctrine, a moral pestilence destroying human souls—my victims shall be there to gather round me in a circle and, like dogs that bay the stag—will, each of them, demand my blood! They shall all be there, friends and foes!

More solemn still, “He” shall be there—the Man of men, the grandest among men—God, as well as Man—and if I have despised and rejected His salvation, I shall then see Him in another fashion and after another sort—

*“The Lord shall come! But not the same  
As once in lowliness He came,  
A silent Lamb before His foes,  
A weary Man and full of woes.  
The Lord shall come! A dreadful form,  
With rainbow-wreath and robes of storm,  
On cherub wings and wings of wind,  
Appointed Judge of all mankind!”*

How will you face Him, you that have despised Him? You who have doubted His Deity, how will you bear the blaze of it? You rejected and trampled on His precious blood, how will you bear the weight of His almighty arm? When on the Cross you would not receive Him, and when on the Throne you shall not escape from Him. That silver scepter which He stretches out now to you, if you refuse to touch it, shall be laid aside and He will take one of another metal—a rod of iron—and He shall break you in pieces. Yes, He shall dash you in pieces like potters’ vessels.

And God shall be there, manifestly there—that God who is here this morning, on the last day of this year—and who sees your thoughts and reads your minds at this moment, but who is so invisible that you forget that He fills this place and fills all places! You shall not be able to forget Him, then. Your eyes shall see Him in that day. You shall understand His Presence. You will try to hide from Him—would desire Hell itself and think it a place of shelter—if you could escape from Him! But everywhere His fire shall encircle you, shall consume you, for “our God is a consuming fire.” You shall no more be able to escape from yourself than from God. You shall find Him as present with you as your own soul will be and you shall feel His hand of fire searching for the chords of your soul and sweeping with a doleful Miserere all the heart strings of your spirit. Misery unspeakable must be yours when the voice of the God-Man, shall say, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell.”

I would to God that you would look at all your actions in the light of the Day of Judgment. Our secret thoughts, let us turn them over this morning. They have been lying by till they are moldy—let us bring them forth today. My Thoughts, how will you look in the light of judgment? My professions, my imaginations, my conceptions, how will they all be when the Judgment Day shall gleam upon them? My profession, how does that look? I have been baptized in Christ professedly. I wear a Christian name, I preach the Gospel, I am a Church officer or a Church member—how will all this bear the light of that tremendous day?

When I am put in the scales and weighed, shall I be the weight that I am labeled? In that dreadful day shall I see the handwriting on the wall, “Mene, Tekel, Upharsin”—“you are weighed in the balances and found wanting”? Or shall I hear the gracious sentence which shall pronounce me saved in Jesus Christ? As to my Graces, what must they be in the light of judgment? My own salvation, all the matters of experience and knowledge—how do they all look in that light? I think I have believed—I think I love the Savior—I sometimes hope that I am His—but am I so? Shall I be found to be a true Believer at the last? Will my love be mere cant or true affection? Will my Graces be mere talk, or will they be found to be the work of God the Holy Spirit?

Am I vitally united to Christ or not? Am I a mere pretender, or a true possessor of the things eternal? Oh, my Soul, set these questions in the light of that tremendous day! I would to God we could now go forward to the Day of Judgment, in thought at any rate. And since I feel myself quite unable to lead you there, let me adopt my Savior’s words—He says that the day comes when He shall separate the righteous from the wicked as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. There shall be some on His left hand to whom He shall say, “I was hungry and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink. Sick and in prison, and you visited Me not. Depart, you cursed.” Will He say that to you and to me?

There will be some on His right hand to whom He will say, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.” Shall He say that to you and to me? The one or the other it must be. As I stand here this morning, I seem to feel, on my own account, and I wish you all did on yours, what a certain man in court once felt. Sentence was about to be given in his case, or, at least he thought the case would be called on immediately and he rushed to his solicitor and he said, “Is there one thing left undone? Are you sure? For if I lose this case I am a ruined man.” His face was white with anxiety. And so it is with you. Is there one thing left undone? For if you lose this case at God’s Judgment Seat you are a ruined man!

Come Hearer, have you believed on Christ Jesus, or is faith left undone? Have you given up self-righteousness? Have you left your sin? Have you given your heart to the Savior? Is regeneration still unaccomplished? Are you born again? Are you in Christ? Are you saved? If your case is lost you are a ruined man! A man ruined here may still retrieve his fortunes. The bankrupt may start again and yet be rich. The captain who has lost a battle may renew the fight and win the next victory and begin the campaign anew. But lose the battle of life and the fight shall be no more. Make bankruptcy in this life’s business and you have no more trading. This is the business of eternity!

Soul, is there anything left undone? Brother, Sister, is there anything left undone? For if you lose this case, you are ruined and that to all eternity. I pray you to look at this day and at all your days, past and the future, in the light of the Day of Judgment.

III. But my lamp—this matchless lamp—has a third side to it, bright, gleaming like a cluster of stars! The third of the last things is HEAVEN, the portion, I trust, of many of us. We hope, when days and years have passed, that full many of us will meet to part no more on the other side of Jordan, in Heaven. Now, let us see if we can cast a little light from Heaven upon the things present and the things past.

You have been toiling—toiling very hard, and wiping the sweat from your brow and saying, “My lot is not a desirable one. Oh how weary I am! I cannot bear it.” Courage, Brother! Courage, Sister! There is rest for the weary. There is eternal rest for the beloved of the Lord and when you shall arrive in Heaven, how little, how utterly insignificant your toil will seem, even if it shall have lasted threescore years and ten! You are pained much. Even now pain shoots through your body. You do not often know what it is to have an easy hour and you half murmur, “Why am I thus? Why did God deal so harshly with me?”

Think of Heaven, where the inhabitants shall no more say, “I am sick”! Where there are no groans to mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues. Courage, tried One! It will soon be over! It is but a pin’s prick or a moment’s pang and then eternal Glory! Be of good cheer and let your patience not fail you. And so you have been slandered. On your face, for Christ’s dear name, shame and reproach have been cast and you are ready to give up. Come, Man, look before you! Can you not hear the acclamations of the angels as the conquerors receive, one by one, their eternal crowns? What? Will you not fight when there is so much to be won? Must you be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease? You must fight if you would reign!

Gird up the loins of your mind and have respect to the recompense of reward. In the light of Heaven the shame of earth will seem to be less than nothing and vanity! And so you have had many losses and crosses—you were once well-to-do—but you are now poor. You will have to go home today to a very poor abode and to a scanty meal. Oh, but Beloved, you will not be there long. “In My Father’s house are many mansions.” It is but an inn you are tarrying at awhile and, if the accommodation is rough, you are gone tomorrow—so complain not! I would to God we could look upon all our actions in the light of Heaven—I mean those who are Believers in Jesus Christ. If we could have regrets hereafter, I think it would be that we did not do more than we did for Christ here below.

In Heaven they cannot feed Christ’s poor, cannot teach the ignorant. They can extol Him with songs of praise, but there are some things in which we have the preference over them—they cannot clothe the naked, or visit the sick, or speak words of cheer to those that are disconsolate. If there is anything that can give joy in Heaven, surely it will be in looking back on the Divine Grace which enabled us to serve the Master! Oh, if I can win souls to Christ I shall be a gainer as well as you! I shall have another Heaven in their Heaven, another joy, as it were, in their life and another happiness in their souls’ happiness. And, dear Brothers and Sisters, if in your Sunday school teaching, or visiting, or talking to others you can bring any to Glory, you will, if it is possible, multiply your Heaven and make it all the more glad and joyful!

Now, look at the life of some Christians. They come here and if I preach what they call a good sermon, they like it and drink it in. They are willing to eat the fat and drink the sweet, but what do they do for Christ? Nothing! What do they give for Christ? Hardly anything. There are a few such among us and these are generally the most miserable people you meet with—neither a comfort to others, nor any joy to themselves. Now, even in Heaven, I think, though no sorrow should be there, it will be only God’s wiping it away that will keep them from regretting that they did not do what they might have done on earth!

We are saved by Grace, blessed be God—by Grace alone—but, being saved, we do desire to make known the savor of Christ in every place, and we believe in Heaven we shall have joy in having made this known among the sons of men. Look at your joy in the light of Heaven and you will make it other than it now looks.

IV. We now turn to the fourth of the four last things and that is, let us look at all things in the light of HELL, that dread and dismal light, the glare of the fiery abyss. Bring that lantern here. Here is a young man very merry. “Ho! Ho!” he sings, “Christians are fools.” Hold my light up. There you are without God, without hope, with the great iron gate of Death shut upon you and barred forever, your body in the flames of Tophet and your soul in the yet more horrible flames of the wrath of God.

Who is the fool now? Oh, when your spirits are damned, as they must be if you live without a Savior, you will think laughing a poor thing. Laugh now, Sir! Scoff now! For a few minutes’ merriment you sold eternal joys. You had a mess of pottage and you ate it in haste and you sold your birthright. What do you think of it now? It is an awful thing that men should be content—for a few short hours of silly mirth—to fling away their souls! Look at merriment in the glare of the flames of Hell.

Mark that man in agony down in the vault of Hell. He made money by sin and there he is. He gained the whole world and lost his own soul. How does it look now? “I would give thirty thousand pounds,” said an English gentleman when he lay dying, “if any man would prove to me to a demonstration, that there is no Hell.” Yes, but if he had given thirty thousand worlds that could not be proved and now, with pangs unutterable, he knows it is so. What would you give, when once you are lost, if you could throw back your gains? If lost spirits could return here, surely they would do what Judas did—throw down the thirty pieces of silver in the temple and curse themselves that they ever took the gain of this world and destroyed their souls.

And how will unbelief look in the flames of Hell? There are no infidels anywhere but on earth—there are none in Heaven and there are none in Hell. Atheism is a strange thing. Even the devils never fell into that vice, for, “the devils believe and tremble.” And there are some of the devil’s children that have gone beyond their father in sin, but how will it look when they are forever lost? When God’s foot crushes them, they will not be able to doubt His existence. When He tears them in pieces and there is none to deliver, then their sophistical syllogisms, their empty logic, their brags and bravadoes will be of no avail! Oh, that they had been wise and had not darkened their foolish hearts, but had turned unto the living God!

And, my dear Hearers, I have another thought which will come home to some of your spirits with peculiar power. How will procrastination seem when once you get there? Some of you have been attending this place a long time—you have often had impressions, but you have always said, “By and by.” “By and by.” You have been aroused and aroused again, but still it has been, “Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow.” How will tomorrow ring in your ears when once you are lost? What would you not give for another day of mercy, another hour of Divine Grace?

I feel, this morning, as if I would do with you what the Roman Ambassadors did with Antiochus. They met him and asked him whether he meant war or peace. He said he must see. And one of them, taking his staff, made a circle round him where he stood and said, “You must answer before you leave that spot. If you step out of that it is war. Now, war or peace?” And I, too, would draw a secret circle round you in the pew this morning and say to you, “Which shall it be, sin or holiness, self or Christ? Shall it be Grace or enmity, Heaven or Hell?”

And I pray you answer that question in the light of Hell. It is a dread light, but it is a revealing one. It is a fire that will devour the scales that are about your blind eyes. God grant that it may scorch those scales away, that you may see now how dreadful a thing it is to be an enemy to God and be led by His Holy Spirit to apply to Jesus Christ even now. Ah, how will the Gospel seem in the light of Hell and how will your indifference to it seem? When I was thinking of preaching this morning, I wished that I could preach as in that light. To think that there are some to whom I have spoken again and again, who during this year have passed away from the world of hope, we fear, into the land of despair is a dreadful thought!

Persons that occupied these pews, sat in these aisles, stood far away there and listened and heard the Gospel—and they are gone! Did I warn them fairly, truly? If not—“If you warn them not they shall perish, but their blood will I require at your hands.” My God, by the blood of the Savior, set me free from these men! Oh deliver me from that solemn condemnation! But with those of you that still live, I would be clear of you. Dear Hearers, do you not feel that you are mortal? Have not you within you a sense that you are dying? It is a thought that is always with me. Life seems so short. It was not so always with me—but the shortness of life now seems to hang over my mind perpetually and I suppose it must do so over those of you who are thirty, forty, fifty, or sixty and who frequently see your friends taken away.

Now, since you must soon be gone. Since there is a world to come and you believe there is, how can some of you play with these things? How is it that while you are attentive to your business, you leave your soul’s business neglected? What are you waiting for, my Hearer? Are you waiting for another season? Does not God say, “Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation”? What are you waiting for? Does not the time past suffice?

Oh that you were wise and would think of your latter end and seek after God! I conjure you, by the shortness of life, by the certainty of death, by the terrors of judgment, by the glories of Heaven, by the pains of Hell— seek after the right way and walk in it. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This is the Gospel, “Whoever believes is not condemned.” To believe is to trust. Oh that you may have Divine Grace to trust your souls with the Lord Jesus now and forever and then we shall not need to fear those words, “At the last,” nor the light of the four last things, Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell.

God bless you, for His name’s sake.  
*“Soon the whole, like a parched scroll,  
Shall before my amazed sight unroll,  
And without a screen at one burst be seen, The presence wherein I have ever been.”*

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Psalm 148, and 2 Corinthians 6.*  
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #915 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Pro 5.22

SINNERS BOUND WITH THE CORDS OF SIN  
NO. 915

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, FFBRUARY 13, 1870, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be held with the cords of his sins.”  
Proverbs 5:22.**

THE first part of our text has reference to a net in which birds or beasts are taken. The ungodly man first of all finds sin to be a bait. And charmed by its apparent pleasantness, he indulges in it. Then he becomes entangled in its meshes so that he cannot escape. That which first attracted the sinner, afterwards detains him. Evil habits are soon formed, the soul readily becomes accustomed to evil, and then, even if the man should have lingering thoughts of better things, and form frail resolutions to amend, his iniquities hold him captive like a bird in the fowler’s snare.

You have seen the foolish fly descend into the sweet which is spread to destroy him—he sips, and sips again, and by-and-by he plunges boldly in to feast himself greedily. When satisfied, he attempts to fly, but the sweet holds him by the feet and clogs his wings. He is a victim, and the more he struggles the more surely is he held. Even so is it with the sins of ungodly men. They are at first a tempting bait, and afterwards a snare. Having sinned, they become so bewitched with sin that the Scriptural statement is no exaggeration—“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”

The first part of the text also may have reference to an arrest by an officer of the Law. The transgressor’s own sins shall take him, shall seize him. They bear a warrant for arresting him—they shall judge him—they shall even execute him. Sin, which at first brings to man a specious pleasure, before long turns into bitterness, remorse, and fear. Sin is a dragon, with eyes like stars, but it carries a deadly sting in its tail. The cup of sin, with rainbow bubbles on its brim, is black with deep damnation in its dregs. O that men would consider this, and turn from their delusions!

To bring torment to the guilty there is little need that God should, literally in the world to come, pile up Tophet with its wood and much smoke, nor even that the pit should be dug for the ungodly in order to make them miserable. Sin shall of itself bring forth death. Leave a man in his own sins, and Hell itself surrounds him. Only suffer a sinner to do what he wills, and to give his lusts unbridled headway, and you have secured him boundless misery. Only allow the seething caldron of his corruptions to boil at its own pleasure, and the man must inevitably become a vessel filled with sorrow.  
Be assured, Brothers and Sisters, that sin is the root of bitterness.

Gild the pill as you may, iniquity is death. Sweet is an unholy morsel in the mouth, but it will be wormwood in the heart. Let but man heartily believe this, and surely he will not so readily be led astray. “Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird,” and shall man be more foolish than the fowls of the air? Will he willfully pursue his own destruction? Will he wrong his own soul? Sin, then, becomes first a net to hold the sinner by the force of custom and habit, and afterwards, a sheriff’s officer to arrest him—and to scourge him with its inevitable results.

The second part of our text speaks of the sinner being held with cords, and a parable may be readily fashioned out of the expression. The lifelong occupation of the ungodly man is to twist ropes of sin. All his sins are as so much twine and cord out of which ropes may be made. His thoughts and his imaginations are so much raw material, and while he thinks of evil, while he contrives transgression, while he lusts after filthiness, while he follows after evil devices, while with head, and hands, and heart he pursues eagerly after mischief, he is still twisting evermore the cords of sin which are afterwards to bind him.

The binding meant is that of a culprit pinioned for execution. Iniquity pinions a man, disables him from delivering himself from its power. It enchains his soul and inflicts a bondage on the spirit far worse than chaining of the body. Sin cripples all desires after holiness, dampen every aspiration after goodness, and thus, fettering the man hand and foot, delivers him over to the executioner, which executioner shall be the wrath of God—but also sin itself, in the natural consequences which in every case must flow from it. Samson could burst asunder green withes and new ropes, but when at last his darling sin had bound him to his Delilah, that bond he could not snap, though it cost him his eyes. Make a man’s will a prisoner, and he is a captive, indeed.

Determined independence of spirit walks in freedom in a tyrant’s Bastille, and defies a despot’s hosts. But a mind enslaved by sin builds its own dungeon, forges its own fetters, and rivets on its chains. It is slavery, indeed, when the iron enters into the soul. Who would not scorn to make himself a slave to his baser passions? And yet the mass of men are such— the cords of their sins bind them.

Thus, having introduced to you the Truth of God which this verse teaches, namely, the captivating, enslaving power of sin, I shall advance to our first point of consideration. This is a solution to a great mystery. But then, secondly, it is itself a greater mystery. And when we have considered these two matters it will be time for us to note what is the practical conclusion from this line of thought.

I. First, then, the doctrine of the text, that iniquity entraps the wicked as in a net, and binds them as with cords is A SOLUTION OF A GREAT MYSTERY. When you and I first began to do good by telling out the Gospel, we labored under the delusion that as soon as our neighbors heard of the blessed way of salvation they would joyfully receive it, and be saved in crowds. We have long ago seen that pleasant delusion dispelled. We find that our position is that of the serpent-charmer with the deaf adder. Charm we ever so wisely, men will not hear so as to receive the Truth. Like the ardent reformer, we have found out that old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon.

We now perceive that for a sinner to receive the Gospel involves a work of Divine Grace that shall change his heart and renew his nature. None the less is it a great mystery that it should be so. It is one of the prodigies of the god of this world that he makes men love sin, and abide in indifference as if they were fully content to be lost. It is a marvel of marvels that man should be so base as to reject Christ and abide in willful and wicked unbelief. I will try and set forth this mystery in the way in which, I dare say, it has struck many an honest-hearted worker for Jesus Christ.

Is it not a mysterious thing that men should be content to abide in a state of imminent peril? Every unconverted man is already condemned. Our Lord has said it—“He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.” Every unregenerate man is not only liable to the wrath of God in the future, but the wrath of God abides on him. It is on him now, it always will remain upon him. As long as he is what he is, it abides on him. And yet in this state men are not frightened, they are not amazed or alarmed, they are not even anxious.

Sunday after Sunday they are reminded of their unhappy position—it makes us unhappy to think they should be in such a state—but they are strangely at ease. The sword of vengeance hangs over them by a single hair, yet they sit at their banquets, and they laugh and sport as though there were no God, no wrath to come, no certainty of appearing before the Judgment Seat of Christ. See a number of persons in a train that has broken down. The guard has only to intimate that another train is approaching and that it may perhaps dash into the carriages and mangle the passengers. He has only to give half a hint, and see how the carriage doors fly open, how the travelers rush up the embankment, each one so eager for his own preservation as to forget his fellow’s!

Yet here are men and women by the hundreds and thousands, with the fast-rushing train of Divine Vengeance close behind them. They may almost hear the sound of its thundering wheels, and, lo, they sit in all quietness, exposed to present peril and in danger of a speedy and overwhelming destruction. “It is strange. It is passing strange, it is amazing.” Here is a mystery, indeed, that can only be understood in the light of the fact that these foolish beings are taken by their sins, and bound by the cords of their iniquities.

Be it ever remembered that before very long these unconverted men and women, many of whom are present this morning, will be in a state whose wretchedness it is not possible for language fully to express. Within twenty-four hours their spirits may be summoned before the bar of God. And, according to this Book, which partially uplifts the veil of the future, the very least punishment that can fall upon an unconverted soul will cause it “weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” All they had endured, of whom it is written that they wept and gnashed their teeth, was to be shut out into outer darkness. Nothing more. No stripes had then fallen, they had not yet been shut up in the prison of Hell—only the gate of Heaven was shut—only the light of Glory was hid.

And straightway there was weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth! What, then, will be the woe of the lost when positive punishment is inflicted? As for what they will endure who have heard the Gospel, but have willfully rejected it, we have some faint notion from the Master’s Words— “It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for them.” We know that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for “our God is a consuming fire.” From this platform there rings full often that question, “How shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation?”

And yet for all this, men are willing to pass on through time into eternity regardless of the escape which God provides, turning aside from the only salvation which can rescue them from enduring “the blackness of darkness forever.” O Reason, have you utterly fled? Is every sinner altogether brutish? If we should meet with a man condemned to die and tell him that pardon was to be had, would he hear us with indifference? Would he abide in the condemned cell and use no means for obtaining the benefit of life and liberty? Yes, there awaits the sinner a more awful doom, and a more terrible sentence—and we are sent to publish a sure pardon from the God of Heaven!

And yet thousands upon thousands give us no deep heartfelt attention, but turn aside and perish in their sins. O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep for the folly of the race to which I belong, and mourn over the destruction of my fellow men! It often strikes us with wonder that men do not receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ, when we remember that the Gospel is so plain. If it were a great mystery one might excuse the illiterate from attending to it. If the plan of salvation could only be discovered by the attentive perusal of a long series of volumes, and if it required a classical training and a thorough education, why then the multitude of the poor and needy, whose time is taken up with earning their bread, might have same excuse.

But there is under Heaven no Truth more plain than this, “He that believes on the Lord Jesus has everlasting life.” “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” To believe—that is, simply to trust Christ. How plain! There is no road, though it ran straight as an arrow, that can be more plain than this. Legible only by the light they give, but all so legible that he who runs may read, stand these soul-quickening words, “Believe and live.” Trust Christ and your sins are forgiven. You are saved. This is so plain a precept, that I may call it a very A B C for infants, yet men receive it not. Are they not, indeed, held by the cords of their sins when they refuse to obey?

Moreover, Brethren, there is a wonderful attractiveness in the Gospel. If the Gospel could possibly be a revelation of horrors piled on horrors—if there were something in it utterly inconsistent with reason, or something that shocked all the sensitive affections of our better part—we might excuse mankind. But the Gospel is just this—man is lost, but God becomes Man to save him—“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Out of infinite love to His enemies the Son of God took upon Himself human flesh, that He might suffer in the place of men what they ought to have suffered.

The doctrine of Substitution, while it wondrously magnifies the Grace of God and satisfies the Justice of God, methinks ought to strike you all with love because of the disinterested affection which it reveals on Jesus Christ’s part. O King of Glory, do You bleed for me? O Prince of Life, can You lie shrouded in the grave for me? Does God stoop from His Glory to be spat upon by sinful lips? Does He stoop from the splendor of Heaven to be “despised and rejected of men,” that men may be saved? Why, it ought to win every human ear! It ought to enter every human heart! Was ever love like this? Go to your poets and see if they have ever imagined anything nobler than the love of Christ, the Son of God, for the dying sons of men!

Go to your philosophers and see if in all their maxims they have ever taught a more Divine philosophy than that of Christ’s life, or ever imagined in their pictures of what men ought to be, an heroic love like that which Christ in very deed displayed! We lift before you no bloody banner that might sicken your hearts. We bring before you no rattling chains of a tyrant’s domination. But we lift up Jesus crucified, and “Love” is written on the banner that is waved in the forefront of our hosts! We bid you yield to the gentle sway of love, and not to the tyranny of terror. Alas, men must surely be bound, indeed, and fettered fast by an accursed love to sin, or else the Divine attractions of a crucified Redeemer would win their hearts!

Consider, my Friends, you who love the souls of your fellow men, how amazing it is that men should not receive the Gospel when the commandment of the Gospel is not burdensome! Methinks if it had been written that no man should enter Heaven except by the way of martyrdom, it had been wisdom for every one of us to give our bodies to be burned, or to be stretched upon the rack. Yes, if there had been no path to escape from the wrath of God but to be flayed alive with Bartholomew, enduring present but exquisite torture—it would have been but a cheap price for an escape from wrath, and an entrance into Heaven. But I find in God’s Word, prescribed as the way of salvation, no such physical agonies!

No austerities are commanded. Not even the milder Law which governed the Pharisee when he “fasted thrice in the week.” Only this is written—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” And the precept of the Christian’s life is, “Love your God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself.” Most pleasant duties, these of love! What more sweet? What more delightful than to permit the soul to flow out in streams of affection? The ways of true religion are not irksome, her ways are

pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. What? Heaven given for believing? What? Heaven’s gate opened only for knocking, and gifts all priceless bestowed for nothing but the asking?

Yet they will not ask, they will not knock. Alas, my God, what creatures are men! Alas, O Sin, what monsters have you made mankind, that they will forget their own interests and wrong their own souls! Further, it is clear that men must be fast held by the bondage of their sins when we remember that, according to the confession of most of them, the pleasures of sin are by no means great. I have heard them say, themselves, that they have been satiated after a short season of indulgence. We know how true the word is, “Who has woe? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. They that go to seek mixed wine.”

No form of sin has ever been discovered yet that has yielded satisfaction. You shall look at those who have had all that heart could wish, and have without restraint indulged their passions—and you shall find them to be in their latter end among the most wretched, rather than the most satisfied of mankind. Yet for these pleasures—I think I degrade the word when I call them “pleasures”—for these pleasures they are willing to pawn their souls and risk everlasting woe! And all this while, be it remembered—to add to the wonder—there are pleasures to be found in godliness. They do not deny this, they cannot without belying their own observation.

We who are at least as honest as they are, bear our testimony that we never knew what true happiness was till we gave our hearts to Christ. But since then our peace has been like a river. We have had our afflictions. We have suffered grievous bodily pain. We have endured mental depression. We have been heavily burdened. We have borne many trials. But we can say—

*“We would not change our blessed estate*

*For all the world calls good or great.”*  
“Happy are the people whose God is the Lord!” We can set our seal to this experimentally. See then, my Brethren, these poor souls will prefer the pleasures that mock them, to the pleasures that alone can satisfy. If we had to die like dogs it would be worth while to be a Christian. If there were no hereafter, and our only consideration were who should enjoy this life the best, it would be the wisest thing to be a servant of God and a soldier of the Cross.

I say not it would ensure our being rich! I say not it would ensure our being respected! I say not it would ensure our walking smoothly and free from outward trouble! But I do say that because of “the secret something which sweetens all,” because of the profound serenity which true religion brings, the Christian life out-masters every other and there is nothing to be compared with it. But think for awhile what the ungodly man’s life is! I can only compare it to that famous diabolical invention of the Inquisition of ancient times. They had as a fatal punishment for heretics, what they called the “Virgin’s Kiss.” There stood in a long corridor the image of the Virgin. She outstretched her arms to receive her heretic child.

She looked fair, and her dress was adorned with gold and tinsel, but as soon as the poor victim came into her arms the machinery within began to work, and the arms closed and pressed the wretch closer and closer to her bosom, which was set with knives and daggers, and lancets, and razors, and everything that could cut and tear him, till he was ground to pieces in the horrible embrace. And such is the ungodly man’s life. It stands like a fair virgin—and with bewitching smiles it seems to say, “Come to my bosom, no place so warm and blissful as this.”

And then as soon as it begins to fold its arms of habit about the sinner, and he sins again and again, it brings misery into his body. Perhaps if he falls into some form of sin, it stings his soul, makes his thoughts a case of knives to torture him, and grinds him to powder beneath the force of his own iniquities. Men perceive this, and dare not deny it. And yet into this virgin’s bosom they still thrust themselves, and reap the deep damnation that iniquity must everywhere involve. Alas, alas, my God!

And now, once more. This terrible mystery, which is only solved by men’s being held by their sins, has this added to it—that all the while in the case of most of you now present, all that I have said is believed, and a great deal of it is felt! I mean this—if I were talking with persons who did not believe they had a soul, or believe in the judgment to come, or believe in the penalty of sin, or believe in the reward of righteousness, I should see some reason why they rejected the great salvation. But the most of you who attend this House of Prayer—I think I might say all—have scarcely ever had a doubt about these things. You would be very much horrified if any one would insinuate that you did not believe the Bible to be the Word of God.

You have a little Phariseeism in your soul, that you think you are not as scoffers are, nor infidels. I own you are not, but I grieve to say I think you are more inconsistent than they. If these things are a fiction, well, Sirs, your course is rational. But if these things are realities, what shall I say for you when I plead with God on your behalf? What excuse can I make for you? If you profess to believe these things, act as though you believe them—yet do not, practically act so—why do you profess to own them as the Truth? The case is worse, for you not only believe these thing’s to be true, but some of you have felt their power. You have gone home from this place, and you could not help it, you have sought your chamber and bowed your knee in prayer—such prayer as it was, for, alas—your goodness has been like the morning cloud and the early dew.

I know some of you who have had to break off some of your sins, for your conscience would not let you rest in them. Yet you are unbelievers still! You are still undecided, still unsaved, and at this moment, if your soul were required of you, nothing would be in prospect but a fearful looking for judgment and of fiery indignation. O my Hearer, you whose conscience has been at times awakened, in whom the arrows of the great

King have found a lodging place, in whom they are rankling still—yield, I pray you—yield to the Divine thrusts, and give up your contrite spirit to your Redeemer’s hands! But if you do not, what shall I say to you? The kingdom of God has been thrust from you by yourselves. Be sure of this— it has come near you, and in coming near it has involved solemn responsibilities which I pray you may not have to feel the weight of in the world to come.

Here, then, stands the riddle, that man is so set against God and His Christ that he never will accept eternal salvation until the Holy Spirit, by a supernatural work, overcomes his will and turns the current of his affections. And why is this? The answer lies in the text—because his own iniquities have taken him, and he is held with the cords of his sin. For this reason he will not come to Christ that he may have life. For this reason he cannot come, except the Father which has sent Christ draw him.

II. But now, secondly, I pass on to observe that though this is the solution of one mystery, IT IS IN ITSELF A GREATER MYSTERY. It is a terrible mystery that man should be so great a fool, so mad a creature as to be held by cords apparently so feeble as the cords of his own sins. To be bound by reason is honorable. To be held by compulsion, if you cannot resist it, is at least not discreditable. But to be held simply by sin, by sin and nothing else, is a bondage which is disgraceful to the human name. It lowers man to the last degree, to think that he should want no fetter to hold him but the fetter of his own evil lusts and desires. Let us just think of one or two cords, and you will see this.

One reason why men receive not Christ and are not saved is because they are hampered by the sin of forgetting God. Think of that for a minute. Men forget God altogether. The commission of many a sin has been prevented by the presence of a child. In the presence of a fellow creature, ordinarily a man will feel himself under some degree of restraint. Yet those eyes which never sleep, the eyes of the eternal God, exercise no restraint on most men. If there were a child in that chamber you would respect it— but God being there you can sin with impunity. If your mother or your father were there you would not dare offend—but God who made you and whose will can crush you—your lawful Sovereign—you take no more account of Him than though He were a dog! Yes, not so much as that.

Oh, strange thing that men should thus act! And yet with many it is not because of the difficulty of thinking of God. Men of study, for instance, if they are considering the works of God, must be led up to thoughts of God. Galen was converted from being an atheist while in the process of dissecting the human body. He could not but see the finger of God in the nerves and sinews, and all the rest of the wonderful embroidery of the human frame. There is not an emmet or an animalcule beneath the microscope but what as plainly as tongue can speak, says, “Mortal, think of God who made you and me.”

Some men travel daily over scenes that naturally suggest the Creator. They go down to the sea in ships and do business on great waters where they must see the works of the Lord. And yet they manage to become the most boisterous blasphemers against the sacred Majesty of the Most High in His very temple where everything speaks of His Glory. But you will tell me, perhaps, some of you, that you are not engaged in such pursuits. I reply, I know it. Many of you have to labor with your hands for your daily bread, in occupations requiring but little mental exercise. So much the more guilty, then, are you that when your mind is not necessarily taken up with other things, you still divert it from all thoughts of God.

The working man often find is it very possible to spend his leisure hours in politics and to amuse his working hours by meditating upon schemes more or less rational concerning the government of his country. And will he dare to tell me, therefore, that he could not, during that time, think of God? There is an aversion to God in your heart, my Brother, or else it would not be that from Monday morning to Saturday night you forget Him altogether. Even when sitting here you find it by no means a pleasant thing to be reminded of your God, and yet if I brought up the recollection of your mother, perhaps in Heaven, the topic would not be displeasing to you at all.

What do you owe to your mother compared with what you owe to your God? If I spoke to you of some dear friend who has assisted you in times of distress, you would be pleased that I had touched upon such a chord. And may I not talk with you concerning your God, and ask you why do you forget Him? Have you good thoughts for all but the best? Have you kind thoughts of gratitude for every friend but the best Friend that man can have? My God! My God! Why do men treat You like this? Brightest, fairest, best, kindest, and most tender, and yet forgotten by the objects of Your care!

If men were far away from God, and it were a topic abstruse and altogether beyond reach, something might be said. But imagine a fish that despised the ocean and yet lived in it! Imagine a man who should be unconscious of the air he breathes! “In Him we live and move and have our being. We are also His offspring.” He sends the frost, and He will send the spring. He sends the seed-time and the harvest, and every shower that drops with plenty comes from Him, and every wind that blows with health speeds forth from His mouth. Why, then, is He to be forgotten when everything reminds you of Him? This is a sin! A cruel sin, a cursed sin! A SIN, indeed, that binds men hard and fast, that they will not come to Christ that they may have life! It is strange, it is beyond all miracles a miracle, that such a folly as this should hold men from coming to Christ.

Another sin binds all unregenerate hearts. It is the sin of not loving the Christ of God. I am not about to charge any person here with such sins as adultery, or theft, or blasphemy. But I will venture to say that this is a sin masterly and gigantic, which towers as high as any other—the sin of not loving the Christ of God. Think a minute. Here is One who came into the world out of pure love, for no motive but mercy. He had nothing to gain. Though He were rich, yet for our sakes He became poor! Why, then, is

He not loved?

The other day there rode through these streets a true hero, a brave bold man who set his country free, and I do remember how I heard your shouts in yonder street, and you thronged to look into the lion-like face of Italy’s liberator. I blame you not. I longed to do the same myself—he well deserved your shouts and your loudest praises. But what had he done compared with what the Christ of God has done in actually laying down His life to redeem men from bondage, yielding up Himself to the accursed death of the Cross that man might be saved through Him? Where are your acclamations, Sirs, for this greater Hero? Where are the laurels that you cast at His feet? Is it nothing to you, is it nothing to you, all you that pass by, is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?

Such a Character, so inexpressibly lovely, and yet despised! Such a salvation, so inexpressibly precious, and yet rejected! Oh, mystery of iniquity! Indeed, the depths of sin are almost as fathomless as the depths of God, and the transgressions of the wicked all but as infinite in infamy as God is infinite in love. I might also speak of sins against the Holy Spirit that men commit, in that they live and even die without reverential thoughts of Him or care about Him. But I shall speak of one sin, and that is the mystery that men should be held by the sin of neglecting their souls. You meet with a person who neglects his body, you call him a fool, if, knowing that there is a disease, he will not seek a remedy. If, suffering, from some fatal malady, he never attempts to find a cure—you think the man is fit only for a lunatic asylum.

But a person who neglects his soul, he is but one of so numerous a class that we overlook the madness. Your body will soon die—it is but as it were the garment of yourself and will be worn out. But you yourself are better than your body as a man is better than the clothes he wears. Why spend you, then, all thoughts about this present life and give none to the life to come? It has long been a mystery who was the man in the iron mask. We believe that the mystery was solved some years ago by the conjecture that he was the twin brother of Louis XIV, King of France. He was fearful lest he might have his throne disturbed by his twin brother, whose features were extremely like his own—so he encased his face in a mask of iron and shut him up in the Bastille for life.

Your body and your soul are twin brothers. Your body, as though it were jealous of your soul, encases it as in an iron mask of spiritual ignorance—lest its true lineaments, its immortal lineage should be discovered—and shuts it up within the Bastille of sin, lest getting liberty and discovering its royalty, it should win the mastery over the baser nature. But what a wretch was that Louis XIV, to do such a thing to his own brother! How brutal, how worse than the beasts that perish! But, Sirs, what are you if you do thus to your own soul, merely that your body may be satisfied, and your earthly nature may have a present gratification?

O Sirs, be not so unkind, so cruel to yourselves! This sin of living for the mouth and living for the eyes. This sin of living for what you shall eat and what you shall drink, and how you shall be clothed. This sin of living by the clock within the narrow limits of the time that ticks by the pendulum. This sin of living as if this earth were all and there were nothing beyond—this is the sin that holds this City of London, and holds the world, and binds it like a martyr to the stake to perish, unless it is set free.

Generally, however, there also lies some distinct form of actual sin at the bottom of most men’s impenitence. I will not attempt to make a guess, my dear Hearer, as to what it may be that keeps you from Christ. But without difficulty I could, I think, state what these sins generally are. Some men would wish to be saved, but they would not like to take up the Cross and be despised as Christians. Some would like to follow Christ, but they will not give up their self-righteous pride. They want to have a part of the glory of salvation. Some men have a temper which they do not intend to try to restrain. Others have a secret sin, too sweet for them to give up. It is like a right arm, and they cannot come to the cutting of it off.

Some enjoy company which is attractive, but destructive, and from that company they cannot fly. Men, one way or another, are held fast like birds with birdlime till the fowler comes and takes them to their destruction. O that they were wise, for then they might be awakened out of this folly! But this still remains the mystery of mysteries—that those sins, absurd and deadly—bind men as with cords, and hold them fast like a bull in a net.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER IS THIS—a message, Sinner, to you. And Believer, to you. Sinner, to you, first—you are held fast by your sins and I fear much you will be held so till you perish, perish everlastingly. Man, does not this concern you? I lay last night by the hours together on my bed awake, tossing with a burden on my heart, and I tell you the only burden that I had was your soul. I cannot endure it, Man, that you should be cast into the “lake that burns with fire and brimstone.” I believe that Book as you do. Believing it, I am alarmed at the prospect which awaits the unconverted.

The more I look into the subject of the world to come, the more I am impressed that all those who would lessen our ideas of the Judgment that God will bring upon the wicked are waging war against God Himself. They are warring against virtue and the best interests of men. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Do not try it, my Friend, I pray you, do not try it! Run not this risk, this certainty of endless misery! I beseech you, dare it not! What? Do you say, “What, then, should I do?” I venture to reply in the words of one of old, “Break off your sins by righteousness, for it is time to seek the Lord.”

Do you reply, “How can I break them off? They are like cords and bonds.” Ah, Soul, here is another part of your misery, that you have destroyed yourself! But you can not save yourself. You have woven the net, you have made it fast and firm, but you cannot tear it in pieces. But there is One who can! There is One upon whom the Spirit of the Lord descended that He might loose the prisoner. There is a heart that feels for you in

Heaven, and there is One mighty to save, who can rescue you. Breathe that prayer, “O set me free, you Liberator of captive souls.” Breathe the prayer now, and believe that He can deliver you, and you shall yet, captive as you are, go free! And this shall be your ransom price—His precious blood! And this shall be the privilege of your ransomed life—to love and praise Him who has redeemed you from going down into the pit.

But I said the conclusion of the whole matter had something to do with the child of God. It has this to do with him. Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, by the love you bear to your fellow sinners, never help to make the bonds of their sins stronger than they are—you will do so if you are inconsistent. They will say, “Why, such a one professes to be a saved man, and yet, see how he lives!” Will you make excuses for sinners? It was said of Judah, by the Prophet, that she had become a comfort to Sodom and Gomorrah. O never do this! Never let the ungodly have to say, “There is nothing in it. It is all a lie. It is all a mere pretense. We may as well continue in sin, for see how these Christians act?!” No, Brethren, they have bonds enough without your tightening them or adding to them.

In the next place, never cease to warn sinners. Do not stand by and see them die without lifting up a warning note. A house is on fire and you see it as you go to your morning’s labor, and yet never lift up the cry of “Fire!”? A man is perishing, and yet no tears for him? Can it be so? At the foot of Mr. Richard Knill’s likeness I notice these words, “Brethren, the heathen are perishing, will you let them perish?” I would like to have each of you apply to your own conscience the question, “Sinners are perishing, will you let them perish without giving them at least a warning of what the result of sin must be?” My Brethren, I earnestly entreat you who know the Gospel to tell it to others. It is God’s way of cutting the bonds which confine men’s souls. Be instant in season and out of season in publishing the good news of liberty to the captives through the redeeming Christ.

And lastly, as you and I cannot set these captives free, let us look to Him who can. O let our prayers go up and let our tears drop down for sinners! Let it come to an agony, for I am persuaded we shall never get much from God by way of conversion till we feel we must have it—until our soul breaks for the longing that it has for the salvation of souls. When your cry is like that of Rachel, “Give me children or I die!” you shall not long be spiritually barren. When you must have converts or your heart will break, God will hear you and send you an answer.

The Lord bless you! May none of you be held by the cords of your sins, but may you be bound with cords to the horns of God’s altar as a happy and willing sacrifice to Him that loved you. The Lord bless you for Jesus’ sake.

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AN APPEAL TO CHILDREN OF GODLY PARENTS  
NO. 2406

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, MARCH 31, 1895. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 27, 1887.

**“My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of your mother: bind them continually upon your heart, and tie them about your neck. When you go, it shall lead you; when you sleep, it shall keep you; and when you awake, it shall talk with you. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.” Proverbs 6:20-23.**

You have here, before you, the advice of King Solomon, rightly reckoned to be one of the wisest of men, and verily he must be wise, indeed, who could excel in wisdom the son of David, the King of Israel. It is worth while to listen to what Solomon has to say—it must be good for the most intelligent young person to listen—and to listen carefully, to what so experienced a man as Solomon has to say to young men. But I must remind you that a greater than Solomon is here, for the Spirit of God inspired the Proverbs! They are not merely jewels from earthly mines, but they are also precious treasures from the heavenly hills, so that the advice we have, here, is not only the counsel of a wise man, but the advice of that Incarnate Wisdom who speaks to us out of the Word of God! Would you become the sons of wisdom? Come and sit at the feet of Solomon! Would you become spiritually wise? Come and hear what the Spirit of God has to say by the mouth of this wise man!

In considering this subject, I am going, first of all, to show you that true godliness, of which the wise man, here, speaks, comes to many of us recommended by parental example—“My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of your mother: bind them continually upon your heart, and tie them about your neck.” But, in addition to that, true religion comes to us commended by practical uses, by its beneficial effect upon our lives—“When you go, it shall lead you; when you sleep, it shall keep you; and when you awake, it shall talk with you. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.”

I. Now, in the first place, I want to show you that TRUE RELIGION COMES TO MANY OF US RECOMMENDED BY PARENTAL EXAMPLE.

Unhappily, it is not so with all of you. There are some who had an evil example in their childhood and who never learned anything that was good from their parents. I adore the sovereignty of Divine Grace that there are among us, tonight, many who are the first in their families that ever made a profession of faith in Christ. They were born and brought up in the midst of everything that was opposed to godliness, yet here they are—they can, themselves, hardly tell you how—brought out from the world as Abraham was brought from Ur of the Chaldees. The Lord in His Grace has taken one of a city and two of a family, and brought them to Zion. You, dear Friends, have special cause for thankfulness, but it should be a note to be entered in your diary that your children shall not be subjected to the same disadvantages as you, yourselves, suffered. Since the Lord has looked in love upon you, let your households be holiness to the Lord and so bring up your children that they shall have every advantage that religious training can give—and every opportunity to serve the living God.

But there are many among us, I believe the larger proportion of those gathered here, who have had the immense privilege of godly training. Now, to my mind, it seems that a father’s experience is the best evidence that a young man can have of the truth of anything. My father would not say that which was false anywhere to anyone, but I am sure that he would not say it to his son and if, after serving God for 50 years, he has found religion to be a failure, even if he had not the courage to communicate it to the whole world, I feel persuaded that he would have whispered in my ear, “My son, I have misled you. I was mistaken and I have found it out.” But when I saw the old man, the other day, he had no such information to convey to me. Our conversation was concerning the faithfulness of God and he delights to tell of the faithfulness of God to him and to his father, my dear grandfather, who has now gone up above. How often have they told me that, in a long lifetime of testing and proving the promises, they have found them all true and they could say, in the language of the hymn—

*“‘Tis religion that can give  
Sweetest pleasures while we live.  
‘Tis religion must supply  
Solid comfort when we die.”*

As for myself, if I had found out that I was mistaken, I would not have been so foolish as to rejoice that my sons should follow the same way of life, and should addict themselves with all their might to preaching the same Truths of God that I delight to proclaim! Dear son, if you have a godly father, believe that the religion upon which he has fixed his faith is true. He tells you that it is so—he is, at any rate, a sincere and honest witness to you. I beseech you, therefore, forsake not your father’s God.

Then I think that one of the most tender bonds that can ever bind man or woman is the affection of a mother. Many would, perhaps, break away from the law of the father—but the love of the mother—who among us can break away from that? So, next, a mother’s affection is the best of arguments. You remember how she prayed for you? Among your earliest recollections is that of her taking you between her knees and teaching you to say—

*“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,  
Look upon a little child.”*

Perhaps you have tried to disbelieve, but your mother’s firm faith prevents it. I have heard of one who said that he could easily have been an infidel if it had not been for his mother’s life and his mother’s death. Yes, these are hard arguments to get over and I trust that you will not get over them! You remember well her quiet patience in the house when there was much that might have ruffled her. You remember her gentleness with you when you were going a little wild. You hardly know, perhaps, how you cut her to the heart, how her nights were sleepless because her boy did not love his mother’s God. I charge you, by the love you bear her, if you have received any impressions that are good, cherish them, and cast them not aside! Or if you have received no such impressions, yet at least let the sincerity of your mother, for whom it was impossible to have been untrue—let the deep affection of your mother, who could not, and would not, betray you into a lie—persuade you that there is Truth in this religion which now, perhaps, some of your companions are trying to teach you to deride. “My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of your mother.”

I think that to any young man, or any young woman, also, who has had a godly father and mother, the best way of life that they can mark out for themselves is to follow the road in which their father’s and mother’s principles would conduct them. Of course, we make great advances on the old folks, do we not? The young men are wonderfully bright and intelligent, and the old people are a good deal behind them! Yes, yes—that is the way we talk before our beards have grown. Possibly, when we have more sense, we shall not be quite so conceited. At any rate, I, who am not very old, but who dares not, any longer, call myself young, venture to say that, for myself, I desire nothing so much as to continue the traditions of my household. I wish to find no course but that which shall run parallel with that of those who have gone before me.

And I think, dear Friends, that you who have seen the holy and happy lives of Christian ancestors will be wise to pause a good deal before you begin to make a deviation, either to the right or to the left, from the course of those godly ones. I do not believe that he begins life in a way which God is likely to bless and which he, himself, will, in the long run, judge to be wise, who begins with the notion that he shall upset everything—that all that belonged to his godly family shall be cast to the winds! I do not seek to have heirlooms of gold or silver but, though I die a thousand deaths, I can never give up my father’s God, my grandfather’s God, and his father’s God, and his father’s God! I must hold this to be the chief possession that I have, and I pray young men and women to think the same. Do not stain the glorious traditions of noble lives that have been handed down to you! Do not disgrace your father’s shield! Bespatter not the escutcheons of your honored predecessors by any sins and transgressions on your part! God help you to feel that the best way of leading a noble life will be to do as they did who trained you in God’s fear!

Solomon tells us to do two things with the teachings which we have learned of our parents. First he says, “Bind them continually upon your heart,” for they are worthy of loving adherence. Show that you love these things by binding them upon your heart. The heart is the vital point—let godliness lie there—love the things of God. If we could take young men and women and make them professedly religious without their truly loving godliness, that would be simply to make them hypocrites, which is not what we desire. We do not want you to say that you believe what you do not believe, or that you rejoice in what you do not rejoice in. But our prayer—and oh, that it might be your prayer, too!—is that you may be helped to bind these things about your heart. They are worth living for! They are worth dying for! They are worth more than all the world besides—the immortal principles of the Divine Life which comes from the death of Christ! “Bind them continually upon your heart.”

And then Solomon, because he would not have us keep these things secret as if we were ashamed of them, adds, “and tie them about your neck,” for they are worthy of boldest display. Did you ever see my Lord Mayor wearing his chain of office? He is not at all ashamed to wear it. And the sheriffs with their badges—I have a lively recollection of the enormous size to which those ornaments attain—and they take care to wear them, too. Now then, you who have any love to God, tie your religion about your neck! Do not be ashamed of it, put it on as an ornament, wear it as the mayor does his chain! When you go into company, never be ashamed to say that you are a Christian, and if there is any company where you cannot go as a Christian, well, do not go there at all. Say to yourself, “I will not be where I could not introduce my Master. I will not go where He could not go with me.” You will find that resolve to be a great help to you in the choice of where you will go and where you will not go—therefore bind it upon your heart, tie it about your neck! God help you to do this and so to follow those godly ones who have gone before you!

I hope that I am not weak in wishing that some here may be touched by affection to their parents. I have had very sorrowful sights, sometimes, in the course of my ministry. A dear father, an honest, upright, godly man, is perhaps present, but he will not mind my saying what lines of grief I saw upon his face when he came to say to me, “Oh, Sir, my boy is in prison!” I am sure that if his boy could have seen his father’s face as I saw it, it would have been worse than prison to him! I have known young men who have come to this Tabernacle with their parents—nice boys, too, they were. And they have gone into employment in the city where they have been tempted to steal—and they have yielded to the tempter and have lost their character. Sometimes, the deficiency has been met and they have been rescued from a criminal’s career, but, alas, sometimes they have fallen into the hands of a wicked woman and then woe betide them!

Occasionally, it has seemed to be sheer wantonness and wickedness that has made them act unrighteously. I wish I could fetch those young men—I do not suppose that they are here, tonight—and let them see not merely the misery they will bring upon themselves, but show them their mother at home when news came that John had lost his job because he had been acting dishonestly, or give them a glimpse of their father’s face when the evil tidings reached him. The poor man stood aghast! He said, “There was never a stain upon the character of any of my family, before.” If the earth had opened under the godly man’s feet, or if the good mother could have gone down straight into the grave, they would have preferred it to the lifelong tribulation which has come upon them!

Therefore, I charge you, young man, or young woman, do not kill the parents who gave you life! Do not disgrace those who brought you up. But I pray you, instead thereof, seek the God of your father, and the God of your mother, and give yourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and live wholly to Him.

II. Now I must turn to my second point, which is that TRUE RELIGION COMES TO US COMMENDED BY PRACTICAL USES. This is a less sentimental argument than the one I have been pleading, but, to many, vital godliness appeals because of its immense utility in the actual everyday life of men.

Solomon tells us, first, that true godliness serves us for instruction— “For the commandment is a lamp.” If you would know all that you ought to know, read this Book. If you would know in your heart that which shall be for you present and eternal good, love this Book, believe the Truths of God it teaches and obey it, “for the commandment is a lamp.”

Next, true religion serves us for direction—“and the law is light.” If we want to know what we should do, we cannot do better than yield ourselves up to the guidance of the Divine Spirit and take this Word as our map, for—

*“‘Tis like the sun, a heavenly light,  
That guides us all the day.  
And through the dangers of the night,  
A lamp to lead our way.”*

Solomon also tells us that true religion guides us under all circumstances. He says, in the 22nd verse, that when we are active, there is nothing like true godliness to help us—“When you go, it shall lead you.” He tells us that when we are resting, there is nothing better than this for our preservation—“When you sleep, it shall keep you.” And when we are just waking, there is nothing better than this with which to delight the mind—“When you awake, it shall talk with you.” I do not intend to expand those three thoughts except to say this—when you are busiest, you religion shall be your best help. When your hands are full of toil and your head is full of thought, nothing can do you more service than to have a God to go to, a Savior to trust in, a Heaven to look forward to! And when you go to your bed to sleep, or to be sick, you can have nothing better to smooth your pillow and to give you rest than to know that you are forgiven through the precious blood of Christ, and saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Often, before I fall asleep, I say to myself those words of Watts—

*“Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood, I lay me down to rest,  
As in the embraces of my God,  
Or on my Savior’s breast”*

and there is no more delicious sleep in the world than that sleep which, even in dreams, keeps near to Christ! Some of us know what it is, even in those wanderings of our mind in sleep, not to quit the holy ground of communion with our Lord. It is not always so, but it is sometimes so, and even then, when the mind has lost power to control its thoughts, even the thoughts seem to dance, like Miriam, to the praise of God! Oh, happy men, whose religion is their protection even in their sleep!

And then Solomon says, “when you awake, it shall talk with you.” This Bible is a wonderful talking book—there is a great mass of blessed talk in this precious volume! It has told me a great many of my faults. It would tell you yours if you would let it. It has told me much to comfort me and it has much to tell you if you will but incline your ears to it. It is a book that is wonderfully communicative. It knows all about you, all the ins and outs of where you are, and where you ought to be. It can tell you everything. The best communion that a man can have is when he commences with God in prayer and the reading of the Word—“When you awake, it shall talk with you.”

I have hurried over that point because I want to say something else to you. Dear Friends, those of you who are unconverted, our great anxiety is that you should know the Lord at once. And our reason is this—that it will prepare you for the world to come. Whatever that world may be, full of vast mysteries, yet no man is so prepared to launch upon the unknown sea as the one who is reconciled to God—who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, who trusts Him and rejoices in the pardon of his sin through the great Atoning Sacrifice—and experiences in his own heart the marvelous change which has made him a new creature in Christ Jesus! The great reason, I say again, why we wish to have our dear friends converted is that they may be ready for the world to come. You will soon die, all of you. I think it was last Sunday evening that there sat, in that pew just over there, a friend who was generally here in the morning and evening, but on Wednesday he died quite suddenly. He appeared to be in good health, but he died at the railway station, away from home. That seat where he used to sit ought to have a warning voice to all of us, crying aloud, “Prepare to meet your God!” It might have been me—it might have been any of these friends around me on the platform—it might have been any of you in the congregation. Who can tell who will go this week? Probably some one or other of us (our number is so large) will be taken away before another Sabbath bell shall be heard!

I think that is a very good reason for seeking the Lord, that you may be prepared for eternity. One day this week I saw an aged friend who cannot live much longer. She is 86 and her faculties are failing her, but she said to me, “I have no fear, I have no fear of death. I am on the Rock, I am on the Rock, Christ Jesus. I know whom I have believed and I know where I am going.” It was delightful to hear the aged saint speak like that. And we are always hearing such talk from our dear friends when they are going Home—they never seem to have any doubts. I have known some who, while they were well, had many doubts, but when they came to die, they seemed to have none at all, but were joyously confident in Christ.

But there is another reason why we want our friends converted and that is that they may be prepared for this life. I do not know what kind of life you have set before yourself. Perhaps I may be addressing some young men who are going to the University and they hope to have lives consecrated to learning and crowned with honor. Possibly, some here have no prospect but that of working hard to earn their bread with the sweat of their brow. Some have begun to lay bricks, or to drive the plane, or to wield the pen. There are all sorts of ways of mortal life, but there is no better provision and preparation for any kind of life on earth than to know the Lord and to have a new heart and a right spirit! He that rules millions of men will do it better with the Grace of God in his heart. And he that had to be a slave would be the happier in his lot for having the Grace of God in his heart. You that are old and you that are young, you that are masters and you that are servants—true religion cannot disqualify you for playing your part here in the great drama of life—but the best preparation for that part, if it is a part that ought to be played, is to know the Lord and feel the power of Divine Grace upon your soul!

Let me just show you how this is the case. The man who lives before God, who calls God his Father and feels the Spirit of God working within him a hatred of sin and a love of righteousness, he is the man who will be conscientious in the discharge of his duties and, you know, that is the kind of man, and the kind of woman, too, that we need nowadays. We have so many people who need looking after—if you give them anything to do, they will do it quickly enough if you stand and look on—but the moment you turn your back, they will do it as slovenly, or as slowly and as badly as can be. They are eye-servants only. If you were to advertise for an eye-servant, I do not suppose anybody would come to you, yet they might come in shoals, for there are plenty of them about! Well now, a truly Christian, a man who is really converted, sees that he serves God in doing his duty to his fellow men. “You, God, see me,” is the power that always influences him, and he desires to be conscientious in the discharge of his duties whatever those duties may be.

I once told you the story of the servant girl who said that she hoped she was converted. Her minister asked her this question, “What evidence can you give of your conversion?” She gave this among a great many other proofs, but it was not a bad one. She said, “Now, Sir, I always sweep under the mats.” It was a small matter, but if you carry out in daily life that principle of sweeping under the mats, that is the kind of thing we need. Many people have a little corner where they stow away all the fluff and the dust—and the room looks as if it was nicely swept, but it is not. There is a way of doing everything so that nothing is really done, but that is not the case where there is Grace in the heart. Grace in the heart makes a man feel that he would wish to live wholly to God—and serve God in serving man. If you get that Grace, you will have a grand preparation for life as well as for death!

The next thing is that a man who has a new heart has imparted to him a purity which preserves him in the midst of temptation. Oh, this dreadful city of London! I wonder why God endures the filth of it? I frequently converse with good young men who come up from the country to their first job in London. And the first week they live in London is a revelation to them which makes their hair almost stand on end! They see what they never dreamed of. Well now, you young fellows who have just come to London—perhaps this is your first Sunday—give yourselves to the Lord at once, I pray you! Yield yourselves to Jesus Christ, tonight, for another week in London may be your damnation! Only a week in London may have led you into acts of impurity that shall ruin you forever! Before you have gone into those things, devote yourselves to God and to His Christ, so that with pure hearts and with right spirits you may be preserved from “the pestilence that walks in darkness, and the destruction that wastes at noonday,” in this terribly wicked city.

There is no hope for you young men and young women in this great world of wickedness unless your hearts are right towards God. If you go in thoroughly to follow the Lamb wherever He goes, He will keep and preserve you even to the end. But if you do not give yourselves to the Lord, whatever good resolutions you may have formed, you are doomed—I am sure you are—to be carried away with the torrents of iniquity that run down our streets today! Purity of heart, then, which comes from faith in Christ is a splendid preparation for life!

So also is truthfulness of speech. Oh, what a wretched thing it is when people tell lies! Now, the heart that is purified by the Grace of God hates the thought of a lie. The man speaks the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth—and he is the man who shall pass through life unscathed—and shall be honored and, in the long run, successful. He may have to suffer for a time through his truthfulness, but, in the end, nothing shall clear a way for him so well as being true in thought and word and deed. If you love the Lord with all your heart, you will also learn honesty in dealing—and that is a grand help in life. I know that the trickster does, sometimes, seem to succeed for a time, but what is his success? It is a success which is only another name for ruin. Oh, dear Sirs, if all men could be made honest, how much more of happiness there would be in the world! And the way to be upright among men is to be sincere towards God—and to have the Spirit of God dwelling within you.

Again, true religion is of this value, that it comforts a man under great troubles. You do not expect many troubles, my young Friend, but you will have them! You expect that you will be married and then your troubles will be over—but some say that then they begin! I do not endorse that statement, but I am sure that they are not over, for there is another set of trials that then begin. But you are going to get out of your apprenticeship and then it will be all right—will it? Journeymen do not always find it so. But you do not mean, always, to be a journeyman—you are going to be a little master. Ask the masters whether everything is pleasant with them in these times. If you want to escape trouble altogether, you had better go up in a balloon—but then I am sure that you would be in trouble for fear of going up too high or coming down too fast! But troubles will come and what is there that can preserve a man in the midst of trouble like feeling that things are safe in his Father’s hands? If you can say, “I am His child and all things are working together for my good. I have committed myself entirely into the hands of Him who cannot err and will never do me an unkindness,” why, Sir, you have on a breastplate which the darts of care cannot pierce! You are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace and you may tread on the briars of the wilderness with unwounded feet.

True religion will also build up in you firmness of character, and that is another quality that I want to see in our young people, nowadays. We have some splendid men in this place, and some splendid women, too. I should not be afraid, if the devil, himself, were to preach here, that he would pervert them from the faith. And if all the new heresies that can rise were to be proclaimed in their presence, they know too well what the Truth of God is ever to be led astray. But, on the other hand, we have a number of people who are led by their ears. If I pull their ears one way, they come after me. If they happen to go somewhere else and somebody pulls their ears the other way, they go after him. There are lots of people who never do their own thinking, but put it out, as they put out their washing—they do not think of doing it at home!

Well now, these people are just like the chaff on the threshing floor, and when the wind begins to blow, away they go! Do not be like that! Dear young sons and daughters of the Church members, here, know the Lord! May He reveal Himself to you at once and when you do know Him, and get a grip of the Gospel, bind it to your heart and tie it about your neck, and say, “Yes, I am going to follow in the footsteps of those I love, and especially in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ”—

*“‘Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads, I’ll follow where He goes.’”*

God help you to do it! But first believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—trust yourselves wholly to Him—and He will give you Grace to stand fast even to the end!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 119:1-16.**

The first eight verses of this Psalm, in the Hebrew, begin with the letter A, and the second eight begin with the letter B. The whole Psalm is the good man’s alphabet. The Holy Spirit condescended to use these expedients to help the memory of the readers of Holy Scripture. We should be thankful for this. I have sometimes heard preachers blamed for dividing their discourses in such a way as to help the memory of their hearers. The preacher may well bear that blame without any regret, since the Spirit of God, here, condescends to alliteration and to alphabetical arrangement in order to help the memories of readers. Thus the Psalm begins

Verse 1. Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the LORD. If there are any people in the world who are blessed, surely it must be those who are in God’s way and who take care to keep their garments unspotted from the world. Oh, if one can feel, at the end of every day, “I am undefiled in God’s way, and I have walked in His Law,” how sweet it is in such a case to fall asleep, not self-righteous and boastful, but yet thankful to have been kept from the iniquity that abounds in the world! Truly, “blessed are the undefiled in the way.” Perhaps some of you cannot claim this particular blessing—then remember that there is another Psalm (the 32nd ) which begins, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered,” and that blessing is of the same force and of the same sweetness as this one.

2, 3. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in His ways. And if we walk in God’s ways, He will never require us to do anything which is inequitable or unrighteous. No, that life which is made up of walking in God’s ways will be full of equity and free from iniquity.

4. You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently. We are to be as industrious in holiness as grasping men are in business. “You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently,” watchfully, carefully, industriously—with all our might.

5. O that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes! The Psalmist is driven to prayer. His admiration of the godly man makes him aspire to be like he and then he feels that he cannot attain to that height without Divine help. So he cries, “O that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!”

6. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your Commandments. That is a wide expression, “respect unto all Your Commandments.” There are many men who are willing to keep a part of God’s Commandments, but they must pick and choose for themselves which these shall be. Such are total traitors—there lurks in their heart a distinct rebellion against the Lord, for they really presume to be the judge of God—by taking exception to this or that command in His Law. In their great condescension, they are willing to be obedient in certain points, but not in all. Such men have need to be ashamed! But the Psalmist could say, “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your Commandments.”

7. I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned Your righteous judgments. “I will not praise myself. If I am enabled to be holy, that holiness is Your work, and I will praise You for it.”

8. I will keep Your statutes: O forsake me not utterly. Whenever you make a resolve, accompany it with a prayer. Let this be your declaration, “I will keep Your statutes.” But pray, “O forsake me not utterly,” for, otherwise, your resolution will come to nothing. Now begins the second octave of the Psalm

9. How shall a young man cleanse his way? The Psalmist has spoken about the holy way. Now he would speak about young men running in it. One of the most intense desires of every godly man is that there may be a succession of godly men. Oh, that our young men might be good men, so that when the old men pass away, the generation following them may be as good as their fathers. No, more—that they may be far better! “How shall a young man cleanse his way?” Within him are strong passions. Around him are fierce temptations—how shall he cleanse his way? There are plenty who would defile him! The youth is compassed about with the temptations of gaiety and the allurements of folly—“How shall a young man cleanse his way?” Here is the answer

9. By taking heed, thereto, according to Your Word. There is no keeping a clean way if you walk with your eyes shut! You must pick your path in such a foul road as this—“By taking heed, thereto, according to Your Word.” Yes, the greatest heed we can take will not keep us out of the mire unless God’s Word is a continual lamp unto our feet and a constant light unto our path. Oh, that every young man here might cleanse his way by taking heed, thereto, according to God’s Word!

10. With my whole heart have I sought You. Can you, each one, say, “With my whole heart have I sought You”?  
10. O let me not wander from Your Commandments. “For though I have sought You with my whole heart, yet my heart may in the future go astray. Do not permit it, Lord—do not permit it!” It is a very sorrowful thought to me that there are many who once sat in these seats and resolved to maintain a holy life, who, nevertheless, are, at this moment, in the seat of the scornful—some perhaps in prison, and many of them where they ought not to be. They determined to be right, but, destitute of Divine Grace, they have gone astray. Therefore, let each of us pray, “O let me not wander from Your Commandments.” You know what John Bradford used to say when he saw a man taken out to be hanged—“There goes John Bradford, but for the Grace of God.” And when you see others wander, you may say the same about yourself, and then breathe the prayer, “O let me not wander from Your Commandments.”  
11. Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You. An old preacher, in a sermon on this text, divided it thus—“The best thing—‘Your Word.’ In the best place—‘have I hid in my heart.’ For the best of purposes—‘that I might not sin against You.’” He thus gave, in a few words, the very gist of the text.  
12. Blessed are You, O LORD: teach me Your statutes. There is a mixture, you see, of prayer and praise. That is the best devotion, which contains a happy combination of these two things, prayer and praise!  
13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Your mouth. I must take leave to claim a special property in this text and there are some among us, here, following that same holy craft of preaching the Divine Word, who can, each one, lay his hand upon his heart and say to God, “With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Your mouth.” This is a happy occupation. If you cannot spend all your lives in it, because of other duties, yet, at least in your own family, and as often as you have opportunities, use your lips in God’s service!  
14. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. Not only as much as in riches, but as in all riches. David had gathered together a vast sum of money for the building of the House of the Lord, but whatever joy he had in those accumulations (and I daresay he had great gladness when he thought of the purpose to which all would be used) yet, nevertheless, he says, “I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.”  
15. I will meditate in Your precepts, and have respect unto Your ways. Blessed meditation! The lack of meditation is one of the faults of the days in which we live—we are so very busy that we have not time to study God’s Word—but the Psalmist said, “I will meditate in Your precepts.” That is the secret strength—“and have respect unto Your ways”—that is the public result. If we meditated more, we would live better. God help us so to do!  
16. I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your Word. So may each one of us resolve. Amen.

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÷Pro 6.22

THE TALKING BOOK  
NO. 1017

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 22, 1871, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“When you awake, it shall talk with you.”  
Proverbs 6:22.**

IT is a very happy circumstance when the commandment of our father and the law of our mother are also the Commandment of God and the Law of the Lord. Happy are they who have a double force to draw them to the right—the bonds of Nature, and the cords of Grace. They sin with a vengeance who sin both against a father on earth and the great Father in Heaven, and they exhibit a virulence and a violence of sin who do despite to the tender obligations of childhood, as well as to the demands of conscience and God. Solomon, in the passage before us, evidently speaks of those who find in the parents’ law and in God’s Law the same thing, and he admonishes such to bind the Law of God about their heart, and to tie it about their neck—by which he intends inward affection and open avowal.

The Law of God should be so dear to us that it should be bound about the most vital organ of our being—braided about our heart. That which a man carries in his hands he may forget and lose. That which he wears upon his person may be torn from him, but that which is bound about his heart will remain there as long as life remains. We are to love the Word of God with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength—with the full force of our nature we are to embrace it. All our warmest affections are to be bound up with it.

When the wise man tells us, also, to wear it about our necks, he means that we are never to be ashamed of it. No blush is to mantle our cheek when we are called Christians. We are never to speak with bated breath in any company concerning the things of God. Manfully must we take up the Cross of Christ! Cheerfully must we avow ourselves to belong to those who have respect unto the Divine Testimonies. Let us count true religion to be our highest ornament. And, as magistrates put on them their gold chains, and think themselves adorned thereby, so let us tie about our neck the Commands and the Gospel of the Lord our God.

In order that we may be persuaded to do so, Solomon gives us three telling reasons. He says that God’s Law, by which I understand the whole run of Scripture, and especially the Gospel of Jesus Christ, will be a guide to us—“When you go, it shall lead you.” It will be a guardian to us—“When you sleep”—when you are defenseless and off your guard—“it shall keep you.” And it shall also be a dear companion to us—“When you awake, it shall talk with you.” Any one of these three arguments might surely suffice to make us seek a nearer acquaintance with the Sacred Word.

We all need a guide, for “it is not in man that walks to direct his steps.” Left to our own we soon excel in folly. There are dilemmas in all lives where a guide is more precious than a wedge of gold. The Word of God, as an infallible director for human life, should be sought by us, and it will

lead us in the highway of safety. Equally powerful is the second reason— the Word of God will become the guardian of our days. Whoever hearkens unto it shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

Unguarded moments there may be. Times inevitable to our imperfection, there will be—when, unless some other power protects us—we shall fall into the hands of the foe. Blessed is he who has God’s Law so written on his heart, and wears it so about his neck as armor of proof, that at all times he is invulnerable, kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!

But I prefer, this morning, to keep to the third reason for loving God’s Word. It is this—that it becomes our sweet companion—“When you awake, it shall talk with you.” The inspired Law of God, which David in the hundred and nineteenth Psalm calls God’s testimonies, precepts, statutes, and the like, is the friend of the righteous. Its essence and marrow is the Gospel of Jesus, the Law-Fulfiller, and this also is the special solace of Believers. Of the whole Sacred Volume it may be said, “When you awake, it shall talk with you.” I gather four or five thoughts from this expression, and upon these we will speak.

I. We perceive here that THE WORD IS LIVING. How else could it be said—“It shall talk with you”? A dead book cannot talk, nor can a dumb book speak. It is clearly a living book, then, and a speaking book—“The Word of God, which lives and abides forever.” How many of us have found this to be most certainly true! A large proportion of human books are long ago dead, and even shriveled like Egyptian mummies. The mere course of years has rendered them worthless—their teaching is disproved, and they have no life for us.

Entomb them in your public libraries if you will, but, from this day forth they will stir no man’s pulse and warm no man’s heart. But this thrice blessed book of God, though it has been extant among us these many hundreds of years, is immortal in its life, unwithering in its strength—the dew of its youth is still upon it! Its speech still drops as the rain, fresh from Heaven! Its Truths are overflowing fountains of ever fresh consolation. Never book spoke like this Book—its voice, like the voice of God, is powerful and full of majesty.

Why is it that the Word of God is living? Is it not, first, because, it is pure Truth? Error is death, Truth is life. No matter how well established an error may be by philosophy, or by force of arms, or the current of human thought—the day comes it shall burn as an oven—and all untruth shall be as stubble before the fire. The tooth of time devours all lies. Falsehoods are soon cut down and they wither as the green herb. The Truth of God never dies. It dates its origin from the immortals. Kindled at the source of light, its flame cannot be quenched. If by persecution it is for a time covered, it shall blaze forth anew to take reprisals upon its adversaries.

Many a once venerated system of error now rots in the dead past among the tombs of the forgotten. But the Truth as it is in Jesus knows no sepulcher, and fears no funeral. It lives on, and must live while the Eternal fills His Throne. The Word of God is living, because it is the utterance of an immutable, self-existing God. God does not speak today what He meant not yesterday. Neither will He tomorrow blot out what He records today. When I read a promise spoken three thousand years ago, it is as fresh as though it fell from the eternal lips today.

There are, indeed, no dates to the Divine promises. They are not of private interpretation, nor to be monopolized by any generation. I say again, as fresh today the Eternal Word drops from the Almighty’s lips as when He uttered it to Moses, or to Elijah, or spoke it by the tongue of Elisha or Jeremiah. The Word is always sure, steadfast, and full of power. It is never out of date. Scripture bubbles up evermore with good matters—it is an eternal geyser—a spiritual Niagara of Grace, forever falling, flashing, and flowing on. It is never stagnant, never brackish or defiled, but always clear, crystal, fresh, and refreshing, and so, therefore, ever living.

The Word lives, again, because it enshrines the living heart of Christ. The heart of Christ is the most living of all existences. It was once pierced with a spear, but it lives on, and yearns towards sinners, and is as tender and compassionate as in the days of the Redeemer’s flesh. Jesus, the Sinner’s Friend, walks in the avenues of Scripture as once He traversed the plains and hills of Palestine—you can still see Him if you have opened eyes, in the ancient prophecies. You can behold Him more clearly in the devout Evangelists. He opens and lays bare His inmost soul to you in the Epistles, and makes you hear the footsteps of His approaching advent in the symbols of the Apocalypse. The living Christ is in the Book. You behold His face in almost every page. And, consequently, it is a Book that can talk.

The Christ of the mount of benedictions still speaks in it. The God who said, “Let there be light,” gives forth from its pages the same Divine fiat. The incorruptible Truth of God which saturated every line and syllable of it when first it was penned, still abides there in full force and preserves it from the finger of decay. “The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever.”

Over and above all this, the Holy Spirit has a peculiar connection with the Word of God. I know that He works in the ministries of all His servants whom He has ordained to preach. But for the most part, I have remarked that the work of the Spirit of God in men’s hearts is rather in connection with the texts we quote than with our explanations of them. “Depend upon it,” says a deeply spiritual writer, “it is God’s Word, not man’s comment on it, which saves souls.” God does save souls by our comments, but still it is true that the majority of conversions have been worked by the agency of a text of Scripture.

It is the Word of God that is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. There must be life in it, for by it men are born again! As for Believers, the Holy Spirit often sets the Word on a blaze while they are studying it. The letters were at one time before us as mere letters, but the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke with tongues. The chapter is lowly as the bush at Horeb, but the Spirit descends upon it, and lo, it glows with celestial splendor! God appears in the Words and we feel like Moses when he put off his shoes from his feet because the place whereon he stood was holy ground!

It is true, the majority of readers do not understand this, and look upon the Bible as a common book—but if they understand it not, at least let them allow the truthfulness of our assertion when we declare that hundreds of times we have as surely felt the Presence of God in the pages of

Scripture as ever Elijah did when he heard the Lord speaking in a still small voice. The Bible has often appeared to us as a temple God, and the posts of its doors have moved at the voice of Him that cried, whose train also has filled the temple.

We have been constrained to adoringly cry, with the seraphim, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts.” The Jews place as a frontispiece to their great Bible, the text, “Surely God is in this place. It is none other than the House of God, and the very gate of Heaven.” And they say well. It is, indeed, a spiritual temple, a most holy house garnished with precious stones for beauty and overlaid within and without with pure gold, having for its chief Glory the Presence of the Lord, so gloriously revealed, that, oftentimes, the priests of the Lord cannot stand to minister, by reason of the Glory of the Lord which fills the house.

God the Holy Spirit vivifies the letter with His Presence, and then it is to us a Living Word, indeed. And now, dear Brethren, if these things are so— and our experience certifies them—let us take care how we trifle with a Book which is so instinct with life. Might not many of you remember your faults this day were we to ask you whether you are habitual students of Holy Writ? Readers of it I believe you are. But are you searchers. For the promise is not to those who merely read, but to those who delight in the Law of the Lord and meditate therein both day and night.

Are you sitting at the feet of Jesus, with His Word as your school-book? If not, remember—though you may be saved—you lack very much of the blessing which otherwise you might enjoy. Have you been backsliding? Refresh your soul by meditating in the Divine Statutes, and you will say with David, “Your Word has quickened me.” Are you faint and weary? Go and talk with this Living Book—it will give you back your energy, and you shall mount again as with the wings of eagles.

But are you unconverted altogether? Then I cannot direct you to Bible reading as being the way of salvation, nor speak of it as though it had any merit in it. But I would, nevertheless, urge upon you unconverted people great reverence for Scripture, an intimate acquaintance with its contents, and a frequent perusal of its pages—for it has occurred ten thousand times over that when men have been studying the Word of Life, the Word has brought Life to them. “The entrance of Your Word gives light.”

Like Elijah and the dead child, the Word has stretched itself upon them and their dead souls have been made to live! One of the likeliest places in which to find Christ is in the garden of the Scriptures, for there He delights to walk. As of old, the blind men were likely to sit by the wayside begging, so that, if Jesus passed by, they might cry to Him. So would I have you sit down by the wayside of the Holy Scriptures. Hear the promises, listen to their gracious Words! They are the footsteps of the Savior. And as you hear them, may you be led to cry, “You Son of David, have mercy upon me!”

Attend most those ministries which preach God’s Word most. Do not select those that are most full of fine speaking, and that dazzle you with expressions which are rather ornamental than edifying. But get to a ministry that is full of God’s own Word, and, above all, learn God’s Word itself. Read it with a desire to know its meaning, and I am persuaded that, thereby, many of you who are now far from God will be brought near to Him and led to a saving faith in Jesus, for “the Word of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

II. If the text says, “When you awake, it shall talk with you,” then it is clear THE WORD IS PERSONAL. “It shall talk with you.” It is not written, “It shall speak to the air, and you shall hear its voice,” but, “It shall talk with you.” You know exactly what the expression means. I am not exactly talking with any one of you this morning. There are too many of you, and I am but one. But, when you are on the road home, each one will talk with his fellow—then it is truly talk when man speaks to man.

Now, the Word of God has the condescending habit of talking to men, speaking personally to them. And, here I desire to commend the Word of God to your love. Oh, that you might esteem it very precious for this reason! “It shall talk with you,” that is to say, God’s Word talks about men, and about modern men. It speaks of ourselves, and of these latter days, as precisely as if it had only appeared this last week. Some go to the Word of God with the idea that they shall find historical information about the ancient ages—and so they will—but that is not the object of the Word.

Others look for facts upon geology, and great attempts have been made either to bring geology round to Scripture, or Scripture to geology. We may always rest assured that Truth never contradicts itself—but, as nobody knows anything yet about geology—for its theory is a dream and an imagination altogether—we will wait till the philosophers settle their own private matters, being confident that when they find out the Truth, it will be quite consistent with what God has revealed. At any rate, we may leave that.

The main teachings of Holy Scripture are about men, about the Paradise of unfallen manhood, the Fall, the degeneracy of the race, and the means of its redemption. The Book speaks of victims and sacrifices, priests and washings, and so points us to the Divine plan by which man can be elevated from the Fall and be reconciled to God. Read Scripture through, and you shall find that its great subject is that which concerns the race as to their most important interests, and concerns the race, not as Jews or as Gentiles, but as men. Not as Barbarians, or Scythians, or Greek, or bond, or free, but as men.

And he does not read the Word of God aright who does not hear it talking to him about things which intimately concern both himself and his fellows. It is a book that talks, talks personally, for it deals with things not in the moon, nor in the planet Jupiter, nor in the distant ages long gone by, nor does it say much of the periods yet to come, but it deals with us, with the business of today. It tells how sin may be forgiven today, and our souls brought at once into union with Christ.

Moreover, this Book is so personal, that it speaks to men in all states and conditions before God. How it talks to sinners! Talks, I say, for it puts it thus—“Come, now, and let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as snow.” It has many very tender expostulations for sinners. It stoops to their condition and position. If they will not stoop to God, it makes, as it were, Eternal Mercy stoop to them.  
It talks of feasts of fat things, of fat things full of marrow. And the

Book, as it talks, reasons with men’s hunger, and bids them eat and be satisfied. It speaks of garments woven in the loom of Infinite Wisdom and Love, and so it talks to man’s nakedness, and entreats him to be arrayed in the Divine righteousness. There is no sinner, in any condition, who dares say there is nothing in the Word of God to suit his case. If you have been a persecutor, Saul’s history talks to you—if you have shed innocent blood very much, Manasseh would speak with you. If you have been a harlot, or a thief, it has special passages to meet you. In all conditions into which the sinner can be cast, there is a Word that precisely meets his condition.

And, certainly, when we become the children of God, the Book talks with us wondrously! In the family of Heaven it is the child’s own Book. We no sooner know our Father than this dear Book comes at once as a love letter from the far-off country, signed with our own Father’s hand, and perfumed with our Father’s love. If we grow in Grace, or if we backslide— in either case Scripture still talks with us. Whatever our position before the eternal God, the Book seems to be written on purpose to meet that position. It talks to you as you are, not only as you should be, or as others have been, but with you, with you personally, about your present condition!

Have you ever noticed how personal the Book is as to all your states of mind, in reference to sadness or to joy? There was a time with some of us when we were very gloomy and sore depressed, and then the Book of Job mourned to the same dolorous tune. I have turned over the Lamentations of Jeremiah and thought that I could have written just what Jeremiah wrote. It mourns unto us when we lament.

On the other hand, when the soul gets up to the exceeding high mountains, to the top of Amana and Lebanon, when we behold visions of Glory and see our Beloved face to face, lo, the Word is at our side—and in the delightful language of the Psalms, or in the yet sweeter expressions of the Song of Solomon—it tells us all that is in our heart! And it talks to us as a living thing that has been in the deeps, and has been on the heights—that has known the overwhelming of affliction, and has rejoiced in the triumphs of delight!

The Word of God is to me my own Book—I have no doubt, Brothers and Sisters, it is the same to you. There could not be a Bible that suited me better—it seems written on purpose for me. Dear Sister, have not you often felt as you have put your finger on a promise, “Ah, that is my promise. If there is no other soul whose tearful eyes can bedew that page and say, ‘It is mine,’ yet I, a poor afflicted one, can do so!” Oh, yes! The Book is very personal, for it goes into all the details of our case, let our state be what it may.

And, how very faithful it always is. You never find the Word of God keeping back that which is profitable to you. Like Nathan it cries, “You are the man.” It never allows our sins to go unrebuked, nor our backslidings to escape notice till they grow into overt sin. It gives us timely notice. It cries to us as soon as we begin to go aside, “Awake you that sleep!” “Watch and pray!” “Keep your heart with all diligence,” and a thousand other words of warning does it address personally to each one of us.

Now I would suggest, before I leave this point, a little self-examination as healthful for each of us. Does the Word of God speak to my soul after this fashion? Then it is a gross folly to lose by generalizations that precious thing which can only be realized by a personal grasp. What do you say, dear Hearer? Do you read the Book for yourself? And does the Book speak to you? Has it ever condemned you, and have you trembled before the Word of God? Has it ever pointed you to Christ, and have you run to Jesus the Incarnate Savior? Does the Book now seal, as with the witness of the Spirit, the witness of your own spirit that you are born of God?

Are you in the habit of going to the Book to know your own condition? To see your own face as in a glass? Is it your family medicine? Is it your test and tell-tale to let you know your spiritual condition? Oh, do not treat the Book in any other way than this—and take it to be your personal friend—and then happy are you, since God will dwell with the man that trembles at His Word! But, if you treat it as anybody’s book rather than your own, then beware, lest you be numbered with the wicked who despise God’s Statutes.

III. From the text we learn that HOLY SCRIPTURE IS VERY FAMILIAR. “When you awake, it shall talk with you.” To talk signifies fellowship, communion, familiarity. It does not say, “It shall preach to you.” Many persons have a high esteem for the Book, but they look upon it as though it were some very elevated teacher speaking to then from a lofty tribunal, while they stand far below. I will not altogether condemn that reverence, but it were far better if they would understand the familiarity of God’s Word.

It does not so much preach to us as talk to us. It is not, “When you awake, it shall lecture you,” or, “it shall scold you.” No, no, “it shall talk with you.” We sit at its feet, or rather at the feet of Jesus, in the Word— and it comes down to us—it is familiar with us, as a man talks to his friend. And here let me remind you of the delightful familiarity of Scripture in this respect that it speaks the language of men. If God had written us a Book in His own language, we could not have comprehended it, or what little we understood could have so alarmed us that we should have begged that those Words should not be spoken to us anymore.

But the Lord, in His Word, often uses language which, though it is infallibly true in its meanings, is not after the knowledge of God, but according to the manner of man. I mean this, that the Word uses similes and analogies of which we may say that they speak humanly and not according to the absolute Truth as God Himself sees it. As men conversing with babes use their broken speech, so does the condescending Word. It is not written in the celestial tongue, but in the patois of this lowland country, condescending to men of low estate. It feeds us on bread broken down to our capacity, “food convenient for us.”

It speaks of God’s arm, His hands, His finger, His wings, and even of His feathers. Now, all this is familiar picturing, to meet our childish capacities. For the Infinite One is not to be conceived of as though such similitudes were literal facts. It is an amazing instance of Divine Love that He puts those things so that we may be helped to grasp sublime Truths. Let us thank the Lord of the Word for this! How tenderly Scripture comes down to simplicity. Suppose the Sacred Volume had all been like the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel? Small would have been its service to the generality of mankind!

Imagine that the entire Volume had been as mysterious as the Book of Revelation—it might have been our duty to study it, but if its benefit depended upon our understanding it—we should have failed to attain it. But how simple are the four Gospels, how plain these Words, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” How deliciously clear those parables about the lost piece of money, the lost sheep, and the prodigal son. Wherever the Word touches upon vital points, it is as bright as a sunbeam.

Mysteries there are, and profound doctrines—deeps where Leviathan can swim—but where it has to do immediately with what concerns us for eternity, it is so plain that the babe in Grace may safely wade in its refreshing streams. In the Gospel narrative the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err. It is familiar talk. It is God’s great mind brought down to our littleness, that it may lift us up. How familiar the Book is, too—I speak now as to my own feelings—as to all that concerns us. It talks about my flesh, and my corruptions, and my sins, as only one that knew me could speak.

It talks of my trials in the wisest way. Some, I dare not tell, it knows all about. It talks about my difficulties. Some would sneer at them and laugh, but this Book sympathizes with them, knows my trembling, and my fears, and my doubts, and all the storm that rages within the little world of my nature. The Book has been through all my experiences. Somehow or other it maps it all out, and talks with me as if it were a fellow pilgrim. It does not speak to me in an impossible way, and scold me, and look down upon me from an awful height of stern perfection—as if it were an angel, and could not sympathize with fallen men. But like the Lord whom it reveals, the Book seems as if it were touched with a feeling of my infirmities, and had been tempted in all points as I am.

Have you not often wondered at the human utterances of the Divine Word—it thunders like God and yet weeps like man! It seems impossible that anything should be too little for the Word of God to notice, or too bitter, or even too sinful for that Book to overlook. It touches humanity at all points. Everywhere it is a personal, familiar acquaintance, and seems to say to itself, “Shall I hide this thing from Abraham My friend?” And, how often the Book has answered enquiries! I have been amazed in times of difficulties to see how plain the oracle is. You have asked friends, and they could not advise you.

But you have gone to your knees, and God has told you. You have questioned, and you have puzzled, and you have tried to elucidate the problem, and, lo, in the chapter read at morning prayer, or in a passage of Scripture that lay open before you, the direction has been given! Have we not seen a text, as it were, plume its wings and fly from the Word like a seraph, and touch our lips with a live altar coal? It lay like a slumbering angel in the beds of spices of the Sacred Word, but it received a Divine mission, and brought consolation and instruction to our hearts. The Word of God, then, talks with us in the sense of being familiar with us.

Do we understand this? I will close this point by another word of application. Who, then, that finds God’s Word so dear and kind a Friend would spurn or neglect it? If any of you have despised it, what shall I say to you? If it were a dreary book, written within and without with curses and lamentations, whose every letter flashed with declarations of vengeance, I might see some reason why we should not read it. But, O precious, priceless Companion! Dear Friend, of all my sorrows, making my bed in my sickness, the light of my darkness, and the joy of my soul, how can I forget you—how can I forsake you?

I have heard of one who said that the dust on some men’s Bibles lay there so thick and long that you might write “Damnation” on it. I am afraid that such is the case with some of you. Mr. Rogers, of Dedham, on one occasion, after preaching about the preciousness of the Bible, took it away from the front of the Pulpit, and, putting it down behind him, pictured God as saying, “You do not read the Book. You do not care about it. I will take it back—you shall not be wearied with it any more.” And then he portrayed the grief of wise men’s hearts when they found the blessed Revelation withdrawn from men. And how they would besiege the Throne of Grace, day and night, to ask it back.

I am sure he spoke the Truth. Though we, too, much neglect it, yet ought we to prize it beyond all price, for, if it were taken from us, we should have lost our kindest comforter in the hour of need. God grant us to love the Scriptures more!

IV. Fourthly, and with brevity, our text evidently shows that THE WORD IS RESPONSIVE. “When you awake, it shall talk with you,” not to you. Now, talk with a man is not all on one side. To talk with a man needs answering talk from him. You have both of you something to say when you talk together. It is a conversation to which each one contributes his part. Now, Scripture is a marvelously conversational Book. It talks, and makes men talk. It is ever ready to respond to us. Suppose you go to the Scriptures in a certain state of spiritual life—you must have noticed, I think, that the Word answers to that state.

If you are dark and gloomy, it will appear as though it had put itself in mourning, so that it might lament with you. When you are on the dunghill, there sits Scripture, with dust and ashes on its head, weeping side by side with you, and not upbraiding like Job’s miserable comforters. But suppose you come to the book with gleaming eyes of joy—you will hear it laugh! It will sing and play to you as with psaltery and harp, it will bring forth the high-sounding cymbals. Enter its goodly land in a happy state and you shall go forth with joy and be led forth with peace! Its mountains and its hills shall break before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

As in water the face is reflected, so in the Living Stream of revealed Truth a man sees his own image. If you come to Holy Scripture with growth in Grace, and with aspirations for yet higher attainments, the Book grows with you, grows upon you. It is ever beyond you, and cheerily cries, “Higher yet! Excelsior!” Many books in my library are now behind and beneath me. I read them years ago with considerable pleasure. I have read them since with disappointment. I shall never read them again, for they are of no service to me.

They were good in their way once, and so were the clothes I wore when I was ten years old. But I have outgrown them. I know more than these books know, and know wherein they are faulty. Nobody ever outgrows

Scripture. The Book widens and deepens with our years. It is true, it cannot really grow, for it is perfect. But it does so to our apprehension. The deeper you dig into Scripture, the more you find that it is a great abyss of Truth. The beginner learns four or five points of orthodoxy, and says, “I understand the Gospel, I have grasped all the Bible.”

Wait a bit, and when his soul grows and knows more of Christ, he will confess, “Your Commandment is exceedingly broad, I have only begun to understand it.” There is one thing about God’s Word which shows its responsiveness to us, and that is when you reveal your heart to it, it reveals its heart to you. If, as you read the Word, you say, “O blessed Truth, you are, indeed, realized in my experience—come still further into my heart. I give up my prejudices, I assign myself, like the wax, to be stamped with your seal.” When you do that, and open your heart to Scripture, Scripture will open its heart to you. For it has secrets which it does not tell to the casual reader. It has precious things of the everlasting hills which can only be discovered by miners who know how to dig and open the secret places, and penetrate great veins of everlasting riches.

Give yourself up to the Bible, and the Bible will give itself up to you. Be candid with it, and honest with your soul, and the Scripture will take down its golden key and open one door after another, and show to your astonished gaze ingots of silver which you could not weigh and heaps of gold which you could not measure. Happy is that man who, in talking with the Bible, tells it all his heart, and learns the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him.

And how, too, if you love the Bible and talk out your love to it, the Bible will love you! Its wisdom says, “I love them that love Me.” Embrace the Word of God, and the Word of God embraces you at once. When you prize its every letter, then it smiles upon you graciously, greets you with many welcomes, and treats you as an honored guest. I am always sorry to be on bad terms with the Bible, for then I must be on bad terms with God. Whenever my creed does not square with God’s Word, I think it is time to mold my creed into another form.

As for God’s Words, they must not be touched with hammer or axe. Oh, the chiseling, and cutting, and hammering in certain commentaries to make God’s Bible orthodox and systematic! How much better to leave it alone! The Word is right, and we are wrong if we agree not with it. The teachings of God’s Word are Infallible, and must be reverenced as such. Now, when you love it so well that you would not change a single line of it, and prize it so much that you would even die for the defense of one of its Truths, then, as it is dear to you, you will be dear to it, and it will grasp you and unfold itself to you as it does not to the world.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I must leave this point, but it shall be with this remark—Do you talk to God? Does God talk to you? Does your heart go up to Heaven, and does His Word come fresh from Heaven to your soul? If not, you do not know the experience of the living child of God, and I can earnestly pray you may. May you this day be brought to see Christ Jesus in the Word, to see a crucified savior there, and to put your trust in Him, and then, from this day forward, the Word will echo to your heart—it will respond to your emotions!

V. Lastly, SCRIPTURE IS INFLUENTIAL. That I gather from the fact that Solomon says, “When you wake, it shall talk with you.” And follows it up with the remark that it keeps man from the strange woman, and from other sins which he goes on to mention. When the Word of God talks with us, it influences us. All talk influences more or less. I believe there is more done in this world for good or bad by talk than there is by preaching. Indeed, the preacher preaches best when he talks. There is no oratory in the world that is equal to simple talk—it is the model of eloquence.

And all your rhetorician’s action and verbiage are so much rubbish. The most efficient way of preaching is simply talking—a man permitting his heart to run over at his lips into other men’s hearts. Now, this Book, as it talks with us, influences us, and it does so in many ways. It soothes our sorrows, and encourages us. Many a warrior has been ready to steal away from God’s battle, but the Word has laid its hand on him, and said, “Stand on your feet, be not discouraged, be of good cheer, I will strengthen you, I will help you. Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.”

Brave saints we have read of, but we little know how often they would have been complete cowards, only the Good Word came and strengthened them, and they went back to be stronger than lions and swifter than eagles. While the Book thus soothes and cheers, it has a wonderfully elevating power. Have you ever felt it put fresh life-blood into you? You have thought, “How can I continue to live at such a dying rate as I have lived, I must gain something nobler?” Read that part of the Word which tells of the agonies of your Master, and you will feel—

*“Now for the love I bear His name  
What was my gain I count my loss.  
My former pride I call my shame,  
And nail my glory to His Cross.”*

Read of the glories of Heaven which this Book reveals, and you will feel that you can run the race with quickened speed because a crown so bright is glittering in your view. Nothing can so lift a man above the gross considerations of carnal gain or human applause as to have his soul saturated with the spirit of the Truth of God. It elevates as well as cheers.

Then, too, how often it warns and restrains. I had gone to the right or to the left if the Law of the Lord had not said, “Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you.” This Book’s consecrated talk sanctifies and molds the mind into the image of Christ. You cannot expect to grow in Grace if you do not read the Scriptures. If you are not familiar with the Word, you cannot expect to become like He that spoke it. Our experience is, as it were, the potter’s wheel on which we revolve. And the hand of God is in the Scriptures to mold us after the fashion and image which He intends to bring us to.

Oh, be much with the Holy Word of God, and you will be holy. Be much with the silly novels of the day, and the foolish trifles of the hour, and you will degenerate into vapid wasters of your time. But be much with the solid teaching of God’s Word and you will become solid and substantial men and women—drink them in, and feed upon them, and they shall produce in you a Christ-likeness at which the world shall stand astonished!

Lastly, let the Scripture talk with you, and it will confirm and settle you. We hear every now and then of apostates from the Gospel. They must have been little taught in the Truth as it is in Jesus. A great outcry is

made, every now and then, about our all being converted to Rome. I was assured the other day, by a good man with a great deal of alarm, that all England was going over to Popery. I told him I did not know what kind of God he worshiped, but my God was a good deal bigger than Satan. And my God did not intend to let the devil have his way after all, and that I was not half as much afraid of the Pope at Rome as of the Ritualists at home.

But mark it, there is some truth in these fears. There will be a going over to one form of error or another, unless there is in the Christian Church a more honest, industrious, and general reading of Holy Scripture. What if I were to say most of you Church members do not read your Bibles? Should I be slandering you? You hear on Sunday a chapter read, and you perhaps read a passage at family prayer, but a very large number never read the Bible privately for themselves.

They take their religion out of the monthly magazine, or accept it from the minister’s lips. Oh, for the Berean spirit back again—to search the Scriptures whether these things are so! I would like to see a huge pile of all the books, good and bad, that were ever written—prayer books, and sermons, and hymnbooks, and all—smoking like Sodom of old, if the reading of those books keeps you away from the reading of the Bible!

A ton weight of human literature is not worth an ounce of Scripture— one single drop of the essential tincture of the Word of God is better than a sea full of our comments and sermons, and the like. The Word, the simple, pure, Infallible Word of God—we must live upon it if we are to become strong against error, and tenacious of Truth. Brethren, may you be established in the faith—rooted, grounded, built up. But I know you cannot be except you search the Scriptures continually.

The time is coming when we shall all fall asleep in death. Oh, how blessed it will be to find when we awake that the Word of God will talk with us then, and remember its ancient friendship! Then the promise which we loved before shall be fulfilled. The charming intimations of a blessed future shall be all realized—and the face of Christ—whom we saw as through a glass darkly, shall be all uncovered, and He shall shine upon us as the sun in its strength. God grant us to love the Word of God, and feed thereon, and the Lord shall have the Glory forever and ever. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Psalm 119:161-179; Proverbs 6:1-23.  
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #626 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Pro 11.25

THE WATERER WATERED

NO. 626

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 23, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“He that waters shall be watered also himself.”  
Proverbs 11:25.**

THE general principle is that in living for the good of others we shall be profited ourselves. We must not isolate our own interests but feel that we live for others. This teaching is sustained by the analogy of nature, for in nature there is a law that no one thing can be independent of the rest of creation, but there is a mutual action and reaction of all upon all. All the constituent parts of the universe are bound to one another by invisible chains and there is not a single creature in it which springs up, or flourishes, or decays itself alone.

The very planets, though they float far from one another, exercise attraction. And the fixed stars, though they seem to be infinitely remote, are still linked to one another by mysterious bonds. God has so constituted this universe that selfishness is the greatest possible offense against His Law and living for others and ministering to others is the strictest obedience to His will. Our surest road to our own happiness is to seek the good of our fellows. We store up in God’s own bank what we generously expend on the behalf of our race. The little spring bubbling forth from the ancient pipe on the hillside overflows the stone basin and liberally supplies all the villagers with pure and cooling drink. In its flowing it does not waste itself, for the deep fountains in the heart of the earth continue unceasingly to supply it and both in winter’s frost and summer’s drought the springhead yields its crystal stream.

The little brook which babbles through the woods, hiding among stones, leaping down the moss-grown rocks and soon deepening and swelling its stream, pours all its gatherings into the river hoarding not a drop. And though its treasure is constantly being lavished with unstinting liberality, yet Heaven and earth see to it that the brook shall never fail to sing its joyous song—

*“Men may come and go*

*But I go on forever.”*  
The river hastens with its greater floods towards the all-receiving ocean— pouring itself out every hour with happy plenteousness, as though it only existed to empty itself. Yet the abundant tributaries which come streaming from the hills and draining the valleys are careful that the river shall know no lack, but shall be kept constantly brimming, a joyous and bounding river forevermore!

The ocean perpetually sends up its steaming exhalations to the sky, grudging nothing. It puts no doors to its rolling waves, but uncovers all its treasure to the sun and the sun makes large draughts upon the royal

treasury of the deep. Nevertheless the ocean is not diminished, for all the rivers are constantly conspiring to keep the sea full to the shore. The clouds of Heaven, when they are full of rain, empty themselves upon the earth and yet the clouds cease not to be, for, “they return after the rain,” and the ocean down below seems but to be too glad to be continually feeding its sister ocean on the other side of the firmament.

So, as wheels with bands are made to work together—as wheels with cogs working upon one another—the whole watery machinery is kept in motion by each part acting upon its neighbor and the next upon the next. Each wheel expends its force upon its fellow and the whole find a recompense in their mutual action upon one another. The same truth might be illustrated from other departments of nature. If we view this microcosm, the human body, we shall find that the heart does not receive the blood to store it up, but while it pumps it in at one valve, it sends it forth at another. The blood is always circulating everywhere and is stagnant nowhere.

The same is true of all the fluids in a healthy body—they are in a constant state of expenditure. If one cell stores for a few moments its peculiar secretion, it only retains it till it is perfectly fitted for its appointed use in the body, for if any cell in the body should begin to store up its secretion, its store would soon become the cause of inveterate disease. No, the organ would soon lose the power to secrete at all if it did not give forth its products. The whole of the human system lives by giving. The eye cannot say to the foot, I have no need of you and will not guide you, for if it does not perform its watchful office, the whole man will be in the ditch and the eye will be covered with mire.

If the members refuse to contribute to the general stock, the whole body will become poverty-stricken and be given up to the bankruptcy of death. Let us learn, then, from the analogy of Nature, the great lesson that to get, we must give! That to accumulate, we must scatter! That to make ourselves happy, we must make others happy! And that to get good and become spiritually vigorous, we must do good and seek the spiritual good of others. This is the general principle.

The text suggests a particular personal application of the general principle. We shall consider it, first, in its narrowest sense—as belonging to ourselves personally. Secondly, in a wider sense—as it may refer to us as a Church. Then, thirdly, in its widest sense—as it may be referred to the entire body of Christ, showing that still it is true that as it waters, so it shall be watered itself.

I. First, then, IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES. There are some works, my Brothers and Sisters, in which we cannot all engage. Peculiar men are called to be God’s great woodmen—to clear the way with the axe, to go before His army like our sappers and miners. Such men as Martin Luther and Calvin and Zwingli—that glorious trio of heroes marching in front of reformation and evangelization. They are cutting down the tall trees, tunneling the hills and bridging the rivers. And we smaller men feel that there is little of this work for us to do. But when the backwoodsmen have cleared the forest, after all the roots are grubbed and the soil is burned and plowed, then comes the sowing and the planting, and in this, all the household can take a place.

And when the plants have sprung up and need water, it is not only the stalwart man with the axe who can now apply himself to watering, but even the little children can take a share in this lighter work. Watering is work for persons of all grades and all sorts. If I cannot carry about me some ponderous load as the Eastern water-bearer can, yet I will take my little water pot, my little jug or pitcher, and go to the well. If I cannot water the forest tree, I may water the tiny plant which grows at its root. Watering is work for all sorts of people. So, then, we will make a personal application to every Christian here this morning—you can all do something in watering—and this promise can therefore be realized by you all, “He that waters shall be watered also himself.”

All God’s plants, more or less, want watering. You and I do. We cannot live long without fresh supplies of Divine Grace. Therefore the value of the promise, “I, the Lord, do keep it. I will water it every moment.” There are no brooks at our roots as we grow in the soil of nature—it is only in the garden of Grace that we are “like trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth our fruit in our season.” If the Lord Jesus, who is the stem of the vine, should cease to supply us with the fresh sap of Grace, would we not be like the withered branch which is cast over the wall to be burned in the fire? The Lord’s people usually get this watering through instrumentality.

God does not speak to us out of Heaven with His own voice—perhaps the thunder might appall us—He does not write texts of Scripture with His own finger in letters of fire across the sky. But He waters us by instrumentality, by His Word written and His Word preached, or otherwise uttered by His servants. His Holy Spirit waters us by the admonitions of parents, by the kind suggestions of friends, by the teaching of His ministers, by the example of all His saints. The Holy Spirit waters us, but He takes care to do it by our fellow workers, putting an honor upon His own servants by using them in instrumentality.

This being fully believed by us all, we may proceed to another Truth of God, namely, that some of His servants especially need watering and should therefore be the objects of our constant care. Some plants need watering from their peculiar nature. A gardener will tell you that certain flowers require very little water, perhaps for months they will grow in a stony soil. But others must be watered regularly and plenteously or they will soon droop. Some of you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, are so desponding that if you did not receive much comfort you would hardly hold up your heads at all. You are so weak in the faith that if you were not fed with milk continually you would scarcely be alive.

“Comfort you, comfort you, My people, says your God”—is especially applicable to the mourners in Zion. Their constitutional temperament is such that to maintain the lamp of their joy they require much oil of comfort. Perhaps, too, they are ignorant, and the ignorant need much watering. If they knew the Doctrines of Grace more fully, they might go to the wells themselves—but not knowing where the water is, or feeling, like the

woman at the well, that the well is deep and that there is nothing to draw with—they cannot get the water. And we who are instructed in the way of God must take care that we bring up the water for them with our longer length of the line of knowledge so that they may not fail to be watered.

It may be the need is not so much caused by the nature of the plant as by the position in which it is placed. Many of you, dear Brethren, are very happily situated where you can constantly attend the means of Grace— where the family altar smokes with sweet perfume—where you cannot help growing. You are like plants in a hothouse. But there are others, on the contrary, who live in houses where the jeer is far more frequently heard than the voice of praise. Where, instead of being helped in your devotions, you are hindered. Your spirit is driven to and fro with distractions—from the very closet where you wanted to commune with God you are forced out by cruel mocking.

We ought to be very tender about your condition. You are planted on no fruitful hill, but on a very thirsty land where there is no water. Your position should lead God’s people to watch you with deepest interest and see to it that you are well watered. I may also mention the sick. When our dear friends are tried with bodily pain—when they are shut up week after week from public gatherings—then they need watering. Their position is such that we ought to be especially mindful of them. It is written, “He carries the lambs in His bosom and gently leads those that are with young.” And we must note the peculiar condition of the saints of God, being most careful of those who most need our tenderness.

Let me also suggest the young to you. These need watering, both, let me say, from their character and from their position. With little experience and little knowledge they are prone to wander or to be seized by the wolf. Tend them with parental affection. When transplanted flowers are first put into the ground they need more water than they will later. When they have sent out more roots and these roots have abundant fibers searching through the soil for moisture they may not require much of the gardener’s care, but just now they must have it or die. Therefore, I say, let the feeble, the weak, the young, the sick, the persecuted be watered most anxiously and lovingly by you all.

Certain dear friends need watering, not so much from their position and character as from the present trials through which they are passing. Certain plants, after long standing in the sun, droop their leaves and look as if they must wither and die. But as soon as water is poured to their roots, it has sometimes perfectly surprised me to see how they recover! I could scarcely think that they were the same plants, their recovery was so sudden. The little roots beneath sent the message up to the main roots and said, “We have found out moisture. A friendly hand has given us a supply,” and the root talked to the stem and the stem rejoiced and the great leaves drank up their share and the little leaves sucked up their drops till the whole plant to the very summit was verdant once more and rejoiced.  
Times will come to all of us when we need water. I, myself, get very desponding at seasons and I suppose you do, too. Unbelief dries us up. Oh that devil of unbelief! Why if that demon were dead, the other devils we might very well contend with. Personal affliction, losses, crosses, burdens make us just like the withering shrub and then we need to have the consolations of some kind friend to water us. Dear Friends, sometimes there are those in the Church who particularly need watering because they are actually withering. It is not to maintain verdure in their case but to restore it. Those backsliding ones—those who have slipped with their feet— do not cast them off, for God casts not off the backsliding one.

When they begin to forsake the House of God, do not forsake them. Follow them with your tears. In such a Church as this, if you do not exercise mutual oversight over one another we shall simply become a mass of corruption instead of being a mountain of holiness. Watch over your Brethren as soon as you see the first signs of declension. When they forsake Prayer Meetings, gently give them a hint of the evil of lukewarmness and the danger of falling by little and little. When you mark the first sign in their outward carriage of laxity with regard to Divine things. When you see coldness where there was formerly zeal, be sure to give a gentle word of earnest, pathetic admonition.

As I look around this Tabernacle I can but compare these rising seats to shelves in the conservatory and you are the plants which must all be watered or you will languish and wither. And I, who have to be my Master’s under gardener, am very anxious to say to all of you who have any water in your watering pots—help me water these plants—that, by the gracious operations of God, the Holy Spirit, they may be kept fruitful, green, verdant in spiritual things even to the end!

We now enter more thoroughly into our text and observe that all Believers have power to water others. You may not have much ability or influence, but you all have some power in this matter. In thinking over what Solomon meant, it struck me that he had in his mind’s eye the plan of irrigation which is followed in some Eastern countries. The rivers at certain seasons overflow their banks. The careful farmers whose farms are close along the sides of the bank have large tanks and reservoirs in which they store up the water.

After the flood the river is comparatively empty and the little farms, the vineyards and pastures on the banks begin to cry out for water. Then the careful farmer lets out the water from his tank or reservoir by slow degrees and uses it with great economy. It would sometimes happen that one of these farmers would have his reservoirs filled and his neighbor, perhaps through the bursting of a tank, or the falling down of the bank of earth, might have little or no water. At such times a greedy man would say, “I shall need all my water for myself. I will not lend or give so much as a drop of it. I have none to spare.” But the generous man says, “I do not know whether God may be pleased to send a drought or not, but I cannot let my neighbor lose all his crops for the want of a little water while I have a good stock in hand.” So he pulls up the sluice and lets such a stream as he thinks he can spare flow into his neighbor’s channel so

that he may water his fields.

Now Solomon says that those who water others shall be watered. Next season it may happen that this good man may have no water himself. Well, then, all the farmers round about will say, “Why, he helped us when his tank was full and we will return his kindness into his bosom.” “Ah,” says one, “he saved me from ruin. I should not have had a crop at all last season if it had not been for him.” So they all lend a portion, till he finds no difficulty whatever—even in a season of drought. When men cannot get water for love or money—he is sure to have it. The common feeling of men, as a usual rule, recognizes the law of gratitude and men say, “He watered others, he shall be watered himself.”

My dear Brother, you may be a man of talent. You may be a man of wealth—just turn on the big tap and let your ignorant or poor neighbors benefit a little by your abundance. Pull up the floodgates and let the more needy brethren be enriched by your fullness—open that mouth of yours that your wisdom may feed many! Tell of what God has done for your soul that the humble may hear and be glad. Do not be a reservoir brimmed up till the banks are ready to burst out through the weight which presses upon them—let some of the treasure run out! And when your need shall come—and who knows when it may overtake any of us?—you shall find willing friends who shall run with swift feet to cheer your adversity.

This simile needs to be supplemented by another—many true saints are unable to do much. See, then, the gardeners going down to the pond and dipping in their watering pots to carry the refreshing liquid to the flowers. A child comes into the garden and wishes to help. And yonder is a little watering pot for him. Now, see that little water pot? Though it does not carry so much, yet carries the same water. And it does not make any difference to the half-dozen flowers which get that water, whether it came out of the big pot or the little pot, so long as it is the same water and they get it!

You who are like children in God’s Church. You who do not know much—try and tell others what you do know—and if it is the same Gospel Truth, and it is blest by the same Spirit—it will not matter to the souls who get blessed by you whether they were blessed by a man of one or ten talents! What difference will it make to me whether I was converted to God by means of a poor woman who was never made a blessing to anybody else, or by one who had brought his thousands to the Savior’s feet? Go, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and exercise the holy art of watering!

You say “How?” Why, a word may do it! A look may do it! An action may do it! Only zealously desire to offer sympathy, to afford instruction, to give needed help, to impart what you may be favored with to others and you shall be watered yourselves! The main point is that in so watering others we shall be watered ourselves. I am sure we shall, for God promises it and He always keeps His promise. If I need to get water, I must give water. Though that seems a strange way of self-serving I pray you try it. Was not that a very singular thing that when the poor woman of Sarepta had nearly exhausted all her meal, the Prophet asked for a cake for himself? She had been saving it. I dare say she had eaten only a mouthful or two every day. She and her poor boy were looking very thin. They had come to the last handful.

She thought, “I will make one cake for my son and myself and then we will die.” She is outside picking up sticks that she may bake this cake. God intends to bless her. How does He do it? There comes His Prophet, the hairy man. And the first word he says to her is, “Fetch me, I pray you, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” She is quite ready to serve anyone and away she hastens for the water when Elijah cries aloud, “Bring me, I pray you, a morsel of bread in your hand.” What? Out of that little handful—barely enough for one? “Yes,” he says, “make me a little cake first and after make for you and your son.”

“After that?” she might have said, “what will be left after that? When there is only a handful of meal and a little oil in a cruse, not enough for one, am I to give that to you and afterwards see to myself and child?” Faith enabled her to obey and from that very moment neither she nor her son ever knew what need was. She gave from her little and her little multiplied. The case of the woman of Zarephath is but one of thousands establishing the rule of God’s mode of action with His Church—a rule which shall not be broken ever. Let me show you how you will get watered yourself. In the first place, if you try to do good to others it will do you good by waking up your powers. Thousands of men do not know what they are made of. You have no idea what a fine fellow you are, young man, till you begin to shake yourself a little and go forth to fight the Lord’s battles!

We do not know what sinews we have till we climb the mountains! We do not know what strength there may be in our backs and arms till we have to carry a ponderous load and then we find it out. You have latent talents, dormant faculties which would work wonders if you would call them forth. Some people are not awake more than skin deep. All underneath the skin is sound asleep. They are like the great candle which I showed you one night with a small wick, which was only melted a little in the middle while all the outside was still cold, hard tallow and did not contribute to the light. You have not become warm through and through yet—your whole souls have not been wound up to the right pitch for serving God—you have only a little earnestness, a little zeal. But if you ventured upon holy enterprises you would bestir yourself so thoroughly that you would scarcely know yourself again! That would be a blessing, indeed.

But next, you would often find that in trying to water others you gained instruction. Go talk to some poor saint to comfort her and she will tell you what will comfort you. Oh, what gracious lessons some of us have learned at sick beds! We went to teach the Scriptures. We came away blushing that we knew so little of them. We went to talk experimental truth and we found we were only up to the ankles, while here were God’s poor saints chest deep in the river of Divine Love. We learn by teaching and our pupils often teach us.

You will also get comfort in your work. Rest assured that working for others is very happy exercise. Like the two men in the snow—one chafed the other’s limbs to keep him from dying and in so doing he kept his own blood in circulation and his own life was preserved. Comfort God’s people

and the comfort will return into your own soul! Watering others will make you humble. You will find better people in the world than yourself. You will be astonished to find how much Divine Grace there is where you thought there was none—and how much knowledge some have gained— while you, as yet, have made little progress with far greater opportunities.

You will also win many prayers. Those who work for others get prayed for and that is a swift way of growing rich in Grace. Let me have your prayers and I can do anything! Let me be without my people’s prayers and I can do nothing. You Sunday school teachers, if you are blessed to the conversion of the children, will get your children’s prayers. You that conduct the larger classes, in the conversion of your young people you will be sure to have a wealth of love come back into your own bosoms, swimming upon the stream of supplication. You will thus be a blessing to yourselves. In watering others you will get honor to yourselves and that will help to water you by stimulating your future exertions.

The Romans appointed censors in their State—not only to censure men for gross immoralities—but to require every man to give an account of what he was doing for the good of the Republic. We have deacons and elders—would it not be an additional blessing to have censors in the Church to go round and ask the members, all of them, what they are doing for the good of the Christian Church? A Greek historian desired very intensely to say a word about the people of the city where he was born. He felt he could not write his history without saying something of his own native place and accordingly he wrote this: “While Athens was building temples and Sparta was waging war, my countrymen were doing nothing.”

I am afraid there are too many Christians of whom, if the book were written as to what they are doing in the Church, it would have to be said they have been doing nothing all their lives. You would be delivered from that reproach if you began to water others. Let me cease from this subject by saying while you are watering others you will be manifesting and showing your love to Christ—and that will make you more like He—and so you will be watered while you are seeking to benefit your neighbors. To serve Jesus! What need I say of that? Look into that face bedewed with bloody sweat for you! Can you not sweat for Him? Look at those hands pierced for you! Shall your hands hang idly down and not be used for Him?

Look at those feet fastened to the wood with nails for you! Can I ask of you any pilgrimage too long to repay the toil which those feet endured for your sake? My Brothers and Sisters, remember what Christ Jesus has done for you! Remember from where He came! Remember the riches which He left! Remember to what He came—the poverty and shame which He endured and how He went down into the depths that He might take us up to the heights!

If you will think of these, you will have the best motive, I think, for beginning to look after His lambs and fighting with those lions which seek to devour His flock. And in that moving motive will be the main means by which you shall be conformed to His image and shall become like He— self-sacrificing—doing your Father’s business. I wish I could speak more powerfully this morning, but the matter ought to speak for itself with Christians. If we love Jesus we shall not need any pleading with to water His plants. If you really love Him, it will not be a question of whether you shall do something. The only question will be, “What can I do?” And you will say in your pew this morning, “What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?”

He has spared your lives. He has given you health and strength. He has provided you with spirituals and temporals. He has made your heart leap for joy at the sound of His name. He has plucked you out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay. He has taken you out of the black bondage of the Prince of Darkness and made you His sons and daughters. He has put the ring of His eternal love upon your finger. Your feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace—

*“This world is yours and worlds to come,  
Earth is your lodge and Heaven your home.”*

There is a crown for your head and a palm branch for your hand. There are pavements of gold for your feet and felicities forever for your entire soul! And even your body is to be raised again from the dust and fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for you.” Now what will you do for Him? Will you not win the promise that your soul shall be watered by seeking to water the souls of others?

II. A BRIEF EXHORTATION shall suffice for the second point. This general principle is worthy of a wider application. We, as a Church, dear Friends, have enjoyed singular prosperity. While many churches have been depressed and decreased in numbers, we have increased. While other churches have had the hectic flush of a spurious revival, we have had one perpetual revival lasting for nearly twelve years. I do not know that we have increased at a more or a less rapid rate. We could not increase more quickly, for we have not officers enough or time enough to see the converts as it is.

We have never, I think, increased less, for the work seems to have ever the same prosperity about it. I praise God that I can say of my ministry in this place and elsewhere, that to this day it has the dew of its youth upon it and there are as many rejoicing to find Christ through the agencies employed in this Church today as in the first day when we came among you in the freshness and vigor of our youth. We have had no schism. We have had no division. We have not been vexed with heresy. We have been blessed with something like persecution, but this has only bound us the closer to one another till we are like a three-fold cord which cannot be broken. And like iron bars made red hot in the furnace and hammered together, we are not soon to be separated from one another.

Now, dear Friends, up to this time the policy which we have pursued has been this—if members of other churches want to know, we tell them! We have endeavored to water others. Your minister has journeyed all over the three kingdoms preaching the Word and you have not grumbled at his absence. We have undertaken many enterprises for Christ. We hope to undertake a great many more. We have never hindered our strength—we

have undertaken enterprises that were enough to exhaust us—to which, by God’s Grace, we became accustomed in due season and then we have gone on to something more.

We have never sought to hinder the planting of other churches from our midst or in our neighborhood. It is with cheerfulness that we dismiss our dozens, our twenties, our fifties to form other churches. We encourage our members to leave us to found other churches—no—we seek to persuade them to do it. We ask them to scatter throughout the land to become the goodly seed which God shall bless. I believe that so long as we do this we shall prosper. I have marked other churches that have adopted the other way and they have not succeeded. This is what I have heard from some ministers—“I do not encourage village stations or, if I do, I do not encourage their becoming distinct churches and breaking bread together. I do not encourage too many young men going out to preach, for to have a knot of people who can preach a little may very soon cause dissatisfaction with my own preaching.”

I have marked those who have followed this course and I have seen that the effect of trying to keep all the blood in the heart is to bring on congestion. And very soon the whole body has been out of health. My Brethren, if you can do more good elsewhere than you can do here, for God’s sake, go! And happy shall I be that you have gone. If you can serve my Master in the little rooms in the neighborhood—if by forming yourselves into smaller churches you can increase the honor of my Master’s name I shall love you none the less for going—and I shall delight to think that you have Christ’s spirit in you and can do and dare for His name’s sake!

At the present moment we rejoice to know that many a Sunday school in this neighborhood is indebted to the members of this Church for teachers. It is right. We do not want you at home and are therefore glad to see you at work elsewhere. No matter, so long as Christ is preached, whether you throw your strength into that Church or into this Church. Here, as being members with us, we have the first claim upon you. But when we do not need you by reason of our abundance of men, go and give your strength to any other part of Christ’s Church that may desire you. While I speak thus much in your praise, my Brothers and Sisters, let me say we must keep this up.

We must not say, “We have the College to support and we do as much as other churches for various societies and we can be content to sit still.” This Church will begin to go rotten at the core the moment we are not working for God with might and main. Sometimes I get a pull at my coattail by very kind, judicious friends who think I shall ask you to do too much. My Brethren are welcome to pull my coattail, but it will come off before I shall stand back for a moment! As long as I live I must serve my Master with my whole soul and when you think I go too fast, you can stand back if you dare, for mark—you will be responsible to God if you do.

You may start back if you will and if you dare! But I must go on, must go, MUST go on! You and I that are worthy of the day in which we live will follow, step by step, in any good project. And though I should seem too rash, you will redeem me from the charge of rashness by the enthusiasm and the earnestness with which you carry out my plans. Here is this great city! Was there ever such spiritual destitution—a million people who could not go to a place of worship if they had the heart to go there! And here we have the priest-craft of the Church of England increasing the spiritual destitution by building fresh churches—not providing for it, but increasing it, I say—for I reckon that wherever Puseyism is preached, there is an increase of spiritual destitution!

Wherever broad Churchism comes there is an increase of spiritual destitution—and it is little better where they go who preach the Gospel in the pulpit and read Popery at the font, the grave, and the bedside. In this last case public morality is shocked by the perjury of those who swear to a Prayer Book in which they do not believe! Much as I respect and even love Believers in the Anglican Establishment, I can only feel that their presence in so corrupt a body is the reason why it exists. And I therefore think them to be doing mischief by buttressing a falling and ruinous cause.

True Protestants, we must take upon ourselves to work for London as if there were no other agencies at work except those of the Free churches! The Hagar church, the church which has a mortal for its head—the harlot church which lives in alliance with the State—has too many sins of her own to repent of to be of much use in this hour of peril. The good she can do is so insignificant that it is not worth while to compute it—the monstrous evil which she fosters and perpetrates is a more than sufficient setoff against it.

We must work and toil and labor to scatter in every lane, alley and court of London the pure Gospel of the blessed God. We must let men know that Sacramentarianism is a lie and that there is no salvation but in the uplifted Cross of Christ, and no salvation through ceremonies but only through a simple faith in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. If you, among others, are come to the kingdom for such a time as this it shall be well with you! But if not, you shall be put away as things abhorred and this place shall be a hissing and a by-word in generations yet to come. And it shall be said of you—“There lived a people who were led by a man, who, with all his faults, was in earnest and was honest and they would not follow him. They proved unworthy of him and they have passed away and their names were written in water.

“They had opportunities which they did not use. Work was allotted them which they were not worthy to take up. God said to them in answer to their request to be excused, ‘You shall be excused.’ And they went back—

*‘To the vile dust from where they sprung, Unwept, unhonored and unsung.’ ”*  
But it shall not be so with you, my Brethren! Though I thus speak, I know

your zeal and love and earnestness and that you will continue to water others and then you shall be watered yourselves! We will pray and strive together for the faith once delivered to the saints! We will cleave closer and closer to one another and foot to foot and shoulder to shoulder we will march to battle for God and for His Truth! And come what may, whoever else may prove a coward in these days of charity and compromise—we

will be found, in God’s name, by the help of God’s Spirit—faithful and true.

III. And now, dear Friends, another sentence or two will close the sermon. On the widest scale this is true. This is true of our denomination and of every church. If we will water others, we shall be watered. From the very day when Carey and Fuller and Pearce went forth to preach the Gospel to the heathen, a blessing rested upon our denomination. I believe if we had done more for the heathen, we should have been stronger to do more at home. You may rest assured, though some may not think it, that our missionary operations are an infinite blessing to the churches at home.

Relinquishing them, giving them up, stopping them would bring such a blight and a curse that we had need to go down on our knees and pray, “God send the missionary work back again! Give us an outlet for our liberality and our zeal, for without it we become like a pool dammed up that is full of filth and toads and frogs and all sorts of foul things. Lord, open the river for our zeal and let us once again have an opportunity to serve You for the nations that are far away!”

But I must leave you to preach on that point, for my time has gone and you can do so more practically than I can. My sermon is reported and I will undertake that what you preach shall not be forgotten—it shall all be taken down in those boxes which shall be passed round. Say each of you as much as ever you can upon this subject by your contributions and remember, “He that waters others, shall himself be watered.”

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÷Pro 11.26

WITHHOLDING CORN

NO. 642

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 30, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“He that withholds corn, the people shall curse him but blessing shall be upon the head of him that sells it.” Proverbs 11:26.**

**IF I dared, I would always preach upon the comfortable promises and gracious doctrines of God’s Word. I find it most delightful and easy work to expatiate upon those themes of Revelation which abound in sweetness and are full of savor and preciousness to the child of God. I said, “If I dared,” and you will ask me why I dare not? The answer is because I have a solemn conviction on my mind that if I would be clear of the blood of all men I must strive to make my range of ministry as wide as the range of Revelation and I must not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. I feel bound to go not where my wishes would lead me, but where Holy Scripture has made a track for my feet.**

**There are certain texts in the Scriptures which are very seldom preached upon because it is thought that there is little Gospel in them and that the people, when they go home, will say to one another, “Well, I wasn’t fed this morning.” Those who aim at pleasing men may well be shy of such subjects. But I hold that since God, in His wisdom has placed these passages in the Bible, He intends His servants, the preachers of the Word, to expound them.**

**We are, it strikes me, not to preach from *selections* of Scripture only, but from the *whole* of the Sacred Volume, for “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness—that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” I freely confess that I do not know why I have selected this text this morning except that it haunted and hunted me until I could not forbear to preach upon it.**

**It seemed to force itself upon me and to bore its way into my soul like a rifle shot. I thought it over and over and could not make much of it until I yielded up myself to it, saying within myself, “If the Lord has anything to say to the people out of my mouth, here it is—let Him use it.” If there should be any persons among our country friends, or our corn-dealing townsmen who this morning feel at all touched by the text, I cannot help it. Here is my Master’s message to them and I can only deliver it with the best intentions, hoping that those to whom it comes home may be profited by it.**

**It will, however, soon be clear to you that the verse before us has, besides its first meaning, a weight of very important spiritual teaching in it to which we shall all do well to take heed. The text, as it stands, has to do, as you clearly see, with owners of corn and dealers in it.**

**In Solomon’s days there were very frequent famines. Communication between one nation and another was so extremely difficult that the transportation of wheat in any large quantities was not attempted. Therefore, if a failure in the crops occurred in one district, the scarcity in that neighborhood was not compensated by abundance in another and terrible famines prevailed. Certain persons in those days not only stored up all the corn which grew in their own fields, but purchased as much as they could of others, so as to raise the market above its natural level. This, under the circumstances, was a very high affront put upon God—for instead of bearing their part in His judgments, these men enriched themselves by the poverty of their starving neighbors.**

**There have been such people ever since Solomon’s day and although the present system of free trade has nearly put an end to that kind of thing, there are doubtless some who would again withhold their corn, even at famine prices, if they could rise the price still higher. How does Scripture deal with this peculiar form of greed in trade? I cannot but admire the wonderful reserve of Holy Scripture, for as Mr. Arnot well observes, “in this brief maxim no arbitrary rule is laid down to the possessor of corn that he must sell at a certain period and at a certain price—and yet the hungry are not left without a protecting law.**

**“The protection of the weak is entrusted not to small police regulations, but to great self-acting providential arrangements. The double fact is recorded in terms of peculiar distinctness that he who in times of scarcity keeps up his corn in order to enrich himself is loathed by the people, and he who sells it freely is loved. This is all. There is no further legislation on the subject.”**

**Our narrow wisdom might have wished for some definite law upon the subject—something like a sliding scale—but the great Ruler of Heaven and earth falls into no such error. Laws which interfere between buyer and seller, master and workman by any form of law, are blunders and nuisances. Parliaments and princes have hung on to the antiquated absurdity of regulating prices, but the Holy Spirit does nothing of the kind. All the attempts of men to control the price of bread and wheat is sheer folly, as the history of France may well prove. The market goes best when it is left alone and so, in our text, there is no law enacted and no penalty threatened except that which the nature of things makes inevitable.**

**God knows political economy, whether men do or not, and leaving the coarse machinery of police regulations He puts the offender under a form of self-acting legislature which is far more efficient. The text seems to say, “Well, if you have no love to your neighbor and choose to keep your wheat, I make no law to break open your granary or pull down your ricks, but you will most certainly gain the hatred, contempt and curse of the people among whom you dwell.” You see, dear Friends, that the man may do as he pleases about selling or not, but he cannot escape from the curse of the people if he chooses to lock up his grain.**

**And on the other hand if he will sell at a proper price, or, as another translation reads it, break his bread, that is to say, give it to the starving if they cannot buy it, he will receive blessings not only from the people but from Heaven itself. Brethren, it is a matter of fact that any man of any observation must have seen—that there is no transaction which ever brings such ill-will upon a man, such general condemnation, especially from the poor—as withholding the corn. Common consent condemns the hoarder and human nature revolts at his offense. Ask anyone you choose to meet, except he is himself deep in the same mire, and he will join you in crying out against it.**

**Of course there are many ways of defending the deed, but there is no way of escaping the fact that the people curse the doer of it in their hearts. “Well,” says one, “it is my own corn, I may do as I like with it.” Just so, nobody said you could not. Nobody disputed your rights—only you are warned that in hoarding it you are sure to get the people’s curse. You cannot alter that. It will follow and hang about your heels, and as far as the fact is known it will make men curl the lip at you and sneer if they are your equals—while the working men, deep in their hearts—will abhor you. No matter how kind you may be to the poor in other matters, nor how you may have given your money in other ways—your holding the corn will be a scorn among your enemies and an offense to your best friends.**

**It is not always an ill sign when the voice of the people is against a man, but in this case Scripture endorses it and he who dares to run the risk is none too wise. “Ah,” says another, “I do not see the wrong of withholding. There are laws of supply and demand and the preacher does not understand political economy.” The preacher, however, thinks he does understand it and even if he does not a *child*** can comprehend the text before him and with what we have to deal just now. Solomon here tells you that if you like to carry out political economy in the withholding way, you will get cursed for it, and depend upon it, YOU WILL!

Facts are stubborn things and this is one that withholding corn earns me the curse of the people and that is what no Christian man would wish to bear. “But what business is that of the preacher’s?” He answers that he thanks God that he has no share in it whatever, but he is set in his place to rebuke what God rebukes and he is doing no more than expounding God’s own Word upon the matter. Whether you hear or forbear, there is the Truth of God and may the Lord bless it to you.

“Well, we ought not to hear such things on Sundays.” What? Not read our Bibles on Sundays—not explain the meaning of a text on Sundays? You would not have heard me on a Monday, some of you, and therefore you have it today! Do not be angry with the text, but look at it and read it—and then afterwards choose as you will. “He that withholds corn,” God says, “the people shall curse him.” And if you wish to have ill-will and the bad word of thousands of poor cottagers and all others who have human sympathies, then withhold your corn. Thank God, the worst monopolizer cannot do much mischief nowadays, for, by the gracious Providence of God which has burst the fetters of commerce we are not likely to feel any very great shortage of bread in this country.

Should our own crops fail, the harvests of other lands supply the masses with their food. The crime is growing scarcer and scarcer. But, if any cases still survive and men choose to follow so ruinous a course, they will get cursed for it in mutterings deep, if silent, and in sneers as bitter as they are welldeserved. By your leave I shall now take a step above my text, using it as a ladder to mount to a yet higher Truth of God. If it brings a curse upon a man to withhold the bread which perishes, what a weight of curse will light upon that man who withholds the bread of Eternal Life!

If the people shall curse the man who keeps back the bread which merely sustains the body, what shall be the withering denunciations which shall overwhelm the soul of him who deals deceitfully with the bread of Eternal Life? That seems to me to be a fair deduction from the text and at that Truth we will aim this morning.

First, I shall attempt to show the ways in which the Bread of Life may be withheld from the people and the curse which will follow. Secondly, I shall try to depict the blessedness of the man who “breaks it,” as another translation has it, to the people. And, then, thirdly we shall conclude by opening our own granaries and breaking some of this bread among the assembled multitude.

I. First, he that withholds the Bread of Life will surely get the people’s curse upon him. How CAN THIS BE DONE?  
1. It may be readily accomplished by locking up the Word of God in an unknown language, or by delivering and preaching it in such a style that the people shall not comprehend it. The Romish Church for many years kept the sacred Scriptures in an unknown tongue and resisted all attempts to translate the Book of God into the vulgar language of the people. What a curse Rome has had resting on her head! To those who know the enormity of this wickedness in holding back the Word of Life, it is scarcely possible to think of Rome without invoking judgment upon her.   
What myriads of souls went down to the pit perishing through lack of knowledge during what were called the Dark Ages! What fearful imprecations they must be uttering even now upon Popes and Cardinals and priests who had the key of the kingdom, but would neither enter themselves nor suffer others to enter there! They had the light but they concealed it in a dark lantern and the nations were compelled to sit in the darkness of profound ignorance and superstition because they would not give them the light. Surely the people shall curse such forever!   
But are these the only offenders? Is not their crime prolonged by those ministers who aim at delivering themselves in an oratorical style, with flowers of rhetoric far too fine to be reached by the common people? We have heard of some and we fear we know some who would rather round a period than win a soul! To them it is the first and the last object to deliver refined thoughts in elegant and elaborate language and, having so done, having soared aloft on the spread-eagle’s wing far out of sight, they are content to have dazzled the many and displayed themselves. Truly such men withhold the corn!   
What can the poor countrymen and servants, who are sitting in the aisles, make out of their eloquence? What can the workers who come in to hear something that may do them good, make out of their outlandish big talk? The terms of theology, the phrases of art, the definitions of philosophy, the jargon of science are all unknown tongues to the young godly farmer or praying shopkeepers. “Alas!” he says, “this does not come to me—I cannot understand it.” Possibly, in their ignorance, some people think the high-flyers very learned men—but in reality they are far from it—for plainness of speech is a better sign of learning than high-sounding words and soaring sentences.   
Oh, dear Friends, when we preach the Gospel plainly I am sure we have our reward! When preaching in some village chapel or from a wagon in a field, it is no small delight to watch the faces of the men in smock frocks and the women in their print gowns, as they catch or feel the force of an inspired Truth of God! Plain speech wins their blessing. But to stand and talk right over the people’s heads—what is it but having the corn and keeping it from those who want it? Simplicity is the authorized style of true Gospel ministry. “Having this ministry,” says the Apostle, “we use great plainness of speech.”   
The common people heard the Master gladly—which they would not have done if He had spoken in high-flown language. Whitfield, the Prince of Preachers, was mainly so because of the market language which he used. Let all of us who have the Bread of Life try to be very plain. You who write tracts, or preach in the streets—or you that teach children—break the large slices of Truth into small pieces and crack the shells of the hard nuts. Take away the crust for the babes and pick out the stones from the fruit. Beware, lest in seeking an excess of refinement you withhold the corn and win the people’s curses!   
2. But secondly, we may fall into this sin by keeping back the most important and vital Truths of Revelation and giving a prominence to other things which are but secondary. My Brethren, if I were to stand in this pulpit and for the next few months address you upon moral precepts, the excellence of virtue, or the faultiness of vice—if you could come out of this place and say, time after time, “We hear nothing about Jesus Christ! We do not know whether there is a Holy Spirit.” If I were gifted with ever so much ability and if these were my themes, however earnestly I pressed them, I should be guilty of withholding the corn, the true food of souls.   
Morality brings no food to hungry souls although it is a good thing in its place. Dissuasives from vice are *not* the Bread of Heaven, though well enough in their way. We need to have the great Doctrines of Grace brought forward, for the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit and it is by preaching the Truth as it is in Jesus that souls are won to Him. I grieve to think how indistinct some preachers are upon the Doctrines of Grace—they dare not say, “election,” or if they do they tremble directly and guard their words with shields so huge that the poor Truth is crushed beneath them!   
As to final perseverance, effectual calling, particular redemption, or any of those grand Truths of God where the fatness and savor and marrow of the Gospel is to be found—you may listen to some of them from the beginning of January to the end of December without hearing a word! This will not do— this is taking away the backbone from the spiritual man—it is tearing away the vitals of the Gospel! It is giving to the people husks for wheat and straw and chaff, instead of corn! Above all, that ministry is an abomination which puts Jesus Christ in the background.   
My Brothers, we must not only hear something about Jesus Christ, but our preaching must be mainly about Him. He must be its head and feet—no, let me say, in some sense—He must be *all* that the preacher has to preach. Christ Crucified must be the general summary of his ministry. And he must he able to say, when he retires from it and is called up higher, “I have preached Christ. Of the things which I have spoken, this is the sum—I have preached my Master and what my Master gave me.”   
O my Brethren, what a guilty ministry is that in which the blood has no place—the ministry which denies or undervalues the atoning sacrifice of the great Redeemer! God have mercy upon us that we have not preached this fundamental truth so earnestly as we ought to have done! But by His Grace we can still plead before Him and say we have truly desired to do it—   
*“Ever since by faith I saw the stream   
His flowing wounds supply,   
Redeeming love has been my theme,   
And shall be till I die.”*What is the use of any ministry of which that is not true? It is withholding corn and in eternity the lost will curse their destroyer.  
But we must not talk about ministers of whom there are not many here—we will come down to you. Many of you are Sunday school teachers—now you can sin in this way in the very same sense. Suppose as a Sunday school teacher you are content with making the little ones read through the lesson, satisfied with filling up the hour or the hour-and-a-half and feeling you have done a good deal in making the little fellows sit still and so on. Ah, my Brother and Sister, it is very solemn work. You have undertaken to teach these young immortals and if you are satisfied with just making them go through the routine, take heed, lest when they grow up they come to curse you!   
I am afraid that many Sunday school addresses have no Gospel in them! I do not see why the same Gospel should not be preached to children as to grown-up people. I think it should. To stand up in a Sunday school and say, “Now, be good boys and girls and God will love you,” is telling lies! I know the teachers of our school feel the importance of delivering the Truth of God as it is in Jesus to their children and you therefore tell them, “You are lost and ruined and your salvation is in Jesus Christ—look to Him and live!”   
The teacher whose general teaching is not full of Christ will be called to a sad account in the day when Christ shall come. Dear Teachers of the school, whatever you do not know, do know your Lord— and whatever you cannot get into the youngsters’ heads, do make it a matter of prayer that you may get a knowledge of Christ and His atoning blood into their young *hearts* by the Holy Spirit. The same is also true of those of our beloved friends who conduct Bible classes, or who in any way teach the people.   
I do not know that I have any necessity to say this to the most of you here, but still I will say it for the good of others—you must not, my Brethren, get away from your great theme. It is of no use to go to the people empty-handed. We must take them bread—we only mock them by offering them stones—if we talk to them about the histories and precepts of Scripture and forget the Cross. Let our teaching be full of Grace and Truth—let us deliver our souls every doctrine as we find it in Scripture and let us be determined that if men perish it shall not be for want of knowing the way of salvation.   
3. We may withhold the Bread of Life, dear Friends, by a want of loving in our labor. The mere telling out the plan of salvation is of no great service. God may bless it, but He does not often do so. That which God blesses to the saving of sinners is Truth attended by the earnestness of the speaker—the loving anguish of a heart which stirs the preacher’s soul. What shall I say here? For if I speak, I do but condemn myself. Think of the preaching of Baxter. He preached for many years but he said he never went into his pulpit without his knees knocking together! And Martin Luther said the same.   
Truly it is enough to make any man tremble when he feels that he is God’s mouth to immortal souls. “If they perish and you warn them not, their blood will I require at your hands.” Surely this ought to give a melting heart and streaming eyes to God’s ministers! But, I say, I remember reading of Baxter’s ministry—oh what pleading before was in it! The man seemed as if he never would go out of the pulpit till his hearers had received the Truth! He wept and sighed and sobbed unless they came to Jesus Christ.   
You know how he followed them to their houses, watched them through the streets of Kidderminster, and would give them no rest till they thought about eternal things and he was privileged thus to break the Bread of Life to many thousands, although his body was as full of physical pain as his heart was of holy anxiety! O for something of Mr. Baxter’s spirit to make us love the souls of men as he did! We are guilty of withholding corn unless we preach with a sympathizing, loving, tender, affectionate, earnest, anxious soul!   
Brothers and Sisters, you are, most of you, doing something for Jesus Christ. Let me, therefore, put this very plainly to you. If you get through your work for God as a mere matter of form—however true may be that which you have to say and however carefully you may deliver it—yet still if the Truth you deliver is not delivered with holy anxiety, with earnestness, with fervor, with love, with affection, and above all, if it is not attended with *prayer—* take heed lest in some day to come you get the curse of those from whom you withheld the bread!   
How would you like, Sunday school Teachers, to see a lad in your class grow up and go into sin? How would you like to meet him some day on a sick bed when his vices had at last brought him to his end? How would you like that he should look into your face and say, “Ah, Teacher, you were never earnest with me—you told me the Truth, but you told it to me so coldly that I did not believe it! If I had seen one tear in your eyes, I think there would have been one in mine. If I thought you felt what you were saying, I sometimes think I should have felt it, too.   
“But you merely kept me still and told me it all as if it were no great matter. And so I doubted the whole and from doubt went on to unbelief and ran into sin—and here I am. O that you had wept over me as such-and-such a teacher did with my brother! How different is my brother from what I am! He was in another class and his teacher took him before God in prayer—prayed *with* him as well as *for* him—told him the Truth of God! But he did more—he labored to drive it home as with a great hammer, while he pleaded with him to lay hold on Eternal Life. Teacher, would to God that you had been more earnest with me.”   
Beloved, seek to rid yourselves of any future regrets in this matter! It is no small satisfaction when you hear the death-bell toll, to say, “Well, I did all I could for that soul and whether it is in Heaven or Hell, my conscience is clear.” You cannot save, but still, God, who works by means, may make you the instrument of conveying salvation to sinners—or, on the other hand, you may be made instruments of unrighteousness through whom Satan may harden these children’s hearts, even to their everlasting ruin.   
I use the example of a Sunday school teacher, but I intend the remarks for every worker. O let us work for God with our whole hearts! God make us more awfully in earnest! Life is earnest, death is earnest, Heaven is earnest, Hell is earnest, Christ is earnest, God is earnest—let us be clad with zeal, as with a cloak—and go forth to serve the Lord with all our soul and strength as His Holy Spirit shall enable us.   
4. Fourthly, we may be found guilty of withholding corn by refusing to labor zealously for the spread of the kingdom of Christ and the conversion of sinners. I am afraid that the churches of the past were not altogether without a curse because of their deficiency in the matter of missions and home evangelization. During the pastorate of my venerated predecessor, Dr. Gill, this Church, instead of increasing, gradually decreased. And although the age in which he lived was honored with many great and excellent men, yet the state of our own denomination and the Presbyterian body and the Independent body in England was most lamentable.   
Many of the churches were gradually sliding into Unitarianism and the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ was scarcely preached, or, where preached, it was without any power whatever—and I take it that the reason was very much that the churches were content to be edified themselves, but had no hearts of compassion for the perishing multitudes around and abroad.   
But mark this—from the day when Fuller, Carey, Sutcliffe and others, got together to send out missionaries to India, the sun began to dawn of a gracious revival which is not over yet! Bad as the state of the churches now is, yet it is marvelously an improvement upon anything before the age of missions. Though not as zealous as we ought to be, the zeal of Christendom is one hundred times greater than it was then. And, as for what is done for winning souls, Brethren, the churches now are like a garden of the Lord compared with what they were then.   
I believe that the neglect of sending the Word to the heathen brought a blight and a curse upon the churches which is now happily removed. Yet even today we find professors who are always doubting. They never get beyond*—   
“ ‘Tis a point I long to know.”*There they stick and never know whether they are saved or not. Full assurance is to be a tempting morsel which they have not yet tasted. Their eyes do not sparkle with heavenly delight. They know not what it is to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Their raptures are very few, their joys very shallow. I will tell you why. In almost every case these people do nothing for souls. They withhold the corn and therefore they get this curse in their souls that they shall not enjoy their own religion becausethey do not want to lead other people into it!   
If you put your hands into your pockets and say, “Well, glory be to God. I trust I am one of the elect and whatever becomes of the rest of mankind really is not my concern. Every man for himself, I say”— that is such an unchristian spirit, so antagonistic to the whole life of Jesus Christ—that if you get sorely whipped in Providence, I can only hope you may be blessed by it! But I would not pray that the rod may be removed until you are scourged into a better temper. Give me the Christian who says, “I bless God I am saved! Now what can I do for others?”  
The first thing in the morning he prays, “God help me to say a word to some soul this day.” During the day, wherever he may be, he is watching his opportunity and will do good if he can. He is concerned about his children—it sometimes breaks his heart to think that they are not saved. If he happens to have an ungodly wife, it is his daily burden, “Oh God, save my wife!” When he goes to a place of worship he does not expect the minister to make sermons always on purpose for him, but he says, “I shall sit here and pray God to bless the Word,” and if he looks round the Chapel and sees one that he loves, he prays for him, “God send the Word home to him.”   
When service is over, a man of this kind will waylay the unconverted and try to get a personal word with them, and see if he cannot discover some beginnings of Divine Grace in their souls. This is how earnest Christians live. And let me tell you, as a rule, though they have the griefs of other men’s souls to carry, they do not have much grief about their own. As a rule their Master favors them with the light of His Countenance. They are watering others and they are watered themselves, also. May this be your work and mine!   
But some of you say nothing for Christ at all. You are too timid, you say. And others of you are too indifferent, too thoughtless about others. Oh, the opportunities many of you have lost! Oh, the many who have died to whom you might have spoken, but you did not! Oh, the people that are now in the darkness of ignorance who get no light from you! You have light, but you keep it. They are dying and you have the healing medicine but you will not tell them of it! May God deliver you from the curse of those who thus withhold the corn!   
We will only mention one more form of this evil. Some may be said to be guilty of withholding the corn because while they themselves do not speak for Christ, they do not help those who can. No Christian man ought to go to bed with an easy conscience if he has thousands of pounds which he does not need which are unused for God. There must be many Christians in this rich country who have not consecrated their substance to the Lord. When a man can say, “I have money which I really do not need, and my children do not require it,” and this is money absolutely needed for God’s cause, ought he to keep it from the Lord Jesus?  
Must you confess that so many missionaries might be sent out tomorrow if you just wrote a check and handed it over to the proper Society—then why not do it? A destitute neighborhood needs a place of worship and if I can build it if I would, how am I to answer for it to my Lord? I cannot understand how a man can love God when he only lives to heap up riches! I can with great difficulty imagine such a case, but I fear that such cannot be real piety. It seems to me that if I have any religion in my soul, it will make me not only say with Dr. Watts—   
“*Were the whole realm of Nature mine,   
That were a present far too small!  
Love so amazing, so Divine   
Demands my soul, my life, may all,”*but I think it would make me carry it out.   
I will not propose to you that you should act indiscreetly in giving so as to beggar your families, or deprive yourselves of what is necessary! You know I am not so foolish. But I am speaking to many Christians who have not only enough to spare, but who will continue to accumulate and accumulate and accumulate and I cannot think that they can feel that they are doing right in the sight of God. O God! This great city needs preachers, needs the Gospel—thousands need even bread to keep them from starving—and yet many of Your professing people are heaping their coffers higher and higher!   
Why surely, if I do this, I am heaping up wrath against the Day of Wrath, and I shall find it come into my bosom hot and fierce from the God of Sabaoth to whom my gold and my silver will cry out against me! Let us not be guilty of this, but each in our own station, as far as we can, let us be aiding others to preach the Word if we cannot preach it ourselves. Dozens of young men are desirous to enter our College and you can help them to go forth to preach, if you cannot preach yourself.   
II. I am pleased to turn to the other subject for a minute or two. I am to speak upon THE BLESSEDNESS WHICH THOSE POSSESS WHO BREAK THE BREAD OF LIFE. To describe it is altogether beyond my power, you must know and taste, and feel it, Beloved. There are many blessings in doing good to others. God is a good Paymaster—He pays His servants while at work as well as when they have done it. And one of His payments is this—an easy conscience. If you have spoken faithfully to only one person, when you go to bed at night you feel happy in thinking, “I have this day discharged my conscience of that man’s blood.”   
You do not know how delightful a Sunday evening is to some of us when God has helped us to be faithful! How sweet to feel, “I have made many blunders, shown many infirmities of the flesh and so on, but I have preached the Gospel and preached it with my whole heart to the best of my ability.” One feels’ a burden taken off one’s back and there is a joy and satisfaction unknown to those who sit at home doing nothing. You in your class at the Sunday school—I know you feel, when Sunday is over, though it is a very hard day’s work for some of you after the six days’ toil in the week, you feel—“I thank God I did not spend that afternoon in lolling about at home, but I did speak a word for Jesus.” You will find such a peace of mind that you would not give it up for all the world.   
Then there is a great comfort in doing something for Jesus. Look into His face—what would you not do for Him? When first converted did you not think you could do ten thousand things for Jesus? The moment your burden was off your back and your sins forgiven, how you felt you could follow Him through floods and flames! Have you lived up to your resolutions, Brethren? Have you kept up to your own ideas of Christian duties? I do not suppose any of us can say that we have. Still, what little we have done has been an unspeakable delight when we have felt that we have been crowning His head and strewing palm branches in His path.   
O what a happiness to place jewels in His crown and give Him to see of the travail of His soul! Beloved, there is a very great reward in watching the first buds of conviction in a young soul! To say of that girl in the class, “She seems so tender of heart, I do hope that there is the Lord’s work there.” To go home and pray over that boy who said something in the afternoon to make you think he must know something more than he seemed to know! Oh, the joy of hope! But as for the joy of success—it is unspeakable! I recollect the first soul that God ever gave me—she is in Heaven now—but I remember when my good deacon said to me, “God has set His seal on your ministry in this place, Sir.”   
Oh, if anybody had said to me, “Somebody has left you twenty thousand pounds,” I should not have given a snap of my fingers for it compared with that joy which I felt when I was told that God had set His seal on my ministry! “Who is it?” I asked. “Why, it is a poor laboring man’s wife! She went home broken-hearted by the sermon two or three Sundays ago and she has been in great trouble of soul. But she has found peace and she says she would like to speak to you.” I felt like the boy who has earned his first guinea! Like a diver who has been down to the depths of the sea and brought up a rare pearl—I prize each one whom God has given me—but I prize that woman most!   
Since then my God has given me many thousands of souls who profess to have found the Savior by hearing or reading words which have come from my lips. Well, this joy, overwhelming as it is, is a hungry sort of joy—you want more of it—for the more you have of spiritual children, the more your soul desires to see them multiplied. Let me tell you that to be a soul-winner is the happiest thing in this world and with every soul you bring to Jesus Christ you seem to get a new Heaven here upon earth! But what will be the joy of soul-winning when we get up above! What happiness to the Christian minister to be saluted on his entrance into Heaven by many spiritual children!   
They will call him, “Father,” for though they are not married nor given in marriage, though natural relations are all over, yet spiritual relations last forever. Oh, how sweet is that sentence, “Enter you into the joy of your Lord.” Do you know what the joy of Christ is over a saved sinner? You cannot guess it! You would need to know the griefs He suffered to save that sinner. O the joys He must feel when He sees that sinner saved as the result of His griefs—this is the very joy which you and I are to possess in Heaven—“Enter you into the joy of your Lord.”   
Yes, when He mounts the Throne, you shall mount with Him! When the Heaven rings with, “Well done, well done,” you shall partake in the reward! You have toiled with Him! You have suffered with Him! You shall now reign with Him! You have sown with Him—you shall reap with Him! You were despised with Him—you shall now be honored with Him! Your face was covered with sweat like His, and your soul was grieved for the sins of men as His soul was—now shall your face be bright with Heaven’s splendor as is His Countenance! And now shall your soul be filled with beatific joys even as His soul is! He that breaks bread, blessings shall be upon his head.   
III. Now I have to open the GRANARY for a minute. Hungry Sinners wanting a Savior, we cannot withhold the bread from you! You may never come to hear the Gospel again. We, therefore, will open the granary very wide. Christ Jesus, the Son of God, became Man to save men, and inasmuch as God’s wrath was due to sin, Christ took the sin of all who have ever believed, or ever shall believe on Him and, taking all their sins, He was punished in their place, so that God can now justly forgive sin because Christ was punished in the place of sinners and suffered Divine Wrath for them.   
Now this is the way of salvation—that you trust this Son of God with your soul. And, if you do so, then know that your sins are now forgiven you and that you are saved! Concerning this salvation, hear just these few words. It is a *satisfying* salvation. Here is all that you can want. Your conscience shall be at ease forever if you believe in Jesus—your biggest sins shall no longer trouble you! Your blackest iniquities shall no longer haunt you. Believing in Jesus, every sin you have of thought, and word, and deed shall be cast into the depths of the sea and never shall be mentioned against you any more forever.   
It is an *all-sufficient* salvation, too. However great your sins, Christ’s blood can take them all away. However deep your needs, Christ can supply them. You can not be so big a sinner as He is a Savior. You may be the worst sinner out of Hell, but you are not too great for Him to remove—He can carry elephantine sinners upon His shoulders and bear gigantic mountains of guilt upon His head into the wilderness of forgetfulness. He has enough for you, however deep your necessity. It is, moreover, a *complete* salvation. Sovereign Mercy does not stand on the mountain and cry to you, “Climb up here and I will save you!” Eternal Mercy *comes down* the valley to you just where you are and meets your case just as it is— and never leaves you till it has made you meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light!   
Christ does not want you to pay one talent out of the hundred and promise to pay for you the ninetynine. He will discharge *all* your debts of sin! All that you need to take you up to Heaven is provided in Jesus. This is a *present* salvation—a salvation which, if it comes to you, will save you NOW! You shall be a child of God this very hour and before that clock shall strike again you shall rejoice in the peace which the Spirit of God gives you, if you believe on Him.   
It is an *available* salvation, freely presented to you in Christ Jesus. Remember the text of two or three Sundays ago—“Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” Jesus casts out none that come to Him. Oh that you may be led to come this morning!   
Thus have I tried to avoid the sin of withholding corn. And if any in this House of Prayer have been guilty of it, I pray you avoid the curse of the people and seek the blessing of the Most High God by this day endeavoring to scatter everywhere the Bread of Life! Go and work for God wherever you have an opportunity and help us in our prayers and efforts to send forth more laborers into the harvest, for the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Amen.

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÷Pro 11.30

THE SOUL-WINNER  
NO. 1292

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 20, 1876, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that wins souls is wise.” Proverbs 11:30.**

I HAD very great joy last night—many of you know why, but some do not. We held our annual meeting of the Church and it was a very pleasant sight to see so many Brothers and Sisters knit together in the heartiest love, welded together as one mass by common sympathies, and holding firmly to, “one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.” Think of a Church with 4,900 members! Such a community has seldom been gathered in any age and in the present century it is without parallel. “O Lord, You have multiplied the people and increased the joy. They joy before You as the joy of harvest.”

It brings tears into one’s eyes to look upon so many who declare themselves to be members of the body of Christ. The hope that so many are plucked as brands from the burning and delivered from the wrath to come is, in itself, exceedingly consoling, and I felt the joy of it while communing with my Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus. On thinking it over afterwards, however, it seemed to me that there was a higher joy in looking at a body of Believers than that which arises from merely regarding them as saved. Not but what there is a great joy in salvation, a joy worthy to stir the angelic harps! Think of the Savior’s agony in the ransom of every one of His redeemed! Think of the work of the Holy Spirit in every renewed heart! Think of the love of the Father as resting upon every one of the regenerate!

I could not, if I took up my parable for a month, set forth all the mass of joy that is to be seen in a multitude of Believers if we only look at what God has done for them, promised to them and will fulfill in them. But there is yet a wider field of thought and my mind has been thinking about it all day—the thought of the capacities of service contained in a numerous band of Believers, the possibilities of blessing others which lie within the bosoms of regenerate persons! We must not think so much of what we already are, as to forget what the Lord may accomplish by us for others! Here are the coals of fire, but who shall describe the conflagration which they may cause?

We ought to regard the Christian Church not as a luxurious hostelry where Christian may, each one, dwell at his ease in his own inn, but as a barracks in which soldiers are gathered together to be drilled and trained for war. We should regard the Christian Church not as an association for mutual admiration and comfort, but as an arm with banners, marching to the fray to achieve victories for Christ! To storm the strongholds of the foe and to add province after province to the Redeemer’s kingdom! We may view converted persons, when gathered into Church membership, as so much wheat in the granary. And we thank God that it is there and that so far the harvest has rewarded the sower—but far more soulinspiring is the view when we regard those Believers as each one likely to be made a living center for the extension of the kingdom of Jesus! Then we see them sowing the fertile valleys of our land and promising, before long, to bring forth some 30, some 40, some 50 and some a hundredfold! The capacities of life are enormous—one becomes a thousand in a marvelously brief space. Within a short time a few grains of wheat would suffice to seed the whole world and a few true saints might suffice for the conversion of all nations!

Only take that which comes from one ear, store it well, sow it all—again store it next year and then sow it all again—and the multiplication almost exceeds the power of computation! O that every Christian were thus, year by year, the Lord’s seed corn! If all the wheat in the world had perished except a single grain, it would not take many years to replenish all the earth and sow her fields and plains. But in a far shorter time, in the power of the Holy Spirit, one Paul or one Peter would have evangelized all lands! View yourselves as grains of wheat predestinated to seed the world! That man lives grandly who is as earnest as if the very existence of Christianity depended upon himself and is determined that to all men within his reach shall be made known the unsearchable riches of Christ! If we, whom Christ is pleased to use as His seed corn, were only all scattered and sown as we ought to be, and were all to sprout and bring forth the green blade and the corn in the ear, what a harvest there would be!

Again would it be fulfilled, “There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains”—a very bad position for it—“the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.” May God grant us to feel, tonight, some degree of the Holy Spirit’s quickening power while we talk together, not so much about what God has done for us, as about what God may do by us and how far we may put ourselves into a right position to be used by Him.

There are two things in the text found laid out with much distinctness in its two sentences. The first is—the life of the Believer is, or ought to be, full of soul-blessing—“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.” In the second place—the pursuit of the Believer ought always to be soul-winning. The second is much the same as the first, only the first head sets forth our unconscious influence, and the second our efforts which we put forth with the avowed object of winning souls for Christ.

I. Let us begin at the beginning, because the second cannot be carried out without the first. Without fullness of life within there cannot be an overflow of life to others. It is of no use for any of you to try to be soulwinners if you are not bearing fruit in your own lives. How can you serve the Lord with your lips if you do not serve Him with your lives? How can you preach with your tongues, His Gospel, when with hands, feet and hearts you are preaching the devil’s gospel and setting up Antichrist by your practical unholiness? We must first have life and bear personal fruit to the Divine Glory and then out of our example will spring the conversion of others!

Let us go to the fountain head and see how the man’s own life is essential to his being useful to others. THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER IS FULL OF SOUL-BLESSING. This fact we shall consider by means of a few observations growing out of the text and first let us remark that the Believer’s outward life comes as a matter of fruit from him. This is important to notice. The fruit of the righteous—that is to say, his life—is not a thing fastened upon him—it grows out of him. It is not a garment which he puts off and on, but it is inseparable from himself. The sincere man’s religion is the man, himself, and not a cloak for his concealment.

True godliness is the natural outgrowth of a renewed nature, not the forced growth of pious hothouse excitement. Is it not natural for a vine to bear clusters of grapes? Is it not natural for a palm tree to bear dates? Certainly, as natural as it is for the apples of Sodom to be found on the trees of Sodom and for noxious plants to produce poisonous berries. When God gives a new nature to His people, the lily which comes out of that new nature springs spontaneously from it! The man who has a religion which is not part and parcel of himself will, by-and-by, discover that it is worse than useless to him.

The man who wears his piety like a mask at a carnival, so that when he gets home he changes from a saint to a savage, from an angel to a devil, from John to Judas, from a benefactor to a bully—such a man, I say, knows very well what formalism and hypocrisy can do for him and he has no vestige of true religion! Fig trees do not bear figs on certain days and thorns at other times—they are true to their nature at all seasons. Those who think that godliness is a matter of vestment and has an intimate relation with blue and scarlet and fine linen—are consistent if they keep their religion to the proper time for the wearing of their sacred pomposities. But he who has discovered what Christianity is, knows that it is much more a life than an act, a form, or a profession!

Much as I love the creed of Christendom, I am ready to say that true Christianity is far more a life than a creed. It is a creed and it has its ceremonies, but it is mainly a life—it is a Divine spark of Heaven’s own flame which falls into the human bosom and burns within, consuming much that lies hidden in the soul and then, at last, as a heavenly life, flames forth so as to be seen and felt by those around. Under the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit a regenerate person becomes like that bush in Horeb which was all aglow with Deity. The God within him makes him shine so that the place around him is holy ground and those who look at him feel the power of his hallowed life.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we must take care that our religion is more and more a matter of outgrowth from our souls. Many professors are hedged about with, “You must not do this, or that,” and are driven onward with, “You must do this and you must do that.” But there is a doctrine, too often perverted, which is, nevertheless, a blessed Truth of God and ought to dwell in your hearts. “You are not under the Law but under Grace.” Therefore you do not obey the will of God because you hope to earn Heaven, or dream of escaping from Divine wrath by your own works,

but because there is a life in you which seeks after that which is holy, pure, right and true—and cannot endure that which is evil.

You are careful to maintain good works, not from either legal hopes or legal fears, but because there is a holy thing within you, born of God, which seeks, according to its nature, to do that which is pleasing to God. Look to it more and more so that your religion is real, true, natural, vital— not artificial, constrained or superficial. We all need a religion which can live either in a wilderness or in a crowd. We need a religion which will show itself in every walk of life and in every company. Give me the godliness which is seen at home, especially around the fireside, for it is never more beautiful than there! Give me the godliness that is seen in the battle and tussle of ordinary business among scoffers and gainsayers as well as among Christian men. Show me the faith which can defy the lynx eyes of the world and walk fearlessly where all scowl with the fierce eyes of hate or where there are no observers to sympathize and no friends to judge leniently! May you be filled with the life of the Spirit and your whole conduct and conversation be the natural and blessed outgrowth of that Spirit’s indwelling!

Note, next, that the fruit which comes from a Christian is fruit worthy of his character—“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.” Each tree bears its own fruit and is known by it. The righteous man bears righteous fruit—and do not let us be at all deceived, Brothers and Sisters, or fall into any error about this—“he that does righteousness is righteous,” and—“he that does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother.” We are prepared, I hope, to die for the doctrine of Justification by Faith and to assert before all adversaries that salvation is not of works. But we also confess that we are justified by a faith which produces works and if any man has a faith which does not produce good works, it is the faith of devils!

Saving faith appropriates the finished work of the Lord Jesus and so saves by itself, alone, for we are justified by faith without works—but the faith which is without works cannot bring salvation to any man! We are saved by faith without works, but not by a faith that is without works, for the real faith that saves the soul works by love and purifies the character! If you can cheat across the counter, your hope of Heaven is a cheat, too! Though you can pray as prettily as anybody and practice acts of outward piety as well as any other hypocrite, you are deceived if you expect to be right at last! If as an employee who is lazy, lying and loitering. Or if, as an employer you are hard, tyrannical, and unchristian-like towards your men, your fruit shows that you are a tree of Satan’s own orchard and bear apples which will suit his tooth!

If you can practice tricks of the trade and if you can lie—and how many do lie every day about their neighbors or about their goods?—you may talk about being justified by faith all you like, but all liars will have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone! And among the biggest liars you will be, for you are guilty of the lie of saying, “I am a Christian,” whereas you are not! A false profession is one of the worst of lies, since it brings the utmost dishonor upon Christ and His people. The fruit of the righteous is righteousness—the fig tree will not bring forth thorns, neither shall we gather grapes from thistles. A tree is known by its fruit, but we cannot judge men’s hearts, and must not try to do so. We can judge their lives and I pray God we may all be ready to judge our own lives and see if we are bringing forth righteous fruit, for if not, we are not righteous!

Let it, however, never be forgotten that the fruit of the righteous, though it comes from him naturally—for his newborn nature yields the sweet fruit of obedience—yet it is always the result of Grace which is the gift of God! There is no Truth of God which ought to be remembered more than this, “In Me is your fruit found.” We can bring forth no fruit except as we abide in Christ! The righteous shall flourish as a branch and only as a branch! How does a branch flourish? By its connection with the stem and the consequent flowing in of the sap. And so, though the righteous man’s righteous actions are his own, yet they are always produced by the Grace which is imparted to him and he never dares to take any credit for them! He sings, “Not unto us, but unto Your name give praise.”

If he fails, he blames himself—if he succeeds, he glorifies God! Imitate the righteous man’s example—lay every fault, every weakness, every infirmity at your own door. And if you fall in any respect short of perfection—and I am sure you do—take all that to yourself and do not excuse yourself. But if there is any virtue, any praise, any true desire, any real prayer—anything that is good—ascribe it all to the Spirit of God! Remember, the righteous man would not be righteous unless God had made him righteous. And the fruit of righteousness would never come from him unless the Divine sap within him had produced that acceptable fruit. To God, alone, is all honor and glory!

The main lesson of the passage is that this outburst of life from the Christian, this consequence of life within him, this fruit of his soul becomes a blessing to others. Like a tree, it yields shade and sustenance to all around. It is a tree of life, an expression which I cannot fully work out tonight as I would wish, for there is a world of instruction compressed into the illustration. That which to the Believer, himself, is fruit, becomes to others a tree! It is a singular metaphor, but by no means a lame one. From the child of God there falls the fruit of holy living, even as an acorn drops from the oak. This holy living becomes influential and produces the best results in others, even as the acorn becomes itself an oak and lends its shade to the birds of the air.

The Christian’s holiness becomes a tree of life. I suppose it means a living tree, a tree calculated to give life and sustenance to others. A fruit becomes a tree! A tree of life! Wonderful result this! Christ in the Christian produces a character which becomes a tree of life. The outward character is the fruit of the inner life—this outer life, itself, grows from a fruit into a tree and as a tree it bears fruit in others to the praise and glory of God. Dear Brothers and Sisters, I know some of God’s saints who live very near to Him and they are evidently a tree of life, for their very shadow is comforting, cooling and refreshing to many weary souls.  
I have known the young, the tried, the downcast, go to them, sit beneath their shade and pour out their troubles and they have felt it a rich blessing to receive their sympathy, to be told of the faithfulness of the Lord and to be guided in the way of wisdom. There are a few good men in this world whom to know is to be rich. Such men are libraries of Gospel Truth but they are better than books, for the Truth of God in them is written on living pages. Their character is a true and living tree—it is not a mere post of the dead wood of doctrine, bearing an inscription and rotting at the same time, but it is a vital, organized, fruit-producing thing—a plant of the Lord’s right hand planting!

Not only do some saints give comfort to others, but they also yield them spiritual nourishment. Well-trained Christians become nursing fathers and nursing mothers, strengthening the weak and binding up the wounds of the broken-hearted. So, too, the strong, bold, generous deeds of largehearted Christians are of great service to their fellow Christians and tend to raise them to a higher level. You feel refreshed by observing how they act—their patience in suffering, their courage in danger, their holy faith in God, their happy faces under trial—all these nerve you for your own conflicts. In a thousand ways the sanctified Believer’s example acts in a healing and comforting way to his Brothers and Sisters and assists in raising them above anxiety and unbelief.

Even as the leaves of the Tree of Life are for the healing of the people, so the words and deeds of saints are medicine for a thousand maladies. And then, what fruit instructed Believers bear! They are sweet to the taste of the godly. We can never trust in men as we trust in the Lord, but the Lord can cause the members to bless us in their measure, even as their Head is ever ready to do. Jesus, alone, is the Tree of Life, but He makes some of His servants to be, instrumentally to us, little trees of life by whom He gives us fruit of the same sort that He bears Himself, for He puts it there and it is Himself in His saints causing them to bring portly golden apples with which our souls are gladdened! May we, every one of us, be made like our Lord and may His fruit be found upon our branches!

We have put into the tomb, during the last year, many of the saints who have fallen asleep. Among them there were some of whom I will not, at this moment, speak particularly—whose lives, as I look back upon them, are still a tree of life to me. I pray God that I may be like they! Many of you knew them and if you will only recall their holy, devoted lives, the influence they have left behind will still be a tree of life to you. They, being dead, yet speak! Do you hear their eloquent exhortations? Even in their ashes live their accustomed fires—kindle your souls in their warmth. Their noble examples are the endowments of the Church! Her children are ennobled and enriched as they remember their walk of faith and labor of love.

Beloved, may we, every one of us, be true benedictions to the Churches in whose gardens we are planted. “Oh,” says one, “I am afraid I am not much like a tree, for I feel so weak and insignificant.” If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed you have the commencement of the tree beneath whose branches the birds of the air will yet find a lodging. The very birds that would have eaten the tiny seed come and find lodgment in the tree which grows out of it! And people who despise and mock you, now that you are a young beginner, will one of these days, if God blesses you, be glad to borrow comfort from your example and experience!

But one other thought on this point. Remember the completeness and development of the holy life will be seen above. There is a City of which it is written, “In the midst of the street, thereof, and on every side of the river was there the tree of life.” The tree of life is a heavenly plant and so the fruit of the Christian is a thing of Heaven! Though not transplanted to the Glory Land, it is getting fit for its final abode. What is holiness but Heaven on earth? What is living unto God but the essence of Heaven? What are uprightness, integrity, Christ-likeness? Have not these even more to do with Heaven than harps and palms and streets of purest gold? Holiness, purity, loveliness of character—these make a Heaven within a man’s own bosom! And even if there were no place called Heaven, that heart would have a heavenly happiness which is set free from sin and made like the Lord Jesus!

See, then, dear Brothers and Sisters, what an important thing it is for us to be, indeed, righteous before God, for then the outcome of that righteousness shall be fruit which will be a tree of life to others and a tree of life in Heaven above, world without end. O blessed Spirit, make it so and You shall have all the praise!

II. This brings us to our second head. THE PURSUIT OF THE BELIEVER SHOULD BE SOUL-WINNING. For “he that wins souls is wise.” The two things are put together—the life first, the effort next—what God has joined together let no man put asunder. It is implied in our text that there are souls which need winning. Ah me, all souls of men are lost by nature! You might walk through the streets of London and say of the masses of men you meet upon those crowded pavements with sighs and tears—“Lost, lost, lost!” Wherever Christ is not trusted—the Spirit has not created a new heart and the soul has not come to the great Father—there is a lost soul.

But here is the mercy—these lost souls can be won! They are not hopelessly lost! Not yet has God determined that they shall forever abide as they are. It is not yet said, “He that is filthy, let him be filthy, still,” but they are in the land of hope where mercy may reach them—for they are spoken of as capable of being won! They may yet be delivered, but the phrase hints that it will need all our efforts. “He that wins souls.” What do we mean by that word, win? We use it in courtship. We speak of the bridegroom who wins his bride and sometimes there is a large expanse of love, many a pleading word and much wooing before the valued heart is all the suitor’s own.

I use this explanation because, in some respects, it is the very best, for souls will have to be won for Christ in this fashion that they may be married to Him. We must woo the sinner for Christ—that is how hearts are to be won for Him. Jesus is the Bridegroom and we must speak for Him and tell of His beauty, as Abraham’s servant, when he went to seek a wife for Isaac, acted as a wooer in his stead. Have you ever read the story? Then turn to it when you get home and see how he talked about his master,

what possessions he had and how Isaac was to be head of it all, and so on. And then he finished his address by urging Rebecca to go with him.

The question was put to her, “Will you go with this man?” So the minister’s business is to commend his Master and his Master’s riches and then to say to souls, “Will you be wedded to Christ?” He who can succeed in this very delicate business is a wise man! We also use the term in a military fashion. We speak of winning a city, a castle, or a battle. We do not win victories by going to sleep. Believe me, castles are not captured by men who are only half awake! To win a battle requires the best skills, the greatest endurance and the utmost courage. To storm fortresses which are regarded as almost impregnable, men need to burn the midnight oil and study well the arts of attack. And, when the time comes for the assault, not a soldier must be a laggard, but all force of artillery and manhood must be brought to bear on the point assailed.

To carry a man’s heart by main force of Grace. To capture it. To break down the bars of brass and dash the gates of iron in pieces requires the exercise of a skill which only Christ can give! To bring up the big battering rams and shake every stone in the sinner’s conscience. To make his heart rock and reel within him for fear of the wrath to come. In a word, to assail a soul with all the artillery of the Gospel needs a wise man and one awakened to his work! To hold up the white flag of mercy and, if that is despised, to use the battering ram of threats until a breach is made and then, with the sword of the Spirit in his hand, to capture the city, to tear down the black flag of sin and run up the banner of the Cross needs all the force the choicest preacher can command and a great deal more!

Those whose souls are as cold as the Arctic regions and whose energy is reduced to the vanishing point are not likely to take the city of Mansoul for Prince Emanuel. If you think you are going to win souls, you must throw your soul into your work just as a warrior must throw his soul into a battle—or victory will not be yours. We use the words “to win” in reference to making a fortune and we all know that the man who becomes a millionaire has to rise up early and sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness. We know it takes a deal of toiling and saving and I know not what, besides, to amass immense wealth.

We have to go in for winning souls with the same ardor and concentration of our faculties as old Astor of New York went in to build up that fortune of so many millions which he has now left behind him. It is, indeed, a race, and you know that in a race nobody wins unless he strains every muscle and sinew. They that run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize—and that one is generally he who had more strength than the rest. Certainly, whether he had more strength or not, he put out all he had and we shall not win souls unless we imitate him in this. Solomon declares in the text that, “He that wins souls is wise,” and such a declaration is all the more valuable as coming from so wise a man.

Let me show you why a true soul-winner is wise. First, he must be taught of God before he will attempt it. The man who does not know that he was once blind but now he sees, had better think of his own blindness before he attempts to lead his friends in the right way. If not saved yourself, you cannot be the means of saving others! He that wins souls must be wise unto salvation, first, for himself. That being taken for granted, he is a wise man to select such a pursuit. Young man, are you choosing an object worthy to be the great aim of your life? I do hope you will judge wisely and select a noble ambition. If God has given you great gifts, I hope they will not be wasted on any low, sordid, or selfish design.

Suppose I am now addressing one who has great talents and has an opportunity of being what he likes—of going into Parliament and helping to pass wise measures—or of going into business and making himself a man of importance? I hope he will weigh the claims of Jesus and immortal souls as well as other claims. Shall I addict myself to study? Shall I surrender myself to business? Shall I travel? Shall I spend my time in pleasure? Shall I become the principal fox hunter of the county? Shall I lay out my time in promoting political and social reforms?

Think them all over, but if you are a Christian man, my dear Friend, nothing will equal in enjoyment, in usefulness, in honor and in lasting recompense the giving yourself up to the winning of souls! Oh, it is grand hunting, I can tell you, and beats all the fox hunting in the world in excitement and exhilaration! Have I not sometimes gone with a cry over hedge and ditch after some poor sinner and kept well up with him in every twist and turn he took till I have overtaken him, by God’s Grace, and been in at the death and rejoiced exceedingly when I have seen him captured by my Master? Our Lord Jesus calls His ministers, fishermen, and no other fishermen have such labor, such sorrow and such delight as we have!

But what a happy thing it is that you may win souls for Jesus and may do this though you abide in your secular callings. Some of you would never win souls in pulpits—it would be a great pity if you tried—but you can win souls in the workshop, in the laundry, in the nursery and in the drawing room. Our hunting grounds are everywhere—by the wayside, by the fireside, in the corner and in the crowd. Among the common people Jesus is our theme and among the great ones we have no other. You will be wise, my Brothers, if for you the one absorbing desire is that you may turn the ungodly from the error of their ways. For you there will be a crown glittering with many stars which you shall cast at Jesus’ feet in the day of His appearing!

Further, it is not only wise to make this your aim, but you will have to be very wise if you succeed in it, because the souls to be won are so different in their constitutions, feelings and conditions—you will have to adapt yourselves to them all! The trappers of North America have to find out the habits of the animals they wish to catch—and so you will have to learn how to deal with each class of sinners. Some are very depressed. You will have to comfort them. Perhaps you will comfort them too much and make them unbelieving! Therefore, possibly instead of comforting them, you will need, sometimes, to administer a sharp word to cure the sulkiness into which they have fallen.

Another person may be frivolous. If you put on a serious face you will frighten your bird away—you will have to be cheerful and drop a word of admonition as if by accident. Some people, again, will not let you speak to them, but will talk to you. You must know the art of putting a word in edgeways! You will have to be very wise and become all things to all men— but your success will prove your wisdom. Theories of dealing with souls may look very wise, but they often prove to be useless when actually tried. He who, by God’s Grace, accomplishes the work, is a wise man, though, perhaps, he knows no theory whatever. This work will need all your wit and far more—and you will have to cry to the great Winner of Souls above to give you of His Holy Spirit.

He that wins souls is wise because he is engaged in a business which makes men wiser as they proceed with it. You will bungle at first and, very likely, drive sinners off from Christ by your attempts to draw them to Him. I have tried to move some souls, with all my might, with a certain passage of Scripture, but they have taken it in an opposite light to what it was intended and have started off in the wrong direction. It is very difficult to know how to act with bewildered enquirers. If you want some people to go forward you must pull them backwards. If you want them to go to the right you must insist upon their going to the left, but, by God’s Grace, they go to the right directly. You must be ready for these follies of poor human nature!

I know a poor aged Christian woman who had been a child of God 50 years, but she was in a state of melancholy and distress from which nobody could awaken her. I called several times and endeavored to cheer her up, but generally, when I left she was worse than before. So the next time I called to see her I did not say anything to her about Christ or religion. She soon introduced those topics herself and then I remarked that I was not going to talk to her about such holy things, for she did not know anything about them. I told her she was not a Believer in Christ and had been, no doubt, a hypocrite for many years. She could not stand that and asserted, in self-defense, that the Lord above knew her better than I did and He was her witness that she did love the Lord Jesus Christ! She scarcely forgave herself, afterwards, for that admission, but she could never talk to me quite so despairingly anymore!

True lovers of men’s souls learn the art of dealing with them and the Holy Spirit makes them expert soul surgeons for Jesus. It is not because a man has more abilities, nor, altogether because he has more Grace, but the Lord makes him to love the souls of men intensely—and this imparts a secret skill—since, for the most part, the way to get sinners to Christ is to love them to Christ. Beloved Brothers, I will say once more, he who really wins souls for Jesus, however he wins them, is a wise man. Some of you are slow to admit this. You say—“Well, So-and-So, I dare say, has been very useful, but he is very rough.” What does his roughness matter if he wins souls? “Ah,” says another, “but I am not built up under him.” Why do you go to hear him? To get built up?

If the Lord has sent him to pull down, let him pull down! And you go elsewhere for edification, but do not grumble at a man who does one work because he cannot do another! We are also too apt to pit one minister against another and say you should hear my minister. Perhaps we should, but it would be better for you to hear the man who edifies you and let others go where they, also, are instructed. “He that wins souls is wise.” I do not ask you how he did it. He sang the Gospel and you did not like it, but if he won souls he was wise! Soul-winners all have their own ways and if they do but win souls they are wise.

I will tell you what is not wise and will not be thought so at the last, namely, to go about the Churches doing nothing, yourself, and railing at all the Lord’s useful servants. Here is a dear Brother on his dying bed. He has the sweet thought that the Lord enabled him to bring many souls to Jesus and the expectation when he comes to the gates that many spirits will come to meet him. They will throng the ascent to the New Jerusalem and welcome the man who brought them to Jesus! They are immortal monuments to his labors. He is wise. Here is another who has spent all his time in interpreting the prophecies, so that everything he read of in the newspapers he could see in Daniel or Revelation.

He is wise, so some say, but I had rather spend my time in winning souls! I would sooner bring one sinner to Jesus Christ than unpick all the mysteries of the Divine Word, for salvation is the thing we are to live for! I would to God that I understood all mysteries, yet chief of all would I proclaim the mystery of soul-saving by faith in the blood of the Lamb! It is comparatively a small matter for a minister to have been a staunch upholder of orthodoxy all his days and to have spent himself in keeping up the hedges of his Church. Soul-winning is the main concern! It is a very good thing to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, but I do not think I should like to say in my last account, “Lord, I have lived to fight the Romanists and the State Church and to put down the various erroneous sects, but I never led a sinner to the Cross.” No, we will fight the good fight of faith, but the winning of souls is the greater matter—he who attends to it is wise!

Another Brother has preached the Truth of God, but he did so polish up his sermons that the Gospel was hidden. Never a sermon was fit to preach, he thought, until he had written it out a dozen times to see whether every sentence would be according to the canons of Cicero and Quintillian—and then he went and delivered the Gospel as a grand oration. Is that wise? Well, it takes a wise man to be a thorough orator, but it is better not to be an orator if fine speech prevents your being understood! Let eloquence be flung to the dogs rather than souls be lost! What we need is to win souls and they are not to be won by flowery speeches! We must have the winning of souls at heart and be red hot with zeal for their salvation—then, however much we blunder, according to the critics—we shall be numbered among those whom the Lord calls wise!

Now, Christian men and women, I want you to take this matter up, practically, and to determine that you will try, this very night, to win a soul. Try the one next to you in the pew if you cannot think of anybody else! Try on the way home. Try with your own children. Have I not told you of what happened one Sunday six months ago? In my sermon I said, “Now, you mothers, have you ever prayed with each of your children, one

by one, and urged them to lay hold on Christ? Perhaps dear Jane is now in bed and you have never yet pleaded with her about eternal things. Go home tonight, wake her up and say, “Jane, I am sorry I have never personally told you about the Savior and prayed with you, but I mean to do it now.” Wake her up and put your arms round her neck and pour out your heart to God with her!

Well, there was a good Sister here who had a daughter named Jane. What do you think? She came on Monday to bring her daughter Jane to see me in the vestry, for when she woke her up and began, “I have not spoken to you about Jesus,” or something to that effect, “Oh, dear Mother,” said Jane, “I have loved the Savior these six months and wondered why you had not spoken to me about Him.” And then there was such kissing and rejoicing! Perhaps you may find that to be the case with a dear child at home, and, if you do not, so much the more reason why you should begin at once to speak! Did you never win a soul for Jesus? You shall have a crown in Heaven, but no jewels it! You will go to Heaven childless! And you know how it was in the old times, how the women dreaded lest they should be childless!

Let it be so with Christian people! Let them dread being spiritually childless! We must hear the cries of those whom God has given to be born unto Himself by our means. We must hear them, or else cry out in anguish, “Give me converts or I die!” Young men, old men and Sisters of all ages, if you love the Lord, get a passion for souls! Do you not see them? They are going down to Hell by the thousands! As often as the hand upon the dial completes its circuit, Hell devours multitudes! Some of them ignorant of Christ and others willfully rejecting Him! The world lies in darkness—this great city still pines for the light!

Your own friends and kinsfolk may be dead before this week is over. Oh, if you have any humanity, let alone Christianity, if you have found the remedy, tell the diseased about it! If you have found life, proclaim it to the dead! If you have found liberty, publish it to the captives! If you have found Christ, tell of Him to others! My Brothers in the college, let this be your choice work while studying, and let it be the one objective of your lives when you go forth from us. Do not be content when you get a congregation, but labor to win souls and, as you do this, God will bless you. As for us, we hope during the rest of our lives to follow Him who is The Soul-Winner and to put ourselves in His hands who makes us soulwinners, so that our life may not be a long folly, but may be proven, by results, to have been directed by wisdom!

O you souls not won to Jesus, remember that faith in Christ saves you! Trust in Him! May you be led to trust in Him for His name’s sake. Amen. **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans 10.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—906, 957. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #850 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SOUL-WINNING  
NO. 850

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“He that wins souls is wise.”  
Proverbs 11:30.

THE text does not say, “he that wins money is wise,” though no doubt he thinks himself wise and perhaps, in a certain groveling sense in these days of competition, he might be so. But such wisdom is of the earth, and ends with the earth. There is another world where the currencies of Europe will not be accepted, nor their past possession be any sign of wealth or wisdom. Solomon, in the text before us, awards no crown for wisdom to crafty statesmen, or even to the ablest of rulers. He issues no diplomas to philosophers, poets, or men of wit. He crowns with laurels only those who win souls.

He does not declare that he who preaches is necessarily wise—and alas, there are multitudes who preach and gain much applause and eminence—who win no souls and who shall find it go hard with them at the last, because in all probability they have run and the Master has never sent them. He does not say that he who talks about winning souls is wise, since to lay down rules for others is a very simple thing, but to carry them out is far more difficult. He who actually, really and truly turns men from the error of their ways to God, and so is made the means of saving them from going down to Hell is a wise man. And that is true of him whatever his style of soul-winning may be. He may be a Paul, deeply logical, profound in doctrine, able to command all candid judgments—and if he thus win souls he is wise.

He may be an Apollos, grandly rhetorical, whose lofty genius soars into the very Heaven of eloquence—and if he wins souls in that way he is wise, but not otherwise. Or he may be a Cephas, rough and rugged, using uncouth metaphor and stern declamation. But if he win souls he is no less wise than his polished brother or his argumentative friend. The great wisdom of soul-winners, according to the text, is proven only by their actual success in really winning souls. To their own Master they are accountable for the ways in which they go to work, not to us.

Do not let us be comparing and contrasting this minister and that. Who are you that judges another man’s servants? Wisdom is justified in all her children. Only children wrangle about incidental methods—men look at sublime results. Do these workers of many sorts and various manners win souls? Then they are wise! And you who criticize them, being yourselves unfruitful, cannot be wise, even though you affect to be their judges! God proclaims soul-winners to be wise, dispute it who dare! This degree from the College of Heaven may surely stand them in good stead—let their fellow mortals say what they will of them. “He that wins souls is wise,” and this can be seen very clearly.

He must be a wise man in even ordinary respects who can, by Divine Grace, achieve so Divine a marvel. Great soul-winners have never been fools. A man whom God qualifies to win souls could probably do anything else which Providence might allot him. Take Martin Luther! Why, Sirs, the man was not only fit to work a Reformation, but he could have ruled a nation or have commanded an army! Think of Whitefield and remember that the thundering eloquence which stirred all England was not associated with a weak judgment, or an absence of brain power—the man was a master orator, and if he had addicted himself to commerce, would have taken a chief place among the merchants. Or had he been a politician, amid admiring senates he would have commanded the listening ear.

He that wins souls is usually a man who could have done anything else if God had called him to it. I know the Lord uses what means He wills, but He always uses means suitable to the end. And if you tell me that David slew Goliath with a sling, I answer it was the best weapon in the world to reach so tall a giant and the very fittest weapon that David could have used, for he had been skilled in it from his youth up. There is always an adaptation in the instruments which God uses to produce the ordained result, and though the glory is not to them, nor the excellence in them—all is to be ascribed to God—yet is there a fitness and preparedness which God sees, even if we do not. It is assuredly true that soul-winners are by no means idiots or simpletons, but such as God makes wise for Himself, though vainglorious wiseacres may dub them fools.

“He that wins souls is wise,” because he has selected a wise object. I think it was Michelangelo who once carved certain magnificent statues in snow. They are gone. The material readily compacted by the frost as readily melted in the heat. Far wiser was he when he fashioned the enduring marble and produced works which will last all down the ages. But even marble itself is consumed and fretted by the tooth of time! And he is wise who selects for his raw material immortal souls, whose existence shall outlast the stars! If God shall bless us to the winning of souls, our work shall remain when the wood and hay and stubble of earth’s art and science shall have gone to the dust from which they sprang.

In Heaven itself, the soul-winner, blessed of God, shall have memorials of his work preserved forever in the galleries of the skies. He has selected a wise object, for what can be wiser than to glorify God and what, next to that, can be wiser than in the highest sense to bless our fellow men—to snatch a soul from the gulf that yawns, to lift it up to the Heaven that glorifies—to deliver an immortal from the thralldom of Satan and to bring him into the liberty of Christ? What more excellent than this? I say, that such an aim would commend itself to all right minds and that angels themselves may envy us poor sons of men that we are permitted to make this our life-work, to win souls for Jesus Christ!

Wisdom herself assents to the excellence of the design. To accomplish such a work, a man must be wise, for to win a soul requires infinite wisdom. God Himself wins not souls without wisdom, for the eternal plan of salvation was dictated by an infallible judgment and in every line of it infinite skill is apparent. Christ, God’s great Soul-Winner, is “the wisdom of God,” as well as “the power of God.” There is as much wisdom to be seen in the new creation as in the old. In a saved sinner there is as much of God to be beheld as in a universe rising out of nothing! And we, then, who are to be workers together with God, proceeding side by side with Him to the great work of soul-winning, must be wise, too.

It is a work which filled a Savior’s heart—a work which moved the Eternal mind before the earth was. It is no child’s play, nor a thing to be achieved while we are half asleep, nor to be attempted without deep consideration, nor to be carried on without gracious help from the only-wise God, our Savior. The pursuit is wise. Mark you well, my Brethren, that he who is successful in soul-winning will prove to have been a wise man in the judgment of those who see the end as well as the beginning.

Even if I were utterly selfish and had no care for anything but my own happiness, I would choose, if I might, under God, to be a soul-winner, for never did I know perfect, overflowing, unutterable happiness of the purest and most ennobling order till I first heard of one who had sought and found a Savior through my means. I recollect the thrill of joy which went through me! No young mother ever rejoiced so much over her first-born child—no warrior was so exultant over a hard-won victory. Oh, the joy of knowing that a sinner once at enmity has been reconciled to God, by the Holy Spirit, through the words spoken by our feeble lips!

Since then, by Divine Grace given to me, the thought of which prostrates me in self-abasement, I have seen and heard of, not hundreds only, but even thousands of sinners turned from the error of their ways by the testimony of God in me. Let afflictions come! Let trials be multiplied as God wills, still this joy preponderates above all others—the joy that we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in every place—and that as often as we preach the Word, hearts are unlocked, bosoms heave with a new life, eyes weep for sin and their tears are wiped away as they see the great Substitute for sin and live!

Beyond all controversy, it is a joy worth worlds to win souls and, thank God, it is a joy that does not cease with this mortal life. It must be no small bliss to hear, as one wings his flight up to the Eternal Throne, the wings of others fluttering at one’s side towards the same Glory and turning round and questioning them, to hear them say, “We are entering with you through the gates of pearl—you brought us to the Savior.” To be welcomed to the skies by those who call us father, in God—father in better bonds than those of earth—father through Grace and sire for immortality—it will be bliss beyond compare, to meet in yon eternal seats with those begotten of us in Christ Jesus, for whom we travailed in birth, till Christ was formed in them the hope of Glory!

This is to have many heavens—a Heaven in everyone won for Christ, according to the Master’s promise, “they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever.” I have said enough, Brethren, I trust, to make some of you desire to occupy the position of soul-winners. Now, before I further address myself to my text, I should like to remind you that the honor does not belong to ministers only. They may take their full share of it, but it belongs to every one of you who have devoted yourselves to Christ! Such honor have all the saints! Every man here, every woman here, every child here whose heart is right with God, may be a soul-winner!

There is no man placed by God’s Providence where he cannot do some good. There is not a glowworm under a hedge but gives a needed light. And there is not a laboring man, a suffering woman, a servant girl, a chimney sweeper, or a crossing sweeper, but what has opportunities for serving God. And what I have said of soul-winners belongs not to the learned doctor of divinity, or to the eloquent preacher, alone, but to you all who are in Christ Jesus! You can, each of you, if Divine Grace enables you. Therefore be wise and win the happiness of turning souls to Christ through the Holy Spirit.

I am about to dwell upon my text in this way—“He that wins souls is wise.” I shall, first, make that fact stand out a little clearer by explaining the metaphor used in the text—winning souls. And then, secondly, by giving you some lessons in the matter of soul-winning, through which, I trust, the conviction will be forced upon each believing mind that the work needs the highest wisdom.

I. First, LET US CONSIDER THE METAPHOR USED IN THE TEXT—“He that wins souls is wise.” We use the word, “win,” in many ways. It is sometimes found in very bad company, in those games of chance, juggling tricks and sleight-of-hand, or thimble-rigging (to use a plain word), which cheaters are so fond of winning by. I am sorry to say that much of legerdemain and trickery are to be met with in the religious world. Why, there are those who pretend to save souls by curious tricks, intricate maneuvers and dexterous posture making. A basin of water, half-a-dozen drops, certain syllables—presto!—the infant is a child of Grace and becomes a member of Christ and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven!

This aqueous regeneration surpasses my belief! It is a trick which I do not understand! The initiated, only, can perform this beautiful piece of magic which excels anything ever attempted by the Wizard of the North! There is a way, too, of winning souls by laying hands upon heads—only the elbows of aforesaid hands must be encased in flowing robes—and then the machinery acts and there is Grace conferred by blessed fingers! I must confess I do not understand the occult science, but at this I need not wonder, for the profession of saving souls by such juggling can only be carried out by certain favored persons who have received Apostolic succession direct from Judas Iscariot.

This Episcopal confirmation, when men pretend that it confers Divine Grace, is an infamous piece of juggling. The whole thing is an abomination! Only to think that in this 19th century there should be men who preach up salvation by sacraments and salvation by themselves, indeed! Why, Sirs, it is surely too late in the day to come to us with this drivel! Priestcraft, let us hope, is a fossil and the sacramental theory out of date. These things might have done for those who could not read and for the days when books were scarce!

But ever since the day when the glorious Luther was helped by God to proclaim with thunderclaps the emancipating Truth of God—“By Grace are you saved, through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God”—there has been too much light for these Popish owls! Let them go back to their ivy-mantled towers and complain to the moon of those who spoiled of old their kingdom of darkness. Let shaven crowns go to Bedlam, and scarlet hats to the scarlet harlot—but let not Englishmen yield them respect.

Modern Tractarianism is a bastard Popery—too mean, too shifty, too double-dealing—to delude men of honest minds. If we win souls it shall be by other arts than Jesuits and idiots can teach us. Trust not in any man who pretends to priesthood. Priests are liars by trade and deceivers by profession. We cannot save souls in their theatrical way and do not want to do so, for we know that with such jugglery as that, Satan will hold the best hand and laugh at priests as he turns the cards against them at the last.

How do we win souls, then? Why, the word, “win,” has a far better meaning. It is used in warfare. Warriors win cities and provinces. Now, to win a soul is a much more difficult thing than to win a city! Observe the earnest soul-winner at his work. How cautiously he seeks his great Captain’s directions to know when to hang out the white flag to invite the heart to surrender to the sweet love of a dying Savior. When, at the proper time, to hang out the black flag of threat, showing that if Divine Grace is not received, judgment will surely follow. And when to unfurl, with dread reluctance, the red flag of the terrors of God against stubborn, impenitent souls.

The soul-winner has to sit down before a soul as a great captain before a walled town. He has to draw his lines of circumvallation, to cast up his entrenchments and fix his batteries. He must not advance too fast—he may overdo the fighting. He must not move too slowly, for he may seem not to be in earnest and may do mischief. Then he must know which gate to attack—how to plant his guns at Ear-Gate and how to discharge them. He has to know how, sometimes, to keep the batteries going, day and night, with red-hot shot. He has to know when and if, perhaps, he may make a breach in the walls.

At other times he may have to lay by and cease. And then, on a moment’s notice, to open all the batteries with terrific violence, if perhaps he may take the soul by surprise or cast in a Truth of God when it was not expected, to burst like a shell in the soul and do damage to the dominions of sin. The Christian soldier must know how to advance by little and little—to sap that prejudice, to undermine that old enmity, to blow into the air that lust—and at the last to storm the citadel. It is his to throw the scaling ladder up and to have his ears gladdened as he hears a clicking on the wall of the heart, telling that the scaling ladder has grasped and has gained a firm hold! And then, with his saber between his teeth, he climbs up and springs on the man! He slays his unbelief in the name of God and captures the city and runs up the blood-red flag of the Cross of Christ! Then he can say, “The heart is won, won for Christ at last!”

This needs a warrior well trained—a master in his art. After many days’ attack, many weeks of waiting, many an hour of storming by prayer and battering by entreaty to carry the Malakoff of depravity—this is the work— this the difficulty. It takes no fool to do this! God’s Grace must make a man wise to capture Mansoul, to lead its captivity captive and open wide the heart’s gates that the Prince Immanuel may come in. This is winning a soul!

The word, “win,” was commonly used among the ancients, to signify winning in the wrestling match. When the Greek sought to win the laurel, or the ivy crown, he was compelled a long time before to put himself through a course of training. And when he came forth at last, stripped for the encounter, he had no sooner exercised himself in the first few efforts than you saw how every muscle and every nerve had been developed in him. He had a stern opponent, and he knew it, and therefore left none of his energy unused.

While the wrestling was going on you could see the man’s eyes, how he watched every motion, every feint of his antagonist and how his hands, his feet and his whole body were thrown into the encounter. He feared to meet with a fall—he hoped to give one to his foe. Now, a true soul-winner has often to come to close quarters with the devil within men. He has to struggle with their prejudice, with their love of sin, with their unbelief, with their pride. And then again, all of a sudden, to grapple with their despair. At one moment he strives with their self-righteousness, at the next moment with their unbelief in God. Ten thousand arts are used to prevent the soul-winner from being conqueror in the encounter, but if God has sent him, he will never renounce his hold of the soul he seeks till he has given a throw to the power of sin and won another soul for Christ!

Besides that, there is another meaning to the word, “win,” upon which I cannot go into too much detail here. We use the word, you know, in a softer sense than these which have been mentioned, when we come to deal with hearts. There are secret and mysterious ways by which those who love win the object of their affection, which are wise in their fitness to the purpose. I cannot tell you how the lover wins his fond one, but experience has probably taught you. The weapon of this warfare is not always the same, yet where that victory is won the wisdom of the means becomes clear to every eye. The weapon of love is sometimes a look, or a soft word whispered and eagerly listened to. Sometimes it is a tear. But this I know, that we have, most of us in our turn, cast around another heart a chain which that other would not care to break and which has linked us together in a blessed captivity which has cheered our life.

Yes, and that is very nearly the way in which we have to win souls. That illustration is nearer the mark than any of the others. Love is the true way of soul-winning, for when I spoke of storming the walls and when I spoke of wrestling, those were but metaphors, but this is near the fact. We win by love. We win hearts for Jesus by love, by sympathy with their sorrow, by anxiety lest they should perish, by pleading with God for them with all our hearts that they should not be left to die unsaved. We win hearts for Jesus by pleading with them for God that, for their own sake, they would seek mercy and find Divine Grace. Yes, Sirs, there is a spiritual wooing and winning of hearts for the Lord Jesus! And if you would learn the way, you must ask God to give you a tender heart and a sympathizing soul.

I believe that much of the secret of soul-winning lies in having hearts of compassion, in having spirits that can be touched with the feeling of human infirmities. Carve a preacher out of granite and even if you give him an angel’s tongue, he will convert nobody. Put him into the most fashionable pulpit. Make his elocution faultless and his matter profoundly orthodox, but so long as he bears within his bosom a hard heart he can never win a soul. Soul-winning requires a heart that beats hard against the ribs. It requires a soul full of the milk of human kindness. This is the sine qua non of success. This is the chief natural qualification for a soul-winner, which, under God and blessed of Him, will accomplish wonders.

I have not looked at the Hebrew of the text, but I find—and you will find who have margins to your Bibles—that it is, “He that takes souls is wise,” which word refers to fishing, or to bird catching. Every Sunday when I leave my house, I cannot help seeing as I come along, men with their little cages and their stuffed birds, trying all around the common and in the fields, to catch poor little warblers. They understand the method of alluring and entrapping their little victims. Soul-winners might learn much from them. We must have our lures for souls adapted to attract, to fascinate, to grasp. We must go forth with our birdlime, our decoys, our nets, our baits, so that we may but catch the souls of men.

Their enemy is a fowler possessed of the basest and most astounding cunning. We must outwit him with the guile of honesty, the craft of Grace. But the art is to be learned only by Divine teaching and herein we must be wise and willing to learn. The man who takes fish must also have some art in him. Washington Irving, I think it is, tells us of some three gentlemen who had read in Izaak Walton all about the delights of fishing. So they entered upon the same amusement and accordingly they became disciples of the gentle art.

They went into New York and bought the best rods and lines that could be purchased. They found out the exact fly for the particular day or month so that the fish might bite at once and, as it were, fly into the basket with cheerful accuracy! They fished and fished and fished the whole day but the basket was empty. They were getting disgusted with a sport that had no sport in it, when a ragged boy came down from the hills without shoes or stockings and humiliated them to the last degree. He had a bit of a bough pulled from off a tree and a piece of string and a bent pin. He put a worm on it, threw it in and out came a fish directly, as if it were a needle drawn to a magnet! In again went the line and out came another fish and so on, till his basket was quite full.

They asked him how he did it. Ah, he said, he could not tell them that, but it was easy enough when you had the way of it. Much the same is it in fishing for men. Some preachers who have silk lines and fine rods, preach very eloquently and exceedingly gracefully, but they never win souls. I know not how it is, but another man comes with very simple language, but with a warm heart and, straightway, men are converted to God. Surely there must be a sympathy between the minister and the souls he would win! God gives to those whom He makes soul-winners a natural love to their work and a spiritual fitness for it. There is a sympathy between those who are to be blessed and those who are to be the means of blessing and very much by this sympathy, under God, souls are taken. But it is as clear as noonday—to be a fisher of men a man must be wise. “He that wins souls is wise.”

II. And now, Brothers and Sisters, you who are engaged in the Lord’s work from week to week and who seek to win men’s souls to Christ, I am, in the second place, to illustrate this BY TELLING YOU OF SOME OF THE WAYS BY WHICH SOULS ARE TO BE WON. The preacher himself wins souls, I believe, best, when he believes in the reality of his work—when he believes in instantaneous conversions! How can he expect God to do what he does not believe God will do? He succeeds best who expects conversion every time he preaches. According to his faith so shall it be done unto him.

To be content without conversions is the surest way never to have them. To drive with a single aim entirely at the saving of souls is the sure method of usefulness. If we sigh and cry till men are saved, saved they will be! He will succeed best who keeps closest to soul-saving Truth. Now, all the Truth of God is not soul-saving, though all Truth may be edifying. He that keeps to the simple story of the Cross—tells men over and over again that whoever believes in Christ is not condemned—that to be saved nothing is needed but a simple trust in the crucified Redeemer. He whose ministry is much made up of the glorious story of the Cross, the sufferings of the dying Lamb, the mercy of God, the willingness of the great Father to receive returning prodigals.

He who cries, in fact, from day to day, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world”—he is likely to be a soul-winner— especially if he adds to this much prayer for souls, much anxious desire that men may be brought to Jesus, and then, in his private life seeks as much as in his public ministry to be telling out to others of the love of the dear Savior of men.

But I am not talking to ministers, but to you who sit in the pew, and therefore to you let me turn myself more directly. Brothers and Sisters, you have different gifts. I hope you use them all. Perhaps some of you, though members of the Church, think you have none. But every Believer has his gift and his portion of work. What can you do to win souls? Let me recommend to those who think they can do nothing, the bringing of others to hear the Word of God. That is a duty much neglected. I can hardly ask you to bring anybody here, because many of you attend other places which are not perhaps half-filled. Fill them! Do not grumble at the small congregation, but make it larger! Take somebody with you to the very next sermon and at once the congregation will be increased.

Go up with the prayer that your minister’s sermon may be blessed, and if you cannot preach yourselves, yet, by bringing others under the sound of the Word, you may be doing what is next best. This is a very commonplace and simple remark, but let me press it upon you, for it is of great practical value. Many Churches and Chapels which are almost empty, might soon have large audiences if those who profit by the Word would tell others about the profit they have received, and induce them to attend the same ministry. Especially in this London of ours, where so many will not go up to the House of God—persuade your neighbors to come forth to the place of worship. Look after them. Make them feel that it is a wrong thing to stay at home on Sunday from morning till night.

I do not say upbraid them, that does little good. But I do say entice them, persuade them. Let them have your tickets for the Tabernacle, for instance, sometimes, or stand in the aisles, yourself, and let them have your seat. Get them under the Word and who knows what may be the result? Oh, what a blessing it would be to you if you heard that what you could not do, for you could scarcely speak for Christ, was done by your pastor, by the power of the Holy Spirit, through your inducing one to come within gunshot of the Gospel! Next to that, Soul-Winners, the preacher may have missed the mark—you need not miss it. Or the preacher may have struck the mark and you can help to make the impression deeper by a kind word.

I recollect several persons joining this Church who traced their conversion to the ministry in the Surrey Music Hall, but who said it was not that, alone, but another agency cooperating with it. They were fresh from the country and some good man, I knew him well, I think he is in Heaven now, met two of them at the gate, spoke to them, said he hoped they had enjoyed what they had heard. He heard their answer, asked them if they were coming in the evening. He said he would be glad if they would drop into his house to tea. They did, and he had a word with them about the Master. The next Sunday it was the same and at last, those whom the sermons had not much impressed, were brought to hear with other ears, till by-and-by, through the good old man’s persuasive words and the good Lord’s gracious work, they were converted to God!

There is a fine hunting ground here and, indeed, in every large congregation for you who really want to do good. How many come into this House every morning and evening with no thought about receiving Christ. Oh, if you would all help me, you who love the Master—if you would all help me by speaking to your neighbors who sit near you—how much might be accomplished! Never let anybody say, “I came to the Tabernacle three months and nobody spoke to me.” But do, by a sweet familiarity, which ought always to be allowable in the House of God, seek with your whole heart to impress upon your friends the Truth of God which I can only put into the ear, but which God may help you to put into the heart!

Further, let me commend to you, dear friends, the art of button-holing acquaintances and relatives. If you cannot preach to a 100, preach to one! Get a hold of the man, alone, and in love, quietly and prayerfully, talk to him. “One!” you say. Well, is not one enough? I know your ambition, young man—you want to preach here, to these thousands. Be content and begin with the ones. Your Master was not ashamed to sit on the well and preach to one! And when He had finished His sermon He had really done good to all the city of Samaria, for that one woman became a missionary to her friends. Timidity often prevents our being useful in this direction, but we must not give way to it. It must not be tolerated that Christ should be unknown through our silence and sinners unwarned through our negligence!

We must school and train ourselves to deal personally with the unconverted. We must not excuse ourselves, but force ourselves to the irksome task till it becomes easy. This is one of the most honorable modes of soulwinning and if it requires more than ordinary zeal and courage, so much the more reason for our resolving to master it. Beloved, we must win souls! We cannot live and see men damned! We must have them brought to Jesus. Oh, then, be up and doing and let none around you die unwarned, unwept, uncured for! A tract is a useful thing, but a living word is better. Your eyes and face and voice will all help. Do not be so cowardly as to give a piece of paper where your own speech would be so much better. I charge you, attend to this, for Jesus’ sake.

Some of you could write letters for your Lord and Master. To far-off friends a few loving lines may be most influential for good. Be like the men of Issachar who handled the pen. Paper and ink are never better used than in soul-winning. Much has been done by this method. Could you not do it? Will you not try? Some of you, at any rate, if you could not speak or write much, could live much. That is a fine way of preaching—that of preaching with your feet—I mean preaching by your life and conduct and conversation! That loving wife who weeps in secret over an infidel husband, but is always so kind to him. That dear child whose heart is broken with a father’s blasphemy, but is so much more obedient than he used to be before conversion! That servant whom the master swears at, but whom he could trust with his purse and the gold uncounted in it! That man in trade who is sneered at as a Presbyterian, but who, nevertheless, is straight as a line and would not be compelled to do a dirty action, no, not for all the mint!

These are the men and women who preach the best sermons! These are your practical preachers! Give us your holy living and with your holy living as the leverage, we will move the world! Under God’s blessing we will find tongues, if we can, but we need greatly the lives of our people to illustrate what our tongues have to say. The Gospel is something like an illustrated paper. The preacher’s words are the print, but the pictures are the living men and women who form our Churches. And as when people take up such a newspaper, they very often do not read the print, but they always look at the pictures—so in a Church, outsiders may not come to hear the preacher—but they always consider, observe and criticize the lives of the members. If you would be soul-winners, then, dear Brothers and Sisters, see that you live the Gospel! I have no greater joy than this, that my children walk in the Truth of God.

One thing more, the soul-winner must be a master of the art of prayer. You cannot bring souls to God if you go not to God yourself. You must get your battle-ax and your weapons of war from the armory of sacred communion with Christ. If you are much alone with Jesus, you will catch His Spirit. You will be fired with the flame that burned in His breast and consumed His life. You will weep with the tears that fell upon Jerusalem when He saw it perishing. And if you cannot speak so eloquently as He did, yet shall there be in what you say somewhat of the same power which in Him thrilled the hearts and awoke the consciences of men.

My dear Hearers, especially you members of this Church, I am always so anxious lest any of you should begin to lie upon your oars and take things easy in the matters of God’s kingdom. There are some of you—I bless you and I bless God at the remembrance of you—who are in season and out of season, in earnest for winning souls and you are the truly wise. But I fear there are others whose hands are slack, who are satisfied to let me preach, but do not preach themselves. There are some who take these seats and occupy these pews and hope the cause goes well, but that is all they do. Oh, let me see you all in earnest!

A great host of 4,000 members—for that is now as nearly as possible the accurate counting of our numbers—what could we not do if we were all alive and all in earnest? But such a host, without the spirit of enthusiasm, becomes a mere mob, an unwieldy mass out of which mischief grows and no good results arise. If you were all firebrands for Christ, you might set the nation on a blaze! If you were all wells of living water, how many thirsty souls might drink and be refreshed! One thing more you can do. If some of you feel you cannot do much personally, you can always help the College and there it is that we find tongues for the dumb. Our young men are called out by God to preach. We give them some little education and training and then away they go to Australia, to Canada, to the islands of the sea, to Scotland, to Wales and throughout England, preaching the Word!

And it is often, it must be often, a consolation to some of you, to think that if you have not spoken with your own tongues as you could desire, you have at least spoken by the tongues of others, so that through you the Word of God has been sounded abroad throughout all this region. Beloved, there is one question I will ask and I have done and that is, Are your own souls won? You cannot win others if they are not. Are you yourselves saved? My Hearers, every one of you under that gallery, there. And you behind here, are you, yourselves, saved? What if this night you should have to answer that question to another and greater than I am? What if the bony finger of the last great orator should be uplifted instead of mine?

What if his unconquerable eloquence should turn those bones to stone and glaze those eyes and make the blood chill in your veins? Could you hope, in your last extremity, that you were saved? If not saved, how will you ever be? When will you be saved if not now? Will any time be better than now? The way to be saved is simply to trust in what the Son of Man did when He became Man and suffered the punishment for all those who trust Him. For all His people, Christ was a Substitute. His people are those who trust Him. If you trust Him, He was punished for your sins! And you cannot be punished for them, for God cannot punish sin twice— first in Christ and then in you! If you trust Jesus, who now lives at the right hand of God, you are this moment pardoned and you shall forever be saved.

O that you would trust Him now! Perhaps it may be now or never with you. May it be now, even now! And then, trusting in Jesus, dear Friends, you will have no need to hesitate when the question is asked, “Are you saved?” for you can answer, “Yes, that I am, for it is written, ‘He that believes in Him is not condemned.’” Trust Him, then! Trust Him now and then God help you to be a soul-winner and you shall be wise and God shall be glorified.

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 51.*  
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MAN UNKNOWN TO MAN  
NO. 2079

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, APRIL 14, 1889, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“The heart knows his own bitterness. And a stranger does not understand with his joy.”  
Proverbs 14:10.**

YOU lift up your eyes and you behold the stars. Surely, it is no idle imagination that these heavenly lights are distant worlds. But they are entirely separated from the inhabitants of this globe. You may peer at them through the telescope as long as you will, but you cannot enter into the feelings and pursuits of the dwellers in those worlds. You know nothing of the nearest planet, nor even of the world’s own satellite. Some look up and declare that they see a man in the moon. It is the fancy of the ignorant. Others gaze at it till they discover huge volcanoes. It is the belief of the astronomer. But do what you will, you cannot enter into conversation with the moon-dwellers.

You cannot sympathize with their politics, nor share their domestic experiences. There is a great gulf fixed and we who would pass to them cannot—neither can they pass to us who would come from there. In a great measure such is our relation to our fellow men. Men are microcosms, or little worlds—each man has his distinct sphere, wherein he dwells. We are so many worlds and no one world of man exactly overlaps another. You cannot completely know your fellow man. All that you know concerning your fellows—and there is much which we can know—leaves a great deal as unknown to us as the fixed stars.

There is a bitterness which each man feels alone and a sweetness with which none can understand. Every man is, in a measure, self-contained. His being is detached from other beings in certain matters. There are bonds which unite us to our fellow man, and there is a solidarity about the race. But for all that, each man is a distinct atom and item and there are portions of his nature in which he does not touch his fellow man at all but displays his own individuality and personality. Alone are we born, one by one. Alone do we die, one by one. Though we shall stand with the great multitude before the Throne of God, yet that judgment will be of individuals and the sentence will be passed upon us one by one.

Heaven will be an enjoyment which the Believer himself possesses—or Hell a misery which the impenitent himself endures. No one can merge himself in another man, nor so blend himself with the mass as to cease to be an individual existence. For weal or woe we are each one launched on the ocean of life in his own vessel. “Every man shall bear his own burden.”

It is not surprising that we must be, in a measure, unknown to others since we do not even fully know ourselves. Mysteries exist within our own bosoms and abysses which we have never yet explored. Their own personal humanity is to many an utterly unknown land. And none know themselves so fully as they think. “Man, know yourself,” is a precept much more profound than it appears. If we do not know ourselves, how shall we know our fellows?

Besides, there are points of individuality in each man which render him distinct from every other. No two women—although they are born of the same parents, have been trained in the same home, and have lived together in close companionship—will be found to be precisely alike. No man could find his exact counterpart among all the millions of the race. In some point or points each man is inscrutable by his companions. Either from one peculiar element which is in him or from the peculiar proportions in which qualities are blended in his constitution, each man is a being after his own kind.

How can we know beings so strangely different from each other? Remember also, that men in their highest and deepest conditions, are remarkably secretive. The extreme heights and depths lie in darkness. A man may openly show himself in his ordinary life and “wear his heart upon his sleeve.” But when he reaches a especial grief the waters are still deep. The keenest griefs cut a narrow but deep channel and as they wear into the inmost soul they flow without noise. The grief that babbles is a shallow brook. Silent sorrow is profound. Great misery is dumb with silence—it opens not its mouth. It is precisely the same in the higher ranges of joy. When once we soar into the heavenlies we are alone.

As I rode along in the South of France, the driver, turning to me, exclaimed, “See, there are eagles!” “No,” I said, “not eagles, for eagles fly alone.” Seven or eight large birds together might be hawks, or falcons, or kites but not true eagles. A royal eagle soars alone into the blue—his mate may bear him company but he has no crew of comrades around him. The child of God—the true eagle of the skies—when he rises into the more Divine ranges of his spiritual life is, and must be, alone. Like their Lord, all saints will have a winepress which they must tread alone. And even so, they will have a Pisgah to which they will climb unattended. I marvel not that men hide those lives which God has hidden in Christ and that their fellows see not the part of them which lives upon the invisible.

What is the practical use of these facts? We learn, I think first, that we may not judge our Brethren as though we understood them and were competent to give a verdict upon them. Do not sit down, like Job’s friends, and condemn the innocent. They, seeing Job covered with sores, and hearing him speak in bitterness—and knowing that God had taken away from him his property and his children—rushed to the conclusion that he was a hypocrite, abhorred of God, and that his heart was proudly rebellious against Jehovah.

Never a more cruel judgment than that of men who are but halfinformed upon the matter and see before them a great man in adversity, a good man in dire distress. Had it not been for Job’s prayers, they would not have escaped the anger of God. And yet they had dared to condemn the patient saint. Why do you sit down and write bitter things against your fellow man? Be not sure that you can accurately judge any of his actions. Seen upon its surface and by itself, his act may appear blameworthy. But the motive behind it, if known to you, might soften your censure or even win your praise.

Before the great Searcher of all hearts, things are not what they seem. As our law condemns no man before it hears him, so let us not hasten to give sentence since we have not yet heard and in all probability never shall hear, all the ins and outs of his behavior. Well said our Lord, “Judge not, that you be not judged.” Especially judge not the sons and daughters of sorrow. Allow no ungenerous suspicions of the afflicted, the poor and the despondent. Do not hastily say they ought to be more brave and exhibit a greater faith. Ask not why are they so nervous and so absurdly fearful? No, in this you speak as one of the foolish women speaks. I beseech you, remember that you understand not your fellow man.

The next practical lesson is if we desire to show sympathy to our Brethren let us not dream that this is an easy task. It is not a simple matter to square two unknown quantities—yourself and your friend. It would take me long to learn to correspond with the inhabitants of the planet Mars—in all probability I should never achieve the task. I doubt not that there are many people so peculiar, both in their sorrows and in their joys, that I shall no more be able to commune with them in real sympathy than with the people of the aforesaid planet. Study the art of sympathy. It is easy enough for a captain of a steam vessel to lay his ship alongside the wharf. But if I had to do it I would probably break down the wall of the dock and wreck the vessel, too.

It is not easy to lay your soul side by side with another man’s soul. It is as difficult to do as Elijah did when he laid himself upon the dead child, putting his mouth upon the child’s mouth and his hands upon the child’s hands and his feet upon the child’s feet and so, by God’s power, breathing life into the cold form. It is not easy to be effectively sympathetic—some cannot manifest tenderness even when they have a mind to do so. I once knew a minister who had never suffered pain or illness in his life. I was unwell in his house and he most kindly tried to sympathize with me. He did it almost as wonderfully as an elephant picks up a pin. It was a marvel that he could attempt a thing so altogether out of his line.

Many of the trials which are experienced by Christians are sent as an education in the art of sympathy. Be thankful for that which enables you to be a minister of consolation to your fellow men. But feel that in this matter you are yet a learner and will frequently meet with sorrows and with joys into which you cannot enter.

One other lesson and that is the great one we want all of us to learn. We all need sympathy. And as it is impossible that we should ever perfectly obtain it from our fellow men, there remains but One who can give it to us. There is One who can enter the closet where the skeleton is locked up. One who is in touch with our unmentionable grief. He weighs and

measures that which is too heavy for us to bear. That blessed One! Oh, that we may each one have Him for our Friend! Without Him we shall lack the great necessity of a happy life! A personal Savior is absolutely needful to each of us to meet our individual personality. Jesus, alone, can understand with our joy and make it still more gladsome. He, alone, can understand our grief and remove its wormwood.

We must each one have Christ for himself. What is another man’s Christ to me? What is the Christ who dies for all the world to anyone in that world until he takes a personal hold on Him? “He loved me and gave Himself for me”—that is the point of rest. What joy to touch the nail print with your finger and to cry, “My Lord and my God”! This is the heart of the matter. The general doctrine of the Gospel has great power in it but the sweetness lies in the particular application of it. What though the city be full of bread? If there is none upon your table you will starve! What though the coffers of the bank should overflow with gold? If you have nothing to purchase the necessaries of life, you will perish in your poverty!

We must have not a national religion but a personal religion. Not a share in the ecclesiastical privileges of a Church but the privilege—each one for himself—of becoming a child of God. We must personally open the door to our Lord and He must enter into us and fill our entire nature with His Divine indwelling. He must be formed in each one of us the hope of glory, or Glory will never be ours. Be not deceived into joint-stock godliness—each man must come into individual relation with the living God in Christ Jesus.

Having already handled its general principle, we will now come close to our text in its two parts—the heart knows a bitterness peculiar to itself. And secondly, the heart also knows a sweetness peculiar to itself.

I. THE HEART KNOWS ITS OWN BITTERNESS. This is true in a natural, common and moral sense. I shall, as a rule, confine myself to the more spiritual application.

“The heart knows its own bitterness.” Concerning any man this is true. The shoe pinches on every foot and that foot only knows where the pinch is felt by itself. Every shoulder bears its load and that load is its own. Envy no man. He who seems most happy may be more fit for pity than for envy. His heart knows its own bitterness. Do not intrude into the hidden sorrows of any—it is enough for one heart to know its bitterness. Maybe you will increase misery if you meddle with it. Leave that alone which you can not relieve. If you can, help, lend your attentive ear. But if you can not help, keep your finger from the wound.

Yet in your very quietness feel inwardly a sense of brotherhood. For since this man’s heart has its own bitterness and you have yours, it proves that you and he are of the same fallen family and both citizens of that world which brings forth thorns and thistles to all the fallen race. You are evidently sprung of the same Adam since in the sweat of your face you must eat bread. You cannot bear another man’s burden so as to take the weight from his shoulder. If a man had to carry a hundredweight of material upon his back you could take fifty-six pounds of it for him and he would have just so much the less to carry.

But it is not so with mental and spiritual loads. You may cheer the heart of the burden-bearer but his trouble is still the same—there is no dividing his grief. When a heart is full of bitterness you may sip the wormwood but the cup will still be nauseous to him that drinks it. We cannot diminish the pain of another’s wound even though we should be wounded ourselves. Rest certain that everywhere throughout this world every foot has its blister, every shoulder has its sore, every lot has its crook—every rose has its thorn.

Most solemnly this is true concerning the godless man. Of the irreligious man—the unbelieving man—it is surely true that, “The heart knows its own bitterness.” In the verse which precedes the text we read, “Fools make a mock at sin.” Why do they? It is to hide the uneasiness within their bosoms. Why does a man blaspheme? Why does he sneer at the Truth of God? Why does he say evil things against the Christ of God? Why does he persecute godly people? Simply because these good things are a protest against his evil condition. He is disturbed by them and is vexed by an uneasy feeling within his heart. The boy going through the Churchyard at night whistles to keep his courage up.

And many of the braggart speeches of infidels are merely an attempt to conceal the unrest of heart which they would not like to confess. They are not happy—they cannot be happy. Can a creature be happy at war with its Creator? Can the breaker of the Law be happy when Justice pursues his every step? They are ill at ease and we may truly say of each one of them, “The heart knows its own bitterness.” Be not afraid to approach them with the Gospel—they are more ready to receive it than we imagine. When they roar most loudly there is little of the lion about them except the skin. Fear them not. They need the Gospel even more than other people and their attempt to bully their own consciences proves that they are somewhat aware of their want. Approach them without fear and press them home with the Word of the Lord. For this is true of them, “The heart knows its own bitterness.”

Next—how true this is concerning an awakened man! When conscience at last starts up from its dream. When the Holy Spirit begins to convict the sinful man of righteousness and of judgment—ah, then, Beloved, “the heart knows its own bitterness.” I could not have told you, if you had bribed me to disclose the secret, the inward grief I felt when day and night God’s hand was heavy upon me on account of sin. Before I found a Savior, the agony of my mind was at times indescribable for I felt the pressure of the wrath of God justly incurred by my iniquity. That verse which precedes my text, which we read as, “Fools make a mock at sin,” may be interpreted, “Fools mock at the sin offering.” Or even “The sin offering is a mock to fools.”

Not only does the fool mock at the sin offering but the sin offering becomes a vain thing to the fool. Religion refuses to yield comfort to godless men. I have known a sinner when under deep conviction of sin to seek the Lord with hunger of spirit and for a while he has been left in his hunger.

He has turned to Jesus for comfort and for a season he has thought that even Jesus repelled him. It is an awful time with the heart when it is obliged to confess, “I remembered God and was troubled.”

Have you ever looked to the Cross and even there beheld darkness and not light? Have you ever heard a voice saying, “You have done despite to the precious blood and it avails you no more”? That voice is a LYING voice—but all the same—when it pierces the ear of conscience it brings on an indescribable agony and then with emphasis, “The heart knows its own bitterness.” Have any of you to whom I now speak at last come to your senses? And do you wish to escape from the wrath of God but cannot? Do you feel like a poor worm upon the ground, surrounded by a ring of fire which you cannot overleap? I am grieved for you, my Brothers and Sisters. And I am thankful that by such despair men are brought at last to trust in Jesus.

They are cut off from sin by a terrible discovery of its evil, cut off from self by utter despair and driven to cast themselves on the merit of the Savior. Fly to Jesus and you shall be saved. But till you do, your heart will be filled with a bitterness beyond expression.

Our text is certainly true concerning the backslider—“The heart knows its own bitterness.” The Proverbs appear at first sight to be thrown together without connection but it is not so—when you come to close reading you will discover that they are threaded pearls and that they are in proper position with regard to each other. In the 14th verse we read—“The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.” So whenever a backslider goes away from God and plunges into sin you may not dare to think that he is happy. In his case, “The heart knows its own bitterness.”

One of the most bitter experiences is that of one who is awakened to see his heinous criminality after having known the Truth of God. One who has enjoyed meetings for prayer and has been accustomed to speak about his own conversion. One who has labored for the salvation of others. Has known rapt fellowship with God but has turned aside to filthiness and dishonored the sacred name by which he was called. To dive from communion with God into gross sin—ah, it were better for him that he had never been born! Even in the present anguish of his heart he will often feel himself set up as a target for the arrows of the Almighty till they seem to drink his blood.

When the gracious Lord grants him repentance and he comes back, as I am persuaded he will—he will return with weeping and with supplication and eat again of the paschal lamb with abundance of bitter herbs. Alas, even when he is restored and Divine Grace has cleansed the stain, his old wounds will be sadly apt to bleed afresh. As men that break a bone in their youth will find strange pains visiting the limb in bad weather, so do old men feel the sins of their youth in their bones. Some go softly all their days, because of one grievous fall. Many a sigh and many a tear will start unawares because of former transgressions. Even the restored and pardoned heart knows its own bitterness.

Concerning the tried Believer, this is very true. The afflicted is one whose heart knows its own bitterness. Brethren, many of the excellent of the earth are constitutionally sorrowful. Certain of our friends are always happy, not so much as the result of Divine Grace as the effect of nature. Some can bear a very much larger amount of pain than others without being depressed in spirit—this is a great gift. Many plants flourish best in the sunshine but others love the shade. I have seen a fern which grows best in drip and gloom. God has made each one for its place.

Some of the most beautiful flowers in the garden of the Lord grow under the shade of the tree of life. Bid all those who are timorous and sad to lift up their hearts and rejoice in God—but oh, do not condemn them while you encourage them! Cheer them, but do not censure them. The Lord knows that there may, in each case, be something about the body, something about the mind, or something about the condition which makes it far less evil in these persons to be desponding than it might be in our cases—“The heart knows its own bitterness.”

Possibly there may be present among us servants of God who are wading through rivers of trouble. We do not know. Dear Friends, in the heyday of our joy how closely we may be sitting to “a woman of a sorrowful spirit,” or “a man that has seen affliction.” We little know the burdens which are bowing our neighbors’ backs. Patience gives them smiling faces but pain wrings their hearts. Great losses and great crosses fall to the lot of great saints. Sickness is often a means of Divine Grace—those who have much Grace may be called to endure much disease. There is a bitterness which some of you can scarcely understand—it is the loss of beloved children—especially the loss of an only child.

Call to mind that word of Holy Scripture—“They shall be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his only son.” Evidently this is singled out as the keenest trial. The widow of Nain was feeling this grief and this led our Divine Master to bid the bearers stand still while He made the dead young man sit upright on the bier and then delivered him to his mother. Bereavement of our loved ones is a heavy trial. I must add here that your spiritual children can also make you feel a bitterness of the most intense order. This sorrow I know better than most men. Ah me—I bow in the dust when I think of those over whom I watched carefully and lovingly— who have turned against the cause I love as my own life.

I thought that they would always preach to the glory of our Lord. But they have denied the faith or sided with those who pervert the Gospel of Christ. There may be sharper troubles but I deeply pity those who have to endure them. In proportion as we have loved, we mourn over Judas when he lifts up his heel against us—and Demas, who quits us for the present evil world. Cutting to the very marrow of the bone is the cruel spirit which, in its infatuation with evil, forgets not only the ties of gratitude but even of common decency. Truly, days have passed over me in which the plowmen made deep their furrows. But I forbear—“The heart knows its

own bitterness.”

You see, then, that in the whole range of human society each heart knows its own bitterness. And I want to say this to you—the singularity of sorrow is a dream of the sufferer. You sit alone and keep silent and you say in your heart, “I am the man that has seen affliction.” But a host of others have seen affliction as well as yourself. Come down from your elevation of especial woe. Indulge no longer the egotism of despair. You are but one pilgrim along the well trod Via Dolorosa. The stairway of grief is never without its passengers and at their head is He whose name is, “A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

Next, let me say, know your sorrow well. “The heart knows its own bitterness.” It is always well when it does know it. If you can write down your grief in black and white and describe it to yourself, the half of it will evaporate. A large proportion of our despondency is mythical—it is a kind of smoke or mist which will disappear as the light falls on it. “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? Why are you disquieted in me?” If you are wise you will press home those two “whys,” till you say to yourself, “There is no reason for being disquieted—hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him!”

Above all, remember that the cure for bitterness of heart is to take it to your Lord at once. Remember this word—“In all their affliction He was afflicted.” No drop of gall was too bitter for His mouth—He tasted death, itself. There is no corner in your heart so dark but Christ has been in as dark a room as that. All the thorns that pierce your feet once pierced His head. Go to Him with the full vessel of your woe. “You people, pour out your hearts before Him: God is a refuge for us.” Then shall you sing for joy of heart. Enough, perhaps too much, upon that part of the text.

II. I wish I had an hour in which to speak upon the second part of our subject. THE HEART KNOWS A SWEETNESS WHICH IS ALL ITS OWN. I will go into one or two of the forms of this sweetness.

You have tasted, many of you, the joy of pardoned sin. Do you remember when you were, for the first time, sure that God, for Christ’s sake, had forgiven you? Could you tell anybody the joy you then felt? If you had tried to explain it, you would have been compelled to use your legs to dance with, your hands to clap with, your eyes for tears of joy and your countenance for beams of delight, as well as your tongue for speech! You would have had to speak by signs and gestures, as well as by words. In proportion as you were burdened before, you felt the bliss of rest. In proportion as the iron had entered into your soul before, the joy came leaping into your heart.

You felt as if you wanted every pore of your skin to become a mouth for song to praise the redeeming Christ. Truly a stranger understands not with such joy. Only the pardoned know the joy of pardon. I dare say when you were first saved others said that you were off your head. In the family it was suspected that poor John was not himself at all. He was so different from what he used to be. Oh yes, the joy of pardoned sin is one with which a stranger cannot understand.

Some time after your pardon you knew the bliss of vanquished evil. To be forgiven was not enough. You longed to be free from the dominion of sin. I do not know what your peculiar sin may have been, but after a struggle you overcame it and you felt that the very desire for that sin was dead—you loathed it now as much as you loved it before. What a joy that was to you! It was like the triumph of Israel when they had come out of Egypt and Egypt itself had been overthrown at the Red Sea. The depths had covered them, there was not one of them left. The mighty waters swept away Pharaoh and his captains.

Do you remember when the habit of drunkenness went down into the sea? Do you remember when another vile propensity sank as lead in the mighty waters? Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the shore. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel, saying, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.” No Arabian in the wilderness could have entered into the joy of Miriam that day. No Edomite in the rock city could have joined in the ecstasy of the tribes who had newly come up dry-shod from the depths of the sea. Joy over a conquered evil is a joy worth worlds, and no stranger can deprive us of it.

Beloved, since then you have known the joy of perfect reconciliation with God. When the prodigal laid his head in his father’s bosom and his father’s kiss was warm on his cheek, he could not have told how happy he felt. He was as a child which nestles down in its mother’s bosom. Or as a lamb which has been lost amidst the brake and has been found by the shepherd and carried home. What a joy to be “reconciled to God by the death of His Son”! I was once His enemy and now I am His friend. He loves me. With an everlasting love He loves me. I will not attempt to describe the joy this confidence creates because I should break down in the endeavor. The only way for anybody to understand the bliss of reconciliation is to be reconciled himself.

I have told you, I think, the story of the boy at the Mission house to whom the missionary gave a piece of white sugar. He had never seen it before and when he reached home, he told his father about this sweet stuff. His father said, “Is it like so-and-so?” The boy could not answer his father’s questions and so he ran down the street to the teacher, and said, “Teacher, please give me a lump of the white stuff for my father. He wants to know how sweet it is and I cannot tell him. He must eat it for himself.” Reconciliation to God has a sweetness in it which he only knows who enjoys it.

One of the most intense joys I have ever known is the joy of accepted service. The best picture I can show you of what that joy must be is Abraham. You have thought of Abraham going up to Mount Moriah with his son, Isaac, bearing the fire and the knife and the wood. What a heavy heart the Patriarch carried up that hill! You have sympathized with him. Will you try to realize his feeling when he comes down from the mount? Isaac is alive. God has revealed Himself—Abraham is accepted. The man of God has been proved and he has not been found wanting. What joy he feels to think that he has not withheld his son, his only son, from God! He has fulfilled to the utmost the Divine command, painful as it was. There

is no self-righteousness about the old man.

But what an intense satisfaction in feeling God has blessed him now with a sevenfold blessing, because when brought to the test, he did not withhold his only son! Now, if you have served God and you have felt the witness of the Spirit within you—that God has accepted you—your joy is such as nobody can dampen or diminish. You will not say much about it for other people would say, “He is proud of what he has done.” But for all that, you know what you know, and are not to be beaten out of the rest which comes of that knowledge.

Another great joy is that of answered prayer. When the Lord has heard our petitions and given us the desire of our hearts, what joy fills our souls! Perhaps it is a personal prayer, like that of Hannah. She sat in the Sanctuary—a woman of a sorrowful spirit and the Lord granted her desire—and in due time she came there a glad mother. Samuel was the reward of the travail of her prayer as well as the travail of her flesh. “For this child I prayed,” said she. With what eyes she looked at him! There is never such a child as that which comes by the way of prayer. She added, “Therefore he shall be the Lord’s as long as he lives.” This is a joy which a stranger cannot touch at all. It must also have been a stern joy which filled Elijah when he stood at the altar after the priests of Baal and their clatter had all failed.

When he stood up and said, “Let it be known, O Lord, that I have done all these things at Your word.” When the live lightning leaped from Heaven and the sacrifice went up in sheets of flame, then I do not wonder that Elijah girded up his loins and ran, old man as he was, before the chariot of Ahab. For God had heard him and he was great that day. A wonderful exhilaration lifted him out of himself and he could do anything in the joy of his heart because of his answered prayer. A stranger to prayer cannot know the joy of its success. He who knows what it is to wrestle, will understand what it is to prevail. None can praise God like the man who has prevailed in prayer.

Further, dear Brethren, there is a very extraordinary joy about usefulness. This is a joy which, thank God, I do know. But unless you know it, I cannot communicate its sweetness to you. It was but a poor child, or a humble servant girl, or a working man in his fustian jacket. But as he took my hand and looked into my face, he said, “God Almighty bless you! You brought me to the Savior.” I get registered letters containing money for the Lord’s work. But the letters which are most precious are those which tell of conversions from great sin to the Lord Jesus through the printed sermons. These are my golden wages. If I say much about this, someone will charge me with blowing my own trumpet. But truly this sacred bliss is one which the successful worker has all to himself and a stranger understands not.

You Sunday school teachers and other workers know what I mean. Pray that you may have more of it! This makes us eat bread in secret— meat which the world knows not of. Blessed be the name of the Lord who gives us this choice delight! As a shepherd rejoices when he brings back the sheep that was lost, so does the winner of souls rejoice with a joy that he cannot communicate to others when he is the means of saving a soul from death and covering a multitude of sins.

There is a joy in the heart with which no stranger understands of another kind, namely, peace in the time of trouble. A painful operation is needful and the patient hears the sad news without a murmur. I remember the picture of “the sleep of Argyle” who is to be executed in the morning and he is found fast wrapped in sweet slumber when the jailer enters the cell. Remember the martyr who had to be burned early in the morning but needed to be shaken to awake him? Fancy being shaken in the morning with, “Get up and be burned”! How blessed to leave all with the Lord and bear His will with gladsome readiness! To be calm in the presence of pain, bereavement, slander, ridicule! This is delightful. The Lord breathes into His people His own peace. Many saints have their highest joy in their deepest trial—the Son of God is most with them in the burning fiery furnace.

They are not disturbed in prospect of the worst of evils—their heart is fixed—trusting in the Lord. God gives them a Divine serenity so that they can say, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” The worldling cannot understand this! The saint is neither careless nor callous. He has both sense and sensitiveness. And yet he lives apart from burdensome care and throws aside the fret which otherwise would eat into his heart.

The deeper the waters, the higher our ark mounts towards Heaven. The darker the night, the more we prize our lamp. We have learned to sing in the dark with the thorn at our breast. This peace is a blessing with which no stranger understands—this world cannot give it and the world to come will not remove it. Nothing can disturb, much less destroy, the peace which Jesus gave us as His last legacy. It passes all understanding.

One other joy I must not overlook—it is the highest of all, and that is the joy of communion with God. About this I hardly dare to speak. If you have ever read Rutherford’s Letters, I will very much judge you by how you judge them. If you know nothing at all about communion with God you will say, “The man is fanatical, carried away with rhapsodies. He almost utters blasphemy at times in his daring language.” But if you have trod the crests of the mountains of fellowship and have bathed your forehead in the eternal sunlight—you will know that he does not exaggerate, but that he even falls short of the indescribable bliss of fellowship with God!

Yes, we even now behold the Invisible and enjoy the Infinite. We pass the boundary which separates us from Immanuel’s land and enter into the ivory palaces wherein our Lord does make us glad. When the gales blow from the right quarter, they carry to us odors from the beds of spices in the heavenly land and then our abode is, indeed, the hill Beulah. Do

you know what this means? If you do not, I could not tell you for I should seem as one that talks in a dream. Yet, whether you know it or not, some of us find Heaven begun below. If you have ever tasted fellowship with God, then there is a joy, as you know, with which no stranger understands.

Beloved, if it is so, be much in the enjoyment of these delights! There is a secret parlor in the house of manhood into which none can go but yourself and your Lord. Be sure that you enter there! Lock yourself in. I wish I might do so and never come out again. Why should you always be moping down in the cellar? If you have a good house, why do you grope in the basement among the coals and the rats? If there is a room in the house that has a fine view, make it your sitting room. I remember at Newcastle a person said, when letting a house, “You can from the upper window see Durham Cathedral on a Sunday.” “Why on a Sunday? Cannot you see it on a Monday?” “No, because then the smoke of the furnaces darkens the air.”

There is a room in my heart from which I can see Heaven at choice Sabbatical times, when I can get alone with my God and forget the cares both of the Church and of the world. A glimpse of Heaven is a rare joy. Why should we not have it often? Come out of the cellar! Come upstairs! Come to the highest place upon the housetop and look toward the New Jerusalem—

*“Why should the children of a king*

*Go mourning all their days?”*  
May the Comforter come and cheer us this morning with that joy which a stranger cannot know!

If you have never known these joys, I pray you seek them for yourself— each man, each woman. Remember, you must come to God alone, by the exercise of personal faith and personal repentance. For neither in your sorrow, nor in your joy can another man exactly fit with you. Therefore, come alone to the Lord Jesus and come at once. Amen.

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÷Pro 14.14

HOW A MAN’S CONDUCT COMES HOME TO HIM  
NO. 1235

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 16, 1875, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.” Proverbs 14:14.**

A common principle is laid down here and declared to be equally true in reference to two characters, who in other respects are a contrast. Men are affected by the course which they pursue, for good or bad—their own conduct comes home to them. The backslider and the good man are very different, but in each of them the same rule is exemplified—they are both filled by the result of their lives. The backslider becomes filled by that which is within him, as seen in his life, and the good man, also, is filled by that which Divine Grace implants within his soul. The evil leaven in the backslider leavens his entire being and sours his existence, while the gracious Fountain in the sanctified Believer saturates his whole manhood and baptizes his entire life.

In each case, the fullness arises from that which is within the man and is in his nature like the man’s character. The fullness of the backslider’s misery will come out of his own ways and the fullness of the good man’s content will spring out of the love of God which is shed abroad in his heart. The meaning of this passage will come out better if we begin with an illustration. Here are two pieces of sponge and we wish to fill them—if you place one of them in a pool of foul water, it will be filled, and filled with that which it lies in. If you put the other sponge into a pure crystal stream, it will, also, become full—full of the element in which it is placed.

The backslider lies soaked in the dead sea of his own ways and the brine fills him. The good man is plunged like a pitcher into “Siloah’s brook, which flows hard by the oracle of God,” and the river of the Water of Life fills him to the brim. A wandering heart will be filled with sorrow, but a heart confiding in the Lord will be satisfied with joy and peace. Or take two farms. One farmer sows tares in his field and, in due time, his barns are filled therewith. Another sows wheat and his garners are stored with precious grain.

Or follow out our Lord’s parable—one builder places his frail dwelling on the sand and, when the tempest rages, he is swept away in it, naturally enough. Another lays deep the foundations of his house and sets it fast on a rock—and, as an equally natural consequence, he smiles upon the storm, protected by his well-founded dwelling place. What a man is by sin or by Grace will be the cause of his sorrow or of his satisfaction.

I. I shall take the two characters without further preface. First, let us speak, awhile, about THE BACKSLIDER. This is a very solemn subject, but one which it is necessary to bring before the present audience, since we all have some share in it. I trust there may not be many present who

are backsliders in the worst sense of the term, but very, very few among us are quite free from the charge of having backslidden, in some measure, at some time or other since conversion. Even those who sincerely love the Master, sometimes wander—and we all need to take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

There are several kinds of persons who may, with more or less propriety, be comprehended under the term, “backsliders,” and these will, each in his own measure, be filled with his own ways. There are, first, apostates, those who unite themselves with the Church of Christ and, for a time, act as if they were subjects of a real change of heart. These persons are frequently very zealous for a season and may become prominent, if not eminent, in the Church of God. They did run well, like those mentioned by the Apostle, but by some means they are, first of all, hindered and slacken their pace. After that they linger and loiter and leave the crown of the causeway for the side of the road. By-and-by, in their hearts they go back into Egypt and, at last, finding an opportunity to return, they break loose from all the restraints of their profession and openly forsake the Lord.

Truly, the last end of such men is worse than the first. Judas is the great type of these pre-eminent backsliders. Judas was a professed Believer in Jesus, a follower of the Lord, a minister of the Gospel, an Apostle of Christ. He was the trusted treasurer of the college of the Apostles and, after all, turned out to be the, “son of perdition,” who sold his Master for 30 pieces of silver. He, before long, was filled with his own ways, for, tormented with remorse, he threw down the blood-money he had so dearly earned, hanged himself and went to his own place. The story of Judas has been written over and over again in the lives of other traitors. We have heard of Judas as a deacon and as an elder. We have heard Judas preach. We have read the works of Judas, the bishop, and seen Judas the Missionary.

Judas sometimes continues in his profession for many years, but, sooner or later, the true character of the man is discovered. His sin returns upon his own head and if he does not make an end of himself, I do not doubt but what, even in this life, he often lives in such horrible remorse that his soul would choose strangling rather than life. He has gathered the grapes of Gomorrah and he has to drink the wine. He has planted a bitter tree and he must eat its fruit. Oh Sirs, may none of you betray your Lord and Master! God grant I never may!

“ Traitor! Traitor!” Shall that ever be written across your brow? You have been baptized into the name of the adorable Trinity. You have eaten the tokens of the Redeemer’s body and blood. You have sung the Songs of Zion. You have stood forward to pray in the midst of the people of God and will you act so base a part as to betray your Lord? Shall it ever be said of you, “Take him to the place from where he came, for he is a traitor”? I cannot conceive of anything more ignominious than for a soldier to be drummed out of a regiment of Her Majesty’s soldiers. But what must it be to be cast out of the host of God!? What must it be to be set up as the target of eternal shame and everlasting contempt for having crucified the Lord afresh and put Him to an open shame!

How shameful will it be to be branded as an apostate from truth and holiness, from Christ and His ways? Better never to have made a profession than to have belied it so wretchedly and to have it said of us, “It is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” Of such John has said, “They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us.”

This title of backslider applies, also, to another class, not so desperate but still most sad, of which not Judas but David may serve as the type. We refer to backsliders who go into open sin. These are men who descend from purity to careless living. And from careless living to indulgence of the flesh—and from indulgence of the flesh in little matters into known sin— and from one sin to another till they plunge into uncleanness. They have been born again and, therefore, the trembling and almost extinct life within must and shall revive and bring them to repentance. They will come back weary, weeping, humbled and brokenhearted—they will be restored—but they will never be what they were before.

Their voices will be hoarse, like that of David after his crime, for he never again sung so jubilantly as in his former days. Life will be more full of trembling and trial and manifest less of buoyancy and joy of spirit. Broken bones make hard traveling and even when they are set, they are subject to shooting pains when ill weathers are abroad. I may be addressing some of this sort this morning and, if so, I would speak with much faithful love. Dear Brother, dear Sister, if you are now following Jesus afar off you will, before long, like Peter, deny Him. Even though you will obtain mercy of the Lord, yet the text will certainly be fulfilled in you and you will be “filled with your own ways.”

As certainly as Moses took the golden calf and ground it into powder— and then mixed it with the water which the sinful Israelites had to drink till they all tasted the grit in their mouths—so will the Lord do with you if you are, indeed, His child! He will take your idol of sin and grind it to powder—and your life shall be made bitter with it for years to come. When the gall and wormwood are most manifest in the cup of life it will be a mournful thing to feel, “I procured this unto myself by my shameful folly.” O Lord, hold us up and keep us from falling little by little, lest we plunge into overt sin and continue in it for a season, for surely the anguish which comes of such an evil is terrible as death itself!

If David could rise from his grave and appear before you with his face seamed with sorrow and his brow wrinkled with his many griefs, he would say to you, “Keep your hearts with all diligence, lest you bring woe upon yourselves. Watch unto prayer and guard against the beginnings of sin lest your bones wax old through your roaring and your moisture be turned into the drought of summer.” O beware of a wandering heart, for it will be an awful thing to be filled with your own backslidings!

But there is a third sort of backsliding and I am afraid a very large number of us have, at times, come under the title—I mean those who in any measure or degree, even for a very little time, decline from the point which they have reached. Perhaps such a man hardly ought to be called a

backslider, because it is not his predominant character, yet he backslides. If he does not believe as firmly, love as intensely and serve as zealously as he formerly did, he has, in a measure, backslidden. And any measure of backsliding, be it less or be it more, is sinful, and will, in proportion as it is real backsliding, fill us with our own ways. If you only sow two or three seeds of the thistle there will not be so many of the ill weeds on your farm as if you had emptied out a whole sack, but still there will be enough and more than enough.

Every little backsliding, as men call it, is a great mischief. Every little going back, even in heart, from God, if it never comes to words or deeds, yet will involve us in some measure of sorrow. If sin were clean removed from us, sorrow would be removed, also—in fact we would be in Heaven— since a state of perfect holiness must involve perfect blessedness. Sin, in any degree, will bear its own fruit, and that fruit will be sure to set our teeth on edge. It is evil, therefore, to be a backslider even in the smallest degree.

Having said so much, let me now continue to think of the last two kinds of backsliders, and leave out the apostate. Let us first read his name, and then let us read his history—we have both in our text. The first part of his name is, “backslider.” He is not a back runner, nor a back leaper, but a backslider. That is to say he slides back with an easy, effortless motion—softly, quietly—perhaps unsuspected by himself or anybody else. The Christian life is very much like climbing a hill of ice. You cannot slide up, no, you have to cut every step with an ice axe—only with incessant labor in cutting and chipping can you make any progress. You need a Guide to help you and you are not safe unless you are fastened to the Guide, for you may slip into a crevasse.

Nobody ever slides up, and if great care is not taken, they will slide down, slide back, or, in other words, backslide. This is very easily done. If you want to know how to backslide, the answer is leave off going forward and you will slide backward! Cease going upward and you will go downward of necessity, for stand still you never can. To lead us to backslide, Satan acts with us as engineers do with a road down the mountains side. If they desire to carry the road from yonder alp right down into the valley far below, they never think of making the road plunge over a precipice, or straight down the face of the rock, for nobody would ever use such a road. But the road makers wind and twist.

Look, the track descends very gently to the right—you can hardly see that it runs downwards. And soon it turns to the left with a small incline, and so, by turning this way and then that, the traveler finds himself in the valley below. Thus the crafty enemy of souls fetches saints down from their high places! Whenever he gets a good man down it is usually by slow degrees. Now and then, by sudden opportunity and strong temptation, the Christian man has been plunged right from the pinnacle of the temple into the dungeon of despair in a moment—but it is not often the case—the gentle decline is the devil’s favorite piece of engineering and he manages it with amazing skill.

The soul scarcely knows it is going down, it seems to be maintaining the even tenor of its way, but before long it is far below the line of peace and consecration. Our dear Brother, Dr. Arnot, of the Free Church, illustrates this very beautifully by supposing a balance. This is the heavy scale loaded with seeds and the other is high in the air. One morning you are very much surprised to find that what had been the heavier scale is aloft, while the other has descended! You do not understand it till you discover that certain little insects had silently transferred the seeds one by one. At first they made no apparent change, but by-and-by there was a little motion—one more little seed was laid in the scales and the balance turned in a moment.

Thus silently the balance of a man’s soul may be affected, and everything made ready for that one temptation by which the fatal turn is made and the man becomes an open transgressor. Apparently insignificant agencies may gradually convey our strength from the right side to the wrong, by grains and half-grains, till at last the balance is turned in the actual life and we are no more fit to be numbered with the visible saints of God. Think again of this man’s name. He is a “backslider,” but what from? He is a man who knows the sweetness of the things of God and yet leaves off feeding upon them! He is one who has been favored to wait at the Lord’s own Table and yet he deserts his honorable post, backslides from the things which he has known, felt, tasted, handled and rejoiced in— things that are the priceless gifts of God!

He is a backslider from the condition in which he has enjoyed a Heaven below. He is a backslider from the love of Him who bought him with His blood. He slides back from the wounds of Christ, from the works of the Eternal Spirit, from the crown of life which hangs over his head, and from a familiar communion with God which angels might envy him. Had he not been so highly favored he could not have been so basely wicked. O fool and slow of heart, to slide from wealth to poverty, from health to disease, from liberty to bondage, front Light to darkness, from the love of God, from abiding in Christ and from the fellowship of the Holy Spirit into lukewarmness, worldliness, and sin!

The text, however, gives the man’s name at greater length, “ The backslider in heart.” Now the heart is the fountain of evil. A man need not be a backslider in action to get the text fulfilled in him. He need only be a backslider in heart. All backsliding begins within—begins with the heart’s growing lukewarm—begins with the love of Christ being less powerful in the soul. Perhaps you think that so long as backsliding is confined to the heart it does not matter much. But consider, for a minute, and you will confess your error. If you went to your physician and said, “Sir, I feel a severe pain in my body,” would you feel comforted if he replied, “There is no local cause for your suffering, it arises entirely from disease of the heart”? Would you not be far more alarmed than before? A case is serious, indeed, when it involves the heart!

The heart is hard to reach and difficult to understand and, moreover, it is so powerful over the rest of the system and has such power to injure all the members of the body, that a disease in the heart is an injury to a vital organ, a pollution of the springs of life! It is more that a wound—it is as a thousand wounds—a complicated wounding of all the members of the

body. Look well, then, to your hearts, and pray, “O Lord cleanse the secret parts of our spirit and preserve us to Your eternal kingdom and Glory!”

Now let us read this man’s history—“He shall be filled with his own ways.” From which it is clear that he falls into ways of his own. When he was in his right state he followed the Lord’s ways, he delighted himself in the Law of the Lord and He gave him the desire of his heart. But now he has ways of his own which he prefers to the ways of God. And what comes of this perverseness? Does he prosper? No. He is, before long, filled with his own ways. We will see what that means. The first kind of fullness with his own ways is absorption in his carnal pursuits. He has not much time to spend upon religion—he has other things to attend to. If you speak to him of the deep things of God he is weary of you and even of the daily necessities of godliness he has no care to hear, except at service time. He has his business to see to, or he has to go out to a dinner party, or a few friends are coming to spend the evening. In any case, his answer to you is, “I pray you have me excused.”

Now, this preoccupation with trifles is always mischievous, for when the soul is filled with chaff there is no room left for wheat. When all your mind is taken up with frivolities, the weighty matters of eternity cannot enter. Many professed Christians spend far too much time in amusements, which they call recreation, but which, I fear, is far rather a redestruction than a recreation. The pleasures, cares, pursuits and ambitions of the world swell in the heart when they once enter and, by-and-by, they fill it completely. Like the young cuckoo in the sparrow’s nest, worldliness grows and grows and tries its best to cast out the true owner of the heart. Whatever your soul is full of, if it is not full of Christ, it is in an evil case!

Then backsliders generally proceed a stage further and become full of their own ways by beginning to pride themselves upon their condition and to glory in their shame. Not that they really are satisfied at heart—on the contrary, they have a suspicion that things are not quite as they ought to be and, therefore, they put on a bold front and try to deceive themselves and others. It is rather dangerous to tell them of their faults, for they will not accept your rebuke. They will defend themselves and even carry the war into your camp. They will say, “Ah, you are a Puritan, strict and straight-laced, and your manners and ways do mischief rather than good.” They would not bring up their children as you do yours, so they say. Their mouths are very full because their hearts are empty and they talk very loudly in defense of themselves because their conscience has been making a great stir within them.

They call sinful pleasure a little unbending of the bow. Greed is prudence, covetousness is economy and dishonesty is cleverness! It is dreadful to think that men who know better should attempt, thus, to excuse themselves. Generally the warmest defender of a sinful practice is the man who has the most qualms of conscience about it. He himself knows that he is not living as he should, but he does not intend to cave in just yet, nor at all if he can help it! He is filled with his ways in a boasted selfcontent. Before long this fullness reaches another stage, for if the backslider is a gracious man at all, he encounters chastisement and that from a rod of his own making. A considerable time elapses before you can eat bread of your own growing. You have to first prepare the ground—it must be plowed and sown. Then the wheat has to come up to ripen and to be reaped—and threshed and ground in the mill—and the flour must be kneaded and baked in the oven. But the bread comes to the table and is eaten at last.

Even so, the backslider must eat of the fruit of his own ways. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked, whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” Now look at the backslider eating the fruit of his ways. He neglected prayer and when he tries to pray, he cannot! His powers of desire, emotion, faith and entreaty have failed. He kneels, awhile, but he cannot pray. The Spirit of supplications is grieved and no longer helps his infirmities. He reaches down for his Bible. He commences to read a chapter, but he has disregarded the Word of God so long that he finds it to be more like a dead letter than a living voice, though it used to be a sweet book before he became a backslider. The minister, too, is altered. He used to hear him with delight, but now the poor preacher has lost all his early power, so the backslider thinks.

Other people do not think so, the place is just as crowded—there are as many saints edified and sinners saved as before—but the wanderer in heart began criticizing and now he is entangled in the habit. He criticizes everything and never feeds upon the Truth of God at all! Like a madman at table he puts his fork into the morsel and holds it up, looks at it, finds fault with it and throws in on the floor! Nor does he act better towards the saints in whose company he once delighted—they are dull society and he shuns them. Of all the things which bear upon his spiritual life he is weary. He has trifled with them and now he cannot enjoy them.

Hear him sing, or rather sigh—  
*“Your saints are comforted, I know,  
And love Your house of prayer.  
I sometimes go where others go,  
But find no comfort there.”*

How can it be otherwise? He is drinking water out of his own cistern and eating the bread of which he sowed the corn some years ago. His ways have come home to him. Chastisement also comes out of his conduct in other ways. He was very worldly and gave wild parties—and his daughters have grown up and grieved him by their conduct. He, himself, went into sin, and now that his sons outdo his example, what can he say? Can he wonder at anything? Look at David’s case. David fell into a gross sin and soon Amnon, his son, rivaled him in iniquity. He murdered Uriah the Hittite, and Absalom murdered his brother, Amnon. He rebelled against God, and lo, Absalom lifted up the standard of revolt against him.

He disturbed the relationships of another man’s family in a disgraceful manner, and behold, his own family was torn in pieces and never restored to peace—so that even when he lay a-dying he had to say, “My house is not so with God.” He was filled with his own ways and it always will be so, even if the sin is forgotten. If you have sent forth a dove or a raven from the ark of your soul, it will come back to you just as you sent it out. May

God save us from being backsliders lest the smooth current of our life should turn into a raging torrent of woe!

The fourth stage, blessed be God, is at length reached by gracious men and women, and what a mercy it is they ever do reach it! At last they become filled with their own ways in another sense, namely, satiated and dissatisfied, miserable and discontent. They sought the world and they gained it, but now it has lost all charms to them. They went after other lovers, but these deceivers have been false to them, and they wring their hands and say, “Oh that I could return to my first husband for it was better with me, then, than now.” Many have lived at a distance from Jesus Christ, but now they can bear it no longer—they cannot be happy till they return. Hear them cry in the language of the 51st Psalm, “Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit.”

But, I tell you, they cannot get back very easily. It is hard to retrace your steps from backsliding, even if it is but a small measure of it. And to get back from great wanderings is hard, indeed—much harder than going over the road the first time. I believe that if the mental sufferings of some returning backsliders could be written and faithfully published, they would astound you, and be a more horrible story to read than all the torments of the Inquisition! What racks a man is stretched upon who has been unfaithful to his Covenant with God! What fires have burned within the souls of those men and women who have been untrue to Christ and His cause!

What dungeons, what grim and dark prisons have saints of God lain in who have gone aside into By-Path Meadow instead of keeping to the King’s Highway! Their sighs and cries, for which, after all they have learned to be thankful, are dolorous and terrible to listen to and make us learn that he who sins must smart, and especially if he is a child of God, for the Lord has said of His people, “You only have I known of all the people of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.” Whoever may go unchastened, a child of God never shall—the Lord will let His adversaries do a thousand things and not punish them in this life since He reserves vengeance for them in the life to come. But as for His own children, they cannot sin without being visited with stripes.

Beloved Friends, let us all go straight away to the Cross at once for fear we should be backsliders—  
*“Come, let us to the Lord our God  
With contrite hearts return!  
Our God is gracious, nor will leave  
The penitent to mourn.”*

Let us confess every degree and form of backsliding, every wandering of heart, every decline of love, every wavering of faith, every flagging of zeal, every dullness of desire, every failure of confidence. Behold, the Lord says unto us, “Return!” Therefore let us return! Even if we are not backsliders, it will do us no harm to come to the Cross as penitents. Indeed, it is well to abide there forevermore! O Spirit of the living God, preserve us in believing penitence all our days!

II. I have but little time for the second part of my text. Excuse me, therefore, if I do not attempt to go into it very deeply. As it is true of the backslider, that he grows, at last, full of that which is within him and his wickedness, it is true, also, of THE CHRISTIAN, that in pursuing the paths of righteousness and the way of faith, he becomes filled and content, too. That which Grace has placed within him fills him in due time. Here, then, we have the good man’s name and history.

Notice first, his name. It is a very remarkable thing that as a backslider, if you call out his name, he will not, as a rule answer to it. Even so, a good man will not acknowledge the title here assigned him. Where is the good man? Know that every man here who is right before God will pass the question on, saying, “There is none good, save One, that is God.” The good man will also question my text and say, “I cannot feel satisfied with myself.” No, dear Friend, but mind you, read the words correctly. It does not say, “satisfied with himself,” no truly good man ever was self-satisfied, and when any talk as if they are self-satisfied, it is time to doubt whether they know much about the matter. All the good men I have ever met with have always wanted to be better—they have longed for something higher than as yet they have reached. They would not admit that they were satisfied and they certainly were, by no means, satisfied with themselves.

The text does not say that they are, but it says something that reads so much like it that care is needed. Now, if I should seem to say, this morning, that a good man looks within and is quite satisfied with what he finds there, please let me say at once, I mean nothing of the sort! I should like to say exactly what the text means, but I do not know quite whether I shall manage to do it, except you will help me by not misunderstanding me, even if there should be a strong temptation to do so. Here is the good man’s history—he is “satisfied from himself”—but first I must read his name again, though he does not admit it, what is he good for?

He says, “good for nothing,” but in truth he is good for much when the Lord uses him. Remember that he is good because the Lord has made him over again by the Holy Spirit. Is not that good which God makes? When He created nature at first, He said of all things that they were very good. How could they be otherwise, since He made them? So in the new creation a new heart and right spirit are from God and must be good. Where there is Grace in the heart the Grace is good and makes the heart good. A man who has the righteousness of Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is good in the sight of God! A good man is on the side of good. If I were to ask, who is on the side of good? We would not pass on that question. No, we would step out and say “I am. I am not all I ought to be, or wish to be, but I am on the side of justice, truth, and holiness. I would live to promote goodness and even die rather than become the advocate of evil.”

And what is the man who loves that which is good? Is he evil? I think not! He who truly loves that which is good must be, in a measure, good, himself. Who is he that strives to be good and groans and sighs over his failures, yes, and rules his daily life by the Laws of God? Is he not one of the world’s best men? I trust, without self-righteousness, the Grace of God has made some of us good in this sense, for what the Spirit of God has made is good, and if in Christ Jesus we are new creatures, we cannot contradict Solomon, nor criticize the Bible if it calls such persons good, though we dare not call ourselves good.

Now, a good man’s history is this, “He is satisfied from himself.” That means, first, that he is independent of outward circumstances. He does not derive satisfaction from his birth, or honors, or properties. That which fills him with content is within himself. Our hymn puts it so truly—

*“I need not go abroad for joys,  
I have a feast at home,  
My sighs are turned into songs,  
My heart has ceased to roam.  
Down from above the blessed Dove  
Is come into my breast,  
To witness Your eternal love  
And give my spirit rest.”*

Other men must bring music from abroad if they have any, but in the gracious man’s bosom there lives a little bird that sings sweetly to him. He has a flower in his own garden more sweet than any he could buy in the market or find in the king’s palace. He may be poor, but he would not change his estate in the kingdom of Heaven for all the grandeur of the rich! His joy and peace are not even dependent upon the health of his body—he is often well in soul when sick as to his flesh—he is frequently full of pain and yet perfectly satisfied.

He may carry about with him an incurable disease which he knows will shorten and eventually end his life, but he does not look to this poor life for satisfaction! He carries that within him which creates immortal joy— the love of God shed abroad in his soul by the Holy Spirit yields a perfume sweeter than the flowers of Paradise. The fulfillment of the text is partly found in the fact that the good man is independent of his surroundings. And he is also independent of the praise of others. The backslider is comfortable because the minister thinks well of him and Christian friends think well of him. But the genuine Christian who is living near to God thinks little of the verdict of men. What other people think of him is not his chief concern—he is sure that he is a child of God.

He knows he can say, “Abba, Father.” He glories that for him to live is Christ and to die is gain! And therefore he does not need the approbation of others to buoy up his confidence. He runs alone and does not need, like a weakly child, to be carried in his mother’s arms. He knows whom he has believed and his heart rests in Jesus—thus he is satisfied, not from other people and from their judgment—but, “from himself.” Then, again, the Christian man is content with the well of upbringing Water of Life which the Lord has placed within him. There, my Brothers and Sisters, up on the everlasting hills is the Divine reservoir of all-sufficient Grace—and down here in our bosom is a spring which bubbles up unto everlasting life!

It has been welling up in some of us these 25 years, but why is it so? The grand secret is that there is an unbroken connection between the little spring within the renewed breast and that vast unfathomed fountain of God—and because of this, the spring never fails—in summer it still continues to flow. And now if you ask me if I am dissatisfied with the spring within my soul which is fed by the all-sufficiency of God, I reply, no, I am not. If you could, by any possibility, cut the connection between my soul and my Lord I should despair altogether. But as long as none can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, I am satisfied and at rest. Like Naphtali, we are, “satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord.”

Faith is in the good man’s heart and he is satisfied with what faith brings him, for it conveys to him the perfect pardon of his sin. Faith brings him nearer to Christ. Faith brings him adoption into the family of God. Faith secures him conquest over temptation. Faith procures for him everything he requires! He finds that by believing, he has all the blessings of the Covenant to enjoy daily. Well may he be satisfied with such an enriching Grace! The just shall live by faith. In addition to faith, he has another filling Grace called Hope, which reveals to him the world to come and gives him assurance that when he falls asleep he will sleep in Jesus— and that when he awakes he will arise in the likeness of Jesus! Hope delights him with the promise that his body shall rise and that in his flesh he shall see God! This hope of his sets the pearly gates wide open before him, reveals the streets of gold and makes him hear the music of the celestial harpers!

Surely a man may well be satisfied with this. The godly heart is also satisfied with what love brings him, for love, though it seems but a gentle maid, is strong as a giant and becomes, in some respects, the most potent of all the Divine Graces. Love first opens wide herself like the flowers in the sunshine and drinks in the love of God, and then she joys in God and begins to sing—

*“I am so glad that Jesus loves me.”*  
She loves Jesus, and there is such an interchange of delight between the love of her soul to Christ and the love of Christ to her that Heaven, itself, can scarcely be sweeter. He who knows this deep mysterious love will be more than filled with it—he will need to be enlarged to hold the bliss which it creates! The love of Jesus is known, but yet it passes knowledge. It fills the entire man so that he has no room for the idolatrous love of the creature! He is satisfied from himself and asks no other joy.

Beloved, when the good man is enabled, by Divine Grace, to live in obedience to God, he must, as a necessary consequence, enjoy peace of mind. His hope is alone fixed on Jesus, but a life which evidences his possession of salvation casts many a sweet ingredient into his cup. He who takes the yoke of Christ upon him and learns of Him finds rest unto his soul. When we keep His commandments, we consciously enjoy His love which we could not do if we walked in opposition to His will. To know that you have acted from a pure motive, to know that you have done the right is a grand means of full content. What matters the frown of foes or the prejudice of friends if the testimony of a good conscience is heard within?

We dare not rely upon our own works—neither have we had a desire or need to do so—for our Lord Jesus has saved us everlastingly. Still, “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the Grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.” The Christian needs to maintain unbroken fellowship with Jesus, his Lord, if he would be good as a soldier of Christ. If his communion is broken, his satisfaction will depart. If Jesus is within, we shall be satisfied from within, but no way else. If our fellowship with Him is kept up—and it may be from day to day, and month to month, and year to year, (and why should it ever be snapped at all?)—then the satisfaction will continue and the soul will continue to be full even to the

brim with the bliss which God alone can give!

If we are, by the Holy Spirit, made to be abundant in labor or patient in suffering—if, in a word—we resign ourselves fully up to God, we shall find a fullness of His Grace placed within ourselves. An enemy compared some of us to cracked vessels and we may humbly accept the description. We do find it difficult to retain good things—they run away from our leaking pitchers. But I will tell how a cracked pitcher can be kept continually full. Put it in the bottom of an ever-flowing river and it must be full! Even so, though we are leaking and broken, if we abide in the love of Christ we shall be filled with His fullness. Such an experience is possible! We may be—

*“Plunged in the Godhead’s deepest sea,*

*And lost in His immensity,”*  
Then we shall be full, full to running over as the Psalmist says, “My cup runs over.” The man who walks in God’s ways, obediently resting wholly upon Christ, looking for all His supplies to the great eternal deeps—that is the man who will be filled—filled with the very things which he has chosen for his own! He will be filled with those things which are his daily delight and desire.

Well may the faithful Believer be filled, for he has eternity to fill him. The Lord has loved him with an everlasting love—there is the eternity past! “The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My Covenant shall not depart from you”—there is the eternity to come. He has infinity, yes, the Infinite One, Himself, for the Father is his Father, the Son is his Savior, the Spirit of God dwells within him—the Trinity may well fill the heart of man! The Believer has Omnipotence to fill him, for all power is given unto Christ and of that power Christ will give to us according as we have need. Living in Christ and hanging upon Him from day to day, Beloved, we shall have a “peace of God which passes all understanding to keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” May we enjoy this peace and magnify the name of the Lord forever and ever. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 15:1-17.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—757, 775, 809.  
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÷Pro 14.26

GODLY FEAR AND ITS GOODLY CONSEQUENCE  
NO. 1290

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

**“In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence and His children shall have a place of refuge.”  
Proverbs 14:26.**

IN the Book of Proverbs you meet with sentences of brief wisdom, which, to all appearances, belong entirely to this world and pertain to the economy of the life that now is. I do not know whether it is true, but it was said that years ago our friends in Scotland had a little book widely circulated and read by all their children which consisted of the Proverbs of Solomon. They say that it was the means of making the Scots, as a generation, more canny, shrewd and wiser in business than any other people. If it is so, I should suggest that such a book be scattered throughout England as well and, indeed, anywhere and everywhere!

The book might have been written, at least some parts of it, by Franklin or Poor Richard, for it contains aphorisms and maxims of worldly wisdom, compact but profound, sometimes poetic, but always practical. Has it never surprised you that there should be such sentences as these in the Book of Inspiration—secular proverbs, for so they are—secular proverbs intermixed with spiritual proverbs—the secular and the spiritual all put together without any division or classification? You might have expected to find one chapter dedicated to worldly business and another chapter devoted to golden rules concerning the spiritual life!

But it is not so. They occur without any apparent order, or, at any rate, without any order of marked division between the secular and the spiritual—and I am very glad of it. The more I read the Book of Proverbs, the more thankful I am that there is no such division, because the hard and fast line by which men of the world and, I fear, some Christians, have divided the secular from the spiritual, is fraught with innumerable injuries. Religion, my dear Friends, is not a thing for Churches and Chapels alone. It is equally meant for counting houses and workshops, for kitchens and drawing rooms.

The true Christian is not only to be seen in the singing of hymns and the offering of prayers, but he is to be distinguished by the honesty integrity, the courage and the faithfulness of his ordinary character. In the streets and in the marketplaces, or wherever else the Providence of God may call him, he witnesses the good confession. It is easy to secularize religion in a wrong sense. There are many, I doubt not, that desecrate the pulpit to worldly ends. How can it be otherwise, if “livings” are to be bought and sold? I cannot doubt that the sacred desk has been a place simply for earning money, or for gathering fame—and that sacred oratory has been as mean in the sight of God as the common language of the streets.

I do not doubt that many people have put religion as a show-card into their business and have tried to make money by it. Like Mr. By-Ends, they thought that if, by being religious, they could get a good smile—if, by being religious they could be introduced into respectable society—if, by being religious they would bring some excellent religious customers to their shop and if, indeed, by being religious they could get themselves to be esteemed, it would be a very proper thing to do! Now, this is making religion into irreligion! This is turning Christianity into selfishness! This is the Judas spirit of putting Christ up for pieces of silver and making as good a bargain as you can out of Him—and this will lead to damnation and nothing short of it—in the case of anybody who deliberately attempts

it. Woe to that man! He is a son of perdition. Better for him he had never

been born! Instead of profaning the spiritual, the right thing is to spiritualize the secular till the purity of your motives and the sanctity of your conscience in ordinary pursuits shall cause the division to vanish. Why, there should be about an ordinary meal, enough religion to make it resemble a sacrament! We should wear our garments and wear them out in the service of the Lord until they acquired as much sanctity as the very vestments of a consecrated priesthood!

There should be a devout spirit in everything we do. “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him.” No, it is not a less holy thing to be the Christian merchant than to be the Christian minister. It is not a less holy thing to be the mother of mercy to your own children than to be the sister of mercy to the sick children of other people in the hospital ward. It is not a less sacred thing to be the married wife than it is to be the virgin consecrated to Christ.

Wherever you are, if you discharge the duties of your calling as in the sight of God, you can, by prayer and thanksgiving, saturate your lives with godliness and make every action drip with sanctity, till, like Ashur of old, it shall be said of you that you have dipped your foot in oil. So shall you leave the mark of Grace wherever your footstep is put. Let us endeavor to be so minded and refrain from sorting out our actions, saying to ourselves, “In this thing I am to be a Christian—in the other thing I am to be a businessman.” “Business is business,” says somebody. Yes, I know it is, and it has no business to be such business as it very often is.

It ought to be Christianized and the Christian that does not Christianize business is a dead Christian—a savorless salt and with what shall such salt be savored when the salt, itself, has lost its flavor? Mix up your proverbs. Be as practical as Poor Richard counsels and then be as spiritual as Christ commands. You need not be a fool because you are a Christian! There is no necessity to be outwitted in business. There is no necessity to be less shrewd, less sharp. There is no necessity to be less pushing because you are a Christian. True religion is sanctified common sense and if some people had got a little common sense with their religion—and some others had got a little more religion with their common sense—they would both be the better for it.

This Book of Proverbs is just this common sense, which is the rarest of all senses, saturated and sanctified by the Presence of God and the power of the Gospel ennobling the pursuits of the creature. Let this suffice by way of introduction. Now we are going to plunge into the text. “In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence and His children shall have a place of refuge.”

I. WHAT IS THIS FEAR OF THE LORD? The expression is used in Scripture for all true godliness. It is constantly the short way of expressing real faith, hope, love, holiness of living and every Grace which makes up true godliness. But why was fear selected? Why did it not say, “Trust in God is strong confidence”? Has not religion been commonly described by faith rather than by fear? In legal indictments it is said, sometimes, of a man, that he, “not having the fear of God before his eyes,” did such-andsuch.

Why is the fear of God selected? One would say that, according to the general theology of this period, we ought to have selected faith. But the Spirit of God has not given us the phrase—faith in God. He puts fear, because, after all, there is a something more tender, more touching, more real about fear than there is about some people’s faith, which faith may very readily verge upon presumption! But in speaking of fear, we must always discriminate. There is a fear with which a Christian has nothing to do. The fear of the slave who dreads a taskmaster, we have now escaped from. At least we ought to be free from such bondage, for we are not under the Law, which is the taskmaster, but we are under Grace, which is a paternal spirit and has given us the liberty of sons.

Brothers and Sisters, if you labor under any dread of God which amounts to a slavish fear of Him, do not cultivate it! Ask God to give you that perfect love of which John tells us casts out fear, because fear has torment. Do not be afraid of God, whatever He does with you. The kind of fear commended in the text is not such as appalls the senses and scares the thoughts. It is a fear that has not anything like being afraid mixed with it. It is quite another kind of fear. It is what we commonly call filial fear of God, like the child’s fear of his father.

Just think for a minute, what is a child’s fear of his father? I do not mean an evil child, a child that is obstinate, but a young man who loves his father—who is his father’s friend, his father’s most familiar acquaintance. Thank God, some of us have children whom we can look upon as near and dear friends, as well as dutiful sons and daughters to whom we can speak with much confidence and love. What is the fear that a wellordered, well-disciplined, beloved child has of his own father?

Well, first, he has an awe of him, which arises out of admiration of his character. If his father is what he should be, he is to that son a real model. The youth looks upon what his father does as exactly what he would like to do and what he aims to copy. His judgment is, to his son, almost infallible. At any rate, if he sees reason to differ from his father, he is a long while before he brings himself to prefer his own judgment. He has seen his father’s wisdom in other matters so often that he mistrusts his own apprehension and would rather trust to what his father tells him. He has a profound conviction that his father is good, kind, wise and could not do anything, or ask him to do anything which would not promote his own good.

So he feels a sort of awe of him—a fear of him—which prevents his questioning what his father does as he would have questioned anybody else. He is prone to conjecture that his father may have got some reason behind him that would explain what he does not understand. He would

not give another person credit for having that concealed virtue, but he has such an esteem for his father—his dear father—that he fears to raise any questions about his father’s character, his conduct, or his conclusions. In fact, that character so rules his admiration and commands his respect that he does not think of questioning it.

Well, now, dear Friends, how far higher must be our fear of God in this view of the matter? How could we question Him? No, whatever He does, we say, “It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him.” Like Aaron, when his two sons were stricken down and, that, as a summary punishment of their transgression, it should be said of us, as it was recorded of him—“He held his peace.” Aaron could not say anything against God, however severe the stroke was. So, Brothers and Sisters, we cannot judge God. I hope we have given up folly. We ought to be afraid to do it. Sometimes terrible horror takes hold upon me, when I, now and then, meet with a Brother or Sister (I hope in Christ) who will tell me that God has taken away a dear child and they cannot forgive Him.

“That cannot be right, Sir.” Oh, it is a dreadful thing for us to get into such a state of heart that we question anything that God does! No—“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Is it meet, do you think, to imagine that our heavenly Father can do anything that is unkind or unwise towards us? It is not possible! The Lord has done it! Let that be your ultimatum. We fear Him too much to question what He does. Our reverence of Him makes us jealous of ourselves.

A child, also, without any fear of his father in the wrong sense, is sure to be very deferential in his father’s presence. If his father is in the way and if quiet is needed in the house, he will take his shoes off his feet and be very quiet lest his father should hear and he should disturb the unruffled calm. He watches carefully and studiously guards his conduct lest anything he does amiss should reach his father’s ear and grieve his father’s heart.

Now it would be very wrong for a child merely to restrain himself in his father’s presence out of respect for him and then break the bounds with unbridled licentiousness in his father’s absence, as I fear many do. But you and I need not fall into this danger because we are always in the Presence of our heavenly Father in every place. Who among us that fears God as he ought would wish to do anything, anywhere, which is wrong and offensive to Him, seeing that—

*“Wherever we roam, wherever we rest,  
We are surrounded, still, with God”?*

Unwise daring were the person that could insult a king to his face and commit trespass in his presence! A sense of the Presence of God, a conscience that prompts one to say, “You, God, see me,” fosters in the soul a healthy fear which you can easily see would rather inspirit, than intimidate, a man! It is a filial, childlike fear, in the presence of one whom we deeply reverence, lest we should do anything contrary to his mind and will. So, then, there is a fear which arises out of a high appreciation of God’s Character and a fear of the same kind which arises out of a sense of His Presence.

Further, every child, of the sort I have described, fears at any time to intrude upon the father’s prerogative. When he is at home he feels that there are some points in which he may take many liberties. Is it not his own home? Has he not always been there? But there are some things of which, if they were suggested to him to do, he would say, “Why, it is impossible. Only my father may do that! I cannot give orders as if I were the master! I cannot expect to govern! I am here and I am glad to be here, but I am under my father. I must not presume to exercise the control to which he has an exclusive right.”

Now, that is one of the fears which a child of God has. “No,” he says, “how should I venture to stand in the place of God? God bids me—it is not for me to object or to ask, ‘Shall I or shall I not?’ That were to usurp the place of ruler, to be a master to myself, to ignore the fact that the Lord, alone, is the Ruler. Such a thing God appoints—then it is not for me to wish the appointment different. Should it be according to my mind? Am I the comptroller? Is Divine Providence put under my supervision? No,” says the child of God, “I cannot do anything so inconsistent with a dutiful allegiance.”

There are some things which he feels would be arrogating a position unbecoming altogether in a creature and much more unbecoming in a creature that has received the spirit of fear whereby he cries, “Abba, Father.” O Brothers and Sisters, it is well to have a fear of getting to feel great—a fear of getting to feel good—a fear of getting to feel anything that should violate your fealty or disregard the worshipful reverence you owe to the Most High! That would be as if you took sinister license because you were given a sacred liberty, or refused to do homage because you had received favor!

Oh no, the virtuous child does not thus slight his indulgent father! Neither must we ever think irreverently of our Covenant God. Holy fear leads us to dread anything which might cause our Father’s displeasure. A good child would not do anything which would make his father feel vexed with him. “It vexes me,” he says, “if it vexes my father.” So let there always be with us a fear to offend our loving God. He is jealous, remember that! It is one of the most solemn Truths in the Bible, “The Lord your God is a jealous God.”

We might have guessed it, for great love has always that dangerous neighbor, jealousy, not far off. They that love not have no hate, no jealousy—but where there is an intense, a definite love like that which glows in the bosom of God, there must be jealousy! And oh, how jealous He is of the hearts of His people! How determined He is to have all their love! How I have known Him to take away the objects of their attachment, one after another—break their idols and deprive them of their precious vanities—all to get their hearts wholly to Himself, because He knew it would never be right with them while they had a divided heart.

It was injurious to themselves and so He is jealous of that which injures them and jealous of that which dishonors Him. Let us have this holy fear very strong upon us and we shall avoid anything which might grieve the Spirit of God. A true child of the kind I have tried to describe—and I hope there are some about—is always afraid of doing anything which might cast a suspicion upon his love and his respect to his father. If he feels that he has done something which might appear discourteous, or be interpreted as akin to rebellion, he is eager to explain, at once, that he did not mean it. Or, if he has made a mistake, he is eager, at once, to rectify it and would say, “Father, do not read my conduct severely. I love you with

all my heart. I may have erred. I have erred. I beg to express my deep regret and repentance.”

He could not bear it that his father should think, “My child has no esteem for me, no respect for me, no love for me.” It ought to go hard with every Christian when he thinks he has given God cause to doubt his love. I should suspect he has, when he finds cause to suspect it himself. When you say in your soul, “Do I love the Lord or not?”—just think whether God may not be saying it—whether Jesus Christ, the Ever-Blessed, may not feel cause, next time He meets you, to say to you, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? Indeed, do you love Me?”

Three times He may have to put that question because you have given Him a treble cause for mistrusting you, as to whether, indeed, your heart is right before Him. We know that the Lord knows all things and He knows that we love Him. We fall back on that, but still, we would not so act that the action should look as if we did not. We do not want so to think, or speak, or do anything that should give just cause for suspicion to the All-Wise One as to the reality of our professions of love. Fear, then—this blessed fear—is what we must all cultivate. May the Lord grant that we may have it, fully matured and fitly exercised, for “blessed is the man that fears always.”

II. But, now, giving our meditation a more cheerful turn, let us follow the teaching of our text. It says that this fear has strong confidence in it. WHEREIN IS THAT CONFIDENCE SEEN? The history of men that have feared God may, perhaps, enlighten us a little on this matter. It is written concerning Job that he was a man that “feared God and eschewed evil.” Satan was permitted to tempt him and he came into deep trouble, but how blessed was the confidence of Job in all his trouble! How brave a thing it was to say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!” How grand it was of him to say in answer to his wife, “What? Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall we not receive evil?”

Best of all, that was one of the noblest resolves that ever mortal uttered, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” A man up to his neck in trouble—no, with the billows going over him—and yet his confidence in God is not moved—no, not for a single moment! He declares that if God does not set him right, now, while he lives, yet he believes that his God, his Kinsman, lives and that, if he dies, yet after his death, God would avenge him. “I know,” says he, “that my Defender lives, and though after my death the worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God and I shall get right somehow.”

He feels sure about that, so his confidence is strong, and it lessens not in time of trouble. You see the same implicit confidence in Habakkuk. He draws a dreadful picture—“Though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall.” He foresees the full stress of the calamity and prophecies that it shall come to pass. “Yet,” he said, “will I rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation.” That was the simple consequence of his fear of the Lord. He feared and, therefore, trusted. He knew the grandeur of the Divine Character. He trembled to impute wrong or unfaithfulness to God—he feared Him too much to have one hard thought of Him or to utter one mistrustful word about Him—in the grandeur of that fear he felt a strong confidence!

Both Job and Habakkuk experienced and even tested this! And there are many schooled in the same school, who have spoken after the same valiant fashion when all God’s waves and billows have gone over them. That confidence will not only appear in time of trouble, but it will appear in acts of obedience. The Lord calls His people to obey Him and sometimes obedience requires great self-denial. We may have to surrender what we greatly prize for Christ’s sake. It is not always easy to be confident in doing that which demands quick decision. We may be prone to parley or to do as though we were driven, yielding to stern compulsion, rather than surrendering with sweet submission. But to do it with strong confidence can only come to us from having the fear of God before us.

Now, Abraham feared the Lord with all his heart and when the Lord said, “Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and offer him up for a burnt offering upon a mountain which I will tell you of”—if he had not feared God wonderfully and dreaded to do anything that would look like rebellion against His orders, he would have said, “What? Commit murder?”—for it will come to that—“Slay my own dear child?” But no, though he could not understand it, he felt sure that God had some meaning in it—that God could not be ordering him to do what was wrong—that there must be a way by which it would be made right.

Besides, he remembered that in Isaac was his seed to be called and his descendants were to come out of Isaac. How, then, can God keep His promise? How can He fulfill the Covenant? This did not distress Abraham, but being, “strong in faith, he staggered not through unbelief.” Therefore he rose up early in the morning and prepared the wood. I have looked with tears at the spectacle of that old man, far advanced in years, preparing the wood and then putting the wood upon Isaac. And then going with him and telling the servants at the bottom of the hill that they must stay lest they should interrupt the consummation of that wondrous deed of faith.

And then Isaac says to him, “My father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” It must have brought the heart of Abraham into his mouth! Still, he seemed to swallow that dreadful thought and he said, “My Son, God will provide Himself a lamb.” And so he takes him and lays him on the altar and draws a knife—going through with it—right through with it, to the very last, with wondrous heroism—till the Lord stopped his hand. But for his deep fear of God, he never would have had the confidence to go through with such an act of obedience! Although the Lord does not call you and me to such strong tests as that, yet He does try our faith.

I have known, sometimes, when a man, in order to do his duty, has had before him what appeared to be a terrible dilemma—“I shall have to give up my employment! If I do that, what is to become of my children? Were I a single man I would do it without hesitation. I would face poverty. I would go down to the docks to ask for day labor. But there are the children. The children—what is to become of the children?” You see, you cannot feel like Abraham, who gave up his darling child for God. You are staggered. Yes, but if your fear of God is very strong, you will say, “I cannot make a compromise with any sin. I cannot persevere with that sinful

line of business in which I am engaged. Is this the ultimatum? Then it admits of no alternative. If God should leave me and my little children to starve, yet I must put all into God’s hands. It is His to provide, not mine. He does not allow me to do a wrong thing under any circumstances. So here goes for God and for righteousness.”

If you have got a great fear of God, that is what you will do. But if you have not the reverence, you will not have the confidence. For lack thereof, you will timorously shrink back into the sin which galls you. May God give you the heroic confidence which springs of a deep fear of Him. The same confidence, the same loyalty to God will develop itself when persecution is involved. There are, in this world, men who hate true religion. And the experiences which occur to true Believers are, consequently, often very painful. If we have much fear of God, we shall have strong confidence, but if we have not the fear of God, then the fear of man will make us waver.

Look yonder—Nebuchadnezzar’s image of gold on the plains of Dura! A great many people stand about the colossal figure who are of the race of Shem, monotheists—that is to say, believers in one God—not polytheists, whose creed might excuse their idolatry. Listen, now! At the sound of flute, harp, sackbut and all kinds of music, the herald proclaims that whoever will not bow down and worship the image that Nebuchadnezzar, the king, has set up, shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace! How quickly does this recreant race of Protestant people swallow their principles! See how they succumb, with their heads in the dust, worshipping the golden image!

They had not much fear of the one God and so they break all His Laws. They have more fear of Nebuchadnezzar and his furnace than they have of Jehovah the God of Israel! But here are three young men, captives in Babylon, who stand before the king. And when asked why it is that they have not worshipped his gods and the image which he has set up, they declare that they will not worship his god or fall down before his image. They speak positively. They say, “Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us, but, if not, be it known unto you, O King, that we will not worship your gods or the image which you have set up.”

Look at the king’s fury! See how the devil lights up his face with lurid glare! Look how a legion of devils possesses him! “Heat that furnace seven times hotter than it has known,” he says, “and cast these daring rebels therein.” The men are calm, unrushed by his rage, unmoved by his threats. They do not even take off their hats to him. There they stand, in their clothes and their hats, calm and quiet. They defy the king, because who needs have a fear of Nebuchadnezzar that has a fear of Jehovah? Who needs fear a king that fears the King of kings? So they consent to be put into the furnace, for in the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence.

It was bravely done by old Hugh Latimer, when he preached before Henry the Eighth. It was the custom of the Court preacher to present the king with something on his birthday and Latimer presented Henry VIII with a pocket handkerchief with this text in the corner, “Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge!” A very suitable text for bluff Henry! And then he preached a sermon before his most gracious majesty against sins of lust. And he delivered himself with tremendous force, not forgetting or abridging the personal application. And the king said that next time Latimer preached—the next Sunday—he should apologize and he would make him so mold his sermon as to eat his own words.

Latimer thanked the king for letting him off so easily. When the next Sunday came, he stood up in the pulpit and said—“Hugh Latimer, you are this day to preach before the high and mighty prince Henry, King of Great Britain and France. If you say one single word that displeases His Majesty he will take your head off. Therefore, mind what you are at.” But then he said, “Hugh Latimer, you are this day to preach before the Lord God Almighty who is able to cast both body and soul into Hell—and so tell the king the Truth of God outright.” And so he did.

His performance was equal to his resolution. However, the king did not take off his head. He respected him all the more. The fear of the Lord gave Latimer strong confidence, as it will any who cleave close to their colors—

*“Fear Him, you saints, and you will then  
Have nothing else to fear.”*

Drive right straight ahead in the fear of the everlasting God and whoever comes in your way had better mind what he is at! It is yours to do what is right and deny everything they devise that is wrong. God will bless you and you shall praise Him! Moreover, this fear of God declares itself in other things besides braving trouble and enduring. It will be a tower of strength to you when you stand up to bear witness to the Truth of God. Have you anything to say for Jesus? You will say it in a very cowardly and in a sneaking manner if you have not a great fear of God. But if you fear God much, you will be like Peter and John, of whom, when the council saw them, it is said, “they wondered at their boldness.”

The fear of God will make you bold in speaking God’s Word! Or should you fall down in sheer exhaustion, instead of standing up in sound enthusiasm, the fear of God will prove a potent restorative. Even if you are overthrown, for a time, you shall overcome at the last. In the Book of Micah we read, “Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for though I fall, yet shall I rise again.” He that really fears God expects to conquer even though, for a time, he seems to be defeated. This fear will come out gloriously in confidence in the hour of death. If we fear God we shall, like Stephen, fall asleep, even if it is amid a shower of stones. Glorious is the confidence with which Christians depart from this life when they can depend on the God whom they fear with reverence and serve with readiness!

III. I must hasten on to notice, in the third place, though not to dwell upon it as I could wish—UPON WHAT IS THIS CONFIDENCE BUILT? The fear of the Lord brings strong confidence, but why? Why? Because they that fear God know God to be infinitely loving to them, to be immutable and unchangeable, to be unsearchably wise and Omnipotently strong on their behalf! How can they help having confidence in such a God? They know, next, that a full atonement has been made for their sins. Jesus has borne the wrath of God for them—how can they help being confident? They know that this same Jesus has risen from the dead and lives to plead for them—and in their ears they can hear the almighty pleas of Jesus ever speaking in their favor.

How can they help having confidence? They believe that this same Jesus is Head over all things to His Church and Ruler of Providence. How can they help being confident in Him? To Him all power is given in Heaven and in earth! They believe that everything is working together for their good! I ask again, how can they help being confident? They believe that

the Spirit of God is in them— dwells in them! What confidence can be too staunch and steadfast for men who know this to be true? They know that there is a mysterious union between them and the Son of God! They know that they are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

What confidence can be too implicit? They know that there are two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie—His promise and His oath whereby He has given them strong consolation. With such strong consolation they may well have strong confidence—

*“The Gospel bears my spirits up;  
A faithful and unchanging God  
Lays the foundation of my hope  
In oaths and promises and blood.”*

Oh, what unwavering confidence may be based on this firm foundation which God has laid for His people! But time fails me. I cannot enlarge upon it.

IV. Let me, therefore, close with a fourth reflection—HOW THIS CONFIDENCE AND THIS FEAR ARE FAVORED OF GOD! Observe the promise. “His children shall have a place of refuge.” So, then, you see that those who fear God and have confidence in Him, are His children! They have a childlike fear and then they have a childlike confidence—and these are the marks that they are His children. And what a favor is this! “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” Oh, dear Friends, there is a Heaven lying asleep inside those words—His children. There is eternal Paradise couched within that word—Abba, Father.

If you know how to say it with the spirit of adoption, you have the earnest of the inheritance within you—you have got a Heaven, a young Heaven within your spirit! Oh, be glad! To be a child of God is greater than to be an angel! Why, were Gabriel capable of envy, he would envy you who are the children of the Most High, however poor or sick or downcast you may be. “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.” “His children shall have a place of refuge.” Take heart, for this is a grand thought for you that fear Him and confide in Him—you shall have a place of refuge!

There is Noah. All the world is about to be drowned. In vain might one climb to the tops of the mountains, for the waters will cover their highest pinnacle. Must Noah be drowned, then? Is his destruction inevitable? No, but there is an ark for him. God will not pull up the floodgates of Heaven till Noah is shut in the ark. There is Lot—evil Lot. He has been acting very badly and has got away down there in Sodom. Still, he is a child of God. He is vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, proving that he has some fear of God in his heart. Well, what does the Lord say? “Haste you,” He says, “for I cannot do anything till you have come out here.”

Lot must get to Zoar. There must be a little city to shelter Lot! God cannot burn Sodom and Gomorrah till He has got Lot safe out of the way. He must find a refuge for His children! Well, there are His people down in Egypt. God is going to smite the firstborn and He has loosed an angel to do it. And that angel is swift in His message—swift to do His bidding and he will slay the firstborn of Israel as well as of Egypt when he goes upon his terrible errand. He will make no distinctions. Yes, but there are the blood marks over the door and the angel sees that the bloody sacrifice has been offered in that house—and he passes by. God’s people must have a place of refuge and He found them one in Egypt when the angel was let loose and the Angel of Death was there.

So it happened all along through Scripture history. God sent a famine into the land and after the famine some that had fled the country came back. And, among them, Naomi and Ruth. What is to become of Ruth? She has been a heathen! But she has come to fear God. She has put her trust under the shadow of the Almighty’s wings. What is to become of Ruth? Well, she must go and glean in the fields of him who is next of kin and she found a place of refuge in his bosom. God takes care, you see, of those that fear Him and have confidence in Him. But there is another great famine and all the country is barren for three years long.

According to the Word of God, there is neither dew nor rain and there is no food. But there is one man, there, who fears the Lord above all the rest, and that is Elijah. Well, he must have a place of refuge! There, you see, by the brook Cherith He sits him down and ravens that were more likely to rob him, than to feed him, come to bring him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening! I heard, some time ago, of a poor woman who was very hard pressed for food. But she remembered the promise of God and she knelt down and appealed to Him that He would provide her bread. Just afterwards a friend came in who brought a loaf of bread to her.

The friend told her that this loaf of bread was bought for her husband, but her husband was not well and he was unable to eat it because they found that a mouse had been eating it. And it so turned him that he could not eat the bread. But the loaf was not hurt, “And,” said the friend, “I dare say you will eat it. I have cut away the part that the mouse touched.” Oh, yes, God can make a mouse do it, or a raven do it! His people shall have a place of refuge! When the brooks are dried up and the ravens are gone, there is a widow woman over there who has to sustain Elijah and that woman’s cruse is nearly empty—and her barrel of meal nearly all spent. Still, her house is the place of refuge for Elijah and God provides for him there.

When the Lord Jesus was here, He knew that Jerusalem was to be destroyed and He knew that His disciples were to be there. If history is to be believed—and I suppose it is—no Christians perished in the destruction of Jerusalem, yet they were very numerous. There is no mention of them by Josephus. They were all gone away, many of them to the little city called Pella, and other places beyond the river Jordan because Jesus told them when they saw Jerusalem compassed with armies, they might know that its desolation was near. So He counseled such as were in Judea to flee to the mountains. Thus when that destruction came, which was the most terrible calamity that ever happened on the face of the earth, His people had a place of refuge.

And now, Brothers and Sisters, whatever is going to happen—and there are some that predict dreadful things—as for me, I do not know what is going to happen and, which is another thing, I do not care—His people shall have a place of refuge. “Though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and are troubled, though the mountains shake with the swellings thereof. There is a river, the streams of which shall make glad the

City of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

If it should ever come to this—that the whole earth should rock and reel, or burn and smoke and seethe, or burn, like a cauldron, into one boiling mass—if there is no room for God’s people on the earth to find a refuge, He will find a refuge for them in the clouds. They shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air! But, somehow or other, His people shall have a place of refuge. His children shall have a place of refuge. Lay hold on that! There is a refuge for you somewhere, Christian, even in the matter of ordinary Providence! And there is always a Mercy Seat for you to go to. There is always the bosom of Christ for you to fly to! The fear of the Lord does not drive you from Him. It drives you to Him and when it drives you to Him you have got a place of refuge!

I find that Moses Stewart reads the text differently from anybody else and I am not sure that he is wrong. He says the text means that the children of those that fear God shall have a place of refuge and, if so, this is not the only passage of Scripture that proves it. There are many precious texts that speak of our children. Let us try to grasp the promise for our children as well as for ourselves and pray for them that they may have a place of refuge. There are some Believers going to be baptized tonight. I hope they have got a firm grip of that Gospel promise that Paul uttered, where he says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and your house.”

The jailer did, you know, and we find that it is said, “He was baptized and all his house.” And for this reason—that he believed in the Lord, rejoicing with all his house. Oh, we can never be satisfied till we see all our house converted and all our household baptized—and all those that belong to us belonging, also, to the Lord our God, for thus it is, “His children shall have a place of refuge.” May God bless you, dear Friends, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONS—Psalm 38.*  
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÷Pro 15.11

GOD, THE ALL-SEEING ONE

NO. 177

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 14, 1858, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“Hell and destruction are before the Lord: how much more, then, the hearts of the children of men?”  
Proverbs 15:11.**

YOU have often smiled at the ignorance of heathens who bow themselves before gods of wood and stone. You have quoted the words of Scripture and you have said, “Eyes have they, but they see not; ears have they, but they hear not.” You have therefore argued that they could not be gods at all, because they could neither see nor hear and you have smiled contemptuously at the men who could so debase their understandings as to make such things objects of adoration. May I ask you one question—just one? Your God can both see and hear—would your conduct be in any respect different if you had a god such as those that the heathen worship?

Suppose for one minute that Jehovah, who is nominally adored in this land, could be (though it is almost blasphemy to suppose it) smitten with such a blindness that He could not see the works and know the thoughts of man. Would you then become more careless concerning Him than you are now? I think not. In nine cases out of ten and perhaps in a far larger and sadder proportion the doctrine of Divine Omniscience, although it is received and believed, has no practical effect upon our lives at all.

The mass of mankind forget God—whole nations who know His existence and believe that He beholds them, live as if they had no God at all. Merchants, farmers, men in their shops and in their fields, husbands in their families and wives in the midst of their households, live as if there were no God. No eye inspecting them, no ear listening to the voice of their lips and no eternal mind always treasuring up the recollection of their acts. Ah, we are practical Atheists, the mass of us. Yes, all but those that have been born again and have passed from death unto life, be their creeds what they may, are Atheists, after all, in life. For if there were no God and no hereafter, multitudes of men would never be affected by the change. They would live the same as they do now—their lives being so full of disregard of God and His ways, that the absence of a God could not affect them in any great degree.

Permit me, then, this morning, as God shall help me, to stir up your hearts. And may God grant that something I may say, may drive some of your practical Atheism out of you. I would endeavor to set before you God, the All-Seeing One, and press upon your solemn consideration the tremendous fact that in all our acts, in all our ways and in all our thoughts, we are continually under His observing eye. We have in our text, first of all, a great fact declared—“Hell and destruction are before the Lord.” We have, secondly, a great fact inferred—“How much more, then, the hearts of the children of men?”

I. We will begin with THE GREAT FACT WHICH IS DECLARED—a fact which furnishes us with premises from which we deduce the practical conclusion of the second sentence—“How much more, then, the hearts of the children of men?” The best interpretation that you can give of those two words, “Hell” and “destruction,” is, I think, comprehended in a sentence something like this—“Death and Hell are before the Lord.” The separate state of departed spirits and destruction, Aladdon, as the Hebrew has it—the place of torment—are both of them, although solemnly mysterious to us—manifest enough to God.

1. First, then, the word here translated “Hell,” might just as well be translated “death,” or the state of departed spirits. Now, death, with all its solemn consequences, is visible before the Lord. Between us and the hereafter of departed spirits a great black cloud is hanging. Here and there the Holy Spirit has made chinks, as it were, in the black wall of separation through which by faith we can see. For He has “revealed unto us by the Spirit” the things which “eye has not seen nor ear heard,” and which the human intellect could never compass. Yet what we know is but very little. When men die, they pass beyond the realm of our knowledge— both in body and in soul they go beyond our understandings. But God understands all the secrets of death. Let us divide these into several heads and enumerate them.

God knows the burial places of all His people. He notes as well the resting place of the man who is buried tumbles and alone, as the man over whom a mighty mausoleum has been raised. He saw the traveler who fell in the barren desert, whose body became the prey of the vulture and whose bones were bleached in the sun. He saw the mariner, who was wrecked far out at sea and over whose corpse no dirge was ever wailed, except the howling of the winds and the murmuring of the wild waves. He saw the thousands who have perished in battle, unnumbered and unnoticed—the many who have died alone amid dreary forests, frozen seas and devouring snowstorms—all these and the places of their sepulcher—are known to God. That silent grotto within the sea, where pearls lie deep, where now the shipwrecked one is sleeping, is marked by God as the death place of one of His redeemed.

That place upon the mountain side, the deep ravine into which the traveler fell and was buried in a snowdrift is marked in the memory of God as the tomb of one of the human race. No body of man, however it may have been interred or not interred, has passed beyond the range of God’s knowledge. Blessed be His name, if I shall die and lie where the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep, in some neglected corner of the churchyard, I shall be known as well and rise as well recognized by my glorious Father as if interred in the cathedral, where forests of gothic pillars proudly stand erect and where the songs of myriads perpetually salute high Heaven.

I shall be known as well as if I had been buried there in solemn pomp and had been interred with music and with dread solemnities. And I shall be recognized as well as if the marble trophy and the famous pillar had been raised to my remembrance. For God knows no such thing as forgetfulness of the burying places of His children. Moses sleeps in some spot that eye has not seen. God kissed away his soul and He buried him where Israel could never find him though they may have searched for him. But God knows where Moses sleeps and if He knows that, He understands where all His children are hidden.

You cannot tell me where is the tomb of Adam. You could not point out to me the sleeping place of Abel. Is any man able to discover the tomb of Methuselah and those long-lived dwellers in the time before the Flood? Who shall tell where the once-treasured body of Joseph now sleeps in faith? Can any of you discover the tombs of the kings and mark the exact spot where David and Solomon rest in solitary grandeur? No, those things have passed from human recollection and we know not where the great and mighty of the past are buried. But God knows—for death and Hades are open before the Lord.

And again—not only does He know the place where they were buried, but He is cognizant of the history of all their bodies after sepulture or after death. It has often been asked by the infidel, “How can the body of man be restored, when it may have been eaten by the cannibal, or devoured by wild beasts?” Our simple reply is that God can track every atom of it if He pleases. We do not think it necessary in resurrection that He should do so, but if He so willed it, He could bring every atom of every body that has ever died—although it has passed through the most complicated machinery of nature and become entangled in its passage with plants and beasts. Yes, and with the bodies of other men. God has it still within the range of His knowledge to know where every atom is and it is within the might of his Omnipotence to call every atom from its wandering and restore it to its proper sphere and rebuild the body of which it was a part.

It is true, we could not track the dust that long since has moldered. Buried with the most exact care, preserved with the most scrupulous reverence, years passed away and the body of the monarch, which had long slept well guarded and protected was at last reached by the careless hand. The coffin had moldered and the metal was broken for the sake of its own value. A handful of dust was discovered, the last relics of one who was

master of many nations. That dust by sacrilegious hand was cast in the aisle of the church, or thrown into the churchyard and blown by the winds into the neighboring field. It was impossible forever to preserve it. The greatest care was defeated. And at last the monarch was on a level with his slave, “alike unknowing and unknown.”

But God knows where every particle of the handful of dust has gone. He has marked in His book the wandering of every one of its atoms. He has death so open before His view that He can bring all these together, bone to bone and clothe them with the very flesh that robed them in the days of yore and make them live again. Death is open before the Lord. And as the body, so the soul when separated from the body is before the Lord. We look upon the countenance of our dying friend and on a sudden a mysterious change passes over his frame. “His soul has fled,” we say. But have we any idea of what his soul is?

Can we form even a conjecture of what the flying of that soul may be and what the august presence into which it is ushered when it is disentangled from its earthly coil? Is it possible for us to guess what is that state where spirits without bodies, perpetually blest, behold their God? Is it possible for us to compass some imagination of what Heaven is to be, when bodies and souls reunited, shall before God’s Throne enjoy the highest bliss? I think that so gross are our conceptions, while we are in our bodies, that it is almost, if not quite impossible, for any of us to form any idea whatever as to the position of souls, while in the disembodied state, between the hour of death and the time of resurrection—

*“This much and this is all, we know,  
They are supremely blest;  
Have done with sin and care and woe,  
And with their Savior rest.”*

But the best of the saints can tell us nothing more than this. They are blest and in Paradise they are reigning with their Lord. Brethren, these things are known to God. The separate state of the dead, the Heaven of disembodied spirits, is within the gaze of the Most High. And at this hour, if so He pleased, He could reveal to us the condition of every man that is dead—whether He has mounted to Elysian fields, to dwell forever in the sunlight of his Master’s countenance, or has been plunged into Hell, dragged down by iron chains, to wait in dreary woe the result of the awful trial, when “Depart you cursed,” must be the re-affirmation of a sentence once pronounced and already in part endured. God understands the separate doom of every man’s spirit before the great tribunal day—before the last sentence shall have been pronounced—death is open before the Lord.

2. The next word, “destruction” signifies Hell, or the place of the damned. That also is open before the Lord. Where Hell is and what its miseries, we know not except “through a glass darkly.” We have never seen the invisible things of horror. That land of terror is a land unknown. We have much reason to thank God that He has put it so far off from the habitations of living mortals that the pains, the groans, the shrieks, the yells are not to be heard here—or else earth itself would have become a Hell—the solemn prelude and actuality of unutterable torment.

God has put somewhere, far on the edge of His dominions, a fearful lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Into that He cast the rebel angels, who (though by a license they are now allowed to walk the earth) do carry a Hell within their bosoms. They are by-and-by to be bound with chains, reserved in blackness and darkness forever for them that kept not their first estate, but lifted the arm of their rebellion against God. Into that place we dare not look. Perhaps it would not be possible for any man to get a fair idea of the torments of the lost, without at once becoming mad. Reason would reel at such a sight of horror.

One moment of listening to the shrill screams of spirits tortured might forever drive us into the depths of despair and make us only fit to be bound in chains while we lived on earth. Raving lunatics surely we must become. But while God has mercifully covered all these things from us, they are all known to Him. He looks upon them. Yes, it is His look that makes Hell what it is. His eyes, full of fury, flash the lightning that scathe His enemies. His lips, full of dreadful thunders, make the thunders that now frighten the wicked. Oh, could they escape the eye of God, could they shut out that dreary vision of the face of the incensed Majesty of Heaven, then might Hell be quenched—then might the wheels of Ixion stand still!

Then might doomed Tantalus quench his thirst and eat to his very full. But there, while they lie in their chains, they look upwards and they see ever that fearful vision of the Most High. The dreadful hands that grasp the thunderbolts, the dreadful lips that speak the thunders and the fearful eyes that flash the flames that burn their souls with horrors deeper than despair. Yes, Hell, horrible as it is and veiled in many clouds and covered over with darkness, is naked before the vision of the Most High.

There is the grand fact stated—“Hell and destruction are before the Lord.” After this the inference seems to be easy—“How much more, then, the hearts of the children of men?”

II. We now come to the GREAT FACT INFERRED. In briefly entering upon this second part I will discuss the subject thus—you notice there an argument—“How much more, then, the hearts of the children of men?” I will therefore begin by asking, why does it follow that the hearts of men are seen by God? Why—how—what—when shall be four questions into which we shall divide what we have now to say.

1. Why is it so clear, that “if Hell and destruction are open before the

Lord,” the hearts of men must be very plainly viewed by Him? We answer, because the hearts of men are not so extensive as the realms of death and torment. What is man’s heart? What is man’s self? Is he not in Scripture compared to a grasshopper? Does not God declare that He “takes up the isles”—whole islands full of men—“as a very little thing. And the nations before Him are but as the drop of a bucket?” If, then, the all-seeing eye of God takes in at one glance the wide regions of death—and wide they are, wide enough to startle any man who shall try to range them through—if, I say, with one glance God sees death and sees Hell through, with all its bottomless depths, with all its boundlessness of misery, surely, then, He is quite able to behold all the actions of the little thing called man’s heart.

Suppose a man so wise as to be able to know the wants of a nation and to remember the feelings of myriads of men, you cannot suppose it difficult for him to know the actions of his own family and to understand the emotions of his own household. If the man is able to stretch his arm over a great sphere and to say, “I am monarch of all this,” surely he shall be able to control the less. He who in his wisdom can walk through centuries shall not say that he is ignorant of the history of a year. He who can dive into the depths of science and understand the history of the whole world from its creation, is not to be alarmed by some small riddle that happens at his own door. No, the God who sees death and Hell sees our hearts, for they are far less extensive.

Reflect again, that they are far less aged, too. Death is an ancient monarch. He is the only king whose dynasty stands fast. Ever since the days of Adam he has never been succeeded by another and has never had an interruption in his reign. His black ebon scepter has swept away generation after generation. His scythe has mowed the fair fields of this earth a hundred times and is sharp to mow us down. And when another crop shall succeed us he is still ready to devour the multitudes and sweep the earth clean again. The regions of death are old domains. His pillars of black granite are ancient as the eternal hills.

He is our ancient monarch, but ancient as he is, his whole monarchy is in the records of God and until death itself is dead and swallowed up in victory, death shall be open before the Lord. How old, too, is Hell!—old as the first sin. In that day when Satan tempted the angels and led astray the third part of the stars of Heaven, then Hell was dug. Then was that bottomless pit first struck out of solid rocks of vengeance, that it might stand a marvelous record of what God’s wrath can do. The fires of Hell are not the kindling of yesterday. They are ancient flames that burned long before Vesuvius cast forth its lurid flame. Long before the first charred ashes fell upon the plain from earth’s red volcanoes, Hell’s flames were burning. For “Tophet is prepared of old, the pile thereof is fire and much wood. The breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it.”

If, then, the ancient things, these old ones, death and Hell, have been observed by God and if their total history is known to Him, how much more then shall He know the history of that mere animalcule—that ephemera of an hour, that we call man? You are here today and gone tomorrow. Born yesterday—the next hour shall see our tomb prepared and another minute shall hear, “ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” and the falling of the clod upon the coffin lid. We are the creatures of a day and know nothing. We are scarcely here. We are only living and dead. “Gone!” is the greatest part of our history. Scarcely have we time enough to tell the story, before it comes to its end. Surely, then, God may easily understand the history of a man, when He knows the history of the monarchies of death and Hell.

This is the why. I need not give further arguments, though there is abundance deducible from the text. “How much more, then, the hearts of the children of men?”

2. But now, how does God know the heart? I mean, to what degree and to what extent does He understand and know that which is in men? I answer, Holy Scripture in many places gives us most precise information. God knows the heart so well that He is said to “search” it. We all understand the figure of a search. There is a search warrant out against some man who is supposed to be harboring a traitor in his house. The officer goes into the lower room, opens the door of every cupboard, looks into every closet, peers into every cranny. He takes the key, descends into the cellar, turns over the coals, disturbs the wood, lest anyone should be hidden there. Up stairs he goes.

There is an old room that has not been opened for years—it is opened. There is a huge chest—the lock is forced and it is broken open. The very top of the house is searched, lest upon the slates or upon the tiles someone should be concealed. At last, when the search has been complete, the officer says, “It is impossible that there can be anybody here, for from the tiles to the foundation, I have searched the house thoroughly through. I know the very spiders well, for I have seen the house completely.” Now, it is just so that God knows our heart. He searches it—searches into every nook, corner, crevice and secret part. And the figure of the Lord is pushed further still. “The candle of the Lord,” we are told, “searches the secret parts of the belly.” As when we wish to find something, we take a candle and look down upon the ground with great care and turn up the dust.

If it is some little piece of money we desire to find, we light a candle and sweep the house and search diligently till we find it. Even so it is with God. He searches Jerusalem with candles and pulls everything to daylight. No partial search, like that of Laban, when he went into Rachel’s tent to look for his idols. She put them in the camel’s furniture and sat upon them. But God looks into the camel’s furniture and all. “Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? says the Lord.” His

eye searches the heart and looks into every part of it.

In another passage we are told that God tries the reins. That is even more than searching. The goldsmith when he takes gold looks at it and examines it carefully. “Ah,” says he, “but I don’t understand this gold yet—I must try it.” He thrusts it into the furnace. There coals are heaped upon it and it is fused and melted till he knows what there is of dross and what there is of gold. Now, God knows to the very carat how much there is of sound gold in us and how much of dross. There is no deceiving Him. He has put our hearts into the furnace of his Omniscience. The furnace—His knowledge—tries us as completely as the goldsmith’s crucible does try the gold. How much there is of hypocrisy, how much of truth. How much of sham, how much of real—how much of ignorance, how much of knowledge—how much of devotion, how much of blasphemy—how much of carefulness, how much of carelessness.

God knows the ingredients of the heart. He reduces the soul to its pristine metals. He divides it asunder—so much of quartz, so much of gold, so much of dung, of dross, of wood, of hay, of stubble. So much of gold, silver and precious stones. “The Lord tries the hearts and searches the reins of the children of men.”

Here is another description of God’s knowledge of the heart. In one place of Sacred Writ—(it will be well if you set your children to find out these places at home)—God is said to ponder the heart. Now, you know, the Latin word ponder means weigh. The Lord weighs the heart. Old Master Quarles has got a picture of a great one putting a heart into one scale and then putting the Law, the Bible, into the other scale, to weigh it. This is what God does with men’s hearts. They are often great, puffed up, blown out things and people say, “What a great-hearted man that is!”

But God does not judge by the appearance of a man’s great heart, nor the outside appearance of a good heart. But He puts it in the scales and weighs it—puts His own Word in one scale and the heart in the other. He knows the exact weight. He knows whether we have grace in the heart, which makes us good weight, or only presence in the heart, which makes us weigh light when put into the scale. He searches the heart in every possible way. He puts it into the fire and then thrusts it into the balances. Oh, might not God say of many of you, “I have searched your heart and I have found vanity therein”? Reprobate silver shall men call you. For God has put you in the furnace and rejected you. And then He might conclude His verdict by saying, “Mene, mene, tekel—you are weighed in the balances and found wanting.” This, then, is the answer to the question, how?

The next question was, what? What is it that God sees in man’s heart? God sees in man’s heart a great deal more than we think. God sees and has seen in our hearts lust and blasphemy and murder and adultery and malice and wrath and all uncharitableness. The heart never can be painted too black unless you daub it with something blacker than the devil himself. It is as base as it can be. You have never committed murder but you have had murder in your heart. You may never have stained your hands with lust and the aspersions of uncleanness, but still it is in the heart. Have you never imagined an evil thing?

Has your soul ever for a moment doted on a pleasure which you were too chaste to indulge in, but which for a moment you surveyed with at least some little complacency and delight? Has not imagination often pictured, even to the solitary monk in his cell, greater vice than men in public life have ever dreamed of? And may not even the divine in his closet be conscious that blasphemies and murders and lusts of the vilest class can find a ready harbor even in the heart which he hopes is dedicated to God? Oh, Beloved, it is a sight that no human eye could endure! The sight of a heart really laid bare before one’s own inspection would startle us almost into insanity—but God sees the heart in all its bestial sensuousness, in all its wanderings and rebellions, in all its high-mindedness and pride. God has searched and knows it altogether.

God sees all the heart’s imaginations and what they are let us not presume to tell. O children of God, these have made you cry and groan many a time! And though the worldling groans not over them, yet He has. Oh, what a filthy sty of Stygian imaginations is the heart! All full of everything that is hideous, when it once begins to dance and make carnival and revelry concerning sin. But God sees the heart’s imaginations.

Again—God sees the heart’s devices. You perhaps, O Sinner, have determined to curse God. You have not done so, but you intend to do it. He knows your devices— heads them all. You perhaps will not be permitted to run into the excess of riotousness into which you purpose to go. But your very purpose is now undergoing the inspection of the Most High. There is never a design forged in the fires of the heart before it is beaten on the anvil of resolve, that is not known and seen and noted by Jehovah our God.

He knows, next, the resolves of the heart. He knows, O Sinner, how many times you have resolved to repent and have resolved and re-resolved and then have continued the same? He knows, O you that have been sick, how you did resolve to seek God, but how you did despise your own resolution when good health had put you beyond the temporary danger. Your resolves have been filed in Heaven. And your broken promises. And your despised vows. All shall be brought out in their order as swift witnesses for your condemnation. All these things are known of God.

We have often had very clear proof of God’s knowing what is in man’s heart, even in the ministry. Some months ago while standing here preaching, I deliberately pointed to a man in the midst of the crowd and said these words—“There is a man sitting there that is a shoemaker. He

keeps his shop open on Sunday. He had his shop open last Sabbath morning, took nine pence and there was four pence profit out of it. His soul is sold to Satan for four pence.” A City Missionary, when going round the West end of the town, met with a poor man of whom he asked this question, “Do you know Mr. Spurgeon?” He found him reading a sermon. “Yes,” He said, “I have every reason to know him. I have been to hear him and under God’s grace I have become a new man.

But,” said he, “shall I tell you how it was? I went to the Music Hall and took my seat in the middle of the place and the man looked at me as if he knew me and deliberately told the congregation that I was a shoemaker and that I sold shoes on a Sunday. And I did, Sir. But, Sir, I should not have minded that. But he said I took nine pence the Sunday before and that there was four pence profit. And so I did take nine pence and four pence was just the profit and how he should know that I’m sure I cannot tell. It struck me it was God had spoken to my soul through him. And I shut up my shop last Sunday and was afraid to open it and go there lest he should split about me again.”

I could tell as many as a dozen authentic stories of cases that have happened in this Hall, where I have deliberately pointed at somebody, without the slightest knowledge of the person, or ever having in the least degree any inkling or idea that what I said was right except that I believed I was moved thereto by the Spirit. And so striking has been the description that the persons have gone away and said, “Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did. He was sent of God to my soul, beyond a doubt, or else he could not have painted my case so clearly.”

And not only so, but we have known cases in which the thoughts of men have been revealed from the pulpit. I have sometimes seen persons nudge with their elbow, because they have got a smart hit. And I have heard them say, when they went out, “That is just what I said to you when I went in at the door.” “Ah!” says the other, “I was thinking of the very thing he said and he told me of it.” Now, if God thus proves his own Omniscience by helping his poor, ignorant servant to state the very thing, thought and done, when he did not know it—then it must remain decisively proved that God does know everything that is secret—because we see He tells it to men and enables them to tell it to others.

Oh you may endeavor as much as you can to hide your faults from God. But beyond a doubt He shall discover you. He discovers you this day. His Word is “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” and “pierces to the dividing asunder of the joints and of the marrow.” And in that last day, when the Book shall be opened and He shall give to every man his sentence, then shall it be seen how exact, how careful, how precious, how personal was God’s knowledge of the heart of every man whom He had made.

4. And, now, the last question—when? When does God see us? The answer is, He sees us everywhere and in every place. O foolish Man, who thinks to hide himself from the Most High! It is night, no human eye sees you. The curtain is drawn and you are hidden. There are His eyes lowering at you through the gloom. It is a far-off country. No one knows you. Parents and friends have been left behind, restraints are cast off. There is a Father near you, who looks upon you even now. It is a lone spot and if the deed is done, no tongue shall tell it.

There is a tongue in Heaven that shall tell it—yes, the beam out of the wall and the stones in the field shall raise up themselves as witnesses against you. Can you hide yourself anywhere where God shall not detect you? Is not this whole world like a glass hive, wherein we put our bees? And does not God stand and see all our motions when we think we are hidden? Ah, it is but a glass hiding place. He looks from Heaven and through stone walls and rocks. Yes, to the very center itself, does His eye pierce and in the thickest darkness He beholds our deeds.

Come, then, let me make a personal application of the matter and I have done. If this is true, Hypocrite, what a fool you are! If God can read the heart, O Man, what a sorry, sorry thing your fair pretense must be! Ah! Ah! Ah! What a change will come over some of you! This world is a masquerade and you, many of you, wear the mask of religion. You dance your giddy hours and men think you to be the saints of God. How changed will you be, when, at the door of eternity, you must drop the visor and must renounce the theatrics in which you live! How you will blush when the paint is washed from off your cheek—when you stand before God naked to your own shame—a hypocrite, unclean, diseased, covered up before with the gewgaws and the trickery of pretended formality in religion, but now standing there, base, vile and hideous! There is many a man that bears about him a cancer that would make one sick to see. Oh, how shall hypocrites look, when their cancerous hearts are laid bare!

Deacon! How you will tremble when your old heart is torn open and your vile pretences rent away! Minister! How black you will look when your surplice is off and when your grand pretensions are cast to the dogs! How will you tremble! There will be no sermonizing others, then! You yourself will be preached to and the sermon shall be from that text, “Depart you cursed.” O Brethren, above all things shun hypocrisy. If you mean to be damned, make up your minds to it and be damned, like honest men. But do not, I beseech you, pretend to go to Heaven while all the while you are going to Hell. If you mean to make your abodes in torment forever, then serve the devil and do not be ashamed of it. Stand right out and let the world know what you are. But oh, never put on the cloak of religion. I beseech you, do not add to your eternal misery by being a wolf in

sheep’s clothing. Show the cloven foot. Do not hide it. If you mean to go to Hell, say so. “If God is God, serve Him. If Baal is God, serve him.” Do not serve Baal and then pretend to be serving God.

One other practical conclusion. If God sees and knows everything, how this ought to make you tremble—you that have lived in sin for many years! I have known a man who was once stopped from an act of sin by the fact of there being a cat in the room. He could not bear even the eyes of that poor creature to see him. Oh, I would you could carry about with you the recollection of those eyes that are always on you. Swearer! Could you swear if you could see God’s eye looking at you! Thief! Drunkard! Harlot! Could you indulge in your sins if you saw His eyes on you?

Oh, methinks they would startle you and bid you pause before you did, in God’s own sight, rebel against His Law. There is a story told of the American War, that one of the prisoners taken by the Americans was subjected to a torture of the most refined character. He says, “I was put into a narrow dungeon. I was comfortably provided for with all I needed. But there was a round slit in the wall and through that, both night and day, a soldier always looked at me.” He says, “I could not rest, I could not eat nor drink, nor do anything in comfort, because there was always that eye—an eye that seemed never to be turned away and never shut—always following me round that little apartment. Nothing ever hidden from it.”

Now take home that figure. Recollect that is your position—you are shut in by the narrow walls of time when you eat and when you drink— when you rise and when you lie upon your beds. When you walk the streets or when you sit at home that eye is always fixed upon you. Go home now and sin against God, if you dare. Go home now and break His laws to His face and despise Him and set Him at nothing! Rush on your own destruction—dash yourselves against the buckler of Jehovah and destroy yourselves upon His sword! No! Rather “turn you, turn you.” Turn you, you that have followed the ways of sin—turn you to Christ and live! And then the same Omniscience which is now your horror, shall be your pleasure. Sinner! If you now pray, He sees you. If you now weep He sees you. “When He was yet a great way off his father saw him and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.” It shall be even so with you, if now you turn to God and do believe in His Son Jesus Christ.

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THE HEDGE OF THORNS AND THE PLAIN WAY  
NO. 1948

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

**“The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.”  
Proverbs 15:19.**

You must have noticed how frequently godly people almost wear out their Bibles in certain places. The Psalms, the Gospel of John and parts of the Epistles are favorite portions and are thumbed in many an old Believer’s Bible till the fact is very noticeable. There are certain sheep-tracks up the slopes of Scripture which are much more trodden than the rest of the holy fields. I suppose it has always been so and I will not quarrel with the instincts of the saints.

I do, however, regret that any portion of Holy Writ should be neglected. There are Bible readers who keep clear of the historical parts of Scripture and also greatly avoid the Book of Proverbs—indeed, they almost wonder how Proverbs and Ecclesiastes came to be a part of the Word of God! Very singular it must seem to them that this Book of Proverbs should be placed so very near to Solomon’s Song—that sacred Canticle which is the center and climax of inspired Scripture—a book which I do not hesitate to call “the holy of holies,” the innermost sanctuary of Divine Love. Concerning that deeply mystical, mysterious and rapturous Canticle, it would be impossible to speak too highly. It is, indeed, the Song of Songs—a song, however, which none can sing but such as are made songsters by God, Himself, by partaking of the Inspiration, not of the fountain which gushed from Mount Parnassus, but of that fountain of every blessing which flows from the mount of Everlasting Love.

It is certainly remarkable that, hard by such a deeply-spiritual Book, there should be placed the Book of Proverbs, which mainly consists of instructions for this life. Doubtless there is a meaning in that arrangement. The Lord would not have the highest spirituality divorced from common sense. God has made us body and soul and He would have us serve Him with both. There is a part of us that is material and there is a part that is spiritual—and both need guidance such as the Holy Spirit affords us in the inspired Book. The Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed us, not as to our soul, alone, nor our spirit, alone, but as to our body, also—and He would have us recognize this fact.

While we are in the world we are not to regard ourselves as if we were pure spirits, having nothing to do with earth, but we are to look to our lower nature and our earthly surroundings and order all these in accordance with the will of the Lord. It is not enough that our hearts are cleansed—our bodies are to be washed with pure water. We are in the world and we must eat, drink, work and trade even as other men do. And all this must be as much brought under the rule of wisdom as our higher nature and its actions. The Christian’s faith does not come to him merely to create holy raptures and heavenly emotions—it comes to help him in the business of every day.

Grace is intended to sanctify all the relations of life. There is no necessity that a man who is wise unto salvation should, in other respects, be a fool! The reverse should be constantly seen—sanctity should beget sagacity and purity should be the mother of prudence. We are to make the common things of this world sacred to God so that the bells of the horses may be as truly, “Holiness unto the Lord” as was the miter of the consecrated priest who served at the altar.

I pray my friends not to be so spiritual that they cannot do a good day’s work, or give full measure, or sell honest wares! To my disgust I have known persons professing to have reached perfect purity who have done very dirty things. I have been suspicious of superfine spirituality since I knew one who took no interest in the affairs of this world and yet speculated till he lost thousands of other people’s money! Do not get to be so heavenly-minded that you cannot put up with the little vexations of the family, for we have heard of people of whom it was said that the sooner they went to Heaven the better, for they were too disagreeable to live with below!

As the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ is meant for this world as well as for worlds to come, the volume of Holy Scripture is fitly made to contain Proverbs as well as Psalms. I have been told, but I do not know how true it is, that Scotland owes very much of its practical shrewdness to the fact that the Book of Proverbs used to be printed in a small form and was one of the first books read by all the children at the public schools. I can only say that if it were so, it showed much wisdom on the part of those who made the arrangement and I have no doubt that if it were still so, it would be a clear gain to the rising generation. It is a right thing to have practical teaching in connection with sound doctrine—and common sense in conjunction with deep spirituality. Let the Gospels, Psalms, Prophets and Epistles be your bread—and let the Book of Proverbs be your salt. Neglect neither the one nor the other.

I preach at this time from the word of Solomon which is now before us and I shall not withhold from you its everyday meaning. But I shall also exhibit its higher lights, for I believe that there is not a moral truth in the Book of Proverbs which does not also wear a spiritual aspect. I shall try to show you that our text, while it has its temporal bearings which we will not conceal, has, beyond these, its higher and spiritual teachings with which we will conclude.

I. First, then, take THE TEXT IN ITS TEMPORAL BEARINGS. It runs thus—“The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.”

Note then, first of all, that a slothful man is the opposite of a righteous man. In the text they are set in opposition. “The way of the slothful man” is placed in contrast, not with the way of the diligent man, but with “the way of the righteous”—as if to show that the slothful man is the very opposite of being a righteous man. A sluggard is not a righteous man and he cannot be—he misses a main part of rightness. It is very seldom that a sluggard is honest. He owes at least more labor to the world than he pays. He is guilty of sins of omission, for he fails in obedience to one of the laws laid upon manhood since the Fall—“In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread.” He aspires to eat his bread without earning it! He would, if he could, eat bread for nothing, or eat the bread for which others toil—and this verges upon coveting and stealing—and generally leads up to one or both of these sins.

The sluggard evades the common law of society and equally does he offend against the rule which our Apostle promulgated in the Church—“If any would not work, neither should he eat.” The sluggard is not righteous, for he does not render to God according to the strength lent to him, nor to man according to the work assigned him. A slothful man is a soldier who would let others fight the battle of life while he lies asleep under the baggage wagon—until rations are served! He is a farmer who only farms his own strength and would eat the grapes while others trim the vines. He would, if possible, be carried on his bed into the Kingdom of Heaven—he is much too great a lover of ease to go on pilgrimage over rough and weary ways. If the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence from others, it will never suffer violence from him! He is too idle to be importunate, too slothful to be earnest.

He cannot be a righteous man, for slothfulness leads to the neglect of duty in many ways and, very soon, leads to lying about those neglects of duty—and no liar can have a portion in Heaven. Idleness is selfishness and this is not consistent with the love of our neighbor, nor with any high degree of virtue. Every good thing withers in the drought of idleness. In fact, all kinds of vices are comprehended in the one vice of sloth and, if you tell me that a man is a sluggard, I have his whole character before me in the blackest of letters! His fallow fields are well adapted for evil seed and, no doubt, Satan will raise a fine crop of weeds in every corner of his life! What this world would have been if we had all been gentlemen, with nothing to do, I cannot tell. The millions that have to work are largely kept out of mischief by their toil and although crimes are abundant enough in our great city as it is, what would they have been if there had not been daily tasks to keep men from excessive indulgence in drink and other forms of evil?

Without labor the ale-houses would have been crammed every one of the 24 hours. Folly would have held unbroken carnival and licentiousness would have burst all bounds. Among the sanitary and salutary regulations of the moral universe there is none much better than this—that men must work. He who does not work is not a righteous man, for he is out of accord with that which makes for righteousness. In some form or other, with either brain or hands, either by working or enduring, we share the common labors of the race appointed them of Heaven. And if we are not doing so, we are not righteous. I call to your remembrance the remarkable words of the Savior, “You wicked and slothful servant.” Those two adjectives are nearly related—“wicked and slothful.” Might not our Lord have said “slothful,” alone? He might, but He knew how much of wickedness goes with sloth and is inherent in it and, therefore, He branded it with the condemning word.

Our second observation is this— if we avoid sloth we have not done enough, we must also be righteous. If it had been sufficient to shake off idleness and become industrious, the text would have run thus—“The way of the slothful is as a hedge of thorns: but the way of the diligent is made plain.” Ah, dear Friends, a man may be very industrious, energetic and earnest, but if it is in a wrong cause, he might have been less mischievous had he been slothful! To be exhibiting industry by doing a great deal of mischief is not commendable. To be actively disseminating your opinions, if those opinions are false, is to be doing grievous harm. To rise up early and sit up late and to eat the bread of carefulness, merely for selfish ends, is not to secure a blessing. There is a diligence which is produced by greed, or ambition—and this is no better than the selfishness which is the cause of it! Many wear themselves to skin and bone to gather that which is not bread, to hoard up that which can never satisfy them. We are to become the servants of righteousness when we escape from the servitude of sloth. “Not slothful in business” is very well, but to complete the change we must be gracious in our diligence, being “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” We must do that which is right, kind and holy—and so we must live to the honor and glory of Him to whom we owe all things.

Young men who are beginning life, it is well that you should be urged to be diligent. But it is better that you should be led to be righteous! Worldlings would have you industrious, but saints would have you righteous. You can be made righteous in state through faith in Jesus Christ—and righteous in character through the renewal of your heart by the Holy Spirit. Mind this.

The text leads us to make a third observation which repeats its very words, namely, that a slothful man’s way is like a hedge of thorns. Here we enlarge. The idler’s way is not a desirable way. Unthinking persons suppose that the sluggard lives a happy life and travels an easy road. It is not so. Many believe in “the sweet doing of nothing,” but it is a sheer fiction. Surface appearances are not the truth—though it may seem that idleness is rest, it is not so. Though sloth promises ease, it cheats its votaries. Of all unrest there is none more wearisome than that of having nothing whatever to do. The severest toil is far more endurable than utter sloth. I have heard of retired business men going back to the counter from absolute weariness of idleness. It is far more desirable to be righteous than it is to be at ease. Labor of a holy sort has ten thousand times more joy in it than purposeless leisure!

The way of the sluggard is also difficult. The idle man walks a hard road in his own apprehension—he has to break through thorns. Every molehill is a mountain to him; every straw is a stumbling block. There is a lion in the way—he will be slain in the streets. You look out and can only see the smallest possible dog, but he is sure that it is a roaring lion and he must stay at home and go to bed! He cannot plow by reason of the cold. The clods are frozen, he is sure. They are hard as iron and will break the plow! If you look out of doors, you will see the neighbors’ teams going, but he has another excuse if you beat him out of the one he has given you! The difficulties that he sees are created in his own mind by his natural sluggishness—he has such a creative faculty that he has always 20 arguments against exerting himself once! The first thing such persons do in the morning, when they open their window, is to look out and see a difficulty. Whenever they are sent about a task, or on an errand, they straightway begin to consider the great labor that will be involved in it, the imminent risk that will surely come of it—and the great advantages of leaving it undone!

To the slothful man, his way, when he gets so far as having a way at all, always appears to be as hard to pursue as a hedge of thorns and, mark you, if he continues slothful, it will actually become a hedge of thorns. Difficulties imagined are apt to arrive! Duty neglected today will have to be done some time or other and the arrears of neglected service are grim debts. The slothful is like the spendthrift who does not reckon what he spends, but contents himself with crying, “Put it down.” The score increases and again he cries, “Put it down.” He resolves to do better and then gives a bill, or renews a former bill and dreams that the debt is paid!

But the debt remains, accumulates and follows the man’s track. Old debts pursue a man. Like wolves which hunt the fleeing traveler across the snowy plains of Russia, neglects and obligations follow a man with swift and sure pursuit and there is no way of escape. It is the past which makes the present and the future so difficult. The sluggard’s way appears to lie not only over a thorny brake, but over a compacted mass of thorns of set purpose planted for a hedge. Dear Friends, do not put off till tomorrow that which can be done today! Keep the road clear of arrears. Do the day’s work in the day. I am persuaded that in your ordinary business work some of you Christian people need to be warned against shiftless delay. Believe me, there is a piety in keeping your work well in hand, in having the house right, the business in order, the daily task well done. True religion seeks to honor God in all the transactions of life and this cannot be done by idling, by postponement and by allowing work to run behind. No sluggard can be a saint; no sluggard can glorify God. Life grows hard and unenviable to men who try to make it easy. A man who neglects his duty, whether he is a carpenter, a bricklayer, a clerk, a minister, or an archbishop, will find his way increasingly difficulty until it becomes almost impassable.

Before long, the sluggard’s course becomes a very painful way, for a way of thorns tears a man’s garments and wounds his flesh—you cannot be neglectful of the ordinary duties of life without, by-and-by, suffering for it. Loss of character, loss of position and actual need all come from idleness.

Continue in that course and you will find your way become a hedge of thorns in a further sense, for it will be blocked up altogether. You will be unable to go on at all. You took it easy, once, but what will you do now? You neglected duty, you chose to put off the service of the day and, at last, your sins have found you out—nobody will have you and you are a burden to yourself! Now have you found a hedge of thorns in your way. This is clear enough and it has been seen by most of us in actual life in several cases.

The other Truth of the text is equally clear— a righteous man’s way becomes plain— “The way of the righteous is made plain.” When a man, by the Holy Spirit’s gracious influence upon him, is made thoroughly truthful, thoroughly honest, so that he walks in his integrity, it is most pleasant to note how soon, by some means or other, his way opens up before him. We have seen good men in great straits and adversities—their own conscientiousness may appear to narrow their course and, of course, the depressions of business fall upon righteous men as much as upon the unrighteous. But in the long run you will see that if a man keeps straight and walks in strict integrity and faith, the Lord will make darkness light before him and crooked things straight. Ask the aged man of God, whose life has been full of Grace and truth, and he will tell you that though he was brought low, the Lord has helped him.

He will interest you with his account of the struggles of his younger days and how, when he had his large family of little children about him, he was tempted to do a questionable act, but was enabled to hold fast his integrity and found, in his steadfastness, the way to success. Those stories, which some of us heard as boys at our father’s fireside, or which our grandfathers told us before they were taken up to Heaven, are, to some of us, heirlooms treasured as tokens for good, and proofs of the faithfulness of God. We know that integrity and uprightness are the best preservatives. If we will not put forth our hand unto iniquity even during the worst pinch, we shall come forth as the light.

But if in trouble you try to get out of it by indirect means, you will involve yourself in tenfold difficulty. It is far better to be poor than dishonest. Yes, it is better to die than to dishonor our profession. It is God’s business to provide for us and He will do it. We are not to be too fast in providing for ourselves. We must not command the stones to be made bread by forestalling the Lord in that which is His own peculiar province. Remember our Lord’s answer to the tempter, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” We shall dwell in the land and, verily, we shall be fed, but how this is to be accomplished is the Lord’s business rather than ours. “The way of the righteous is made plain.” Only wait and watch—and you shall see the salvation of God.

Thus I have set before you the moral or temporal meaning of the text, commending it earnestly to the consideration of all, especially of men of business, begging them to see to it that there is no neglect about any part of their calling, for a Christian’s business ought to be the best done of any man’s in the world.

See to it, also, that there is no swerving from righteousness in anything that you do, for the safest and surest road is the way of truth, the path of righteousness. If you keep close to God and make Him your Guide even unto death, you will have no need to trouble yourself about your way—the Lord will make it plain.

II. Now I come to THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF THE TEXT and may the Lord anoint our eyes by His Holy Spirit that we may see!  
Take the first side of the text, the spiritual sluggard—what is said of him? His way is “as a hedge of thorns.” I gather from the opposition of the text that the spiritual sluggard’s way is the way of unbelief because the opposite of his way is the way of the righteous. Now, the way of the righteous is the way of faith—“We walk by faith.” Therefore the spiritual sluggard’s way is the way of unbelief.  
I will describe him. He has a way, for he is not altogether dead to religious matters. He hears sermons and attends the House of God. He sometimes reads his Bible and he often has a correct notion of what the Gospel is. But he fails in faith—he has not faith enough in the truth of the things which he professes to believe, to ever be affected by them in his daily life, or in his truest feelings. If he did really believe these things to be true, his life would not be slothful. When a man believes that there is a Hell, he labors to escape from it. When a man verily believes that there is a Heaven, unless he is demented, he has an ambition to partake in its glories! When a man really and truly accepts the fact of his having sinned against a righteous God and believes in the evil of sin, he pines to be cleansed from sin. When he heartily believes in the power of the precious blood of Christ to make him clean, he seeks to be washed therein, that he may be pure before the sight of God. The spiritual sluggard does not believe after that practical fashion. He says, “It is true,” but he acts as if it were false. He is too much a sluggard to become an infidel—he is too lethargic to argue against the Truth of God which condemns him—he nods assent. It is the nod of sleep.  
We might have more hope for him if he would begin to contradict. If he would think enough of the Truth of God to endeavor to justify his unbelief of it, we might hope that he had opened one of his eyes! But while he continues to cry “Yes! Oh, yes,” and to do all that is proper, but nothing that is decided and earnest—we have small hope for him. He prays at times, but it is a dreamy devotion. He has not faith enough in prayer to continue in it till he is heard in Heaven. He listens to the preaching of the Gospel, but as a sluggard, he lets what is said go in one ear and out the other—he grasps nothing, feels nothing, retains nothing. He is often on the verge of some good and great thing, but it ends in smoke. He has resolved in real earnest to look to his eternal state and seek the Lord with all his might. But his resolves are frail as bubbles. If you were to tell him that in seven years’ time he would be just as dull, stupid and sinful as he now is, he would angrily deny it—but such will be the case. He intends only to delay a little longer and then he is going to entertain the great question in the most serious manner. If I recollect rightly, he was in the same mind 20 years ago and I fear he will continue in the same mind when death comes upon the scene and ends all his dreaming! I fear that of him it will be true, “in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.” He will not open his eyes till then.  
I must not forget that this sluggard did once make an effort. He gave up one of his vices—that is to say, he almost did so, but he soon returned to it. He was a drunk and he went the length of not drinking quite so much. Perhaps he even went so far as not drinking at all, which was a good thing for him, but then he made up for his self-denial in that direction by indulgence in another way. If you cannot sink a ship by a hole in one place, you can do so by boring a hole in another. While some go down to perdition by one sin, others destroy themselves by another. The sluggard spent all his strength in tinkering one breakage and he had no energy left to mend a second flaw. He was so much asleep that he murmured in his dream, “Well done! I am a splendid fellow.”  
But when a friend shook him, he yawned and turned over—and went to sleep again. He was almost awakened, but he preferred to doze till a more convenient season. He heard a sermon the other day upon, “One thing you lack,” and he cried, “That’s me!” and slumbered again. He heard a discourse upon judgment to come and he at once admitted the absolute need of being prepared for death and judgment. But he did not prepare and, in all probability, he will die in his sins. The man has no resolution, no soul for action, no spirit for anything good. He is given up to slumber! He always pleads for a little more folding of the arms to sleep. He will, he will—he assures you that he will wake up—but he never does. Oh, that by the Grace of God this dreamer could be awakened! His way is the way of unbelief and he keeps to it with a deadly persistence which must end in destruction.  
Now, that way is full of thorns. It is a very hard way. I will show you, in a minute, that it is so. People who are in this state cannot quite give up religion and yet they have never really taken to it. Do you notice how hard everything is to them? To begin with, ministers always preach such dreadfully long sermons. The sermon is not long to you who feed upon the Word of God, but to those who sleep at the table it is intolerably tedious! The whole service is dreary to them, though to Believers it is bright and happy. And Sundays! To me the Sabbath is the pearl of the week, but to these sluggards in religion, it is a day of gloom. We hear them speak of “dreary English Sundays.” They piteously describe the closed shops, theatres and museums—and enquire what a man is to do in so sad a case! To go to church? To hear of the best things? This is much too hard a task for sluggish minds. Poor dear souls!  
As for a Prayer Meeting, they never condescend to consider such a gathering—it is too dreary! Or if, perchance, they go, nobody ever prays to please them—their ideal of devotion is not reached! Ask them whether they read the Bible at home. They might do so if they were fogged to it, but the Bible does not interest them and it requires so much thought. They cannot muster mind enough for it. To us it is a Book which sparkles with the most Divine Truths of God—it is the Book of God! The Lord of books! There is no volume like it. But to these people, Bible reading is hard labor and worse. Prayer is also slavery. Repentance is impossible. The revival plan of “Believe and live,” without any repentance—they rather take to for a time—till they begin to understand more of what the evangelist means.  
They go into the Enquiry Room and get “converted” in five minutes— and have done with godliness for the rest of their lives! Possibly some time after they hear of a sanctification to be had in the same manner, they believe themselves to be perfect and feel that there is no more need for watchfulness or striving, for sin is dead and they are perfect! When they are told what repentance and faith really are and that these are for daily, life-long use—and that we must every day watch and strive against temptation, without and within, they disappear from among our hearers, for they do not wish to trouble themselves with so great an enterprise. If they could be carried to Heaven in a sedan chair, or trip there in their slippers, they would be glad of it. But to go on pilgrimage, up hill and down dale, is another matter. Their way is as full of difficulties as a thorn-hedge is full of prickles!  
Moreover, it is full of perplexities. Do you ever meet with these sluggards? I do. They sometimes come to see me and when they come, this is their style of talk. They say, “Well, Sir, I have heard about believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Can you tell me what it means?” I explain that it is a simple acceptance of God’s testimony and trust in the Lord Jesus. Do you understand that? They say, “Yes.” Then they raise a difficulty, which I explain. Do you quite comprehend that? “Yes, Sir, I see that, but”—and then follows a further doubt. This also is cleared up in time to make room for another. Again and again it is—“Yes, but then\_\_\_\_.” Thus I continue grinding wind by the hour together! Their minds are bottomless buckets and their memories are bags full of holes—it is very unprofitable work to endeavor to fill them. I seem to be trying to catch a fox. I stop up its hole, but it is out at another opening! This also I stop and 50 more and, to my surprise, I hear the shout, “Hark, away! My fox has gone across country.”  
He is further off than ever. It was great folly on my part to imagine that I could bring him to earth, or dig him out of his burrow. These people are great at questions, the whole difficulty really lying in their unbelief—they are unwilling to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! When a man does not wish to believe, reasons for doubting gather about him in swarms, like flies. Besides, it is such a fashionable thing, you know, to doubt. You are aware that all the cultured folk display great facility in fashioning doubts, while those who believe God to be true and do not mistrust His Word are common-place persons of a very low order of mind. You smile, but this is a very convincing argument to our sleepy friend. No great logic is needed to lull a sluggard to repose. It is the fashion to doubt and you may as well be dead and buried as out of fashion! These sluggish people will not take the trouble to sift evidence. They have no wish to be driven to turn from their sins and seek a Savior and be reconciled to God. This would take too much exertion and involve too many self-denials and heart-searching. They prefer a way full of perplexities to the new and living way! They choose a thorn-hedge rather than the King’s Highway of righteousness! Nor is this all. In addition to perplexities, their way becomes full of miseries. The sermon which pleases the Believer and cheers his heart, saddens the sluggard. The prayer, which is to us a delight, is to them a cause of anxiety if they enter into it at all. The sight of bread is a great joy to a hungry man, but suppose he does not eat it and there it stands? Well, then, it becomes an instrument of torture fit for Tantalus to use! I should suppose that nothing could aggravate thirst much more than the mirage of the desert when the traveler sees a stream of bright, sparkling water rippling at his feet and yet not a drop is there. His fancy torments his thirst! So, for some of you to hear of the Feast of Love and to see the joy of the children of God must be horrible if you, yourselves, have neither part nor lot therein. That promise quoted by the preacher—how it must have grated on your ears if you knew its value and yet did not embrace it by faith!  
Painful is this predicament. You are sadly placed, for you enjoy neither good nor evil. If you were to go straight out into the world and plunge into the pleasures of it, you would, at least, know one side of life. But you dare not do that—you have too much conscience, too much training in religious ways to run with the worldling in his wantonness—so that you neither know the pleasures of the world, nor the pleasures of Grace! You feel restraints from both sides, but you know not the liberties of either side. Between two stools you come to the ground. Neither Heaven nor Hell is on your side! Both saints and sinners are shy of you and so your way is as a thorn hedge. It is dreadful for a man to have enough conscience to know that he is lost, but not enough Grace to find salvation! To have enough religion to make him uncomfortable in sin, but not enough to make him happy in Christ! I know some who continue in sin and yet at night have terrible dreams and wake up in a cold sweat of fear. They dare not think of the course of conduct, which, nevertheless, they persevere in—they go onward to destruction and, by-and-by, they will take a leap in the dark because they are too idle to wake up. O mighty Grace, wake these sluggards, or else they will sleep themselves into eternal misery!  
“The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns.” One of these days he will come to the end of his way and he will see that hedge of thorns blocking him out of Heaven—blocking him out from God! His sins, like a thick hedge, will stand in front of him as he is about to die and will shut him out from hope, while his despairing soul will cry, “Oh, that I could find mercy! Oh, that I could find deliverance!” Recollection of wasted opportunities, of a rejected Gospel and of despised Sabbaths will come up before him—and through that thorn hedge his naked soul will be unable to force its way into hope and peace! God grant that we may not be among the sluggards at the end of the way!  
We will now consider the other side of the text very briefly and notice that the righteous man’s way shall be made plain. This is a cheering promise, especially to any of you who are walking in the dark at this time. “The way of the righteous is made plain.” The Lord will see to this. The way of the righteous is the way of faith. They see Him who is invisible and they trust in God. They look for their pardon to the precious blood of Jesus Christ. In fact, they look to God in Christ Jesus for everything! Their way has impediments in it—crooked things are in it, mountains are in it, and deep gulfs—but see the beauty of the promise, “The way of the righteous is made plain.” Difficulties shall be removed, the valleys shall be exalted and the mountains and hills shall be laid low. The crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain. Child-like confidence in God shall march on as upon a raised causeway and always find a road for itself.  
Faith travels by an unseen track to honor and glory, neither shall anything turn her aside. Her way may not be plain at this moment, but it shall be made so. God is with those who trust in Him and what or whom shall we fear when God is with us? In due time the hand of the Lord shall be seen. To the moment the Divine Power will time its interposition. The Red Sea was not divided a single second before Israel passed through it. The Jordan only flowed apart when the feet of the Lord’s priests actually came to the water’s brim. Tomorrow’s difficulties are real and tomorrow’s Grace will be real. When tomorrow comes, sufficient unto the day shall be the Divine help thereof. When you come to the sepulcher, you shall find that the stone is rolled away from its mouth. In due time the way of the righteous shall be made plain and that is all the righteous should desire or expect.  
Sometimes the way of the righteous is mysterious and perplexing. I have known the best of men say, “I long to do right and, by God’s Grace, I will not stoop to anything which is evil—but which of the two ways now before me is the right way? Each of them seems to be both hopeful and doubtful. Which way shall I turn?” This is a condition which causes great anxiety to one who is deeply earnest to be right. Oh, for an Oracle which could plainly indicate the path! Superstition and fanaticism shall not be gratified by either voice or dream, but yet the way of the righteous shall be made plain. Brothers and Sisters, when you do not know your way, ask your Guide. Stand still and pray. If you cannot find the way upon the chart, commit yourself to the Divine guidance by prayer. Down on your knees and cry to the Lord! Few go wrong when they pray over their movements and use the judgment which God has given them. The last is not to be omitted, for I have known persons pray about a matter which was perfectly clear to anyone with half a grain of sense. In order to escape from an evident but unpleasant duty, they have talked about praying over it. Where a plain command is given, an unmistakable finger points the way and hesitation is rebellion! Sluggards make prayer an excuse for doing nothing. On the other hand, willful people make up their mind and then pray—and this is sheer hypocrisy!  
God is insulted by prayers which only mean that the petitioner would be glad of Divine allowance to do wrong—glad of an event which might be twisted into guidance in a doubtful direction! Such prayers God will never hear. But the way of the righteous shall be made plain. The path of faith shall end in peace. The way of holiness shall conduct to happiness. Your way may be so dark that you cannot see your hand before you, but God will, before long, make it bright as noonday. At this moment all the wise men in the world might not be able to predict your path, but the Lord will direct you. Only trust in the Lord and do good—and He will light your candle. Yes, He will cause His sun to shine upon you. There is a blessing in the very act of waiting upon God—and out of it comes this joy—that your way shall be made plain.  
I find one excellent translation runs thus—“The way of the righteous is a highway.” The righteous do not follow the blind alleys and back streets of craft and policy—“The way of the righteous is a highway”—it is the open road where none may challenge the traveler. It is the King’s Highway where the passenger has a right to be. It is a grand thing to feel that in your position in life you are where you have a right to be and that you came there by no trespass, or breaking of hedges—that you are doing what you have a right to do before the living God and none may criticize you. He that is in the King’s Highway is under the King’s protection and he that stops him by daylight shall come under the strong hand of the law. Our King has said, “No lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon.”  
He that is on the King’s highway will come to a good end, for the King has completed that way so that it does not fall short, but leads to a city of habitations whose Builder and Maker is God. Oh, to be right with God! Yes, to be right with Him in our daily life and private walk! Let that be the case and our way shall be judged of by the Lord as His own royal highway and upon it the light of His love shall shine so that it shall become brighter and brighter unto the perfect day!  
O God of great mercy, keep us in Your fear and through Your Grace lead us, in imitation of Your dear Son, to abide in holiness! And to Your name be praise forever and ever! Amen,

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Isaiah 35 and Hebrews 12:1-13.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—241, 210, 126.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #849 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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UNSOUND SPIRITUAL TRADING  
NO. 849

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 10, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes; but the Lord weighs the spirits.”  
Proverbs 16:2.**

During the last two years some of the most notable commercial reputations have been hopelessly destroyed. Men in the great world of trade who were trusted for hundreds of thousands of pounds, around whose characters there hovered no cloud of suspicion, nor even the shadow of a doubt, have proved themselves reckless of honesty and devoid of principle. The fiery trial has been too much for the wood, hay and stubble of many a gigantic firm. Houses of business which seemed to be founded upon a rock and to stand as fast as the commonwealth of England itself, have been shaken to their foundations and have caved in with a tremendous crash!

On all sides we see the wrecks of great reputations and colossal fortunes. There is wailing in the palaces of sham and desolation in the halls of pretense. Bubbles are bursting, windbags are collapsing, paint is cracking, gilt is peeling off! Probably we have more of this to come, more revelations still to be made of apparent wealth which covered insolvency as a rich paper may cover a mud wall—crafty schemes which duped the public with profits never made and tempted them to advance to deeper speculations—even as the mirage of the desert mocks the traveler. We have seen in the public prints, month after month, fresh discoveries of the modes of financing adopted by the villainy of this present age to accomplish robbery respectably and achieve felony with credit. We have been astonished and amazed at the vile tricks and shameless devices to which men of eminence have condescended!

And yet we have been compelled to hear justifications of gigantic frauds and have even been compelled to believe that the perpetrators of them did not consider themselves to be acting disreputably—their own previous successes and the altogether low state of morality having lulled them into a state in which conscience, if not dead, was thoroughly asleep. I say we may probably have yet more to see of this school of dishonesty, but it is a pity that we should, and altogether needless, for the whole trade of finance is now to be examined by the diligent student with models and living examples—more than enough to illustrate every single portion of the art.

Some ages may have been great in science, others in art, and others in war—but our era excels every other in the proficiency of its rascals! This is the classic period of chicanery, the golden age of fraud! Let a man have a base heart and a seared conscience and a plausible mode of address, and let him resolve upon deluding the public out of millions—he need not travel to learn the readiest method—he can find examples near at home, among high professors and the great ones of the earth!

My Brethren, these noises of falling towers on the right. These sounds of crumbling battlements on the left. These cries of the shipwreck everywhere along the coasts of trade have not only awakened within me many thoughts relative to themselves and the rottenness of modern society, but they have made me muse upon similar catastrophes evermore occurring in the spiritual world. Unrecorded in the journals and unmourned by unregenerate men, there are failures and frauds and bankruptcies of soul most horrible to think upon! There is a spiritual trading just as pretentious, and apparently just as successful, as your vaunted limited liability juggle—and really just as rotten and as sure to end in hopeless overthrow.

Speculation is a spiritual vice as well as a commercial one—trading without capital is common in the religious world—and puffery and deception are everyday practices. The outer world is always the representative of the inner—the life which clusters round the Exchange illustrates that which gathers within the Church—and if our eyes were opened and our ears were able to hear, the sights and the sounds of the spirit world would far more interest us and sadden us than the doings which begin in the directors’ boardroom and end we know not where. We would see, at this moment, colossal religious fortunes melting into abject spiritual poverty. We would see high professors, much reverenced and held in esteem, brought into shame and everlasting contempt. We would see the wealthy in Divine matters, whom men have unwisely trusted as their guides and counselors as to their souls’ best interests, unmasked and proved to be deceitful through and through.

I seem, at this moment, to be peering into the world of spiritual things and I see many a Babel tower tottering and ready to fall! I see many a fair tree decaying at the heart—many a blooming cheek undermined by disease. Yes, a sound comes to my ear of men in the Church, apparently rich and increased in goods, who are naked and poor and miserable—and great men whose towering glories are but a fading flower! There always have been such. There are many now and there will be to the end. The supply of deceivers is sure to be maintained, since the text tells us that all the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes. There is a propensity in human nature which leads men, even when they are most wrong, to judge themselves most right.

The text at the same time suggests the terrible conclusion to which all self-deception will certainly come, for the judgment of man concerning himself is not final—there comes a day when the Lord who weighs the spirits will reverse the verdict of a perjured conscience and make the man to stand no longer in the false light which his conceit has thrown around him, but in the true light in which all his fancied glory shall vanish as a dream.

Traveling some time ago in an iron steamboat to the Continent, the captain told me that the compass was far from trustworthy where so much iron was on every side, and that sometimes, when, so far as he knew, he had steered correctly, he had found himself very considerably off his course. Though the compass was fixed aloft, so as to be as much as possible out of the region of the metallic attraction, yet the deflection and aberrations in the case of his own compass had been occasionally most remarkable.

In like manner our conscience, originally, as it came from God was, no doubt, an exceedingly correct standard of right and wrong. And if we had sailed by it, we would have reached the haven safely enough. But conscience is now placed in connection with a depraved nature which forbids its accurate working. Now, if when the compass erred, the laws of Nature would vary to make up for its defects, the aberrations would not matter. But if the man is misled by the perverted needle, he may unexpectedly be upon a rock and will be as surely wrecked as if the helmsman had neglected the compass altogether! So, if God’s Law could be shaped to suit the errors of our judgment, it might not matter—but the Laws of God stand sternly and inflexibly the same and if we deviate from the right way through this false judgment of ours, we shall be none the less guilty and we shall find our fate to be none the less terrible.

Therefore, I do with a greater vehemence and earnestness, this morning, on your account and with more brokenness and humility of spirit on my own, approach this matter, desiring to speak with various classes among you, urging you not to be so flattered by your own conceptions of your position as to get out of the course in which you ought to steer. I beseech you to remember that however well you may cajole yourselves with the idea that your way is right and pure, yet the inevitable Judgment Day will come to end all delusions, however pleasant.

Spiritual traders, I speak to you this day, reminding you of the great audit which hastens on—and warning you lest you make a fair show for awhile and then in the end come down with a crash. I am sure there is much rotten spiritual trading abroad and to save you from it, I pray the Holy Spirit to help me speak plainly and searchingly this morning. I intend, as God shall help me, to address the text to different characters. We will endeavor to be practical throughout the sermon and to push home vital Truths of God with great earnestness upon each one.

I. THE WAYS OF THE OPENLY WICKED are pure in their own eyes, but the Lord will weigh their spirits. At first sight this statement seems to be rash. The drunkard, the blasphemer, the Sabbath-breaker—can it be that these people are right in their own eyes? Solomon was a profound student of human nature and when he penned this sentence you may rest assured he knew what he wrote. They who are best acquainted with mankind will tell you that self-righteousness is not the peculiar sin of the virtuous, but that most remarkably it flourishes best where there appears to be the least soil for it.

Those men who distinctly and plainly, in the judgment of their fellows, have no righteousness in which they can glory, are the very persons who, when you come to search into the depth of their nature, are relying upon a fancied goodness which they dream about and rest upon. Take the outwardly immoral for a moment and begin to talk with them about their sins and you will find that they are accustomed to speak of their faults under very different names from those which Scripture and right reason would use. They do not call drunkenness, “drunkenness,” for instance, but it is, “taking a glass.” They would not, for a moment, advocate downright blasphemy, but it is, “strong language which a fellow must use if he’s to get on,” or, “letting slip an ugly word or so, because you were plagued so.”

They disguise vice to themselves as pleasure. They label their uncleanness as gaiety, their filthiness as lightheartedness. They speak of their sins as though they had no enormity about them, but were trifles light as air—if wrong at all—themes, rather, for the feather lash of ridicule than for the scourge of reproof. Moreover, the most of them will claim that they are not so bad as others. There is some one point in their character in which they do not go so far as some of their fellows and this is a grand point and a vast comfort to them!

They will confess that they are sinners, not meaning it for a moment— and if you come to particulars and details, if they are in an honest frame of mind—they will recede step by step, admitting fault after fault, till they come to a particular point and there they take their footing with virtuous indignation. “Here I am right beyond all rebuke, and even deserving of praise. So far my sin has come, but how thoroughly sound at heart must I be that I have never permitted it to advance further!” This boasted line is frequently so singular and mysterious in its direction that no one but the man himself can see any reason or consistency in it! And the satirist who shoots at folly as it flies, finds abundant objects for his arrows. Yet to that man, himself, his pausing there is the saving clause of his life! He looks to that as the sheet anchor of his character!

The woman whose character long since has gone, yet boasts some limit to her licentiousness which is merit in her esteem—merit sufficient to make all her ways pure in her own eyes. Moreover, the worst of men conceive that they have some excellences and virtues which, if they do not quite atone for their faults, yet at any rate greatly diminish the measure of blame which should be awarded them. The man is a spendthrift, “But, Sir, he was always free-hearted and nobody’s enemy but his own.” The man, it is true, would curse God, but then, well, it was a mere habit—he always was a dashing blade, but he meant no harm—and besides, he never was such a liar as So-and-So! And, indeed, he scorned to tell a lie upon any business subject.

Another has cheated his creditors, but he was such a nice man! And, although, poor fellow, he never could keep accounts or manage money matters, yet he always had a good word for everybody. The immoral man, if he sits down to write his own character and summons all the partiality he is capable of, will say, “I am a sad dog in some respects, sowing a great many wild oats, but I have a fine character underlying it all which will, no doubt, come up some day, so that my end shall be bright and glorious notwithstanding all.” That last point that I hinted at is very often the righteousness of men who have no other, namely, their intention, one of these days, to amend much and improve.

To make up for present poverty of righteousness they draw a bill upon the future. Their promises and resolves are a sort of paper currency on which they imagine they can trade for eternity. “Is it not often done in business?” they say. “A man who has no present income may have a reversionary interest in an estate. He gets advances thereon—why should not we?” Thus the open sinner eases his all too ready conscience with the imaginary picture of his future repentance and amendment—and begins to feel himself already meritorious and bids defiance to all the threats of the Word of God. I may be speaking to some to whom these remarks are very applicable and if so, I pray that they may lead to serious thought.

My Hearer, you must know—or at any rate a few sober moments of reflection would make you know—that there is no truth in the pleas, excuses and promises with which you now quiet your conscience! Your peace is founded on a lie and is upheld by the Father of Lies! While you are continuing recklessly to break the Laws of God in your ordinary life and to take pleasure in sin, you most assuredly are under the anger of God—and you are heaping up wrath against the Day of Wrath—and when the measure of your iniquity is full, then shall you receive the terrible reward of transgression. The Judge of all the earth will not pay regard to the idle past promises which now stultify your conscience.

He is not a man that He should be flattered as you flatter and deceive yourself. You would not have the impertinence to tell your excuses to Him! Do you dare kneel down, now, and speak to the great God in Heaven, and tell Him all these fine things with which you are now smoothing your downward road? I hope you have not come to such a brazen pitch of impertinence as that! But if you have, let me remind you of that second sentence of my text, “The Lord weighs the spirits.” A just and true balance will be used upon you before long!

When the Lord puts such as you are into the scale, there will be no need for delay—the sentence will go forth at once and from it there shall be no appeal—“You are weighed in the balances and found wanting.” Ah, then, my Hearer, when that conscience of yours wakes up, how it will torment you! It sleeps now, drugged by the opiates of your ignorance and perverseness—but it will wake up soon like a giant refreshed with new wine—and then with strength and fury unthought of before, it will pull down the temple of your peace about your ears, even as Samson smote the Philistines.

An awakened conscience in another world is the worm that dies not and the fire which never can be quenched. O Sirs, it is a dreadful thing to be delivered up to one’s own conscience when that conscience is enlisted on the side of right! Old tyrants had their terrible headsmen with grim masks across their brows who carried the bright and gleaming axe! The old inquisitors had their executioners arrayed in gowns of wool and hoods—from the loopholes of which their fierce eyes gleamed like wolves! But no tormentors, no fiends of Hell, can ever prove more terrible to a man than his conscience when its lash is corded with truth and weighted with honesty!

Did you ever spell the burning letters of that word, remorse? Within the bowels of that single word there lies Hell with all its torments! O Sirs, when you are but a little aroused, now, by an earnest sermon or a sudden death, how wretched you feel and how desperately you plunge into fresh gaiety and wantonness to drown your thoughts! But what will you do with thoughts which no dissipation can drown? What will you do with remembrances which no mirth can banish? What will it be to be haunted by your sins forever and forever? What will it be to have it made sure to you that from the guilt and punishment no way of escape can ever be discovered?

O you who fondly dream that the broad road to destruction is the upward path to celestial bliss, I beseech you learn wisdom and hearken to the voice of instruction! Consider your ways and seek unto the precious blood which alone can blot our your sins!

II. A second class I will now address. THE WAYS OF THE GODLESS MAN are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits. The godless man is often exceedingly upright and moral in his outward behavior to his fellow men. He has no religion, but he glories in a multitude of virtues of another kind. It is unhappily true that there are many who have much that is amiable about them, who nevertheless are unamiable and unjust towards the one Being who ought to have the most of their love, and who should have been respected in their conduct first of all.

How often have I met with the ungodly man who has said, “You talk to me about fearing God! I know Him not, neither do I regard Him, but I am much better than those who do.” He will sometimes say, “Your religion I look upon as a mere farce—I regard Christians as being made up of two sorts—knaves and fools. They are either duped by others, or else for purposes of their own they are deceiving others. Their talk about God, Sir, it is all cant. With some of them I grant you it is not quite that, but then they have too few brains to be able to discover that they are deceived. However, take the whole thing for all in all, it is all a piece of nonsense! If people just behave as they ought towards their neighbors and do their duty in their station in life, that is enough.”

Yes, and there are in this city of London, thousands and hundreds of thousands, who think this to be good logic and, indeed, who open their eyes with astonishment if for a single moment you are even thought to contradict their statement that such a style of life is the best and most commendable! And yet, if they would but think, nothing can be more unsound than their life and its supposed excellence. Here is a man created by his God and he is put down among his fellow creatures—surely, the first duty that he owes is towards his Creator! His life depends entirely upon that Creator’s will—it must be his first duty to have respect to Him in whose hands his breath is!

But this man not only refuses to be obedient to the Law of his Creator and have regard to Him in his daily actions, but he turns round to his neighbors, who are mere creatures like himself, and he says, “I will have respect for you, but not to God. Any laws of the State which bind me in my relation to you I will obey. But any laws which describe my relation to God, I will not consider except to ridicule and laugh at them. I will be obedient to any but to God! I will do the right thing to any but to the Most High! I have a sense of right and wrong, but I will restrict its action to my fellow men and that sense of right and wrong when it comes in relation to God I will utterly obliterate.”

Now, if there were no God, this man were wise enough. But as there is a God who created us and who shall surely come in the clouds of Heaven to call every one of us to account for the things which we have done in the body, what do you think will be the judgment dealt out to this unfaithful servant? Will he dare to say unto his King, “I knew that You were my Maker and Lord, but I considered that if I served my fellow servants it would be enough. I knew what was right to them, but I disregarded the doing of anything that was right towards You”? Shall not the answer be, “You wicked and faithless servant, you knew what was right and wrong and yet towards Me, having first claim upon you, you have acted unjustly and while you would bow your neck to others, you would not yield to Me. Depart from Me, I know you not. You did not know Me, neither do I know you. I weigh you in the balances and I find you utterly reprobate. You are cast away forever.”

O ungodly man, let this warning, if you are here this morning, sound in your heart as well as your ears—no longer set yourself in defiance to your Creator or live in negligence of Him, but say, “I will arise, and go unto my Father. I will confess that I have forgotten Him and despised Him and I will seek peace through the blood of Jesus Christ!”

III. Further, I shall address myself to another class of persons. In all ages of the Church and especially at this time, there are numbers of persons who are OUTWARDLY RELIGIOUS, but whose religion ends there. Now, it seems to some of us amazingly strange that a man should be acting viciously, should be living wickedly and yet should think that his ways are pure, because he takes a sacrament or attends a certain place of worship!

I must confess that to my mind this seems a very strange phenomenon—that there should exist men of intelligence in this world who know that their conduct is altogether blameworthy and yet feel perfectly at ease because a chosen ritual has been diligently observed—as if bowing and scraping, singing or groaning could be a substitute for holiness of heart! Look at the Pharisee and tell me if he is not a moral wonder! He devours widows’ houses. He is ready to prey on everything that comes to hand. He is a detestable hypocrite, but the man is perfectly at ease because he has made broad the border of his garments! He is at ease because he fasts twice in the week and strains out gnats from the wine that he drinks!

He is quite content with himself and all his ways seem right, so right, indeed, that other men who are better than he, he passes by with contempt—afraid lest they should come between the wind and his nobility! He thanks God that he is not as other men, when, so far as you and I can judge, he is 10,000 fathoms deeper down in dark damnation in his horribly hypocritical character! Yet, Brothers and Sisters, some form or other of this is very common. All the ways of a man are pure unto him when he once imbibes the idea that ceremonial religion, or religious talk, or religious profession can make up for moral sin.

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, this evil may even creep in among ourselves! Let us not be so swift in condemning the Pharisee, when, perhaps, the same sin may pollute our own souls! I have known the man who was reckoned a sound Calvinist and believed in very high doctrine—but he lived a very unhallowed life. He despised, “Arminians,” as he chose to call them, though some of these despised ones lived very near to God and walked in holiness and integrity. The Arminian, indeed, godly man as he was, would be lost. But this self-righteous orthodox man, who could at the same time drink and cheat, thought that he should be saved because he had been able to see the truth of certain doctrines—which also the devil sees as well as he!

I have known another who thought he had a deep and memorable experience. He could talk by the yard of the depravity of his heart. Some people thought that he was able to talk about that very truly, for he proved it in his life! And yet, because he could repeat cant phrases and had picked up certain rich expressions of experience from books, he verily thought within himself that he was not only as good as others, but a very pattern for others to copy! Right and left such men as these will hurl curses and anathemas upon the best and most earnest of saints! They are the men—wisdom will die with them! Holiness being dead already with them, it is no wonder that wisdom should die, too!

Ah, take care lest you and I drink in the same spirit in another shape! Ah, Preacher, your preaching may be all well and good—it may be sound enough and right enough and it may be even edifying to the people of God—and arousing to the unconverted. But remember, God will not judge you by your sermons, but by your spirit, for He weighs not your words, but your motive, your desire, your object in preaching the Gospel! Deacon of the Church, you may have walked in all honor for many years and may be universally respected, and your office may have been well maintained in all the outward duties of it. But if your heart is not right. If some secret sin is indulged. If there is a canker upon your profession which none know but yourself—the Lord who weighs the spirit will make nothing of your deaconship and your carrying round the cups and bread at the communion—but you shall be found wanting and cast away!

You, too, Brother Elder, your labors and your prayers are nothing if the heart is evil. You may have visited others and instructed them, and been a judge of their state. Still, if you have not served God and His Church out of a pure desire for His Glory, you too, put into the scales, shall be rejected with abhorrence! I often pray—I wish I prayed it, however, more— that none of us here may be preached into the idea that we are all right if we are all wrong. It is not your coming to the Tabernacle! It is not your joining the Church! It is not your being baptized! It is not your attending Prayer Meetings, or your doing anything, that will be the slightest matter in this business—it is your truly giving up your hearts to God and your living in conformity with your profession!

And unless the Grace of God is really given you, helping you to do this, your ways may be pure unto you, because of your outward profession, but the Lord who weighs the spirits will make short work of these bubbles! He will break this confectionery! He will smash to pieces these shams and leave the man who thought he would have a palace over his head throughout eternity, to sit down and shiver among the ruins of his Babylon and cry out and weep and wail among dragons and the fiends!

IV. But to pass on, there is another character that must be addressed. “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,” and so are THE WAYS OF THE COVETOUS PROFESSOR. It is marvelous to some of us that a man whose object in life is merely to get money and who withholds what he has from the cause of God, should take up the profession of being a Christian, because none of all the vices is more contrary to true religion than covetousness!

Where will you find an instance of a single saint in Scripture that ever fell into covetousness? Into all other sins have they fallen, but into this one, I do not remember that one child of God mentioned in Scripture ever descended. Grace may exist where there are many occasional sins, but never where there is abiding covetousness. Think of Paul’s words: “Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionists shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

Luther used to say, “I have been tempted to all sins but covetousness.” This he so detested that he distributed gifts made to him lest he should have his portion in this world. Adams, in his book on Peter, well remarks, “Noah was once drunk with wine, but never with the world. Lot twice incestuous, never covetous. Peter denied his Master thrice, but it was not the love but the fear of the world that brought him to it. Once David was overcome by the flesh, never by covetousness. Why did not these purge themselves from adultery, anger and the like? Because into these sins the infirmities of a saint may fall—but if once into covetousness, there is nothing of a saint left—not even the name. Covetousness has the brand of God’s hate full on its brow.”

“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” And when a professor shows the love of the world in its grossest shape—when he gives way to being the slave of “Mammon, the least erect of all the fiends,”—he bears evidence to all who judge righteously according to Scripture, that the love of God is not in him, and cannot be in him—the two things are inconsistent! Yet, strange to say, we know not a few whose way seems very pure to them. They treat shamefully here and there—now their servants and now their customers. The widow and the fatherless would not be safe from them, if they could pick their bones. What they scrape together is held with an iron grasp. Let souls be damned, they shall have no missionary sent to them by their money!

Let this London fester with sin! Let it be covered with the ulcers of the most fearful depravity—they are never stirred to give any assistance towards the healing of the city’s wounds! And yet, while their certain damnation awaits them and their condemnation stares them in the face as plainly as the sun in the heavens—yet their ways seem pure unto themselves! Strange it should be so, but the Lord weighs the spirits and what a weighing that shall be, when men who escape Church censure because theirs was a sin of which the Church could not deal with, shall be found guilty of it and God shall cast them away! Vain will be their pretensions that they ate and they drank in God’s house, for the answer shall come, “I was hungry and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; naked and you clothed Me not. I was sick and in prison and you did not minister unto Me. Verily I say unto you, I know you not!”

O let this Truth of God, for Truth of God it is, pierce like a two-edged sword right through the hearts of any of you who are beginning to yield to this damning vice! Cry unto God that as He gives you substance, you may use it for His glory! Ask Him that you may never perish with a millstone about your neck—for even if that killing weight is made of gold, it will be no better perishing for all that!

V. Another character must have a word also. We will now note THE WAYS OF THE WORLDLY PROFESSOR. It is amazing how some people, making a profession of religion, square it with their conscience that they live as they do live. You could not with a microscope detect any difference between them and common worldlings, and yet they think there is a vast difference and they would be insulted if you did not allow it. Here they come up to the House of God today, but to what amusements have they been during the week? How are they dressed? How are their children educated? Is there any family prayer? Is there anything in the household that is Christian?

Look at them in business! Do not they trade precisely like those who make no pretensions to religion? Ask their workpeople or just go yourselves and watch them—see if they cannot tell white lies as well as others—whether they are not for all the world as alike as two peas are to one another, like other unregenerate and unconverted people! And yet their ways seem very dear unto them, very pure, indeed, and their conscience does not trouble them in any way whatever. I have but this word to say in all affection to such, earnestly desiring that they may be plucked out of this fire, “the Lord will weigh the spirits.”

The whole of our life is known to Him. He will not judge us without book. When He comes to the account, He will not be like a judge who has to learn the facts. He will come to the last assize, having seen with those eyes of fire the secret thoughts, the private feelings of our life! God be merciful to us sinners, we may all of us say—but God especially save us from being like the ungodly.

VI. Yet another word, and this is addressed to all professors here, more or less. It is a solemn word concerning THE WAYS OF SECURE BACKSLIDERS. Do you not know, Brothers and Sisters, that very often our ways seem very pure to us when they are not? I have learned by experience, most painful to my own soul, that I am not in the least qualified to judge of my own spiritual health. I have thought myself gradually advancing in the ways of God when I have been going back. And I have had the conceit crossing my mind that I had now overcome a certain besetting sin, when to my surprise I had found it return with greater force than before.

Fellow Professor, you may be at this moment walking, as you think, very rightly and going off very well and comfortably, but let me ask you a few questions. Are you not less in private prayer than you used to be? Do you not now hurry over it? Do you not sometimes omit it altogether? Do you not frequently come from your closet without really having spoken to God, having merely gone through the form for the sake of quieting yourself? Your way may seem pure, but is it not foul when the Mercy Seat becomes neglected?

How about your Bible? Is that read as it once was and are the promises as sweet to you? Do they ever rise from the page and talk with you? Oh, but if your Bible is neglected, my Brother, you may be just as diligent in attending to the House of God as you used to be, but is not yours a sad state of decay? Let me come closer still. Is there the vitality about your profession that there used to be? There are some in this House, this morning, who, if they could speak, would tell you that, when to their great sorrow they fell into sin, it was because by little and little their piety began to lose its force and power of life.

They have been restored, but their bones still ache where they were once broken and I am sure they would say to their Brethren, “Take care of allowing a gracious spirit to evaporate, as it were, by slow degrees. Watch carefully over it, lest, settling upon your lees and not being emptied from vessel to vessel, you should by-and-by become carnally secure and afterwards fall into actual sin.” I ask some of my Brethren here, and I ask the question because I have asked it of my own soul and answered it very tearfully—may not some of us be growing hardened in heart with regard to the salvation of our fellow creatures? Do we not love less, now, than we used to, those who are crying to us, “Come over and help us”? Do we not think ourselves getting to be experienced saints? We are not the poor sinners we once used to be! We do not come broken-heartedly to the Mercy Seat as we did!

We begin to judge our fellow Christians and we think far less of them than we did years ago when we used almost to love the ground that the Lord’s saints did tread upon, thinking ourselves to be less than nothing in their sight. Now, if it were the case in others, that they were growing proud, or becoming cold, or waxing hard of heart, we should say of them, “they are in great danger!” But what about ourselves, if that is the case with us? For myself, I dread lest I should come to this pulpit merely to preach to you because the time has come and I must get through an hour, or an hour-and-a-half of worship. I dread getting to be a mere preaching machine without my heart and soul being exercised in this solemn duty! And I dread for you, my dear Friends who hear me constantly, lest it should be a mere piece of clock-work—that you should be in the seats at certain times in the week and should sit there and patiently hear the din which my noise makes in your ears!

We must have vital godliness and the vitality of it must be maintained and the force and energy of our religion must go on to increase day by day, or else, though our ways may seem to be very pure, the Lord will soon weigh our spirits to our eternal confusion! Do you know that to His people the Divine weighing in fatherly chastisement is rough work? He can put the soul into the scale to our own consciousness, and when we think that it weighs pounds, He can reveal to us that it does not even reach to ounces! “There,” says He, “see what you are!” And He begins to strip off the veil of self-conceit and we see the loathsomeness and falsehood of our nature and we are utterly dismayed!

Or perhaps the Lord does worse than that. He allows a temptation to come when we do not expect it and then the evil rolls up within us and we, who thought we were next door to the cherubs, find ourselves near akin to the demons! There we are, wondering, too, that such a wild beast should have slumbered in the den of our hearts, whereas we ought to have known it was always there and to have walked humbly with God and watched and guarded ourselves! Rest assured, Beloved, great falls and terrible mischief never come to a Christian at once—they are a work of slow degrees. And be assured, too, that you may glide down the smooth waters of the river and never dream of the Niagara beyond, and yet you may be speeding towards it!

An awful crash may yet come to the highest professor among us, that shall make the world ring with blasphemy against God and the Church to resound with bitter lamentations because the mighty have fallen! God will keep His own, but what if I should turn out not to be His own?! He will keep the feet of His saints, but what if I leave off watching and my feet should not be kept and I should turn out to be no saint of His, but a mere intruder into His family and a pretender to have what I never had? O God, through Christ Jesus, deliver each of us from this!

VII. Had time not failed me, I meant to speak concerning the seventh and last character, namely, THE WAYS OF THE DECEIVED MAN. There are, no doubt, many in the world who will never find out that their ways, which they thought to be so pure, are all foul, till they enter upon another world. There are some men who are Christians in all but this, that they have not true faith in Jesus. There are others who apparently are saved, but they have never been really born-again. There are many who have everything but the one thing necessary and who think they have that, and persuade their fellows that they have it.

How near a man may come to being a Christian and miss salvation is difficult to tell. But, certainly, he may come so near that no man, nor the angels of God shall be able to tell the difference between him and a saved soul—only God shall discern the difference when He comes to weigh the spirits. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. It is this. Let us come, my Brothers and Sisters, all of us to the place of confession of sin and acknowledge that we have broken God’s Law and deserve His just displeasure. Let us go, by the help of His Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of supplication, and let us confess the depravity of our nature and the error of our hearts. Let us pray that instead of thinking our ways pure, we may know them to be foul, may mourn over them and may learn to see them as God sees them—as crooked ways and wrong ways in themselves, not to be boasted of—but to be remembered with shame and confusion of face.

Blessed is he who is delivered from any rejoicing in himself! Happy is that man who can see no speck of soundness in his own flesh, but who feels that the leprosy of sin has covered him without and within from head to foot. And, Brothers and Sisters, if we come to such deep humiliation of spirit, the next word is this. Let us go together to the great salvation which God has provided in the Person of Christ Jesus. Come, linking hand in hand, saint and sinner, now all sinners consciously—let us stand and see where sin has pierced the body of the blessed Substitute with yonder bleeding wounds. Let us read the lines of grief written upon that blessed face! Let us gaze into the depth of His soul filled with an ocean of anguish, lashed to a tempest of suffering!

Let us believe that He suffered in our place and so roll our sin and our sinfulness on Him. Jesus, accept a sinner, a poor sinner still! Though these 20 years I have known Your name, yet still a sinner I come to You— as the chief of sinners! Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we are never safer, I am sure, never healthier, never in a better frame than when we are right flat down on the ground before the Cross! When you feel yourself to be utterly unworthy, you have hit the truth! When you think you are doing something and are rich and flourishing, you are poor and naked and miserable! But when you are consciously weak and sinful—then you are rich! When you are weak you are strong!

O God, save us from letting our ways seem pure in our own sight! We pray for Grace to weigh our spirits by the help of Your Spirit and condemn ourselves that we may not be condemned of the Lord. The Lord bless you richly and freely, for His name’s sake. Amen.

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 51.*Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #392 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Pro 16.20

**TRUST IN GOD—TRUE WISDOM**  
NO. 392

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 12, 1861, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“He that handles a matter wisely shall find good: and whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he.”  
Proverbs 16:20.**

WISDOM is man’s true path—that which enables him to accomplish best the end of his being and which, therefore, gives to him the richest enjoyment and the fullest play for all his powers. Wisdom is the compass by which man is to steer across the trackless waste of life. Without wisdom man is as the wild asses’ colt. He runs here and there wasting strength which might be profitably employed. Without wisdom man may be compared to a soil untilled which may yield some fair flowers but can never field a harvest which shall repay the labor of the reaper, or even the toil of the gleaner. Give man wisdom—wisdom in the true sense of the term— and he rises to all the dignity that manhood can possibly know.

He becomes a fit companion for the angels and between him and God there is no creature. He stands next to the Eternal One because Christ has espoused his nature and so has linked humanity with divinity. But where shall this wisdom be found? Many have dreamed that they discovered it but they have not possessed it. Where shall we find it? It were worth while to pierce the deep of the earth, to scale the heights of Heaven, to traverse the deserts, to plow the sea, to fly through the illimitable fields of ether—all were too little if we might but find this precious thing at last.

But the depth says, It is not in me—and the sea says, It is not with me. It cannot be had for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it—and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls—for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it—neither shall it be valued with pure gold. From where, then, comes wisdom? And where is the place of understanding, seeing it is hidden from the eyes of all living and kept close from the fowls of the air?

Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understands the way thereof and He knows the place thereof. Let us listen, then, to the voice of the Lord, for He has declared the secret—He has revealed to the sons of men wherein true wisdom lies and

we have it in the text, “whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he.” And that sentence is put in conjunction with another which teaches us this Truth— that to handle a matter wisely is to find good and the true way to handle a matter wisely is to trust God. This is the short and brief method of escaping the greatest difficulties—this is the clue to the most intricate labyrinths. This is the lever which shall lift the most tremendous weights. He that trusts in the Lord has found out the way to handle matters wisely and happy is he.

I shall take the text this morning, by God’s assistance, in two ways. First, we shall apply it to the wise handling of matters with regard to time and this present state. And then, secondly, with regard to the handling of the eternal matters relating to our destiny beyond the grave and endeavor to show how trusting in the Lord is handling this matter wisely.

I. First, then, my dear Friends, with regard to THE WISE HANDLING OF MATTERS OF TIME WHICH CONCERN OUR BODIES AND OUR SOULS WHILE WE ARE HERE BELOW.

A man must be prudent in such a world as this. He will soon cut his feet if he does not watch his steps. He will soon tear his garments with thorns and briars if he does not choose his way. This is a land full of enemies. We must be wise or the arrow will suddenly find out a vulnerable place in our armor. We must be cautious for we are not traveling in noonday on the king’s highway—but rather at night-fall—and we may, therefore, be attacked by robbers and may lose our precious treasures. He who is in a wilderness and in a wilderness infested with robbers, must handle matters wisely if he would find good.

How shall we handle these matters wisely? Three or four come forward to instruct us and the first lesson is one which Satan often teaches the young and foolish spirit. He says, “To handle a matter wisely is to make your own will your law and to do that which seems to be the best for you, be it right or be it wrong.” This was the lesson which he taught to Eve, when in the serpent’s form he spoke the serpent’s wisdom, “You be shall be as gods.” He said, “Mistrust the goodness of your Maker. Believe that He is afraid lest you should attain to equal power and dignity with Himself. Pluck the fruit.

“It is true He forbids, but who is Jehovah that you should obey His voice? ‘It is true He threatens to punish, but do not believe the threat, or if you believe it, dare it. He who cannot risk anything will never win. He that will not venture something shall never make great gains. Do and dare and you will be handling the matter wisely.” She plucked the fruit and the next instant she must have perceived somewhat of her folly. And before many hours had passed over man’s head, his discovered nakedness, pains of body, weariness, toil, expulsion from Paradise and tilling a thankless, thorny land, taught man that be had not handled the matter wisely, for he had not found good.

And you, too, you sons and daughters of Eve, when the old serpent whispers in your ear, “Sin and you shall escape from difficulty. Be honest when you can afford to be so, but if you cannot live except by dishonesty, be dishonest. If you cannot prosper except by lies, then lie.” Oh, men, listen not to his voice, I pray you! Hearken to a better wisdom than this. This is a deception which shall destroy you. You shall find no good but you shall find much evil. You think that you dive into these depths for pearls, but the jagged rocks shall break you and from the deep waters you shall never rise—except your lifeless corpse swim on the surface of the pestilential waves.

Be wise and learn of God and close your ears to him who would have you destroy yourself that he may gloat his malicious spirit over your eternal misery. It is never wise to sin, Brethren, never. However it may seem to be the best thing you can do, it is always the worst. There never was a man in such a position that it would be really profitable to him to sin. “But,” you say, “some men have become rich by it!” Sirs, they have had sorrow with their riches. They have inherited the blasting curse of God and so they have been really poorer than poverty could have made them.

“But,” you say, “men have mounted to the throne by breaking their oaths.” I know they have. But temporary success is no sure sign of constant happiness. The Emperor’s career is not ended yet—should he escape in this life, the perjurer shall meet his Judge. He that measures what man gains by what he seems to gain has taken a wrong standard. There was never yet—I will repeat it—there was never yet any man who broke his word, who forfeited his oath, who turned aside from God’s Word or God’s Law—who in the end found it was profitable to him. He heaped up deceptions. He gathered together delusions—and when God awoke—and when that man awoke—as a dream when one awakes, so did he, or so shall he, despise the image on which his soul had doted.

But now the serpent moderates his hiss. “Do not sin,” says he. “There is no necessity for downright dishonesty or theft. Do not absolutely plunge yourself into vice, but be wise,” says he, by which he means, “Be crafty. Trim your sails when the wind changes—how can you reach your haven unless you learn to tack about? The straight road is thorny—take the bypath—there will be another path which will bring you back after the thorns and flints are passed. Why,” says he, “will you dash your head against a stone? If there is a mountain in your way, why not wind about the base—why climb the summit?  
“Does not wisdom teach you that that which is easiest must be best

and that which is most consistent with the dictates of your own nature must after all be best for you?” Ah, slimy serpent! Ah, base deceiver—how many multitudes have been thus deceived! Why, Brethren, the reason why we have not more men in this age whom one could trust. Why we have not in our high places more men in whom we could place confidence is because policy has been the law of individuals and the law of nations, too, instead of that course of honesty which is like the flight of the arrow, certain and sure to reach its mark—not by tortuous windings—but by one onward straight line.

Why do persons so frequently inquire what they ought to do in such a case—not meaning what God’s Law would have them do—but what will bring the best result? The rules of modern craft and time-serving morality are difficult because they are inconsistent. But honesty is simple and clear as the sunlight. It takes years to make a clever lawyer—grace, however can make an honest man in an hour. Brethren, believe me, policy is not wisdom and craft is not understanding.

Let me give you the case of another woman—Rebecca. Rebecca heard that God had decreed that her favorite son Jacob should be ruler of the two. “The elder shall serve the younger.” She could not wait for God’s Providence to fulfill God’s purpose—but thought she must deceive her blind husband. She dresses up her son with skins of goats and wool; provides the savory meat and sends Jacob, who was, though a good man, the very picture of a political and prudent professor, to meet his father and to deceive him. Ah, if Rebecca had been wise she would not have done this. Little did she foresee that the effect of this stratagem would be to drive her favorite son away from her.

She could not foresee this would give Jacob years of toil under Laban, cause him to make the greatest mistake of his life—the commission of the error of polygamy—and make him a far more afflicted man than he might have been had he been like Abraham or Isaac who leveled not to their own understandings, but trusted in God with all their hearts. Brethren, you shall never find in any case that any turning aside from a straightforward course will be for your profit. After all, you may depend on it, that the way to be most renowned among men is to have the strange singularity of being a downright honest man.

Say what you mean—mean what you say. Do what you believe to be right and ever hold it for a maxim. If the skies fall through your doing right, honest men will survive the ruin. How can the godly sin? If the earth should reel, would he fail? No, blessed be God, he should find himself in the honorable position of David of old, when he said, “The earth is removed. I bear up the pillars thereof.”

But now the serpent changes his tune and he says, “Well, if you are not sinful or crafty, at any rate, to succeed in life you must be very careful. You must fret and worry and think much about it. That is the way to handle a matter wisely. Why,” says he, “see how many are ruined from want of thought and want of care? Be you careful over it. Rise up early, sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness. Stint yourself, deny yourself. Do not give to the poor. Be a miser and you shall succeed. Take care. Watch—be thoughtful.” And this is the path of wisdom according to him.

My Brethren, it is a path which very many have tried, very many have persevered in it all their lives. But I must say to you this is not handling a matter wisely after all. God forbid we should say a single word against prudence and care and necessary forethought, industry and Providence. These are virtues. They are not only commendable but a Christian’s character would be sadly at fault if he had them not. But when these are looked upon as the foundations—the staple materials of success—men are desperately in error. It is vain for you in that sense to rise up early and sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness, for “so He gives His Beloved sleep.”

Oh, there are many who have realized that picture of old Care, which old Spenser gives in his Fairy Queen—  
*“Rude was his garment and to rags all rent; So better had he, nor for better cared;  
With blistered hands, among the cinders burnt, And fingers filthy, with long nails uncared, Right fit to rend the food before which he fared— His name was Care—a blacksmith by his trade, That neither day nor night from working spared, But to small purpose iron wedges made—  
Those be unquiet thoughts that careful minds invade.”*

Who wishes to have that picture come true of himself? I would infinitely rather that we could be photographed as being like Luther’s birds which ate upon the tree and sang—

*“Mortal cease from care and sorrow,*

*God provides for the morrow.”*  
Care is good, mark—if it is good care. But care is ill when it comes to be ill care and it is ill care if I dare not cast it upon Him who cares for me. Cotton has well said of covetous earthworms, “After hypocrites, the greatest dupes the devil has are those who exhaust an anxious existence in the disappointments and vexations of business and live miserably and meanly, only to die magnificent and rich. For, like the hypocrites, the only disinterested action these men can accuse themselves of is that of serving the devil without receiving his wages—he that stands every day of his life behind a counter until he drops from it into the grave may negotiate many very profitable bargains. But he has made a single bad one, so bad indeed, that it counter-balances all the rest. For the empty foolery of dying rich he has paid down his health, his happiness and his integrity.”

Once again—there is another way of handling a matter wisely which is often suggested to young men and suggested, too, I am sorry to say, by Christian men who little know that they are giving Satanic advice. “Well,” say they, “young man, if you will not be exceeding careful and watch night and day, at least be self-reliant. Go out and tell the world that you are a match for it and that you know it. That you mean to carve your way to glory and to build yet for yourself an edifice at which men shall gaze. Say to the little men round about you, ‘I mean to tower above you all and bestride this narrow world like a Colossus.’ Be independent young men. Rest on yourselves. There is something wonderful in you—quit yourselves like men. Be strong.”

Well, Brethren, there are many who have tried this self-reliance and their deception in this case has been fearful, too—for when the day of fiery trial has come they have discovered that, “Cursed is he that trusts in man”—even though that man is himself—“and makes flesh his arm”— though it be his own flesh. Broken in pieces they have been left as wrecks upon the sand though they sailed out of the harbor with all their sails filled with the wind. They have come back like knights unhorsed and dishonored though they went out with their lance in hand and their proudly flaunting pennon—intending to push like the horns of unicorns—and drive the whole earth before them. No man was ever so much deceived by others as by himself. Be warned, Christian man, that this is not handling a matter wisely.

But what, then, is the way of wisdom? The text answers the question— “He that trusts in the Lord, happy is he.” So, then, if I understand the text, in temporal things if we learn to trust in God, we shall be happy. We are not to be idle. That would show we did not trust in God—who works up to now—but in the devil, who is the father of idleness. We are not to be impudent and rash. That were to trust chance and not to trust God, for God is a God of economy and order. We are to trust God, acting in all prudence and in all uprightness we are to rely simply and entirely upon Him. Now I have no doubt there are many here who say, “Well, that is not the way to get on in the world. That can never be the path of success— simply trusting in God.”

Yes, but it is so—only one must have grace in the heart to do it. One must first be made a child of God and then he can trust his affairs in his Father’s hands. One must come to depend upon the Eternal One, because the Eternal One has enabled him to use this Christian grace which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. I am persuaded that faith is as much the rule of temporal as of spiritual life and that we ought to have faith in God for our shops as well as for our souls. Worldly men may sneer at this but it is none the less true. At any rate, I pray that it may be my course as long as I live.

My dear friends, let me commend to you a life of trust in God in temporal things by these few advantages among a great many others. First, trusting in God, you will not have to mourn because you have used sinful means to grow rich. Should you become poor through it—better to be poor with a clear conscience—than to be rich and guilty. You will have always this comfort should you come to the lowest position of nature, that you have come there through no fault of your own. You have served God with integrity and what if some should say you have missed your mark, not achieved to success? At least there is no sin upon your conscience.

And then, again, trusting God you will not be guilty of selfcontradiction. He who trusts in craft sails this way today and that way the next—like a vessel propelled by the fickle wind. But he that trusts in the Lord is like a vessel propelled by steam—she cuts through the waves, defies the wind—and makes one bright silvery track to her destined haven. Be you such a man as that—never bow to the varying customs of worldly wisdom. Let men see that the world has changed, not you—that man’s opinions and man’s maxims have veered round to another quarter, but that you are still invincibly strong in the strength which trusting in God alone can confer.

And then, dear Brethren, let me say you will be delivered from care, you will not be troubled with evil tidings, your heart will be fixed trusting in the Lord. I have read a story of an old Doctor of the Church, who, going out one morning met a beggar and said to him, “I wish you a good day.” “Sir,” said he, “I never had an ill day in any life.” “But,” said the Doctor, “your clothes are torn to rags and your wallet seems to be exceedingly empty.” Said he, “My clothes are as good as God wants them to be. And my wallet is as full as the Lord has been pleased to make it and what pleases Him pleases me.”

“But,” said the Doctor, “suppose God should cast you into Hell?” “Indeed, Sir,” said he, “but that would never be. But if it were, I would be contented, for I have two long and strong arms—faith and love—and I would throw these about the neck of my Savior, and I would never let Him go, so that if I went there, He would be with me and it would be a Heaven to me.”

Oh, those two strong arms of faith and love! If you can but hang about the Savior’s neck, indeed, you may fear no ill weather. No fatal shipwreck shall I fear, for Christ is in my vessel—He holds the helm and holds the winds, too—

*“Though winds and waves assault my keel,  
He does preserve it, He does steer,  
Even when the boat seems most to reel.  
Storms are the triumphs of His care,  
Sure He may close His eyes, but not His heart.”*

The practical lesson from all this is—“trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding.” Whatever your trouble be, take it to God this morning—do not bear it till the night. Whatever your difficulty and peculiar exercise of mind, tell it unto the Lord your God. He is as able as He is willing and as willing as He is able. Having sent the trial, He will surely make a way of escape for you.

II. But now I turn to the second part of our discourse. IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS HE THAT HANDLES A MATTER WISELY SHALL FIND GOOD.  
But what is the right way of handling this dread matter which stands between our soul and God? We have immortal spirits and spirits that are responsible. The day of judgment draws near and with it Heaven’s happiness, or Hell’s torment. What, my Brethren, shall we do to handle this matter wisely? And here comes up the old serpent again and he says, “Young man, the easiest way to handle this matter is to let it alone altogether. You are young as yet—there is plenty of time—why put old heads on young shoulders? You will have need enough to think of religion byand-by but at present, you see, it will be much in your way.  
“Better leave it alone. It is only these ministers that try and make you thoughtful—but they only bother you and trouble you—so drop it. You can think of it if there is anything in it by-and-by. But for the present, rejoice in your youth and let your joy be in the morning of your days—for the evil days come—and then let your thoughtfulness come with them.”  
Well now, young man, does this strike you, after all, as being the wisest course? I will tell you one thing—whatever you may think of it—such a course as that is the direct road to Hell. Do you know the road to Heaven? Well, it might take us some little time to tell you about that, but if you want to go to Hell we will tell you that in one moment. You need not go and swear, you need not be drunk, you need not become a monster in iniquity or a fiend in cruelty. No, no, it is easier than that, it is just a little neglect, that is all and your soul is lost for sure. Remember how the Apostle puts it, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?”  
Now, can that which is the surest road to Hell be a wise way? I think I may leave it with your reason. Certainly I may leave it with your conscience. You know it is not the right way. Yes, and I have noticed this— that men who laugh most at religion when they are well and are most careless—are the most frightened when they meet with a little accident. If they have a little illness, oh, how bad they feel! It is an awful thing for them to be ill. They know it is—they are dreadfully shaken. And the strangest thing is that the minister they hated most when they were well—becomes the very man they have the most faith in—and most long to see when they become sick.  
I know when the cholera was here last, there was a certain man for whom no word in the English language could be found that was bad enough to describe me. But in the cholera when he lay sick, who do he send for? The clergyman of the parish? No, certainly not. Who did he send for? Some minister of good repute? No—send for the man whom he had cursed before. And until that man should come and speak to him and offer prayer, he could not even indulge a hope—though, alas! poor soul, I fear he had no hope even then.  
Yet, so it is. God will honor His ministers, He will prove the utter futility of man’s brag and boast. You may be careless, Sir, while you are well. You may neglect this great salvation but a little sickness shall make you tremble and your knees shall shake and you shall be convulsed with agony and find that this is not handling the matter wisely. You are something like a bankrupt who knows that his accounts are going wrong and fears that he is insolvent, so he does not look at his books. He does not like to look at them, for there is no very pleasant reading there. There may be a few assets but the entries are mostly on the other side—and so at last he does not keep any books at all—it would be troublesome to him to know where he was.  
So is it with you. It is because things are not right you do not like to sift them and try them—lest you should find out the black reality. Be wise, I pray you and look a little beyond you. Why shut your eyes and perish? Man, I charge you by the living God, awake, or Hell shall wake you! Look, man, or eternity shall soon amaze you.  
But Satan comes to some and he says, “If you won’t be careless, the next easiest thing is to be credulous. There,” says he, “is a man over there with a shaven crown who says he’d manage the thing for you. Now, he ought to know. Does not he belong to a Church that has an infallible head? Give yourself up to him,” says he, “and it will be all right. Or,” says he, “I hate popery. But there is a clergyman, let him give you the sacrament—rely upon him and it will be all safe. Or,” says he, “if you could but join the Church and be baptized. There, that will do—take it for granted that it is all right. Why should you trouble yourself with theological squabbles? Let these things alone. Be credulous, don’t search into the root of the matter. Be content so long as you swim on the surface and do not care whether there are rocks down deep at the bottom of the sea.”  
And is this the way—is this the way to handle this matter wisely? Assuredly not, Sir. Better trust a lawyer with your property than a priest with your soul. Better hand your purse to a highwayman upon the heath than commit your soul to a Romish priest. What will he do for you but make his penny of you and your soul may be penniless for him? So shall it be with the best of men if you make saviors of them. Go, lean upon a reed. Go, build a throne of bubbles. Go, sleep in a powder magazine with your candle burning in a bag of gunpowder—but do not trust even a good man with your soul. See to it that you handle this matter wisely and you cannot do it thus.  
“Ah, well,” says Satan, “if this will not do, then try the way of working out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Do good,” says he, “say a great many prayers, perform a great many good works and this is handling the matter wisely.” Now, I will take you to Switzerland for a minute, to give you a picture. There was a poor women who lived in one of those sweet villages under the Alps where the fountains are always pouring out their streams of water into the great stone tanks and the huge overhanging roofs cover the peasant homes. She had been accustomed to climb the mountain to gather fodder for her cows and she had driven her goats to the wild crags and the sheer solitudes, where no sound is heard except the tinkling of the bell.  
She, good soul, had read nothing but the Bible and her dreams and thoughts were all of heavenly things and she dreamed thus—that she was walking along a smooth meadow—where there were many fair flowers and much soft grass. The pathway was smooth and there were thousands wending their way along it but they took no notice of her. She seemed alone. Suddenly the thought crossed her that this was the path to destruction and these were selfish sinners. She sought another way, for she feared to meet their doom. She saw a path up the mountain-side exceedingly steep and rugged, as mountain paths are, but up this she saw men and women carrying tremendous burdens, as some of us have seen them carry them, till they stoop right down under the tremendous weight, as they climb the stony staircase.  
Here there was a tree across the road and there a bramble. And there a brook was gushing down the mountain-side and the path was lined with stones and she slipped. So she turned aside again. But those that went up the hill looked at her with such sorrow that she turned back again and began to climb once more—only to find the way rough and impossible. She turned aside again into the green meadow but the climbers seemed to be very sad. Though they pitied her, she did not pity them, for their toil made them wet with perspiration and faint with fatigue.  
She dreamed she went along the green meadow till she came to a fair house out of which looked a bright spirit. The side of the house where she was, was all windows without a door and the spirit said to her, “You have come the wrong road, you cannot come in this way, there is no entrance here,” and she woke. She told a Christian woman who visited her of this dream and said, “I am sore troubled for I cannot go up that mountain path, I know. I understand that to be the way of holiness but I cannot climb it—and I fear that I shall choose the green meadow—and when I come at last to the gates of Heaven, they will tell me that is not the way and I cannot enter there.”  
So her kind instructress said to her, “I have not dreamed, but I have read in my Bible this morning that one day when the corn was ripening and the sun was shining brightly there went three men out of a city called Jerusalem. One of them was the Savior of the world and the other two were thieves. One of the thieves, as he hung upon the cross, found his way to the bright city of Heaven. And it was said, ‘Today shall you be with me in Paradise.’ Did he go up that hilly path do you think?” “No,” said the poor woman, “he believed and was saved.” “Ah,” said her friend, “and this is your way to Heaven. That hilly path you cannot climb—those who were ascending it with so much labor—perished before they reached the summit. Tottering from some dizzy height, they were dashed to pieces upon some jagged rock. Believe and this shall be the path of salvation for you.”  
And so I come to the poor soul and I say—if you would handle matters rightly, happy is he that trusts in the Lord. You have done the right thing for eternity with all its solemnities, when you have cast your soul, just as it is, on Him who is “able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.”  
And let me now tell you what are the excellencies of so doing. That man who believes in Christ and can say, “Salvation is finished. All is of Christ and all is free. My faith is in Jesus Christ and in Him alone”—that man is freed from fears. He is not afraid to die—Christ has finished the work for him. He is not afraid to live, he shall not perish—for his soul is in Jesus Christ. And he is not afraid of trial, or of trouble, for He that bought him with His blood shall keep him with His arm. He is free from present fears and he is free from present cares, too. He has no need to toil and labor, to fret and strive, to do this or to do that. He feels no more the whip of the slave-driver on his back. His life is happy and his service light, the yoke he wears he scarce knows to be a yoke. The road is pleasant and the path is peace—no climbing upwards except as angel hands assist him to climb the road which else no mortal feet could traverse.  
He is free, too, from all fatal delusion. He is not a deceived man. He shall never open his eyes to find himself mistaken. He has something which shall last him as long as life shall last—which shall be with him when he wakes from his bed of clay—to conduct him joyously to realms of light and endless day. This man is such a man that if I compared him with the very angels, I should not do amiss. He is on earth but his heart is in Heaven. He is here below but he sits together with Christ in heavenly places. He has his troubles but they work his lasting good. He has his trials but they are only the precursors of victory. He has weakness, but he glories in infirmity because the power of Christ does rest upon him.  
He is sometimes cast down but he is not destroyed. He is perplexed—he is not in despair. He does not grovel but he walks upright. His foot may be in the mire but his eye is above the stars. His body may be covered with rags but his soul his robed in Light. He may go to a miserable pallet to find an uneasy rest—but his soul sleeps in the bosom of his Beloved and he has a perfect peace—“a peace which passes all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ.”  
Christians, I would that you and I could believe God better and get rid of these wicked fears of ours. Gracious Father, I do today cast all I have on You and all I have not, too, I would cast on You. My cares, my sorrows, my labors, my joys, my present, my past, my future—take You and manage all. I will be nothing, You my all—  
*“O God, I cast my care on You,  
I triumph and adore,  
Henceforth my chief concern shall be.  
To love and serve You more.”*  
Brethren, believers in Jesus. Do the same and you shall find that happy is the man who trusts in the Lord. As for you who fear not the Lord Jesus—may His Holy Spirit visit you this morning. May He quicken you, for you are dead in sin. May He give you power, for you have no strength of yourselves. Remember, the way of salvation is simple and plain before you—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Trust my Master’s blood, depend upon His finished righteousness and you must, you shall be saved. You cannot, you will not be lost—  
*“Oh believe the promise true  
God to you His Son has given.”*  
Depend on His Son and you shall thus escape from Hell and find your path to Heaven. The Lord add now His own best blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #899 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Pro 17.17

THE UNRIVALLED FRIEND  
NO. 899

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 7, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity.” Proverbs 17:17.**

THERE is one thing about the usefulness of which all men are agreed, namely, friendship. But most men are soon aware that counterfeits of friendship are common as autumn leaves. Few men enjoy from others the highest and truest form of friendship. The friendships of this world are hollow. They are as unsubstantial as a dream, as soon dissipated as a bubble, as light as thistledown. Those airy compliments, those empty sentences of praise—how glibly they fall from the lips—but how little have they to do with the heart! He must be a fool, indeed, who believes that there is anything in the complimentary affection but mere flattery or matter of form.

The loving cup means not love and the loud cheering of the toast means not sincere fellowship. With very many, friendship sits very loosely—they could almost write as Horace Walpole does in one of his letters. He says he takes everything very easily, “and if,” says he, “a friend should die, I drive down to the St. James’s coffee house and bring home another,” doubtless as cordial and enraptured with the new friend as with the old. Friends in this world are too often like the bees which swarm around the plants while they are covered with flowers and those flowers contain nectar for their honey. But let November send its biting frosts—the flowers are nipped and their friends, the bees, forsake them. Swallow friendship lives out with us our summer, but finds other loves in winter.

It has always been so from of old, even until now. Ahithophel has deserted David and Judas has sold his Lord. The greatest of kings who have been fawned upon by their courtiers while in power, have been treated as if they were but dogs in the time of their extremity. We say, as the poet of the passions—

*“King Darius, great and good—  
Deserted in his utmost need,  
By those his former bounty fed.  
On the cold ground exposed he lies,  
With not a friend to close his eyes.”*

Of all friendship which is not based on principle, we may say with the Prophet, “You are weighed in the balances and found wanting.”

But there is a higher friendship than this, by far, and it exists among Christian men, among men of principle, among men of virtue where profession is not all, but where there is real meaning in the words they use. Damon and Pythias still have their followers among us. Jonathan and David are not without their imitators. All hearts are not traitorous. Fidelity still lingers among men. Where godliness builds her house, true friendship finds a rest. Solomon, speaking not of the world’s sham friends, but of friends, indeed, says, “A friend loves at all times.” Having once given his heart to his chosen companion, he clings to him in all weathers, fair or foul. He loves him none the less because he becomes poor, or because his fame suffers an eclipse. His friendship, like a lamp, shines the brighter, or is made more manifest because of the darkness that surrounds it.

True friendship is not fed from the barn floor, or the wine vat. It is not like the rainbow, dependent upon the sunshine. It is fixed as a rock and firm as granite and smiles superior to wind and tempest. If we have friendship at all, Brothers and Sisters, let this be the form it takes. Let us be willing to be brought to the test of the wise man and, being tried, may we not be found wanting. “A friend loves at all times.” But I am not about to talk of friendship at all as it exists between man and man. I prefer to uplift the text into a still higher sphere. There is a Friend, blessed forever be His name, who loves at all times! There is a Brother, who, in an emphatic sense, was born for adversity!

That Friend is Jesus, the Friend of sinners! The Friend of man! The Brother of our souls, born into this world that He might succor us in our adversities. I shall take the text, then, and refer it to the Lord Jesus Christ. And unless time should fail us, I shall then refer it to ourselves as in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ, showing that we, also, ought to love Him even as He has loved us, always and under all adversities.

I. First, then, IN REFERENCE TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. The first sentence is, “a friend loves at all times,” and this leads us to consider, first, the endurance of the love of Jesus Christ. My dear Brethren, when we read “a friend loves at all times,” and refer that to Christ, the sentence, full as it is, falls short of what we mean, for our Lord Jesus is a Friend who loved us before there was any time! Before time began the Lord Jesus Christ had entered into Covenant that He would redeem a people unto Himself, who should show forth His Father’s praise.

Before time began His prescient eye had foreseen the creatures whom He determined to redeem by blood. These He took to Himself by election— these the Father also gave to Him by Divine donation and upon these—as He saw them in the glass of the future He set His heart. Long before days began to be counted, or moons to wax and wane, or suns to rise and set, Jehovah Jesus had set apart a people to Himself whom He espoused unto Himself—whose names He engraved upon His heart and upon His hands— that they might be taken into union with Himself forever and ever! Meditate on that love which preceded the first rays of the morning and went forth to you before the mountains were brought forth, or ever He had formed the earth and the world. My Brothers and Sisters, you believe the doctrine of eternal love, meditate, then, and let it be very sweet unto your hearts—

*“Before Your hands had made  
The sun to rule the day,  
Or earth’s foundation laid,  
Or fashioned Adam’s clay!  
What thoughts of peace and mercy flowed  
In your dear bosom, O my God!”*

He loved you when time began, in the days before the Flood and in the far-off periods—for those promises which were spoken in love had reference to you as well as to all the believing Seed. All the deeds of love which were worked as a preface to His coming—all had some bearing towards you as one of His people. There never was a point in the antiquity of our world in which this Friend did not love you! Every era of time has been a time of love. Love, like a silver thread, runs adown the ages. Chiefly did He lay bare His love 1,800 years ago, when down with joyful haste He sped to lie in the manger, and hang as a Babe at the virgin’s breast. He proved His love to you to a degree surpassing thought when, as a carpenter’s son He condescended for 30 years to live in obscurity, working out a perfect righteousness for you and then spent three years of arduous toil, to be ended by a death of unutterable bitterness.

You had no being then, but He loved you and gave Himself for you. For you the bloody sweat that fell amidst the olives of Gethsemane. For you the scourging and the crowning with thorns. For you the nails and spear, the vinegar and lance. For you the cry of agony—the exceeding sorrow “even unto death.” He is a Friend that loved you in that darkest and most doleful hour when your sins were laid upon Him and with their crushing weight pressed Him down, as it were, in spirit, to the lowest Hell. Beloved, having thus redeemed you, He loved you when time began with you. As soon as you were born the eyes of His tenderness were fixed upon you. “When Ephraim was a child, then I loved him.”

It was loving kindness which arranged your parents’ native place and time of birth. You came not into this world, as it were, by chance or as the young ostrich bereft of a parent’s care—the Lord was your guardian. The Lord Jesus Christ looked upon you in your cradle and bade His angels keep watch around you. He would not let you die unconverted, though fierce diseases waited around you to hurry you to Hell. And when you grew up to manhood and ripened the follies of youth into the crimes of mature years, yet still He loved you. O let your heart be humbled as you remember that if you ever fell into blasphemy, He loved you as you cursed Him! That if you indulged in Sabbath-breaking, He loved you when you despised His Day! That your neglected Bible could not wean His heart from you! That your neglected prayer closet could not make Him cease His affection!

Alas, to what an excess of riot did some of His people run! But He loved them notwithstanding all. He was a Friend that loved under the most provoking circumstances—

*“Loved when a wretch defiled with sin,  
At war with Heaven, in league with Hell,  
A slave to every lust obscene,  
Who, living, lived but to rebel.”*

When Justice would have said, “Let the rebel go, O Jesus. Be not bound any longer by cords of love to such a wretch,” our ever faithful Redeemer would not cast us away, but threw another band of Divine Grace around us and loved us still. Consider well, “His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.” I feel as if this were rather a matter for you to think over in private, than for me thus hastily to introduce to you in public. May the Holy Spirit, however, now bedew your hearts with grateful drops of celestial love as I remind you of the love at all times of this best of friends.

You remember when you were constrained to seek Him, when your heart began to be weary of its sin and to be alarmed at the doom that would surely follow unpardoned transgression? It was His love that sowed the first seeds of desire and anxiety in your heart! You had never desired Him if He had not first desired you. There was never a good thought towards Christ in any human breast unless Christ first put it there. He drew you and then you began to run after Him. But had He left you alone, your running would have been from Him and never towards Him. It was a bitter time when we were seeking the Savior, a time of anguish and sore travail. We recollect the tears and prayers that we poured out day and night, asking for mercy.

Jesus, our Friend, was loving to us then, taking delight in those penitential tears, putting them into His bottle, telling the angels that we were praying and making them string their harps afresh to sweet notes of praise over sinners that repented. He knew us, knew us in the gloom, in the thick darkness in which we sought after God, if haply we might find Him. He was near the Prodigal’s side when in all his rags and filth he was saying, “I will arise and go to my Father,” and it was Jesus through whom we were introduced to the Father’s bosom and received the parental kiss and were made to sit down where there was music and dancing, because the dead are alive and the lost are found!

My Brethren, since that happy day, this Friend has loved us at all times. I wish I could say that since that sacred hour when we first came to His feet, and saw ourselves saved through Him, we had always walked worthily of the privileges we have received—but it has been very much the reverse. There have been times in which we have honored Him, His Grace has abounded and our holiness has been manifest. But alas, there have been other seasons in which we have backslidden, our hearts have grown cold, and we were on the road to become like Nabal when his heart was turned to a stone within him. We have been half persuaded, like Orpah, to go back to the land of idols and not like Ruth, to cleave unto the Lord our God.

Our heart has played the harlot from the love of Christ, desiring the leeks and garlic and onions of Egypt rather than the treasures of the land of promise. But at such times when our piety has been at a low ebb, He has loved us still! There has not been the slightest diminution in the affection of Christ even when our piety has been diminished. He does not set His clock by our watch, or stint His love to the narrow measure of ours. I fear we have often gone further than merely getting poor in Grace within— there have been times when God’s people have even actually fallen into overt sin! Yes, and have descended to sin grievously, too, and to dishonor the name of Christ. But herein is mercy, even those actual and accursed sins of ours have not torn away the promise from us, nor turned away the heart of Christ for His Beloved.

Sinned though we have, to our abounding sorrow—I was about to say, for if there could be sorrow in Heaven we might eternally regret that we have sinned against such love and mercy—yet for all that, our Lord and Savior would not cast us off! Nor will He renounce us, come what may. Reflect, my dear Friends, upon all the trying and changeful scenes through which you have passed since the time of your conversion. You have been rich, perhaps, and increased in goods—you were tempted to forget your Lord, but He was a friend who loved you at all times and He would not suffer your prosperity to ruin you—He still made His love to dart with healing beams into your soul.

But you have been, also, very poor. The cupboard has been bare and you have said, “Where shall I find money to supply my needs?” But Christ has not gone away because your suit was threadbare, or your house ill furnished. No, He has been nearer than ever, and if He revealed Himself to you in your prosperity, much more in your adversity. You have found Him a faithful Friend when all others were unfaithful—true when everyone else was a liar. You have been sorely sick, sometimes, but He it was that made the pillow and softened the bed of your affliction. It may be you have been slandered and those who loved you have passed you by. Some ill word has been spoken in which there was no truth, but it has sufficed to turn away the esteem of many—your Lord has gone with you through shame and abuse and never, for a single moment, has He even hinted that He only loved you because you were held in respect by men.

Ever faithful, ever true has been this Friend who loves at all times. Ah, there have been times, it may be with you, when you could gladly have thrown your very self away, for you felt so empty, so good-for-nothing, so undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving. You felt more fit to die than to live. You could hardly entertain a hope that any good thing could ever spring from you—but when you have least esteemed yourself, His esteem of you has been just the same—when you were ready to die in a ditch, He has been ready to lift you to a throne! When you felt yourself a castaway, you have still been pressed to His dear bosom, an object of His peculiar regard.

Soon, very soon, your time will come to die. You shall pass through the valley of death shade, but you need not fear, for the Friend that loves at all times will be with you. That eminent servant of God, Jonathan Edwards, when he was at his last, said, “Where is Jesus of Nazareth, my old and faithful Friend? I know He will be with me now that I need His help,” and so He was, for that faithful servant died triumphantly! You shall enquire in that last day for Jesus of Nazareth and you shall hear Him say, “Here I am!” You shall find the death shade vale lit up with supernal splendor—it shall be no death to you, but a passing into Eternal Life—because He who is the Resurrection and the Life shall be your Helper! Thus I have hastily run through the life of Christ’s love from the beginning that had no beginning, down to the end that knows no end—and in every case we see that He is a Friend that loves at all times.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I shall vary the strain, though still keeping to the same subject. Let us consider the reality of Christ’s love at all times. The text says, “A friend loves at all times,” not professes to love, not talks of love, but really does so. Now in Christ’s case, the love has become intensely practical. His love has never been a thing of mere words or pretensions. His love has acted out itself in mighty deeds and signs and wonders, worthy of a God such as Heaven, itself, shall not sufficiently extol with all its golden harps. See then, Brethren, Christ has practically loved us at all times. It is not long ago that you and I were slaves to sin. We wore the fetters, nor could we break them from our wrists. We were held fast by evil passions and worldly habits and there seemed no hope of liberty for us. Jesus loved us at all times, but the love did not let us lie prisoners any longer.

He came and paid the ransom price for us. In drops of blood from His own heart He counted down the price of our redemption and by His Eternal Spirit He broke every fetter from us and today His believing people rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ makes them free. See how practical His love was! He did not leave the slave in his chains and let him remain a captive, but He loved us right out of our prison into a sacred freedom! Our Lord found us not long ago standing at our trial. There we were, prisoners at the bar. We had nothing to plead in our defense. The accuser stood up to plead against us and as he laid many charges and heavy, we were not able to answer so much as one of them. Our great High Priest stood there and saw us thus arraigned as prisoners at the bar. He loved us, but oh, how efficient was His love—he became an Advocate for us—He did more, He stood in our place, stood where the felon ought to stand.

He suffered what was due to us and then, covering us with His perfect righteousness, He said before the blaze of the ineffable Throne of Justice, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that has risen again.” He did not love the prisoner at the bar and leave him there to be condemned—He loved him until as this day we stand acquitted and there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Believer, lift up your heart now and bless His name who has done all this for you!

Our Lord, when He came in mercy to us, found us in the rags of our selfrighteousness and in the abject poverty of our natural condition. We were houseless, fatherless. We were without spiritual bread. We were sick and sore, we were as low and degraded as sin could make us. He loved us, but He did not leave us where love found us. Ah, do you not remember how He washed us in the fountain which flowed from His veins? How He wrapped us about with the fair white linen which is the righteousness of His saints? How He gave us bread to eat that the world knows not of? How He supplied all our needs and gave us a promise that whatever we should ask in prayer, if we did but believe His name, we should receive it?

We were aliens, but His love has made us citizens. We were far off, but His love has brought us near. We were perishing, but His love has enriched us. We were serfs, but His love has made us sons. We were condemned criminals, but His love has made us “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.” I shall not enlarge here, but I shall appeal to the experience of every Believer. In your needs, has not Christ always helped you? You have been in doubt which way to take and you have gone to Him for guidance— did ever you go wrong when you left it to Him? Your heart has been very heavy and you had no friend that you could communicate with, but you have talked with Him and have you not always found solace in pouring out your heart before Him? When did He ever fail you? When did you find His arm shortened, or His ear heavy? Up to this moment has it been mere talk with Christ? No, you know it has been most true and real love—and now in the recollection of it, I beseech you give Him true and real praise—not that of the head, only, or of the lips—but of your whole spirit, soul and body as you consecrate yourself afresh to Him. See, then, Brothers and Sisters the great endurance of Christ’s love, and see then, also, the reality of it.

By your patience I shall notice, in the next place, the Nature of the love of Christ, accounting for its endurance and reality. The love of our good Friend to us sprang from the purest possible motives. He has nothing to gain by loving us. Some friendship may be supposed to be tinged with a desire of self-advantage, to which extent it is degraded and valueless. But Jesus Christ had nothing to gain, and everything to lose. “Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor.” The love He bears to His people was not a love which sprang from anything in them. I have no doubt it had a reason, for Christ never acts unreasonably, but that reason did not lie in us. Love between us and our fellows sometimes springs from personal beauty, sometimes for traits of character which we admire and at other times from obligations which we have incurred—but with Christ none of these things could avail.

There was no personal beauty in any one of His elect. There were no traits of character in them that could enchant Him. There was very much, on the other hand, that might have disgusted Him. He certainly was under no obligations to us, for we had not a being, then, when His heart was set upon us! The love of man to man is sustained by something drawn from the object of love, but the love of Christ to us has its deep springs within Himself. As His own courts maintain the grandeur of His Throne without drawing a revenue from the creatures, so His own love maintains itself without drawing any motives and reasons from us, and therefore, my Brothers and Sisters, you see why this love is the same at all times. If it had to subsist upon us and what we do and what we merit, ah, it would always be at the lowest conceivable ebb! But since it leaps up from the great deep of the Divine heart, it never changes! And, by His Grace, it never shall!

Be it also remembered that Christ’s love was a wise love, not blind as ours often is. He loved us knowing exactly what we were whom He loved. There is nothing in the constitution of man that Jesus Christ had not perceived. There is nothing in your individuality but what Christ had foreknown. Remember, Christ loved His people before they began to sin, but not in the dark. He knew exactly everything they would think, or do, or be—and if He resolved to love them at all, you may rest assured He never will change in that love, since nothing fresh can ever occur to His Divine mind. Had He begun to love us and we had deceived and disappointed Him, He might have turned us out of doors—but He knew right well that we should revolt—that we should backslide and should provoke Him to jealousy. He loved us knowing all this and therefore it is that His love abides and endures and shall even remain faithful to the end.

Brothers and Sisters, the love of Christ is associated continually with an infinite degree of patience and pity. Our Lord knows that we are but dust and like as a father pities his children, so He pities us. We are but shorttempered, but our Lord is long-suffering. When He sees us sin, He says within Himself, “Alas, poor souls, what folly in them thus to injure themselves.” He takes not our cold words in umbrage, so as to put Himself in wrathful fume with it, but He says, “Poor child, how he hurts himself by this and how much he loses thereby.” He even has a kind look for us when we sin, for He knows it is blotted out through His own blood and He sees, rather, the mischief which it is quite sure to bring to the poor soul, than the evil of the sin itself.

Jesus has infinite condescension and patience and we cannot so provoke Him as to turn Him from His purpose of Divine Grace. He is at all times ready to pardon and never slow to be moved to forgiveness. Oh, the provocations of men! But the patience of Christ reaches over the mountains of our provocation and drowns them all. I think one reason why Christ is so constant in His love and so patient with us is that He sees us as what we are to be. He does not look at us merely as what we are today in Adam’s Fall—ruined and lost—nor as we are today, but partly delivered from indwelling sin. But He remembers that we are to lie in His bosom forever, that we are to be exactly like He is, and to be partakers of His Glory. And as He sees us in the glass of the future, as, by-and-by, to be His companions in the world of the perfect, He passes by transgression, iniquity and sin, and like a true Friend He loves us at all times.

I shall not weary those who know this love. They need no gaudy sentences or eloquent periods to set it forth. Its sweetness lies in itself. You may drink such wine as this out of any cup. He that knows the flavor of this Divine dainty asks not that it be carved this way or that—he rejoices but to have it—for the meditation upon it must be sweet. “A friend loves at all times.”

The next sentence of the text is, “ and a brother is born for adversity.” That is to say, a true brother comes out and shows his brotherhood in the time of the trouble of the family. Now let every Believer in Jesus here catch the meaning of this with regard to Christ. Jesus Christ was born for you. “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.” But if at any one time more than another Christ is peculiarly yours by birth, it is in the time of adversity. A Brother born for adversity. Observe, that Christ was born, in the first place, for our adversity—to deliver us from the great adversity of the Fall. When our parents’ sin had blasted Eden and destroyed our hopes—when the summer of our joy had turned into the winter of our discontent, then Christ was born in Bethlehem’s manger that the race might be lifted up to hope—and His elect be elevated to salvation.

He restored that which He took not away. He rebuilt that which He cast not down. He had never come to be a Savior if we had not been lost. Because our adversity was so great—therefore so great a Savior was required and so great a Savior came! Our Lord is born for adversity because He has the peculiar art of sympathizing with all in adversity. No other but He can claim that He has ranged high and low through all the territories of grief— only this Jesus Christ can justly make that claim. Every pang that ever rends a human heart has first tried its keen edge on Him. It is not possible, even in the extremities of anguish to which some are exposed, that any man can go beyond Christ in the endurance of pain. Christ is crowned King of Misery. He is the Emperor of the domains of woe. He is able, therefore, to succor all such as are tempted and tried, seeing He is compassed about Himself, also, with a feeling of our infirmities.

Look to him suffering on the tree. Look to Him throughout all His life of shame and pain and you will see that He was born into adversity—and through being born into it, was born to sympathize with our trials, having learned, as the Captain of our salvation, to be made perfect in sympathy with those many sons whom He brings to Glory. Brethren, the text means more than this, however. Jesus Christ is a Brother born for adversity because He always gives His choicest Presence to His saints when they are in tribulation. I know many men will think that the Presence of Christ with the sick and with the depressed is mere fancy. Ah, blessed fancy! Such a fancy as makes them laugh at pain and rejoice in deep distress and take joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Truly a blessed fancy!

Let me declare my heart’s witness and assert that if there is anything real anywhere to the spiritual mind, the Presence of Christ is intensely so. Though we do not see His form bending over us, nor mark the lovely light of those eyes that once were red with weeping. Though we touch not that hand which felt the nails and hear no soft footfalls of the feet that were fastened to the Cross, yet are we inwardly as certainly conscious of the shadow of Christ falling upon us as ever were His disciples when He stood in the tempest-tossed vessel and said to winds and waves, “Peace, be still.” Believe me, it is not imagination, nor is it barely faith. It is faith that brings Him, but there is a kind of spiritual sense that discovers His Presence and that rejoices in the bliss flowing from it. We speak what we know and testify what we have seen when we say that He is a Brother born for adversity in very deed, most tenderly revealing Himself to His people as He does not unto the world.

He is born for adversity, I think, in this sense, that you can hardly know Him except through adversity. You may know Christ so as to be saved by Him by a single act of faith, but for a full discovery of His beauty it needs that you go through the furnace. Those children of God whose grassy paths are always newly mown and freshly smoothed learn comparatively but little fellowship with Christ and have but slender knowledge of Him. But they that do business on great waters—these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep—and these know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted,” many can say, not only because of the restoring effect of sorrow, but because their afflictions have acted like windows to let them gaze into the very heart of Christ and read His pity and understand His Nature as they never could have done by other means. Furnace light is memorably clear! Jesus is a Brother born for adversity because in the glimmer of the world’s eventide, when all the lamps are going out—a Glory shines around Him transforming midnight into day.

He is a Brother born for adversity, in the last place, because in adversity it is that through His people’s patience He is glorified. I guarantee you the sweetest songs that ever come up from these lowlands to the Eternal Throne are from sick beds. “They shall sing His high praises in the fires.” God’s children are too often dumb when they have much of this world’s earth in their mouths. But when the Lord is pleased to take away their comforts and possessions, then, like birds in cages, they begin to sing with all their hearts! Praise Him, you suffering ones, your praise will be grateful to Him! Extol Him, you mourners—exchange by faith your sorrows for hopes and bless His name who deserves to be praised!

II. Now, I shall leave this and only for a moment turn the text round to a practical purpose by REFERRING IT TO THE CHRISTIAN. I hope that what has been spoken has been only the echo of the experience of the most of you. You have found Jesus Christ to be a true Brother and a blessed Friend. Now let the same be true of you. He that would have friends must show himself friendly. If Christ is such a Friend to us, what manner of people ought we to be towards Him? So, Beloved, let us pray and labor to be friends that love Christ at all times.

Alas, some professors seem to love Him at no time at all. They give Him lip homage, but they refuse to give Him the exercise of their talents, or the contribution of their substance. They love Him only with words that are but air. They offer Him no sweet cane with money, neither do they fill Him with the fat of their sacrifices. Such people are windbag lovers and do nothing substantial to prove their affection. Let it not be so with us. Let our love to Christ be so true as to constrain us to make sacrifices for Him. Let us deny ourselves that we may spread abroad the knowledge of His Truth and never be content unless in very deed and act we are giving proofs of our love. We ought to love Him at all times.

Alas, there are some that prosper in business who grow too great to love their Savior. They hold their heads too high to associate with His saints. Before their wealth they were with His people—content to worship with them when they were in humble circumstances. But they have prospered in trade, they have laid by a good store of wealth—and now they feel half ashamed to attend the conventicle that was once the very joy of their hearts. They must seek out the world’s religion and they must worship after the world’s fashion, for they must not be left behind in society! The people of God are not good enough for them, though they are kings and princes in Christ’s esteem, yet are they too poor company for those that have risen so high in the world.

Alas, alas, that professed lovers of Jesus should rise too high to walk truthfully and faithfully with Christ! It is no rise at all, but a lamentable fall! Let us cling to Him in days of joy as well as nights of grief and prove to all mankind that there are no enchantments in this world that can win our hearts away from our Best-Beloved. We should love Jesus Christ at all times, that is to say, in times when the Church seems dull and dead. Perhaps some of you are living in a district just now where the ministry is painfully devoid of power. The lamp burns very low in your sanctuary—the members worshipping are few and zeal is altogether dead. Do not desert the Church. Do not flee away from her in the time of her necessity. Keep to your post come what may. Be the last man to leave the sinking vessel, if sink she must. Resolve as a friend of Christ to love Him at all times. And as a Brother born into that Church feel that now, beyond all other times, in the season of adversity, you must adhere to her.

It may happen that some here present may tomorrow be found in a workshop, or in some other place where their business brings them, where some dear child of God will be laughed at and ridiculed. That same man you would have cheerfully claimed on the Sabbath as your Brother, you delighted to unite your voice with him in prayer, but now, while he stands in the midst of a ribald throng, will you claim him, or rather, claim Christ in him? They are making cruel jokes, they are vexing his gracious spirit. Now it is possible that a cowardly fear may make you slink away to the other end of the shop. But, oh, if you remember that a friend loves at all times, you will take up this man’s quarrel as being Christ’s quarrel, and you, as being a part of the body of Christ, will be willing to share whatever contumely may come upon your fellow Christian and you will say, “If you mock him, you may also mock me, for I, also, have been with Jesus of Nazareth and Him whom you scoff I adore.”

O let us never, by the love that Christ has borne to us, keep back a Truth of God because it may expose us to shame! Let us never be such cowards as to compromise the Word of God because we may then live in silken ease and delicacy. These are not times in which one single particle of Truth ought to be repressed. Whatever the Spirit of God and the Word of God may have taught you, my Brethren, out with it for Christ’s sake and let it bring what it will to you, bear that with joy. Since your Savior bore far more for you, count it joy to bear anything for Him. Be a brother born on purpose for adversity!

Do you expect to be carried to Heaven on a bed of ease? Do you reckon to win the everlasting laurels without a conflict? What? Sirs, would you stand beneath the waving banners of victory without having first endured the smoke and the dust of battle? No, rather, with consecrated courage follow in the steps of your Master. Love Him at all times! Give up all for Him and then shall you soon be with Him in His Glory world without end. God grant a blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Proverbs 17.*  
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÷Pro 18.10

OUR STRONGHOLD  
NO. 491

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 26, 1862, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the  
righteous run into it, and are safe.”  
Proverbs 18:10.**

STRONG towers were a greater security in a bygone age than they are now. Then when troops of marauders invaded the land, strong castles were set upon the various hilltops, and the inhabitants gathered up their little wealth and fled there at once. Castles were looked upon as being very difficult places to attack. And ancient troops would rather fight a hundred battles than endure a single siege. Towns which would be taken by modern artillery in twelve hours held out for twelve years against the most potent forces of the ancient times.

He that possessed a castle was lord of all the region round about, and made their inhabitants either his clients who sought his protection, or his dependents whom he ruled at will. He who owned a strong tower felt, however potent might be his adversary, his walls and bulwarks would be his sure salvation. Generous rulers provided strongholds for their people—mountain fastnesses where the peasantry might be sheltered from marauders.

Transfer your thoughts to a thousand years ago, and picture a people, who after plowing and sowing, have gathered in their harvest. But when they are about to make merry with the harvest festival, a startling signal banishes their joy. A trumpet is blown from yonder mountain, the bell answers it from the village tower. Hordes of ferocious robbers are approaching, their corn will be devoured by strangers! Burying their corn and furniture, and gathering up the little portable wealth they have, they hasten with all their might to their tower of defense which stands on yonder ridge.

The gates are shut. The drawbridge is pulled up. The iron grating is let down. The warders are on the battlements, and the inhabitants within feel that they are safe. The enemy will rifle their deserted farms, and search for hidden treasure, and finding that the inhabitants are quite beyond their reach, they will betake themselves to some other place. Such is the figure which is in the text. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous run into it and are safe.”

I. Of course we all know that by the name of God is meant the Character of the Most High, so that our first lesson is that THE CHARACTER OF GOD FURNISHES THE RIGHTEOUS WITH ABUNDANT SECURITY.

The Character of God is the refuge of the Christian, in opposition to other refuges which godless men have chosen. Solomon suggestively puts the following words in the next verse—“The rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.” The rich man feels that his

wealth may afford him comfort. Should he be attacked in law, his wealth can procure him an advocate. Should he be insulted in the streets, the dignity of a full purse will avenge him. Should he be sick, he can hire the best physicians. Should he need ministers to his pleasures, or helpers of his infirmities, they will be at his call.

Should famine stalk through the land, it will avoid his door. Should war itself break forth, he can purchase an escape from the sword, for his wealth is his strong tower in contradistinction to this, the righteous man finds in his God all that the wealthy man finds in his substance and a vast deal more. “The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore will I trust in Him.” God is our treasure. He is to us better than the heaviest purse, or the most magnificent income. Broad acres yield not such peace as a well attested interest in the love and faithfulness of our heavenly Father. Provinces under our sway could not bring to us greater revenues than we possess in Him who makes us heirs of all things by Christ Jesus.

Other men who trust not in their wealth, nevertheless make their own names a strong tower. To say the truth, a man’s good name is no mean defense against the attacks of his fellow men. To wrap one’s self about in the garment of integrity is to defy the chill blast of calumny and to be mailed against the arrows of slander. If we can appeal to God and say, “Lord, You know that in this thing I am not wicked”—then let the mouth of the liar pour forth his slanders, let him scatter his venom where he may—we bear an antidote within before which his poison yields its power.

But this is only true in a very limited sense. Death soon proves to men that their own good name can afford them no consolation, and under conviction of sin a good repute is no shelter. When conscience is awake, when the judgment is unbiased, when we come to know something of the law of God and of the justice of His Character, we soon discover that selfrighteousness is no hiding place for us. It is nothing but a crumbling battlement which will fall on the neck of him that hides behind it—a pasteboard fortification yielding to the first shock of the law—a refuge of lies to be beaten down with the great hailstones of eternal vengeance—such is the righteousness of man.

The righteous trusts not in this—not his own name—but the name of his God. Not his own character, but the Character of the Most High is his strong tower. Numberless are those castles in the air to which men hasten in the hour of peril—ceremonies lift their towers into the clouds— professions pile their walls high as mountains, and works of the flesh paint their delusions till they seem substantial bulwarks. But all, all, shall melt like snow, and vanish like a mist. Happy is he who leaves the sand for the Rock, the phantom for the Substance.

The name of the Lord is a strong tower to the Christian, not only in opposition to other men’s refuges but as a matter of fact and reality. Even when he is not able to perceive it by experience, yet God’s Character is the refuge of the saint. If we come to the bottom of things, we shall find that the basis of the security of the Believer lies in the Character of God. I know you will tell me it is the Covenant—but what is the Covenant worth, if God were changeable, unjust, untrue? I know you will tell me that the confidence of the Believer is in the blood of Christ—but what were the blood of Christ if God were false?

If after Christ had paid the ransom the Lord should deny Him the ransomed. If after Christ had been the Substitute, the Judge of men should yet visit upon our heads, for whom He suffered, our own guilt. If Jehovah could be unrighteous, if He could violate His promise and become faithless as we are—then, I say, that even the blood of Christ would afford us no security. You tell me that there is His promise, but again I remind you that the value of a man’s promise must depend on his character.

If God were not such that He cannot lie, if He were not so faithful that He cannot change His mind, if he were not so mighty that He cannot be frustrated when He intends to perform—then His promises were but waste paper! His Words like our words, would be but wind, and afford no satisfactory shelter for a soul distressed and anxious. But you will tell me He has sworn with an oath. Brethren, I know He has. He has given us two immutable things in which it is impossible for Him to lie, that we may have strong consolation.

But still what is a man’s oath worth irrespective of his character? Is it not, after all, what a man is that makes his assertions to be eminently mistrusted or profoundly believed? And it is because our God cannot by any means foreswear Himself but must be true, that His oath becomes of value to you and to me. Brethren, after all, let us remember that the purpose of God in our salvation is the glorifying of His own Character, and this it is that makes our salvation positively sure. If everyone that trusts in Christ is not saved, then is God dishonored, the Lord of Hosts has hung up His escutcheon.

And if in the face of the whole earth He accomplishes not that which He declares He will perform in this Book, then is His reputation stained. I say it, He has flung down the gauntlet to sin, death, and Hell—and if He is not the conqueror over all these in the heart of every soul that trusts in Him, then He is no more the God of Victories, nor can we shout His everlasting praise as the Lord mighty in battle. His Character, then, you see, when we come to the basis of all, is the granite formation upon which must rest all the pillars of the Covenant of Grace, and the sure mercies thereof.

His wisdom, truth, mercy, justice, power, eternity and immutability are the seven pillars of the house of sure salvation. If we would have comfort, we can surely find it in the Character of God. This is our strong tower, we run into it and we are safe.

Mark, Beloved, not only is this true as a matter of fact, but it is true as a matter of experience. I hope I shall now speak the feelings of your hearts, while I say we have found the Character of God to be an abundant safeguard to us. We have known full well the trials of life! Thank God we have, for what would any of us be worth if we had no troubles? Troubles, like files, take away our rust—like furnaces, they consume our dross—like winnowing fans they drive away the chaff. And we should have had but little value, we should have had but little usefulness—if we had not been made to pass through the furnace.  
But in all our troubles we have found the Character of God a comfort.

You have been poor—very poor—I know some of you here have been out of work a long time. You have wondered where your bread would come from, even for the next meal. Now what has been your comfort? Have you not said, “God is too good to let me starve. He is too bountiful to let me want.” And so, you see, you have found His Character to be your strong tower. Or else you have had personal sickness—you have long lain on the bed of weariness, tossing to and fro, and then the temptation has come into your heart to be impatient—“God has dealt harshly with you,” so the Evil One whispers. But how do you escape?

Why you say, “No, He is no tyrant, I know Him to be a sympathizing God.” “In all their afflictions He was afflicted, the angel of His Presence saved them.” Or else you have had losses—many losses, and you have been apt to ask, “How can these things be? How is it I have to work so long, and plod so hard, and have to look about me with all my wits to earn but little, and yet when I have made money it melts? I see my wealth, like a flock of birds upon the fields—here one moment, and gone the next—for a passerby claps his hands, and everything takes to itself wings and flies away.”

Then we are apt to think that God is unwise to let us toil for nothing, but lo, we run into our strong tower and we feel it cannot be. No. The God who sent this affliction could not have acted in a thoughtless, reckless, unwise manner. There must be something here that shall work for my good. You know, Brothers and Sisters, it is useless for me to attempt to describe the various ways in which your trials come. I am sure they that know Jehovah’s name will put their trust in Him.

Perhaps your trial has been want, and then you have said, “His name is Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord will provide.” Or else you have been banished from friends, perhaps from country, but you have said, “Ah, His name is Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there.” Or else you have had a disturbance in your family. There has been war within, and war without, but you have run into your strong tower, for you have said, “His name is Jehovah-Shalom, the Lord sends peace.” Or else the world has slandered you, and you, yourself have been conscious of sin, but you have said, “His name is Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness.”

And so you have gone there and been safe. Or else many have been your enemies, then His name has been “Jehovah-Xissi, the Lord my banner.” And so He has been a strong tower to you. Defy, then, Brothers and Sisters—defy, in God’s strength, tribulations of every sort and size. Say, with the poet—

*“There is a safe and secret place Beneath the wings Divine,  
Reserved for all the heirs of Grace, That refuge now is mine.  
The least and feeblest here may hide Uninjured and unawed;  
While thousands fall on every side, I rest secure in God.”*

But, Beloved, besides the trials of this life, we have the sins of the flesh, and what a tribulation these are! But the name of our God is our strong tower then. At certain seasons we are more than ordinarily conscious of our guilt. And I would give little for your piety, if you do not sometimes creep into a corner with the poor publican and say, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Broken hearts and humble walkers, these are dear in Jesus’ eyes. There will be times with all of us when our saintship is not very clear, but our sinnership is very apparent. Well, then, the name of our God must be our defense—“He is very merciful.” “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

Yes, in the Person of Christ we even dare to look at His justice with confidence, since, “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Possibly it is not so much the guilt of sin that troubles you, as the power of sin. You feel as if you must one day fall by the hand of this enemy within. You have been striving and struggling, but the old Adam is too much for you.

It is a stern conflict and you fear that the sons of Anak will never be driven out. You feel you carry a bombshell within your heart. Your passions are like a powder magazine—you are walking where the flakes of fire are flying, and you are afraid a spark may fall, and then there will be a terrible destruction of everything. Ah, then there is the power of God, there is the Truth of God, there is the faithfulness of God, and, despite all the desperate power of sin, we find a shelter here in the Character of the Most High.

Sin sometimes comes with all the terrors of the law. Then if you know not how to hide yourself behind your God, you will be in an evil plight. It will come at times with all the fire of the flesh, and if you cannot perceive that your flesh was crucified in Christ, and that your life is a life in Him, and not in yourself, then you will soon be put to the rout. But he who lives in his God and not in himself. He who wraps Christ’s righteousness about him, and is righteous in Christ—such a man may defy all the attacks of the flesh, and all the temptations of the world. He shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb. “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.”

Then, Beloved, there are the temptations of the devil, and these are very dreadful. But how sweet it is, still, to feel that the Character of God is our strong tower. Without walls of Divine Grace and bulwarks of mercy, how can a tempted soul escape the clutches of the Destroyer? But where the soul lies in the entrenchments of Divine promise, all the devils in Hell cannot carry it by storm. I saw this week, one whom many of you greatly respect, the former pastor of this Church, Mr. James Smith, of Cheltenham—[since departed, to be with Christ, which is far better]—a name well-known by his innumerable little works which are scattered everywhere and cannot fail to do good.

You will remember that about a year ago he was struck with paralysis and one half of his body was dead. But yet, when I saw him on the bed, I had not seen a more cheerful man in the full heyday of strength. I had been told that he was the subject of very fearful conflicts at times. So after I had shook hands with him, I said, “Friend Smith, I hear you have many doubts and fears!” “Who told you that?” said he, “for I have none.” “Never have any? Why I understood you had many conflicts.” “Yes,” he said, “I have many conflicts, but I have no doubts. I have many wars within, but I have no fears.

“Who could have told you that? I hope I have not led anyone to think that. It is a hard battle, but I know the victory is sure. After I have had an ill night’s rest—of course, through physical debility—my mind is troubled, and then that old coward, Satan, who would be afraid to meddle with me, perhaps, if I were strong, attacks me when I am weak. But I am not afraid of him—don’t you go away with that opinion. He does throw many fiery darts at me, but I have no doubt as to my final victory.”

Then he said, in his own way, “I am just like a packet that is all ready to go by train, packed, corded, labeled, paid for, and on the platform, waiting for the express to come by and take me to Glory. I wish I could hear the whistle now,” said he. “I had hoped I should have been carried to Heaven long ago, but still I am fine.” “And then,” he said, “I have been telling your George Moore, over there, that I am not only on the Rock, but that I am cemented to the Rock, and that the cement is as hard as the Rock, so there is no fear of my perishing. Unless the Rock falls, I cannot. Unless the Gospel perishes, I cannot perish.”

Now, here was a man attacked by Satan—he did not tell me of the bitter conflicts he had within, I know they were severe enough. He was anxious to bear a good testimony to the faithfulness of his gracious Lord—but you see, it was his God that was his stronghold. He ran to this—the immutability, the faithfulness, the truthfulness, the mightiness of that God upon whose arm he leaned. If you and I will do the same, we can always find an attribute of God to oppose to each suggestion of the Evil One. “God will leave you,” says the Evil One. “You old liar, He cannot, for He is a faithful God.” “But you will perish after all.” “O you vile deceiver! That can never be, for He is a mighty God and strong to deliver.”

“But one of these times He will abhor you.” “No, you false accuser, and father of lies, that cannot be, for He is a God of love.” “The time shall happen when He shall forget you.” “No, traitor! That cannot be, for He is a God Omniscient, and knows and sees all things.” I say, thus we may rebut every mischievous slander of Satan, running still into the Character of God as our strong tower.

Brethren, even when the Lord Himself chastens us, it is most blessed to appeal against God to God. Do you understand what I mean? He smites us with His rod, but then to look up and say, “Father, if I could believe what Your rod seems to say, I should say You love me not. But I know You are a God of love, and my faith tells me that You love me none the less because of that hard blow.” See here, Brothers and Sisters, I will put myself in the case a moment—Lo, He spurns me as though He hated me. He drives me from His Presence, gives me no caresses, denies me sweet promises.

He shuts me up in prison, and gives me the water of affliction, and the bread of distress. But my faith declares, “He is such a God that I cannot think harshly of Him. He has been so good to me that I know He is good now, and in the teeth of all His Providences, even when He puts a black mask over His face, I still believe that—

*“Behind a frowning Providence,*

*He hides a smiling face.”*  
But, Friends, I hope you know, I hope each of us may know by experience, the blessed are running into the bosom of God and hiding there.

This word to the sinner who has not yet found peace. Do not you see, Sinner, the Christian is not saved by what he is, but by what his God is? And this is the groundwork of our comfort—that God is perfect—not that we are perfect. When I preached last Thursday night about the snuffers of the temple, and the golden snuffer trays, and the necessity there was for the lamps in the sanctuary to be trimmed, one foolish woman said, “Ah, you see, according to the minister’s own confession, these Christians are as bad as the rest of us, they have many faults. Oh,” she said, “I dare say I shall be as well off at the last as they will.”

Poor soul! She did not see that the Christian’s hope does not lie in what he is, but in what Christ is. Our trust is not in what we suffer, but in what Jesus suffered. Not in what we do, but in what He has done. It is not our name—I say again—that is a strong tower to us. It is not even our prayers, it is not our good works. It is the name, the promise, the truth, the work, the finished righteousness of our God in Christ Jesus. Here the Believer finds his defense and nowhere besides. Run Sinner, run, for the castle gate is free to all who seek a shelter, be they who they may.

II. By your leave I shall turn to the second point. How THE RIGHTEOUS AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THIS STRONG TOWER. They run into it. Now, running seems to me to imply that they do not stop to make any preparation. You will remember our Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples that when the Romans surrounded Jerusalem, he that was on the housetop was not to come down into his house, but to run down the outer staircase, and escape. So the Christian, when he is attacked by his enemies, should not stop for anything, but just run into his God and be safe.

There is no need for you to tarry until you have prepared your mind, until you have performed sundry ablutions, but run, Man, straight away, at once. When the pigeons are attacked by the hawk, their better plan is not to parley, nor to stay, but swiftly as they can, cut the air and fly to the dovecote. So should it be with you. Leave fools, who will, to parley with the fiend of Hell—but as for you, fly to your God and enter into His secret places till the tempest is over, past. A gracious hint, this, to you anxious souls who are seeking to fit yourselves for Jesus—away with such legal rubbish, run at once!

You are safe in following the good example of the righteous. This running appears to me to imply that they have nothing to carry. A man who has a load, the heavier the load may be, the more will he be impeded in his flight. But the righteous run, like racers in the games, who have thrown off everything. Their sins they leave to mercy, and their righteousness to the moles and bats. If I had any righteousness I would not carry

it, but run to the righteousness of Christ without it—for my own righteousness must be a drag upon me which I could not bear.

Sinners, I know, when they come to Christ, want to bring tons of good works, wagon loads of good feelings, and fitness, and repenting and such like—but the righteous do no such thing. They just foreswear everything they have of their own, and count it but dross and dung, that they may run to Christ, and be found in him. Gospel righteousness lies all in Jesus, not in the Believer.

It seems to me, too, that this expression not only implies a want of preparation, and having nothing to carry, but it implies that fear quickens them. Men do not run to a castle unless they are afraid. But when the avenger of death is close behind, then swiftly they fly. It is marvelous how godly fear helps faith. There is a man sinking there in the river. He cannot swim, he must be drowned! Look! He is going down! We push him a plank—with what a clutch he grasps it! And the more he is convicted that he has no power to float, the more firmly does he grip at this one hope. Fear may even drive a man, I say, to faith, and lend him wings to fly, where otherwise he might have crept with laggard feet. The fight is the flight of fear, but the refuge is the refuge of faith. O, Sinner, if the righteous fly, what ought your pace to be?

Again, it seems to me that there is great eagerness here, as if the Christian did not feel safe till he had entered into his God. As the stag pursued by the hounds quickens its flight by reason of the baying of the dogs, as the clamor grows louder and louder, see how the stag leaps from crag to crag! He dashes through the stream, flies over yonder hill, is lost in yonder brake and soon springs through the valley! So the Christian flies to his dear God for safety, when the hounds of Hell and the dogs of temptation are let loose against him. Eagerness! Where indeed shall the like be found?

“As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” O convicted Sinner, what should your eagerness be if thus the righteous pant for God? Brethren, I may add here, that there is an absence of all hesitation. He runs. You know, if we want somebody to help us, we put our hand to our brow and consider, “Let us see, where shall we go? I am in great straits, to whom shall I fly? Who will be the best friend to me?” The righteous never ask that question, at least when they are in a right mind they never do.

The moment their trouble comes they run at once to their God, for they feel that they have full permission to repair to Him. And again they feel they have nowhere else to fly. “To whom, or where should I go, if I could turn from You,” is a question which is its own answer. Then understand, in our text there is eagerness, the absence of all hesitation. There is fear, and yet there is courage. There is no preparation, there is the flinging aside of every burden. “The righteous run into His high tower and are safe.”

Beloved, I will leave that point, when I have said please remember that when a man gets into a castle, he is safe because of the impregnability of the castle. He is not safe because of the way in which he entered into the castle. You hear some man inside saying, “I shall never be hurt, because I came into the castle the right way.” You will tell him, “No, no, no, it is not the way you came into the castle, but the castle itself is our defense.” So some of you may be thinking, “I do come to Christ, but I am afraid that I do not come aright.” But it is not your coming, it is Christ that saves you!

If you are in Christ, I do not care a pin how you got in, for I am sure you could not get in except by the door! If you are once in, He will never throw you out. He will never drive away a soul that comes unto Him, for any reason whatever. Your safety does not lie in how you came, for in very truth, your safety is in Him. If a man should run into a castle and carry all the jewels of a kingdom with him, he would not be safer because of the jewels. And if another man should run in with hardly a fresh suit of clothes with him, he would not be any the more in danger because of his raggedness.

It is the castle, it is the castle, not the man. The solid walls, the strong bastions, the frowning ramparts, the mighty munitions—these make up the defense—not the man! Nor the man’s wealth, nor the way the man came. Beloved, it is most true that salvation is of the Lord, and whoever shall look out of self tonight, whoever shall look to Christ only, shall find Him to be a strong tower. You may run into your Lord and be safe.

III. And now for our third and closing remark. You that have Bibles with margins, just look at them. You will find that the second part of the text is put in the margin thus—“The righteous run into it and are set aloft.” Our first rendering is, “The righteous run into it and are safe”— there is the matter of fact. The other rendering is, “He is set aloft”—there is the matter of joyous experience.

1. Now, first, let us see to the matter of fact. The man that is sheltered in his God—a man that dwells in the secret places of the tabernacle of the Host on High, who is hidden in His pavilion, and is set upon a rock, he is safe, for, first, who can hurt him? The Devil? Christ has broken his head. Life? Christ has taken his life up to Heaven, for we are dead, and, “our life is hid with Christ in God.” Death? No. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. “O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?”

The law? That is satisfied and it is dead to the Believer, and he is not under its curse. Sin? No—that cannot hurt the Believer, for Christ has slain it. Christ took the Believer’s sins upon Himself, and therefore they are not on the Believer any more. Christ took the Believer’s sins and threw them into the Red Sea of His atoning blood. The depths have covered them, not one of them is left. All the sin the Believer has ever committed is now blotted out, and a debt that is cancelled can never put a man in prison. A debt that is paid, let it be ever so heavy, can never make a man an insolvent—it is discharged, it has ceased to be.

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes inter

cession for us.” Who can harm us? Let him have permission to do what he will, what is there that he can do? Who, again, has the power to reach us? We are in the hands of Christ. What arrow shall penetrate His hands to reach our souls? We are under the skirts of Deity. What strength shall tear away the mantle of God to reach His children? Our names are written on the hands of Jesus—who can erase those everlasting lines?

We are jewels in Immanuel’s crown. What thievish fingers shall steal away those jewels? We are in Christ. Who shall be able to rend us from His innermost heart? We are members of His body. Who shall mutilate the Savior? “I bore you,” says God, “as on eagles’ wings.” Who shall smite through the breast of the Eternal One, Heaven’s great eagle? He must first do it before he can reach the eaglets, the young sons of God, begotten unto a lively hope. Who can reach us? God interposes—Christ stands in the way. And the Holy Spirit guards us as a garrison.

Who shall stand against the Omnipotent? Tens of thousands of created powers must fall before him, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. What weapon is there that can be used against us? Shall they kill us? Then we begin to live. Shall they banish us? Then we are but nearer to our Home. Shall they strip us? How can they rend away the garment of imputed righteousness? Shall they seize our property? How can they touch our treasure since it is all in Heaven? Shall they scourge us? Sweet shall be the smart when Christ is present with us! Shall they cast us into a dungeon? Where shall the free spirit find a prison? What fetters can bind the man who is free in Christ?

Shall the tongue attack us? Every tongue that rises against us in judgment, we shall condemn. I know not what new weapon can be formed, for certain it is that the anvil of the Church has broken all the hammers that were ever used to smite it, and remains uninjured, still. The Believer is— he must be safe. I said this morning that if the Believer in Christ is not saved forever, then, Beloved, there is no meaning whatever in God’s Word. And I say it once again, and I say it without any word of apology for so doing—I could never receive that Book as the Book of God at all, if it could be proved to me that it did not teach the doctrine of the safety of those that trust in Christ.

I could never believe that God would speak in such a manner as to make tens of thousands of us, yes, millions of us, believe that He would keep us, and yet after all, He should cast us away. Nor do I believe that He would use words which, to say the very least, seem to teach final perseverance if He had not intended to teach us the doctrine. All the Arminian Divines that ever lived cannot prove the total apostasy of Believers. They can attack some other points of the Calvinistic doctrine. There are some points of our form of doctrine which apparently are far more vulnerable.

God forbid we should be so foolish as to deny that there are difficulties about every system of theology! But about the perseverance of the saint there is no difficulty. It is as easy to overthrow an opponent, here, as it would be to thrust through, with a spear, a shield of pasteboard. Be confident, Believer, that this is God’s Truth, that they who trust in God shall be as Mount Zion which shall never be removed, but abide forever.

2. But now we conclude by noticing that our text not only teaches us our safety, but our experience of it. “He shall set him up aloft.” The Believer in his high days, and they ought to be every day, is like an eagle perched aloft on a towering crag. Yonder is a hunter, down below, who would desire to strike the royal bird. He has his rifle with him—but his rifle would not reach one third of the way—so the royal bird looks down upon him. He sees him load and prime, and aim. He looks in quiet contempt on him, not intending even to take the trouble to stretch one of his wings.

He sees him load again, hears the bullet down below, but he is quite safe, for he is up aloft. Such is the faithful Christian’s state before God. He can look down upon every trial and temptation, upon every adversary and every malicious attack—for God is his strong tower, and, “he is set up aloft.” When some people go to the newspaper and write a very sharp, bitter, and cutting letter against the minister, “Oh,” they think, “How he will feel that! How that will cut him to the quick!”

And yet, if they had seen the man read it through, double it up, and throw it into the fire, saying, “What a mercy it is to have somebody taking notice of me.” If they could see the man go to bed and sleep all the better because he thinks he has had a high honor conferred on him for being allowed to be abused for Christ, surely they would see that their efforts are only, “hate’s labor lost.” I do not think our enemies would take so much trouble to make us happy, if they knew how blessed we are under their malice.

“You have prepared a table before me in the presence of my enemies,” said David. Some soldiers never eat so well as when their enemies are looking on—for there is a sort of gusto about every mouthful which they eat, as they seem to say—“snatched from the jaw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear, and in defiance of you all, in the name of the Most High God I feast to the full, and then set up my banner.” The Lord sets His people up aloft.

But there are many who do not appear to be much up aloft. You meet them in the corn market and they say, “Wheat does not pay as they used to. Farming is no good to anybody.” Hear others, after those gales, those violent gales, when so many ships have gone down, say, “Ah, you may well pity us poor fellows that have to do with shipping, dreadful times these, we are all sure to be ruined.” See many of our tradesmen—“This Exhibition has given us a little spurt, but as soon as this is over, there will be nothing doing. Trade never was so dull.” Trade has been dull ever since I have been in London, and that is nine years!

I do not know how it is, but our friends are always losing money, yet they get on pretty comfortably, too. Some I know, began with nothing. And they are getting pretty rich now, but, it is all by losing money, if I am to believe what they tell me! Surely this is not sitting up aloft. Surely this is not living up on high. This is a low kind of life for a child of God. We should not have liked to see the Prince of Wales in his boyhood playing with the children in the street, and I do not suppose you would like to

see him now among coal heavers at a wrestling match.

Nor should the child of God be seen pushing and grasping as if this world were all, always using that muckrake to scrape together the things of this world. Instead he should be in full satisfaction, being content with such things as he has, for God has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” I am not a little ashamed of myself that I do not live more on high, for I know when we get depressed in spirits, and downcast, and doubting, we say many unbelieving and God-dishonoring words. It is all wrong. We ought not to stay here in these marshes of fleshly doubts. We ought never to doubt our God. Let the heathen doubt his god, for well he may, but our God made the heavens.

What a happy people we ought to be! When we are not, we are not true to our principles. There are ten thousand arguments in Scripture for happiness in the Christian. But I do not know that there is one logical argument for misery. Those people who draw their faces down, and like the hypocrites, pretend to be of a sad countenance, these, I say, cry, “Lord, what a wretched land is this, that yields us no supplies.” I should think they do not belong to the children of Israel! The children of Israel find in the wilderness a Rock following them with its streams of water, and manna dropping every day. And when they want them, there are the quails, and so the wretched land is filled with good supplies.

Let us rather rejoice in our God. I should not like to have a serving man who always went about with a dreary countenance, because do you know people would say, “What a bad master that man has.” And when we see Christians looking so sad, we are apt to think they cannot have a good God to trust to. Come, Beloved, let us change our notes, for we have a strong tower, and are safe.

Let us take a walk upon the ramparts. I do not see any reason for always being down in the dungeon. Let us go up to the very top of the ramparts, where the banner waves in the fresh air, and let us sound the clarion of defiance to our foes! And let it ring across the plain, where yonder pale white-horsed rider comes, bearing the lance of death. Let us defy even him. Ring out the note again! Salute the evening, and make the outgoings of the morning to rejoice.

Wander upon the castle top, shout to your companion, yonder, and let every tower and every turret of the grand old battlements be vocal with the praise of Him who has said—

*“Munitions of stupendous rock,  
Your dwelling place shall be.  
There shall your soul without a shock  
The wreck of nature see.”*

Sinner, again I say the door is open! Run to the mercy of God in Christ, and by His Grace, be safe!  
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÷Pro 18.12

PRIDE AND HUMILITY  
NO. 97

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 17, 1856, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honor is humility.”  
Proverbs 18:12.**

ALMOST every event has its prophetic prelude. It is an old and common saying, that, “coming events cast their shadows before them.” The wise man teaches us the same lesson in the verse before us. When destruction walks through the land, it casts its shadow—it is in the shape of pride. When honor visits a man’s house, it casts its shadow before it— it is in the fashion of humility. “Before destruction the heart of man is haughty.” Pride is as surely the sign of destruction as the change of mercury in the weatherglass is the sign of rain! And far more infallibly so than that, “Before honor is humility,” even as before the summer, sweet birds return to sing in our land! Everything has its prelude. The prelude of destruction is pride and of honor, humility. There is nothing into which the heart of man so easily falls as pride—and there is no vice which is more frequently, more emphatically and more eloquently condemned in Scripture! Against pride Prophets have lifted up their voices, Evangelists have spoken and teachers have discoursed. Yes, more—the Everlasting God has mounted to the very heights of eloquence when He would condemn the pride of man! The full gushing of the Eternal’s mighty language has been most gloriously displayed in the condemnation of the pride of human nature. Perhaps the most eloquent passage of God’s Word is to be found towards the conclusion of the book of Job., where, in most splendid strains of unanswerable eloquence, God hides pride from man by utterly confounding him! And there is another very eloquent passage in the 14th Chapter of Isaiah where the Lord’s holy anger seems to have risen up and it waxes hot against the pride of man, when He would utterly and effectually condemn it. He says concerning the great and mighty king of Babylon, “Hell from beneath is moved for you to meet you at your coming. It stirs up the dead for you, even all the chief ones of the earth. It has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto you, Are you also become weak as we? Are you become like unto us? Your pomp is brought down to the grave and the noise of your viols: the worm is spread under you and the worms cover you. How are you fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations! For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the most High. Yet you shall be brought down to Hell to the sides of the pit. They that see you shall narrowly look upon you and consider you, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms?”

Mark how God addresses him, describing Hell, itself, as being astonished at his fall, seeing that he had mounted so high. And yet declaring, assuredly, that his height and greatness were nothing to the Almighty, that He would put him down, even though, like an eagle he had built his nest among the stars. I say there is nothing more eloquently condemned in Scripture than pride—and yet there is no trap into which we poor silly birds so easily flee, no pitfall into which like foolish beasts of the earth we so continually run! On the other hand, humility is a Divine Grace that has many promises given to it in the Scripture. Perhaps more promises are given to faith and love which are often considered to be the brightest of the train of virtues—yet humility holds by no means an inferior place in God’s Word and there are hundreds of promises linked to it. Every Grace seems to be like a nail on which precious blessings hang and humility has many a mercy suspended from it. “He that exalts himself shall be abased and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.” “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” and in multitudes of other passages, we are reminded that God loves the humble but that He “brings down the mighty from their seats and exalts the humble and meek.” Now, this morning, we shall have a word to say concerning pride and humility. May the Holy Spirit preserve us from the one and produce in our hearts the other!

I. In the first place, we shall have something to say concerning the vice of PRIDE. “Before destruction the heart of man is haughty.” Pride, what is it? Pride, where is its seat? The heart of man. And pride, what is its consequence? Destruction!

1. In the first place, I must try to describe pride to you. I might paint it as being the worst malformation of all the monstrous things in Creation! It has nothing lovely in it, nothing in proportion but everything in disorder. It is altogether the very reverse of the creatures which God has made, which are pure and holy. Pride, the first-born son of Hell, is, indeed, like its parent—all unclean and vile—and in it there is neither form, fashion, nor comeliness.

In the first place, pride is a groundless thing. It stands on the sands. Or worse than that, it puts its foot on the billows which yield beneath its tread. Or worse still, it stands on bubbles which soon must burst beneath its feet. Of all things, pride has the worst foothold. It has no solid rock on earth whereon to place itself. We have reasons for almost everything, but we have no reasons for pride! Pride is a thing which should be unnatural to us, for we have nothing to be proud of. What is there in man of which he should glory? Our very creation is enough to humble us—what are we but creatures of today? Our frailty should be sufficient to lay us low for we shall be gone tomorrow. Our ignorance should tend to keep pride from our lips. What are we, but like the wild ass’s colt which knows nothing? And our sins ought effectually to stop our mouths and lay us in the dust. Of all things in the world, pride towards God is that which has the very least excuse. It has neither stick nor stone whereon to build. Yet like the spider, it carries its own web in its bowels and can, of itself, spin that wherewith to catch its prey. It seems to stand upon itself, for it has nothing besides where it can rest. Oh, man, learn to reject pride, seeing that you have no reason for it! Whatever you are, you have nothing to make you proud. The more you have, the more you are in debt to God—and you should not be proud of that which renders you a debtor. Consider your origin—look back to the hole of the pit from where you were dug. Consider what you would have been, even now, if it were not for Divine Grace. And consider that you will yet be lost in Hell if Grace does not hold you up! Consider that among the damned, there are none that would have been more damned than yourself, if Grace had not kept you from destruction. Let this consideration humble you, that you have nothing whereon to ground your pride.

Again, it is a brainless thing as well as a groundless thing for it brings no profit with it. There is no wisdom in a self-exaltation. Other vices have some excuse, for men seem to gain by them. Avarice, pleasure, lust have some plea. But the man who is proud sells his soul cheaply! He opens wide the floodgates of his heart to let men see how deep is the flood within his soul. Then suddenly it flows out and all is gone—and all is nothing—or one puff of empty wind, one word of sweet applause—the soul is gone and not a drop is left! In almost every other sin, we gather up the ashes when the fire is gone—but here, what is left? The covetous man has his shining gold, but what has the proud man? He has less than he would have had without his pride and is no gainer whatever! Oh, Man, if you were as mighty as Gabriel and had all his holiness, still you would be a complete fool to be proud, for pride would sink you from your angel station to the rank of devils and bring you from the place where Lucifer, son of the morning, once dwelt, to take up your abode with hideous fiends in Perdition! Pride exalts its head and seeks to honor itself, but it is, of all things, most despised. It sought to plant crowns upon its brow and so it has done—but its head was hot and it put an ice crown there— and it melted all away. Poor pride has sometimes decked itself out finely. It has put on its most gaudy apparel and said to others, “how brilliant I appear!” But, ah, Pride, like a harlequin dressed in your colors, you are all the more fool for that—you are but a gazing stock for fools less foolish than yourself! You have no crown, as you think you have, nothing solid and real—all is empty and vain. If you, O Man, desire shame, be proud! A monarch has waded through slaughter to a throne and shut the gates of mercy on mankind to win a little glory. But when he has exalted himself and has been proud, worms have devoured him, like Herod, or have devoured his empire till it passed away—with all its pride and glory! Pride wins no crown. Men never honor it, not even the menial slaves of earth, for all men look down on the proud man and think him less than themselves.

Again, pride is the maddest thing that can exist. It feeds upon its own vitals. It will take away its own life so that with its blood it may make a purple cape for its shoulders! It saps and undermines its own house that it may build its pinnacles a little higher—and then the whole structure tumbles down! Nothing proves men so mad as pride! For this they have given up rest and ease and repose to find rank and power among men. For this they have dared to risk their hope of salvation, to leave the gentle yoke of Jesus and go toiling wearily along the way of life, seeking to save themselves by their own works! And at last they stagger into the mire of fell despair. Oh, Man, hate pride—flee from it, abhor it, let it not dwell with you! If you want to have a madman in your heart, embrace pride, for you shall never find one more mad than he!

Then pride is a flexible thing. It changes its shape. It is all forms in the world. You may find it in any fashion you choose. You may see it in the beggar’s rags as well as in the rich man’s garment. It dwells with the rich and with the poor. The man without a shoe to his foot may be as proud as if he were riding in a chariot! Pride can be found in every rank of society—among all classes of men. Sometimes it is an Arminian and talks about the power of the creature. Then it turns Calvinist and boasts of its fancied security—forgetful of the Maker—who alone can keep our faith alive! Pride can profess any form of religion. It may be a Quaker and wear no collar to its coat. It may be a Churchman and worship God in splendid cathedrals. It may be a Dissenter and go to the common Meeting House. It is one of the most universal things in the world! It attends all kinds of chapels and churches. Go where you will, you will see pride. It comes up with us to the House of God. It goes with us to our houses. It is found in the market and the exchange, in the streets and everywhere! Let me hint at one or two of the forms which it assumes. Sometimes pride takes the doctrinal shape. It teaches the doctrine of self-sufficiency. It tells us what man can do and will not acknowledge that we are lost, fallen, debased and ruined creatures, as we are. It hates Divine Sovereignty and rails at Election. Then if it is driven from that, it takes another form—agrees that the Doctrine of Free Grace is true, but does not feel it! It acknowledges that salvation is of the Lord, alone, but still it prompts men to seek Heaven by their own works, even by the deeds of the Law! And when driven from that, it will persuade men to join something with Christ in the matter of salvation. And when that is all torn up and the poor rag of our righteousness is all burned, pride will get into the Christian’s heart as well as the sinner’s—it will flourish under the name of self-sufficiency, teaching the Christian that he is “rich and increased in goods, having need of nothing.” It will tell him that he does not need daily Grace, that past experience will do for tomorrow—that he knows enough, does enough, prays enough. It will make him forget that he has “not yet attained.” It will not allow him to press forward to the things that are before, forgetting the things that are behind. It enters into his heart and tempts the Believer to set up an independent business for himself. And until the Lord brings about a spiritual bankruptcy, pride will keep him from going to God! Pride has ten thousand shapes. It is not always that stiff and starched gentleman that you picture it. It is a vile, creeping, insinuating thing that will twist itself like a serpent into our hearts! It will talk of humility and prate about being dust and ashes. I have known men talk about their corruption most marvelously, pretending to be all humility, while at the same time they were the most proud wretches that could be found this side the gulf of separation! Oh, my Friends, you cannot tell how many shapes pride will assume—look sharp about you, or you will be deceived by it and when you think you are entertaining angels, you will find you have been receiving devils unawares!

2. Now, I have to speak of the seat of pride—the heart. The true throne of pride is the heart of man. If, my dear Friends, we desire, by God’s Grace, to put down pride, the only way is to begin with the heart. Now let me tell you a parable, in the form of an eastern story which will set this Truth of God in its proper light. A wise man in the East, called a dervish, in his wanderings came suddenly upon a mountain. And he saw beneath his feet a smiling valley, in the midst of which there flowed a river. The sun was shining on the stream and the water, as it reflected the sunlight, looked pure and beautiful. When he descended, he found it was muddy and the water utterly unfit for drinking. Hard by, he saw a young man, in the dress of a shepherd, who was, with much diligence, filtering the water for his flocks. At one moment he placed some water into a pitcher and then allowed it to stand. After it had settled, he poured the clean fluid into a cistern. Then, in another place, he would be seen turning aside the current for a little and letting it ripple over the sand and stones, that it might be filtered and the impurities removed. The dervish watched the young man endeavoring to fill a large cistern with clear water and said to him, “My son, why all this toil?—what purpose do you answer by it?” The young man replied, “Father, I am a shepherd. This water is so filthy that my flock will not drink of it and, therefore, I am obliged to purify it, little by little, so I collect enough in this way that they may drink, but it is hard work.” So saying, he wiped the sweat from his brow, for he was exhausted with his toil. “Right well have you labored,” said the wise man, “but do you know your toil is not well applied? With half the labor you might attain a better end. I should conceive that the source of this stream must be impure and polluted. Let us take a pilgrimage together and see.” They then walked some miles, climbing their way over many a rock, until they came to a spot where the stream took its rise. When they came near to it, they saw flocks of wild fowls flying away and wild beasts of the earth rushing into the forest—these had come to drink and had soiled the water with their feet. They found an open well which kept continually flowing, but by reason of these creatures, which perpetually disturbed it, the stream was always turbid and muddy. “My son,” said the wise man, “set to work, now, to protect the fountain and guard the well which is the source of this stream. And when you have done that, if you can keep these wild beasts and fowls away, the stream will flow of itself, all pure and clear and you will have no longer need for your toil.” The young man did it and as he labored the wise man said to him, “My son, hear the word of wisdom—if you are wrong, seek not to correct your outward life, but seek first to get your heart correct, for out of it are the issues of life and your life shall be pure when once your heart is so.”

So if we would get rid of pride, we should not proceed to arrange our dress by adopting some special costume. Or to qualify our language by using an outlandish tongue—but let us seek of God that He would purify our hearts from pride and then assuredly, if pride is purged from the heart, our life, also, shall be humble. Make the tree good and then the fruit will be good. Make the fountain pure and the stream will be sweet. Oh that God might grant us all, by His Grace, that our hearts may be kept with diligence, so that pride may never enter there lest we be haughty in our hearts and find that afterwards comes wrath!

3. This brings me to the other point, which is the consequence of pride—destruction—a fact which we can prove by hundreds of instances in Scripture. When men have become proud, destruction has come upon them. See you yon bright angel chanting the loud anthem of praise before his Maker’s Throne? Can anything tarnish that angel’s glory, rob him of his harp, despoil him of his crown? Yes, see there enters a destroyer whose name is Pride. He assaults the angel and his harp strings are snapped in two. His crown is taken from his brow and his glory is departed—and yon falling spirit descending into Hell is he who once was Lucifer, son of the morning! He has now become Father of nights, even the Lord of Darkness, Satan, the Fallen One. See you again that happy pair walking in the midst of luscious fruits and flowery walks and bowers of Paradise? Can anything spoil Eden and ruin those happy beings? Yes, pride comes in the shape of a serpent and asks them to seek to be as gods. They eat of the forbidden fruit and pride withers their Paradise and blasts their Eden! Out they go to till the ground, whence they were taken to beget and to bring forth us who are their children—sons of toil and sorrow! Do you see that man after God’s own heart, continually singing his Maker’s praise? Can anything make him sad? Can you suppose that he shall ever be laid prostrate on the earth, groaning and crying and asking, “that the bones which God has broken may rejoice?” Yes, pride can do that! It will put into his heart that he will number his people, that he will count the tribes of Israel to show how great and mighty is his empire. It is done and a terrible pestilence sweeps over his land on account of his pride. Let David’s aching heart show how destruction comes to a man’s glory when he once begins to make a god of it! See that other good and holy man who, like David, was much after God’s own heart? He is rich and increased in goods. The Babylonian ambassadors have come and he shows them all he has. Do you not hear that threat, “Your treasures shall be carried away and your sons and your daughters shall be servants to the king of Babylon”? The destruction of Hezekiah’s wealth must come because he is proud! But for the most notable instance of all, let me show you yonder palace, perhaps the most magnificent which has even yet been built. In it there walks one who, lifting up his head on high, as if he were more than mortal man, exclaims, “See you this great Babylon that I have built?” Oh, Pride, what have you done? You have more power than a wizard’s wand! Mark the mighty builder of Babylon creeping on the earth. Like oxen, he is devouring grass—his nails have grown like birds’ claws, his hair like eagles’ feathers and his heart has gone from him. Pride did all that—that it might be fulfilled which God has written—“Before destruction the heart of man is haughty.”

Is yours heart haughty, Sinner, this morning? Do you despise God’s Sovereignty? Will you not submit yourself to Christ’s yoke? Do you seek to weave a righteousness of your own? Are you seeking to be or to do something? Are you desirous of being great and mighty in your own esteem? Hear me then, Sinner—destruction is coming upon you! As truly as ever you exalt yourself, you shall be abased! Your destruction, in the fullest and blackest sense of the word, is hurrying on to overwhelm you. And oh, Christian, is your heart haughty this morning? Are you come here glorying in your Graces? Are you proud of yourself, that you have had such high frames and such sweet experiences? Mark you, Brother, or Sister, there is a destruction coming to you, also! Some of your proud things will be pulled up by the roots, some of your Graces will be shattered and your good works, perhaps, will become loathsome to you and you will abhor yourself in dust and ashes! As truly as ever you exalt yourself, there will be a destruction come to you! O saint—the destruction of your joys and of your comforts—though, by His Grace, there can be no destruction of your soul!

Pride, you know, is most likely to meet with destruction because it is too tall to walk upright. It is most likely to tumble down because it is always looking upward in its ambition and never looks to its feet. There only needs to be a pitfall in the way, or even a stone—and down it goes. It is sure to tumble because it is never contented with being where it is. It is always seeking to be climbing—and boys who will climb must expect to fall. Pride is foolhardy and will venture upon scaling any rock. Sometimes it holds on by a brier and that pricks it. Sometimes by a flint and that cuts it. There it goes, toiling and laboring on, till it gets as high as it can and then, from its very height, it is likely to fall. Nature, itself, tells us to avoid high things. Who is he that can stand upon a high hill without a reeling brain and without a temptation to cast himself down? Pride, when most successful, stands in slippery places. Who would choose to dwell on a pinnacle of the temple? That is where pride has built its house and truly, it seems but natural that pride should fall down if pride will go up! God will carry out this saying, “Before destruction, the heart of man is haughty.” Yet Beloved, I am persuaded that all I can say to you, or to myself, can never keep pride from us! The Lord, alone, can bolt the door of the heart against pride! Pride is like the flies of Egypt—all Pharaoh’s soldiers could not keep them out—and I am sure all the strong resolutions and devout aspirations we may have cannot keep pride out unless the Lord God Almighty sends a strong wind of His Holy Spirit to sweep it away!

II. Now, let us consider briefly the last part of the text, “BEFORE HONOR IS HUMILITY.” So then, you see our heavenly Father does not say that we are not to have honor! He has not forbidden it. He has only forbidden us to be proud of it. A good man may have honor in this life. Daniel had honor before the people. Joseph rode in the second chariot and the people bowed the knee before him. God often clothes His children with honor in the face of their adversaries and makes the wicked confess that the Lord is with them in deed and in Truth. But God forbids our making that honor a cloak for pride and bids us seek humility which always accompanies as well as precedes true honor.

1. Now let us briefly enquire, in the first place, what is humility? The best definition I have ever met with is, “to think rightly of ourselves.” Humility is to make a right estimate of one’s self. It is no humility for a man to think less of himself than he ought, though it might rather puzzle him to do that. Some persons, when they know they can do a thing, tell you they cannot—but do you call that humility? A man is asked to take part in some meeting. “No,” he says, “I have no ability.” Yet, if you were to say so, yourself, he would be offended at you. It is not humility for a man to stand up and depreciate himself and say he cannot do this, that, or the other, when he knows that he is lying! If God gives a man a talent, do you think the man does not know it? If a man has ten talents, he has no right to be dishonest to his Maker and to say, “Lord, you have only given me five.” It is not humility to underrate yourself. Humility is to think of yourself, if you can, as God thinks of you. It is to feel that if we have talents, God has given them to us and let it be seen that, like freight in a vessel, they tend to sink us low. The more we have, the lower we ought to lie. Humility is not to say, “I have not this gift,” but it is to say, “I have the gift and I must use it for my Master’s Glory. I must never seek any honor for myself for what have I that I have not received?” But, Beloved, humility is to feel ourselves lost, ruined and undone. To be killed by the same hand which, afterwards, makes us alive. To be ground to pieces as to our own doings and willings, to know and trust in none but Jesus, to be brought to feel and sing —

*“Nothing in my hands I bring,*

*Simply to Your Cross I cling.”*  
Humility is to feel that we have no power of ourselves, but that it all comes from God. Humility is to lean on our Beloved, to believe that He has trod the winepress alone, to lie on His bosom and slumber sweetly there. It is to exalt Him and think less than nothing of ourselves. It is, in fact, to annihilate self and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as All-in-All.

2. Now, what is the seat or throne of humility? The throne of humility must be the heart. I do hate, of all things, that humility which lives in the face. There are some persons who always seem to be so very humble when you are with them. But you can discover there is something underneath it all—and when they are in some other society—they will brag and say how you told them your whole heart. Take heed of the men who allow you to lay your head in their lap and betray you into the hands of the Philistines! I have met with such persons. I remember a man who used to pray with great apparent humility—and then would go and abuse his servants and make a noise with all his farming men. He was the stiffest and most proud man in the Church, yet he invariably used to tell the Lord, in prayer, that he was nothing but dust and ashes—he would lay his hand on his lips and his mouth in the dust and cry, “Unclean, unclean.” Indeed he talked of himself in the most despairing way, but I am sure if God had spoken to him, He must have said, “O, you that lie before My Throne, you say this, but you do not feel it, for you will go your way and take your brother by the throat, exalt yourself above all your fellow creatures and be a very Diotrephes in the Church and a Herod in the world.” I dislike that humility which rests in outward things. That is a kind of oily, sanctimonious, proud humility which is not the genuine article, though it is sometimes extremely like it. You may be deceived by it, once or twice, but by-and-by you discover that is a wolf dexterously covered with sheep’s clothing! It arrays itself in the simplest dress in the world. It talks in the gentlest and humblest style. It says, “We must not intrude our own peculiar sentiments but must always walk in love and charity.” But after all, what is it? It is charitable to all except those who hold God’s Truth and it is humble to all when it is forced to be humble! It is like one of whom, I dare say, you have read in your childish books—

*“So, stooping down, as needs he must*

*Who cannot stand upright.”*  
True humility does not continually talk about, “dust and ashes,” and prate about its infirmities, but it feels all that which others say, for it possesses an inwrought feeling of its own nothingness.

Very likely the most humble man in the world won’t bend to anybody. John Knox was a truly humble man, yet if you had seen him march before Queen Mary with the Bible in his hand, to reprove her, you would have rashly said, “What a proud man!”

Cringing men that bow before everybody are truly proud men, but humble men are those who think themselves so little, they do not think it worth while to stoop to serve themselves. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were humble men, for they did not think their lives were worth enough to save them by a sin. Daniel was a humble man—he did not think his place, his station, his whole self—worth enough to save them by leaving off prayer! Humility is a thing which must be genuine. The imitation of it is the nearest thing in the world to pride. Seek of God, dear Friends, the gift of true humility. Seek to have that breaking in pieces by the Holy Spirit, that breaking in the mortar with the pestle which God Himself gives to His children! Seek that every twig of His rod may drive pride out of you so that by the blueness of your wound, your soul may be made better! Seek of Christ—that He may take you to Calvary and that He may show you His brightness and His Glory—that you may be humble before Him. Never ask to be a mean, cringing, fawning thing. Ask God to make you a man—those are scarce things nowadays—a man who only fears God, who knows no fear of any other kind. Do not give yourselves up to any man’s power, or guidance, or rule—but ask of God that you may have that humility towards Him which gives you the noble bearing of a Christian before others. Some think that ministers are proud when they resent any interference with their ministry. I consider they would be proud if they allowed it for the sake of peace, which is only another word for their own self-seeking. It is a great mercy when God gives a man freedom from everybody—when he can go into his pulpit careless of what others may think of him. I conceive that a minister should be like a lighthouse keeper—he is out at sea and nobody can suggest to him that he had better light his candles a little later, or anything of the kind. He knows his duty and he keeps his lamps burning—if he were to follow the opinions of the people on shore, his light might be extinguished altogether! It is a merciful Providence that they cannot get to him, so he goes on easily, obeys his regulations as he reads them and cares little for other people’s interpretation. So a minister should not be a weathercock that is turned by the wind, but he should be one who turns the wind. He should not be one who is ruled by others, but one who knows how to stand firm and fast and keep his light burning, trusting always in God—believing that if God has raised him up, He will not desert him, but will teach him, by His Holy Spirit, without the ever-changing advice of men!

3. Now, in the last place, what comes of humility? “Before honor is humility.” Humility is the herald which ushers in the great king. It walks before honor and he who has humility will have honor afterwards. I will only apply this spiritually. Have you been brought, today, to feel that in yourself you are less than nothing? Are you humbled in the sight of God, to know your own unworthiness, your fallen estate in Adam and the ruin you have brought upon yourself by your own sins? Have you been brought to feel yourself incapable of working out your own salvation, unless God shall work in you, to will and to do of His own good pleasure? Have you been brought to say, “Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner”? Well, then, as true as the text is in the Bible, you shall have honor, byand-by! “Such honor have all the saints.” You shall soon have honor to be washed from all your guilt. You shall soon have honor to be clothed in the robes of Jesus, in the royal garments of the King! You shall soon have honor to be adopted into His family, to be received among the blood-washed ones who have been justified by faith. You shall have honor to be borne, as on eagles’ wings, to be carried across the river and, at last, to sing His praise, who has been the “death of deaths and Hell’s destruction.” You shall have honor to wear the crown and wave the palm, one day, for you now have that humility which comes from God! You may fear that because you are now humbled by God, you must perish. I beseech you do not think so! As truly as ever the Lord has humbled you, He will exalt you! And the more you are brought low, the less hope you have of mercy, the more you are in the dust—so much the more reason you have to hope! So far from the bottom of the sea being a place over which we cannot be carried to Heaven, it is one of the nearest places to Heaven’s gate! And if you are brought to the very lowest place to which even Jonah descended, you are so much the nearer being accepted. The more you know your vileness—remember the blacker, the more filthy, the more unworthy you are in your own esteem—so much the more right have you to expect that you will be saved! Verily, honor shall come after humility! Humble souls, rejoice!

Proud souls, go on in your proud ways but know that your end is destruction! Climb up the ladder of your pride—you shall fall over on the other side and be dashed to pieces. Ascend the steep hill of your glory— the higher you climb, the more terrible will be your fall. For know you this, that against none has the Lord Almighty bent His bow more often and against none has He shot His arrows more furiously than against the proud and mighty man that exalts himself! Bow down, O Man, bow down! “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2494 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Pro 18.14

THE CAUSE AND CURE OF A WOUNDED SPIRIT  
NO. 2494

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 6, 1896.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 16, 1885.

**“The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit, who can bear?”  
Proverbs 18:14.**

EVERY man, sooner or later, has some kind of infirmity to bear. It may be that his constitution from the very first will be inclined to certain disease and pains, or possibly he may, in passing through life, suffer from accident or decline of health. He may not, however, have any infirmity of the body—he may enjoy the great blessing of health, but he may have what is even worse—an infirmity of mind. There will be something about each man’s infirmity which he would alter if he could, or, if he should not have any infirmity of body or of mind, he will have a cross to carry of some kind—in his relatives, in his business, or in certain of his circumstances. His world is not the Garden of Eden and you cannot make it to be so! It is like that garden in this respect—that the serpent is in it—and the trail of the serpent is over everything here. It is said that there is a skeleton in some closet or other of everybody’s house. I will not say so much as that, but I am persuaded that there is no man in this world but has trial in some form or other, unless God permits them to have their portion in this life because they will have no portion of bliss in the life that is to come! There are some such people who appear be have no afflictions and trials, but as the Apostle reminds us, “If you are without chastisement, of which all (the true seed of the Lord) are partakers, then are you bastards and not sons.” And none of us would wish to have that terrible name truthfully applied to us! I should greatly prefer to come into the condition of the Apostle when he said, “Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may great upon me.”

I say again that every man will have to bear an infirmity of some sort or other. To bear that infirmity is not difficult when the spirit is sound and strong—“The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity.”

I. Let me, therefore, first of all, try to answer the question—WHAT IS THAT SOUND SPIRIT WHICH WILL SUSTAIN A MAN’S INFIRMITIES?  
Such a spirit may be found, in a minor degree, in merely natural men. Among the Stoics there were men who bore pain and poverty and reproach without evincing the slightest feeling. Among the Romans, in their heroic days, there was one named Scoevola who thrust his right hand into a fire and suffered it to be burned off in order to let the foreign tyrant know that there were Romans who did not care about pain. We have read amazing stories of the patience and stern endurance of even natural men, for our text is true in that sense, “the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity.” Whatever it was that was placed upon some men, they seemed as if they carried it without a care or without a thought, so brave was their heart within them. Yet, if we knew more of these people, we would find that there were some points in which their natural strength failed them, for it must be so—the creature at its best estate is altogether vanity! David truly said, “God has spoken once; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God.” And the strength of mind by which Christian men are able to bear their infirmities is of a higher kind than that which comes from either stoicism, from natural sternness or from obedience to any of the precepts of human philosophy.  
The spirit which will best bear infirmities is, first of all, a gracious spirit worked in us by the Spirit of God. If you would bear your trouble without complaining. If you would sustain your burden without fainting. If you would mount on wings as eagles. If you would run without weariness and walk without fainting, you must have the Life of God within you—you must be born again! You must be in living union with Him who is the Strong One and who, by the life which He implants within you, can give you of His own strength. I do not believe that anything but that which is Divine will stand the wear and tear of this world’s temptations and of this world’s trials and troubles—  
*“Mere mortal power shall fade and die,  
And youthful vigor cease,”*  
but they that trust in the Lord and derive their power from Him shall press forward even to victory! So then, first, if you would sustain your infirmity, you must have a gracious spirit, that is, a spirit renewed by Divine Grace.  
Further, I think that a sound spirit which can sustain infirmity will be a spirit cleansed in the precious blood of Christ. “Conscience does make cowards of us all” and it is only when conscience is pacified by the application of the blood of sprinkling that we are able to sustain our infirmities. The restful child of God will say, “What does it matter if I am consumptive? What does it matter if I have a broken leg? My sin is forgiven me and I am on my way to Heaven—what does anything else matter? Have you not sometimes felt that if you had to spend the rest of your life in a dungeon and to live on bread and water, or to lie there, as John Bunyan would have said, till the moss grew on your eyelids, yet, as long as you were sure that you were cleansed from sin by the precious blood of Christ, you could bear it all? For, after all, what are any pains and sufferings that the whips and scourges of this mortal life can lay upon us— compared with the terrors that have to be endured when sin is discerned by an awakened conscience and the wrath of God lies heavily upon us?  
Believe me when I say that I would rather suffer such physical pangs as may belong to Hell, itself, than I would endure the wrath of God in my spirit—for there is nothing that can touch the very marrow of our being like a sense of Divine Anger when it comes upon the soul, when God seems to dip His arrows in the Lake of Fire and then shoot them at us till they wound the very apple of our eye and our whole being seems to be a mass of pain and misery! Oh, this is dreadful! But, once delivered from all fear of the righteous vengeance of God, I can sing with Dr. Watts— *“If sin is pardoned, I’m secure!  
Death has no sting beside.  
The law gives sin its damning power  
But Christ, my Ransom, died.”*  
Take sin away and give me a spirit washed in the fountain filled with blood and I can patiently go through anything and everything, the Lord being my Helper.  
The kind of spirit, then, that a man needs to sustain his infirmity, is one which has been renewed by the Holy Spirit and washed in the precious blood of Jesus.  
Next, it is a spirit which exercises itself daily to a growing confidence in God. The spirit that is to sustain infirmity is not a spirit of doubt and fear and mistrust. There is no power about such a spirit as that—it is like a body without bone, or sinew, or muscle. Strength lies in believing. He who can trust can work. He who can trust can suffer. The spirit that can sustain a man in his infirmity is the spirit that can say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. Come what may, I will not doubt my God, for His Word is strong and steadfast. Although my house is not so with God, yet has He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” O dear Sirs, I am sure that if God calls you to do business in great waters, you will need the great bow anchor with you—you will not feel safe without it! When the Lord calls you to battle with your spiritual foes, you will feel the necessity of having upon you the whole armor of God and, above all, you will need to take the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the enemy!  
So, Beloved, our spirit must be a renewed spirit, a blood-washed spirit and a believing spirit if we are to sustain our infirmity.  
I must also add my belief that no spirit can so well endure sickness, loss, trial or sorrow as a perfectly-consecrated spirit. The man who is free from all secondary motives, who lives only for God’s Glory, says, if he is sick, “How can I glorify God upon my bed?” If he is in health, he cries, “How can I glorify God in my vigor?” If he is rich, he asks, “How can I glorify God with the possessions which He has put under my stewardship?” If he is poor, he says, “There must be some advantage about my poverty! How can I best use it to the Glory of God?” He looks to see, not how he can comfort himself, but how he can most successfully fight his Master’s battles! A soldier who is in the fight must not enter into business on his own account. Paul wrote to Timothy, “No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.” And the true soldier of the Cross says, “Up hill and down dale, wet or dry, in honor or dishonor, all I have to do is to lift on high the banner of my Lord and strike down the foe. And, if necessary, even lay down my own life for His sake.” The perfectly consecrated spirit will enable a man to sustain his infirmity, but a selfish spirit will weaken him so that he will begin to complain of this and to lament that—and will not be made “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”  
So much, then, about the sound spirit that can sustain infirmity—may the Lord give it to every one of us! How many of us have it? “Oh,” says one, “I think I am all right! I have a sane mind in a sane body.” Ah, yes, but there is another part of you that needs sanity—you need spiritual health! And there are times that will come to you who have nothing to depend upon but your bodily and mental vigor, and then you will find you need something more. There will come a trial that will touch you in a very tender spot and you will cry out, “Oh, what is it that I need?” You will find that there was an unguarded place in your harness and the arrow of the adversary has pierced you to the soul. You must be born again even for the bearing of your present infirmity—even for struggling through this life you must have a new heart and a right spirit—or else sometime or other you will find yourself overthrown. “If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, in which you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” What will you do, then, if you have not that Divinely-given spirit which will sustain your infirmity? When the death sweat is on your brow, you will need a bettor handkerchief than was ever made by human hands! And if the Lord your God is not at your side, then, to wipe the scalding tears from your eyes, what will you do? What will you do?  
II. But now I have to answer a second question, WHAT IS A WOUNDED SPIRIT? “A wounded spirit, who can bear?” It cannot bear its own infirmity, so it becomes a load to itself and the question is not, “What can it bear?” but, “Who can bear it?” “A wounded spirit, who can bear?”  
What, then, is a wounded spirit? Well, I have known some who have talked about having a wounded spirit, but the wound has been, after all, a very slight affair compared with the wounds that I mean. One has been disappointed in love. That is very sad, but still, it is a trial that can be endured. We have no right to love the creature so much as to make it our god or our idol. I have known some who have been disappointed in the object of their ambition and, in consequence, they have had a wounded spirit. But who are you that you should not be disappointed and what are you that you should have everything according to your own mind? Surely, if the Lord were to deal with you according to your sins, you would have something to bear far worse than your present disappointment! As to those trials of which a person says, “Nobody ever suffered as I have done—nobody was ever treated as I have been,” such statements are altogether wrong! There are many others who have passed through equal or even greater trials. Do not, therefore, allow these things to fret you and to destroy your peace. Be not like the Spartan boy who put the fox in his bosom and carried it there, though it was gnawing at his flesh and eating right into his heart! There are some people who are so unwise as to make earthly objects their supreme delight and those objects become like foxes that gnaw to their soul’s destruction!  
I will only say this about such wounded hearts as these—there is a great deal of sin mingled with the sorrow—and a great deal of pride, a great deal of creature-worship and of idolatry! Depend upon it, if you make an idol, and God loves you, He will break it! A Quaker lady once stood up to speak in a little meeting and all that she said was, “Verily, I perceive that children are idols.” She did not know why she said it, but there was a mother there who had been wearing black for years after her child had been taken away. She had never forgiven her God for what He had done. Now this is an evil that is to be rebuked! I dare not comfort those whose spirits are wounded in this fashion. If they carry their mourning too far, we must say to them, “Dear Friend, is not this rebellion against God? May not this be petulance instead of patience? May there not be very much here which is not at all according to the mind of Christ?” We may sorrow and be grieved when we lose our loved ones, for we are men—but we must moderate our sorrow and bow our will to the will of the Lord—for are we not also men of God?  
I will not dwell further upon that point, but there are some forms of a wounded spirit which are serious and yet they are not quite what I am going after to speak about. Some have a wounded spirit through the cruelty of men, the unkindness of children, the ingratitude of those whom they have helped and for whom they have had such affection that they would almost have been willing to sacrifice their own lives. It is a terrible wounding when he who should have been your friend becomes your foe and when, like your Lord, you, also, have your Judas Iscariot. It is not easy to bear misrepresentation and falsehood, to have your purest motives misjudged and to be thought to be only seeking something for yourself when you have a pure desire for the good of others. This is a very painful kind of wounded spirit, but it must not be allowed to be carried too far. We should cry to God to help us bear this trial, for, after all, who are we that we should not be despised? Who are we that we should not be belied? He is the wise man who expects this kind of trial and, expecting it, is not disappointed when it comes!  
“How”—asked one of a person who had lived through the terrible French Revolution when almost all notable men were put to death—“how was it that you escaped?” He answered, “I made myself of no reputation and nobody ever spoke of me, so I escaped.” And I believe that, in this world, the happiest lot does not belong to those of us who are always being talked about, but to those who do not know anybody and whom nobody knows—they can steal through the world very quietly. So do not be broken-hearted if men try to wound your spirit!  
When, 30 years ago, they abused me to the utmost, I felt that I need not care what they said, for I could hardly do anything worse than they said I had done! When you once get used to this kind of treatment—and you may as well do so, for you will have plenty of it if you follow Christ— it will not trouble you and

you will be able to bear your infirmity without being much wounded by the unkindness of men.  
There are others who have been very grievously wounded by sorrow. They have had affliction upon affliction, loss after loss, bereavement after bereavement. And we ought to feel those things. Indeed, it is by feeling them that we get the good out of them. Still, every Christian man should cry to God for strength to bear repeated losses and bereavements if they are his portion. And he should endeavor, in the strength of God, not to succumb whatever his trials may be. If we yield to temptation and begin to complain of God for permitting such things to come upon us, we shall only be kicking against the pricks and so wound ourselves all the more! Let us be submissive to the hand that wields the rod of correction and then very soon that rod will be taken from off our backs. There are some who have been greatly wounded, no doubt, through sickness. A wounded spirit may be the result of diseases which seriously shake the nervous system. Let us be very tender with Brothers and Sisters who got into that condition. I have heard some say, rather unkindly, “Sister So-and-So is so nervous, we can hardly speak in her presence.” Yes, but talking like that will not help her—there are many persons who have had this trying kind of nervousness greatly aggravated by the unkindness or thoughtlessness of friends. It is a real disease—it is not imaginary! Imagination, no doubt, contributes to it and increases it, but, still, there is a reality about it.  
There are some forms of physical disorder in which a person lying in bed feels great pain through another person simply walking across the room. “Oh,” you say, “that is more imagination!” Well, you may think so if you like, but if you are ever in that painful condition—as I have been many a time—I will guarantee that you will not talk in that fashion again. “But we cannot take notice of such fancies,” says one. I suppose that you would like to run a steamroller across the room, just for the sake of strengthening their nerves! But if you had the spirit of Christ, you would want to walk across the room as though your feet were flakes of snow! You would not wish to cause the poor sufferer any additional pain. I beg you, never grieve those upon whom the hand of God is lying in the form of depression of spirit, but be very fond and gentle with them! You need not encourage them in their sadness, but, at the same time, let there be no roughness in dealing with them—they have many very sore places and the hand that touches them should be soft as down.  
Yet I do not wish to speak only of that kind of wounded spirit, for that is rather the business of the physician than of the Divine. Still, it well illustrates this latter part of our text, “a wounded spirit, who can bear?” But this is the kind of wounded spirit I mean. When a soul is under a deep and terrible sense of sin—when conviction flashes into the mind with lightning swiftness and force—and the man says, “I am guilty.” When the notion of what guilt is, first comes clearly home to him and he sees that God must be as certainly just as He is good—then he discovers that he has angered Infinite Love, that he has provoked Almighty Grace and that he has made his best Friend to be, necessarily, his most terrible Foe! A man in such a condition as that will have a wounded spirit such as none can bear! Then you may pipe to him, but he will not dance. You may try to charm him with your amusements, or to please him with your oratory, but you cannot give him peace or rest. “A wounded spirit, who can bear?” You know that there was one of old who said, “My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life.” And there was another, Judas, who actually did strangle himself under an awful sense of his guilt in betraying his Lord. Oh, I trust that no one of you will act as he did, for that were to damn yourself irretrievably! But I do not wonder that you cry out, “Oh, that I could hide myself in the dust to escape from the terrors of a sense of Divine wrath!” “A wounded spirit, who can bear?”  
Sometimes the spirit is wounded by the fierce temptations of Satan. I hope that you do not all understand what this means, but there are some who do. Satan tempts them to doubt, tempts them to sin, tempts them to blaspheme. Some dear friends whom I know, who are among the purest-minded of mortals and whose lives are models of everything that is devout and right, are worried by the great adversary from morning to night, scarcely ever waking in the night without some vile suggestion of Satan or some horrible howling in their ears—“You are lost! You are lost! You are shut out from mercy forever.” They are tempted even to curse God and die—and that temptation brings a wounded spirit such as they scarcely know how to bear! Who can bear it? God save you from it, if you have fallen under its terrible power!  
A wounded spirit may also come through desertion by God. The Believer has not walked carefully. He has fallen into sin and God has hidden His face from him. Ah, my Friends, whenever you trifle with sin, I wish you could feel as some of God’s true people have done when they have been restored after a great fall! A burned child dreads the fire and so does a true child of God who has ever played with sin—he has been brought back to his Lord, but he has gone the rest of his life with an aching heart and limping limbs and, many a time in wintry weather he has felt that his broken bones start and cry out against him with the memory of his past sins! “Deliver me,” says David, “from the sins of my youth!” And so may some of God’s best servants say in their old age. And some who once were very bright stars, but who have been, for a while, eclipsed, will never be able to escape from a certain sense of darkness which is still upon them. “I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul,” may he say who has once grievously sinned against God after light and knowledge. Therefore, Beloved, be very careful that you do not backslide, for if you do, you will have a wounded spirit which you will not know how to bear.  
I believe, however, that some of God’s children have a wounded spirit entirely through mistake. I am always afraid of those who get certain wild notions into their heads—ideas that are not true, I mean. They are very happy while they hold those high notions and they look down with contempt upon others of God’s people who do not go kite-flying or balloonsailing as they do. I think to myself, sometimes—how will they come down when their precious balloon bursts? I have often wished them well down on the level again. I have seen them believe this and believe that which they were not warranted by the Scriptures to believe—and they have affected exalted ideas of their own attainments. Their position was something amazing—they were far up in the sky looking down upon all the saints below! Yes, dear Friends, that is all very pretty and very fine, undoubtedly. But when you come down again, then you will begin to condemn yourself for things that you need not condemn—and you will be distressed and miserable in your spirit because of a disappointment which you need never have had if you had walked humbly with your God.  
For my own part, I can truly say that none of the novelties of this present evil age have any sort of charm for me. I am still content to abide in the old way, myself always a poor, needy, helpless sinner, finding everything I need in Christ. If you ever hear me beginning to talk about what a fine fellow I am, and how perfect I am getting, you just say, “He’s off his head.” Please put me in an asylum immediately, for I must have lost my reason before I could have believed this modern nonsense! I feel sure that I, for one, shall not suffer any disappointment in this direction, for I shall keep just where Jack the huckster kept and say with him— *“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my All in All.”*  
Yet I am very fearful for others, for whom there awaits a terrible time of bondage when they once come back to the place where it would have been better for them to have stayed. If I were to set up to be a prince of the realm and begin to spend at the rate of fifty thousand pounds a year, I am afraid that, in a very few days, I would have the sheriff’s officer down upon me—and I should not be able to pay a penny in the pound of my debts! I think I would much rather go on in my own quiet way and keep within my own means, than do anything of that kind. There are, nowadays, many spiritual spendthrifts who are pretending to spend money that does not exist—but they will very soon find a sense of their poverty forced upon them—and their need will come like an armed man demanding their surrender!  
So much, then, upon the words, “a wounded spirit, who can bear?”  
III. My time has almost fled, but I need to answer a third question— HOW ARE WE TO AVOID A WOUNDED SPIRIT SO FAR AS IT IS EVIL?  
I answer, first, if you are happy in the Lord and full of joy and confidence, avoid a wounded spirit by never offending your conscience. Labor with all your might to be true to the light that God has given you, to be true to your understanding of God’s Word and to follow the Lord with all your heart. When Mr. Bunyan describes Christian as meeting with Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation and fighting that terrible battle which he so graphically describes, he told us that the pilgrim remembered, then, some of the slips that he had made when he was going down into the valley. While he was fighting with Apollyon, he was remembering in his own heart the slips that he had previously made. Nothing will come to you so sharply, in a time of sorrow, pain and brokenness of spirit, as a sense of sins of omission or sins of commission. When the Light of God’s Presence is gone from you, you will sadly begin to say, “Why did I do this? Why did I not do that?” Therefore, dear Friends, endeavor as much as lies in you, to live in the time of your joy that if there ever should come times of depression, you may not have to remember neglected duties or willful wickedness!  
Again, if you would avoid a wounded spirit, get a clear view of the Gospel. There are numbers of Christian people who have seen the Gospel just as that half-opened eye of the blind man saw “men as trees walking.” They do not yet know the difference between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. They do not know how a Christian stands in Christ. Get them to spell that glorious word, Grace, if they can! Ask them to say it like this—“Free Grace.” They will probably say to you, “Oh Free Grace—that is tautology!” Never mind—give it to them, tautology or not! Spell it in your own soul—Free, Rich, Sovereign Grace, and know that you, a guilty, lost sinner, are saved as a sinner, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, that in due time He died for the ungodly and that your standing is not in yourself or in your own attainments, but wholly and entirely in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ! It will often prevent your getting a wounded spirit if you understand the differences between things that really differ and do not mix them up as so many do.  
Again, you will avoid a wounded spirit by living very near to God. The sheep that gets bitten by the wolf is the one that does not stay near the shepherd. Ah, and I have known sheep to get bitten by the dog—and the dog did not mean them any hurt though he bit them! It has often happened that when I have been preaching, there has been somebody dreadfully hurt. Yes, even the Good Shepherd’s dog bites, sometimes, but if you had kept near the Shepherd, His dog would not have bitten you, for neither the dog nor the wolf will bite those that are near Him. Let your cry be—  
*“Oh, for a closer walk with God!”*  
Then will come “a calm and heavenly frame.” But if you get away from holy living and close communion with God, you may expect to get a wounded spirit.  
So much, then, for the prevention which is better then a cure! God help us all to make good use of it!  
IV. But, lastly, suppose our spirit is wounded, HOW IS IT TO BE HEALED?  
Do you need that I should tell you that there is only One who can heal a wounded spirit? “By His stripes we are healed.” If you would be healed of the bleeding wounds of your heart, flee to Christ! You did once—do it again! Come to Christ, now, though you may have come to Him a hundred times before! Come now, just as you are, without one plea, but that His blood was shed for you. Come to Him! There is no peace for a soul that does not do this—and you will have peace if you will but come simply as you are and trust yourself with Christ.  
If, however, your wounded Spirit should not get peace at once, try to remove any mistakes which may be causing you unnecessary sorrow. Study your Bible more! Listen to plain preaching of the Gospel. Let this be to you the mark of true Gospel preaching—where Christ is everything and the creature is nothing—where it is salvation all of Grace, through the work of the Holy Spirit applying to the soul the precious blood of Jesus! Try to get a clear view of the Gospel and many a doubt and fear will fly away when knowledge takes the place of ignorance.

Endeavor, also, to get a clear view of your own troubles. We are never frightened so much by what we know as by what we do not know. The boy thinks, as he sees something white, “That is a ghost,” and that is why he is frightened. He does not know what a ghost is—he supposes that it is something mysterious and he is superstitious—so he is frightened by the object before him. If he would go right up to it, he would see that it is a cow, and he would not be frightened any more. Half the fears in the world have no real grounds and if we could but induce troubled persons dispassionately to look at their fears, their fears would vanish! Write them down in black and white if you can, and let some friend read them. Perhaps, if you read them yourself, you will laugh at them. I believe that, oftentimes, with regard to the most grievous afflictions that we have in our mind, if they fretted somebody else, we should say, “I cannot think how that person can be so stupid.” We almost know that we are, ourselves, stupid, but we do not like to confess it! I would therefore urge the wounded spirit to look at its wound—it is of no use to cover it over and say, “Oh, it is an awful wound!” Perhaps if you would just have it thoroughly examined, the surgeon would say to you, “Oh, it is only a flesh wound. It will soon be all right again!” And so, your drooping spirits would revive and your wounded self would begin to heal.

One thing, however, I would say to one who has a really wounded heart. Remember Christ’s sympathy with you. O you who are tossed with tempest and not comforted, your Lord’s vessel is in the storm with you! Yes, He is in the vessel with you! There is not a pang that rends the Believer’s heart but He has felt it first. He drinks out of the cup with you. Is it very bitter? He has had a cup full of it for every drop that you taste! This ought to comfort you. I know of no better remedy for the heart’s trouble in a Christian than to feel, “My Master, Himself, takes no better portion than that which He gives to me.”

Also let me recommend, as a choice remedy for a wounded spirit, an enlarged view of the love of God. I wish that some of you who have a wounded spirit would give God credit for being as kind as you are, yourself. You would not suffer your child to endure a needless pain if you could remove it—neither does God willingly afflict, or grieve the children of men. He would not allow you to be cast down, but would cheer and comfort you if it were good for you. His delight is that you should be happy and joyful. Do not think that you may not take the comfort which He has set before you in His Word—He has put it there on purpose for you! Dare to take it and think well of God and it shall be well with your soul.

If this should not cure the evil, remember the great brevity of all your afflictions, after all. What if you should be a child of God who has even to go to bed in the dark? You will wake up in the eternal daylight! What if, for the time being, you are in heaviness? There is a necessity that you should be in heaviness through manifold temptation, but you will come out of it. You are not the first child of God who has been depressed or troubled. Yes, among the noblest men and women who ever lived, there has been much of this kind of thing. I noticed in the life of Sir Isaac Newton—probably the greatest mind that God ever made apart from His own dear Son—the great Sir Isaac Newton, the master and teacher of the truest philosophy, during the middle part of his life was in great distress and deep depression! Robert Boyle, whose name is well known to those who read works of depth of thought, at one time said that he counted life to be a very heavy burden to him. And there was that sweet, charming spirit of the poet, Cowper. You all know that throughout his life, he was like a flower that blooms in the shade, yet he exhaled the sweetest perfume of holy piety and poetry.

Do not, therefore, think that you are quite alone in your sorrow. Bow your head and bear it, if it cannot be removed, for but in a little while every cloud shall be swept away, and you, in the cloudless sunlight, shall behold your God! Meanwhile, His strength is sufficient for you. He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear! And if you cannot bear your infirmity because of your wounded spirit, He will bear for you, both yourself and your infirmity! “O rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.” “Let not your heart be troubled. you believe in God, believe, also, in your Christ.” Go away, you Hannah of a sorrowful spirit, and be no more sad! The Lord grant His comforts to you, for His Son, Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **MARK 9:30-40.**

Verses 30-32. And they departed from there and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it. For He taught His disciples, and said to them, The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after He is killed, He shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying and were afraid to ask Him. Here is the ruling passion of Christ which was always prominent throughout His life. Though He has just won a glorious victory over Satan, He does not stay to congratulate Himself upon it, but His heart is still away to the Cross where He is to suffer. He is thinking of His dying for His people, and longing until He shall have paid the ransom price for their redemption and set them free. Oh, the heights and depths of the love of Christ! See how steadfastly He sets His face to go to Jerusalem where He must die. Let us imitate Him—let us think as much of His passion, now that it is over, as He thought of it before it was come.

33-34, And He came to Capernaum: and being in the house He asked them, What was it that you argued among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had argued among themselves who should be the greatest. It was a dreadful descent from communing with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration to meeting the furious demon at the foot of the hill—but this looks like a far greater descent—from the self-sacrifice of the Divine Master to the petty jealousies and self-seeking of His chosen servants! Oh, sometimes it makes our hearts sick when we have been almost lost in rapturous meditation, when we have been taken up well-near to Heaven in communion with the Lord—and then we have had to attend to some paltry squabble between two Brothers or two Sisters! It does seem such a terrible come-down, yet our Lord and Master does not disdain thus to come down, for in tenderness He deals with these diseases of the sheep like a good shepherd.

35-37. And He sat down and called the twelve, and said to them, If any man desires to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And He took a child and set him in the midst of them: and when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, Whoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receives Me: and whoever shall receive Me, receives not Me, but Him that sent Me. Perhaps they were jealous of Peter. Possibly they were even more jealous of James and John. So the Lord gently pacifies them. He does not impatiently say, “I cannot enter into your disputes, I cannot be worried with you.” Oh, no! But He sits down and talks with them. I like that picture—it is almost as grand as the group of Christ and His disciples at the supper table in the upper room. “He sat down and called the twelve, and said to them, If any man desires to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.” That is the way they come to be first, by being willing to be last and the servant of all! This is the only way to get to the front of Christ’s army—he who would be chief, must always be aiming at the rear rank, willing to do the most humble service and to be the lowest menial in his Master’s service. Only in this way can we rise. In Christ’s Kingdom, the way to go up is to go down. Sink self and you shall surely rise.

38. And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Your name, and he follows not us: and we forbade him, because he follows not us. He did it, I daresay, in love to his Master, but not in the love of his Master. He did it, no doubt, with the desire to honor his Master, but he did not honor his Master by what he did.

39, 40. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is on our side. Thus the Master had to talk to His poor disciples after having conversed with Moses and Elijah. Again I say, what a come-down it was from fellowship with the great Law-Giver of Israel and with the mighty Prophet of fire, to talk with these childish men who had fallen out among themselves and fallen out with other people! O blessed Master, we may gladly hope that You will commune with us as You did with them! We may also trust that some poor sinner, even though the devil may be in him, may catch Your eyes of pity and love—and that You may heal him.

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÷Pro 18.24

A FAITHFUL FRIEND  
NO. 120

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 8, 1857, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Proverbs 18:24.**

CICERO has well said, “Friendship is the only thing in the world concerning the usefulness of which all mankind are agreed.” Friendship seems as necessary an element of a comfortable existence in this world as fire or water, or even air, itself. A man may drag along a miserable existence in proud solitary dignity, but his life is scarcely a life. It is nothing but an existence, the tree of being of stripped of the leaves of hope and the fruits of joy. He who would be happy, must have friends. And he who would be happy hereafter, must, above all things, find a Friend in the world to come, in the Person of God, the Father of His people!

Friendship, however, though very pleasing and exceedingly blessed, has been the cause of the greatest misery to men when it has been unworthy and unfaithful. For just in proportion as a good friend is sweet, a false friend is full of bitterness. “A faithless friend is sharper than an adder’s tooth.” It is sweet to repose in someone but oh, how bitter to have that support snapped and to receive a grievous fall as the effect of your confidence! Fidelity is an absolute necessity in a true friend. We cannot rejoice in men unless they will stand faithful to us. Solomon declares that “there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” That friend, I suppose, he never found in the pomp and vanities of the world. He had tried them all, but he found them empty. He passed through all their joys, but he found them, “vanity of vanities.” Poor Savage spoke from sad experience when he said—

*“You’ll find the friendship of the world a show— Mere outward show! ‘Tis like the harlot’s tears, The statesman’s promise, or false patriot’s zeal, Full of fair seeming, but delusion still.”*

And so for the most part they are. The world’s friendship is always brittle. Trust to it and you have trusted a robber. Rely upon it and you have leaned upon a thorn. Yes, worse than that, upon a spear which shall pierce you to the soul with agony! Yet Solomon says he had found, “a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Not in the haunts of his unbridled pleasures, nor in the wanderings of his unlimited researches but in the pavilion of the Most High, the secret dwelling place of God—in the Person of Jesus, the Son of God—the Friend of sinners!

It is saying a great thing, to affirm that “there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” For the love of brotherhood has produced most valiant deeds. We have read stories of what brotherhood could do, which, we think, could hardly be excelled in all the annals of friendship. Timoleon, with his shield, stood over the body of his slain brother to defend him from the insults of the foe. It was reckoned a brave deed of brotherhood that he should dare the spears of an army in defense of his brother’s corpse. And many such instances have there been, in ancient and modern warfare, of the attachment of brethren. There is a story told of two brothers in a Highland regiment, who, while marching through the Highlands, lost their way. They were overtaken by one of the terrible storms which will sometimes come upon travelers unawares—and blinded by the snow, they lost their way upon the mountains. Well near frozen to death, it was with difficulty they could continue their march. One man after another dropped into the snow and disappeared. There were two brothers, however, of the name of Forsythe, one of them fell prostrate on the earth and would have lain there to die but his brother, though barely able to drag his own limbs across the white desert, took him on his back and carried him along—as others fell one by one. This brave true-hearted brother carried his loved one on his back until at last he fell down, overcome with fatigue, and died. His brother, however, had received such warmth from his body that he was enabled to reach the end of his journey in safety and so lived. Here we have an instance of one brother sacrificing his life for another.

I hope there are some brothers here who would be prepared to do the same if they should ever be brought into the same difficulty. It is saying a great thing to declare that, “there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” It is putting that friend, first of all, in the list of loved ones. For surely, next to a mother’s love, there is and there ought to be no higher affection in the world than the love of a brother to one begotten of the same father and held on the same knee. Those who have, “Grown in beauty side by side and filled one house with glee,” ought to love one another! And we think there have been many glorious instances and mighty proofs of the love of brothers. Yet, says Solomon, “there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

To repeat our assertion, we believe that this Friend is the blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ. It shall be ours first, to prove, this morning, the fact that He sticks closer than a brother. Then as briefly as we can, to show you why He sticks closer than a brother. And then to finish up by giving you some lessons which may be drawn from the Doctrine that Jesus Christ is a faithful Friend.

I. First, then, Beloved, we assert that CHRIST IS “A FRIEND THAT STICKS CLOSER THAN A BROTHER.” And in order to prove this from facts, we appeal to such of you as have had Him for a Friend. Will you not, each of you, at once give your verdict that this is neither more nor less than an unexaggerated Truth of God? He loved you before all worlds! Long before the day star flung his ray across the darkness, before the wings of angels had flapped the unnavigated ether, before anything of Creation had struggled from the womb of nothingness, God, even our God, had set His heart upon all His children! Since that time, has He never swerved, has He once turned aside, once changed? No! You who have tasted of His love and know His Grace will bear me witness that He has been a certain Friend in uncertain circumstances—

*“He, near your side has always stood,*

*His loving kindness, oh, how good!”*  
You fell in Adam. Did He cease to love you? No. He became the second Adam to redeem you! You sinned in practice and brought upon your head the condemnation of God. You deserved His wrath and His utter anger. Did He then forsake you? No!—

*“He saw you ruined in the Fall*

*Yet loved you notwithstanding all.”*  
He sent His minister after you—you despised him. He preached the Gospel in your ears—you laughed at him. You broke God’s Sabbath, you despised His Word. Did He then forsake you? No.—

*“Determined to save, he watched over your path*

*While Satan’s blind slave, you sported with death.”*And at last He arrested you by His Grace. He humbled you, He made you penitent, He brought you to His feet and He forgave all your sins! Since then, has He left you? You have often left Him—has He ever left you? You have had many trials and troubles—has He ever deserted you? Has He ever turned away His heart or shut up His heart of compassion? No, Children of God, it is your solemn duty to say, “No,” and bear witness to His faithfulness! You have been in severe afflictions and in dangerous circumstances—did your Friend desert you then? Others have been faithless to you. He that eats bread with you has lifted up his heel against you. But has Christ ever forsaken you? Has there ever been a moment when you could go to Him and say, “Master, You have betrayed me”?

Could you once, in the blackest hour of your grief, dare to question His fidelity? Could you dare say to Him, “Lord, You have promised what You did not perform”? Will you not bear witness now—“Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised. All has come to pass”? And do you fear He will yet forsake you? Ask, then, the bright ones before the Throne—“You glorified spirits! Did Christ forsake you? You have passed through Jordan’s stream, did He leave you there? You have been baptized in the black flood of death, did He forsake you there? You have stood before the Throne of God—did He deny you?” And they answer, “No. Through all the troubles of our life, in all the bitterness of death, in all the agonies of our expiring moments and in all the terrors of God’s judgment, He has been with us, ‘a Friend who sticks closer than a brother.’” Out of all the millions of God’s redeemed, there is not one He has forsaken! Poor they have been, mean and distressed, too, but He has never abhorred their prayer, never turned aside from doing them good! He has always been with them—

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

But I shall stop on this point since I cannot prove this to the ungodly. But to the godly it is already proven—for they know it by experience! Therefore it is not necessary that I should do more than just certify the fact that Christ is a faithful Friend—a Friend in every hour of need and every time of distress!

II. And now I have to tell you THE REASONS WHY IT IS WE MAY DEPEND UPON CHRIST AS BEING A FAITHFUL FRIEND.  
There are some things in Himself which render it certain that He will stick close to His people.  
1. True friendship can only be made between true men, whose hearts are the soul of honor. There can be no lasting friendship between bad men. Bad men may pretend to love each other, but their friendship is a rope of sand which shall be broken at any convenient season. But if a man has a sincere heart within him and is true and noble, then we may confide in him. Spenser sings in fine old English verse—  
*“Ne, certes can that friendship long endure, However gay and goodly be the style,  
That does ill cause or evil end enure,  
For Vertue is the band that binds Harts most sure.”*But who can find a stain in the Character of Jesus, or who can tarnish His honor? Has there ever been a spot on His escutcheon? Has His flag ever been trampled in the dust? Does He not stand the true Witness in Heaven, the Faithful and Just? Is it not declared of Him that He is God who cannot lie? Have we not found Him so up to this moment? And may we not, knowing that He is, “Holy, holy, holy Lord,” confide in Him, knowing that He will stick closer to us than a brother? His goodness is the guarantee of His fidelity—He cannot fail us!  
2. Faithfulness to us in our faults is a certain sign of fidelity in a friend. You may depend upon that man who will tell you of your faults in a kind and considerate manner. Fawning hypocrites, insidious flatterers are the sweepings and offal of friendship. They are but the parasites upon that noble tree. But true friends put enough trust in you to tell you openly of your faults. Give me for a friend the man who will speak honestly of me before my face—who will not tell first one neighbor and then another but who will come straight to my house and say, “Sir, I feel there is suchand-such a thing in you, which, as my Brother, I must tell you of”—that man is a true friend! He has proven himself to be so, for we never get any praise for telling people of their faults, we rather hazard their dislike! A man will sometimes thank you for it, but he does not often like you any the better. Praise is a thing we all love. I met with a man the other day who said he was impervious to flattery. I was walking with him at the time and turning round rather sharply, I said, “At any rate, Sir, you seem to have a high gift in flattering yourself, for you are really doing so, in saying you are impervious to flattery.” “You cannot flatter me,” he said. I replied, “I can if I like to try and, perhaps, may do so before the day is out.” I found I could not flatter him directly, so I began by saying what a fine child that was of his. And he drank it in as a precious draught! And when I praised this thing and that belonging to him, I could see that he was very easily flattered. Not directly but indirectly. We are all pervious to flattery. We like the soothing cordial, only it must not be labeled flattery, for we have a religious abhorrence of flattery if it is so called—call it by any other name and we drink it in, even as the ox drinks in water! Now, Child of God, has Christ ever flattered you? Has He not told you of your faults right truly? Has He not pricked your conscience even upon what you thought to gloss over—your little secret sins? Has He not provoked conscience to thunder in your ears notes of terror because of your misdeeds? Well, then, you may trust Him, for He shows that faithfulness which renders a man right trustworthy! Thus I have pointed out to you that there are reasons in Himself for which we may trust Him.  
3. In the next place, there are some things in His friendship which render us sure of not being deceived when we put our confidence in Him. True friendship must not be of hasty growth. As quaint old Master Fuller says, “Let friendship creep gently to a height. If it rushes to it, it may soon run itself out of breath.” It is even so. I think it was Joanna Baillie said—  
*“Friendship is no plant of hasty growth.  
Though planted in esteem’s deep fixed soil, The gradual culture of kind growth  
Must bring it to perfection.”*  
In vain do you trust the gourd over your head, O Jonah! It will not be of much use to you. It came up in a night—it may wither in a night. It is the strong stiff oak of ages growth which shall abide the tempest—which shall alike put out its wings to shield you from the sun and shall afterwards find you a hovel in its heart, if necessary, in its gray old age, when its branches tremble in the blast. Friendship is true when it begins—but we must have a man’s friendship long before we can say of him that he will stick closer than a brother! And how long has Christ loved you? That you cannot tell. When the ages were not born, He loved you. When this world was an infant, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of mist, He loved you. When the old pyramids had not begun to be built, His heart was set upon you. And ever since you have been born He has had a strong affection for you. He looked on you in your cradle and He loved you then. He was affianced to you when you were an infant of a span long and He has loved you ever since. Some of you I see with gray hairs, some with heads all bald with age. He has loved you up till now and will He now forsake you? Oh, no, His friendship is so old that it will last! It has been matured by so many tempests, it has been rooted by so many winds of trouble that it cannot but endure, it will stand! The granite peak of the mountain shall not be melted because, unlike the young snow, it has braved the blast and borne the heat of the burning sun. It has always stood out, catching in its face every blow from the fist of Nature and yet been unmoved and uninjured. It shall last, for it has lasted! But when the elements shall melt and in a stream of dissolving fire shall run away, then shall Christ’s friendship still exist, for it is of older growth than they! He is “a Friend who sticks closer than a brother.” His friendship is an ancient friendship—ancient as His own head of which it is said, “His head and His hair are white like snow, as white as wool.”  
4. But note, further, the friendship which will last does not make its rise in the chambers of mirth, nor is it fed and fattened there. Young lady, you speak of a dear friend whom you acquired last night in a ballroom. Do not, I beseech you, misuse the word! He is not a friend if he was acquired there. Friends are better things than those which grow in the hothouse of pleasure. Friendship is a more lasting plant than those. You have a friend, have you? Yes, and he keeps a pair of horses and has a good establishment. Ah, but your best way to prove your friend is to know that he will be your friend when you have not so much as a mean cottage. And when houseless and without clothing, you are driven to beg your bread. Thus you would make true proof of a friend. Give me a friend who was born in the winter time, whose cradle was rocked in the storm. He will last. Our fair-weather friends shall flee from us. I had rather have a robin for a friend than a swallow. For a swallow abides with us only in the summer, but a robin comes to us in the winter. Those are tight friends who will come the nearest to us when we are in the most distress—but those are not friends who speed themselves away when bad times come! Believer, have you reason to fear that Christ will leave you? Has He not been with you in the house of mourning? You found your Friend where men find pearls, “In caverns deep, where darkness dwells.” You found Jesus in your hour of trouble. It was on the bed of sickness that you first learned the value of His name. It was in the hour of mental anguish that you first laid hold of the hem of His garment. And since then, your nearest and sweetest friendship has been held with Him in hours of darkness. Well then, such a Friend, proved in the house of sorrow—a Friend who gave His heart’s blood for you and let His soul run out in one great river of gore—such a Friend never can and never will forsake you! He sticks closer than a brother.  
5. Again, a friend who is acquired by folly is never a lasting friend. Do a foolish thing and make a man your friend—‘tis but a confederacy in vice and you will soon discover that his friendship is worthless! The friendships you acquire by doing wrong, you had better be without! Oh, how many silly friendships there are springing up, the mere fruit of a sentimentalism, having no root whatever but like the plant of which our Savior tells us, “It sprang up because it had no depth of earth”? Jesus Christ’s friendship is not like that! There is no ingredient of folly in it. He loves us discreetly, not winking or conniving at our follies, but instilling into us His wisdom. His love is wise. He has chosen us according to the counsel of His wisdom. Not blindly and rashly but with all judgment and prudence!  
Under this head I may likewise observe that the friendship of ignorance is not a very desirable one. I desire no man to call himself my friend if he does not know me. Let him love me in proportion to his knowledge of me. If he loves me for the little he knows, when he knows more he may cast me aside. “That man,” says one, “seems to be a very amiable man.” “I am sure I can love him,” says another, as he scans his features. Yes, but do not write, “friend,” yet! Wait a wee bit, until you know more of him! Just see him, examine him, try him, test him and not till then enter him on the sacred list of friends. Be friendly to all but make none your friends until they know you and you know them! Many a friendship born in the darkness of ignorance has died suddenly in the light of a better acquaintance with each other. You supposed men to be different from what they were and when you discovered their real character, you disregarded them. I remember one saying to me, “I have great affection for you, Sir,” and he mentioned a certain reason. I replied, “My dear fellow, your reason is absolutely false. The very thing you love me for, I am not and hope I never shall be!” And so I said, “I really cannot accept your friendship if it is founded upon a misunderstanding of what I may have said.” But our Lord Jesus never can forsake those whom once He loves because He can discover nothing in us worse than He knew, for He knew all about us beforehand! He saw our leprosy and yet He loved us. He knew our deceitfulness and unbelief and yet He did press us to His bosom. He knew what poor fools we were and yet He said He would never leave us nor forsake us. He knew that we would rebel against Him and often despise His counsel. He knew that even when we loved Him, our love would be cold and languid. But He loved for His own sake. Surely, then, He will stick closer than a brother!  
6. Yet again, friendship and love, to be real, must not lie in words but in deeds. The friendship of bare compliments is the fashion of this age because this age is the age of deceit! The world is the great house of sham! Go where you may in London—sham is staring you in the face! There are very few real things to be discovered. I allude not merely to tricks in business, adulterations in food and such like—deception is not confined to the tradesman’s shop—it prevails throughout society! The sanctuary is not exempt. The preacher adopts a sham voice. You hardly ever hear a man speak in the pulpit in the same way he would speak in the parlor. Why, I hear my Brothers, sometimes, when they are at tea or dinner, speak in a very comfortable decent sort of English voice. But when they get into their pulpits, they adopt a sanctimonious tone and fill their mouths with inflated utterance, or else whine most pitifully! They degrade the pulpit by pretending to honor it—speaking in a voice which God never intended any mortal to have! This is the great house of sham. And such little things show which way the wind blows. You leave your card at a friend’s house. That is an act of

friendship—the card? I wonder whether, if he were hard up for cash, you would leave your banker’s book? You write, “My dear Sir,” “Yours very truly”—it is a sham—you do not mean it! “Dear,” that is a sacred word. It ought to be used to none but those you regard with affection. But we tolerate lies, now, as if they were truths. And we call them courtesies. Courtesies they may be, but they are lies in many cases! Now, Christ’s love lies not in words, but in deeds. He says not, “My dear people.” But He let His heart out and we could see what that was! He does not come to us and simply say, “Dearly Beloved.” But He hangs upon the Cross and there we read, “Dearly Beloved,” in red letters! He does not come to us with the kisses of His lips first—He gives us blessings with both His hands, He gives Himself for us and then He gives Himself to us. Trust no complimentary friend! Rely upon the man who gives you real tokens worth having, who does deeds for you to show the truthfulness of his heart! Such a friend—and such is Jesus—“sticks closer than a brother.”  
7. Once more and I trust I shall not weary you. A purchased friend will never last long. Give to a man 19 times, but deny him the 20th and he shall hate you, for his love sprang only from your gifts! The love which I could buy for gold, I would sell for dross. The friendship that I could buy for pearls, I would dispense with for pebbles. It is of no value and, therefore, the sooner lost, the better! But oh, Believer, Christ’s love was unpurchased love! You brought Him no presents. Jacob said, when his sons went to Egypt, “Take the man a present, a little oil, a little balm, a few nuts and almonds,” but you took Christ no presents! When you came to Him, you said—  
*“Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to Your Cross I cling.”*  
You did not even promise that you would love Him, ,or you had such a faithless heart, you dared not say so! You asked Him to make you love Him—that was the most you could do. He loved you for nothing at all— simply because He would love you! That love which so lived on nothing but its own resources will not starve through the scantiness of your returns. The love which grew in such a rocky heart as this will not die for lack of soil. That love which sprang up in the barren desert in your soul will never, never die for lack of moisture! It must live, it cannot expire. Jesus is, “a Friend who sticks closer than a brother.”  
8. Shall I continue to urge more reasons? I may but mention one other, namely, this—that there cannot, by any possibility, arise any cause which could make Christ love us less. You say, “How is that?” One man loves his friend, but he all of a sudden grows rich and now he says, “I am a greater man than I used to be. I shall forget my old acquaintances.” But Christ can grow no richer—He is as rich as He can be, infinitely so! He loves you now—then it cannot be possible that He will by reason of an increase in His own personal Glory forsake you, for everlasting glories now crown His head! He can never be more glorious and great and, therefore, He will love you always. Sometimes, on the other hand, one friend grows poorer and then the other forsakes him. But you never can grow poorer than you are, for you are “a poor sinner and nothing at all.” Now, you have nothing of your own—all you have is borrowed—all given you by Him. He cannot love you, then, less, because you grow poorer, for poverty that has nothing is at least as poor as it can be and can never sink lower in the scale! Christ, therefore, loves you for all your nakedness and all your poverty!  
“But I may prove sinful,” you say. Yes, but you cannot be more so than He foreknew you would be and yet He loved you with the foreknowledge of all your sins! Surely, then, when it happens, it will occasion no surprise to Him. He knew it all beforehand and He cannot swerve from His love. No circumstance can possibly arise that ever will divide the Savior from His love to His people and the saint from his love to his Savior. He is “a Friend who sticks closer than a brother.”  
III. Now then, AN INFERENCE TO BE DERIVED FROM THIS. Lavater says, “The qualities of your friends will be those of your enemies—cold friends, cold enemies; half-friends, half-enemies—fervid enemies, warm friends.” Knowing this is true, I have often congratulated myself when my enemies have spoken freely against me. “Well,” I have thought, “My friends love me hard and fast. The enemies can be as hot as they please. It only indicates that the friends are proportionately firm in affection.” Then we draw this inference—that if Christ sticks close and He is our Friend—then our enemies will stick close and never leave us till we die. Oh, Christian, because Christ sticks close, the devil will stick close, too— he will be at you and with you! The dog of Hell will never cease his howling till you reach the other side of Jordan. No place in this world is out of bow-shot of that great enemy! Until you have crossed the stream, his arrows can reach you and they will—if Christ gave Himself for you, the devil will do all he can to destroy you! If Christ has been long-suffering to you, Satan will be persevering, in hopes that Christ may forget you. He will strive after you and strive until he shall see you safely landed in Heaven. But be not disappointed, the louder Satan roars, the more proof you shall have of Christ’s love! “Give me,” said old Rutherford, “give me a roaring devil rather than a sleeping one, for sleeping devils make me slumber but roaring ones provoke me to run to my Master.” Oh, be glad, then, if the world rants at you, if your foes attack you fiercely—Christ is just as full of love to you as they are of hatred! Therefore—  
*“Be firm and strong—  
Be Grace your shield and Christ your song.”*  
And now I have a question to ask—that question I ask of every man and every woman in this place and of every child, too—Is Jesus Christ your Friend? Have you a Friend at court—at Heaven’s court? Is the Judge of the quick and the dead your Friend? Can you say that you love Him and has He ever revealed Himself in the way of love to you? Dear Hearer, do not answer that question for your neighbor! Answer it for yourself. Peer or peasant, rich or poor, learned or illiterate—this question is for each of you! Therefore, ask it—“Is Christ my Friend?” Did you ever consider that question? Have you ever asked it? Oh, to be able to say, “Christ is my Friend,” is one of the sweetest things in the world! A man who had lived much in sin, one day casually entered a place of worship. Before the sermon, this hymn was sung—  
*“Jesus, lover of my soul.”*  
The next day the man was met by an acquaintance who asked him how he liked the sermon. He said, “I do not know, but there were two or three words that took such a hold of me that I did not know what to do with myself. The minister read that hymn, ‘Jesus, lover of my soul.’ Ah,” he said, though he was by no means a religious man—“to be able to say that, I would give up all I have! But do you think,” he asked, “that Jesus ever will be the lover of such a man as I am? ‘Jesus, lover of my soul!’ Oh, could I say it?” And then he buried his head in his hands and wept. I have every reason to fear that he went back to his sin and was the same afterwards as before. But you see, he had a conscience enough to let him know how valuable it was to have Christ for his Love and his Friend. Ah, rich man, you have many friends! There are some here who have learned the faithlessness of friends. Oh, put no confidence, you great men and you rich, in the adherence of your friends! David said in his haste, “All men are liars.” You may one day have to say it at your leisure!  
And oh, you kind and affectionate hearts who are not rich in wealth but who are rich in love—and that is the world’s best wealth—put this golden coin among your silver ones and it will sanctify them all! Get Christ’s love shed abroad in your hearts and your mother’s love, your daughter’s love, your husband’s love, your wife’s love will become more sweet than ever! The love of Christ casts not out the love of relatives, but it sanctifies our loves and makes them far sweeter! Remember, dear Hearer, the love of men and women is very sweet, but all must pass away and what will you do if you have no wealth but the wealth that fades and no love but the love which dies, when death shall come? Oh, to have the love of Christ! You can take that across the river Death with you! You can wear it as your bracelet in Heaven and set it up as a seal upon your hand, for His love is “strong as death and mightier than the grave.” Good old Bishop Beveridge, I think it was, when dying, did not know his best friends. Said one, “Bishop Beveridge, do you know me?” Said he, “Who are you?” And when the name was mentioned, he said, “No.” “But don’t you know your wife, Bishop?” “What is her name?” he said. She said, “I am your wife.” “I did not know I had one,” said he. Poor old man! His faculties all failed him! At last someone stooped down and whispered, “Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?” “Yes,” he said, making an effort to speak, “I have known Him these 40 years and I never can forget Him.” It is marvelous how memory will hold the place with Jesus, when it will with no one else! And it is equally marvelous that—  
*“When all created streams are dry,  
Christ’s fullness is the same.”*  
My dear Hearers, do think about this matter. Oh, that you might get Christ for your Friend! He will never be your Friend while you are selfrighteous. He will never be your friend while you live in sin. But do you believe yourselves guilty? Do you desire to leave off sin? Do you want to be saved? Do you desire to be renewed? Then let me tell you, my Master loves you! Poor, weak and helpless worms, my Master’s heart is full of love for you! His eyes at this moment are looking down with pity on you! “Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem!” He now bids me tell you that He died for all of you who confess yourselves to be sinners and feel it. He bids me say to you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” He tells me to proclaim salvation full and free—full, needing nothing of yours to help it. Free, needing nothing of yours to buy it— *“Come, you thirsty, come and welcome!  
God’s free bounty glorify—  
True belief and true repentance  
Every Grace that brings us near —  
Without money  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”*  
There is nothing I feel that I fail so much in as addressing sinners. Oh, I wish I could cry my heart out and preach my heart out to you and at you!—  
*“Dear Savior, draw reluctant hearts!  
To you let sinners fly  
And take the bliss Your love imparts—  
And drink and never die!”*  
Farewell, with this one thought—we shall never, all of us, meet together here again. It is a very solemn thought but according to the course of nature and the number of deaths, if all of you were willing to come here next Sabbath morning, it is not at all likely that all of you would be alive! One out of this congregation will be sure to have gone the way of all flesh. Farewell, you that are appointed to death, I know not who you are—yonder strong man, or yonder tender maiden with the hectic flush of consumption on her cheek. I know not who is appointed to death. But I do now most solemnly take my farewell of such an one. Farewell poor soul—and is it farewell forever? Shall we meet in the land of the hereafter, in the home of the blessed, or do I now bid you farewell forever? I do solemnly bid farewell to you forever if you live and die without Christ. But I cannot bear that dreary thought! And I therefore say, poor Sinner, stop and consider! Consider your ways and now—“turn you, turn you, why will you die?” “Why will you die?” “Why will you die?” “Why will you die?” Ah, you cannot answer that question! May God help you to answer it in a better fashion, by saying—  
*“Here, Lord!  
Just as I am, without one plea  
But that Your blood was shed for me,  
O Son of God, I come to Thee!”*  
The Lord bless you all for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2766 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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THE SLUGGARD’S REPROOF  
NO. 2766

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A THURSDAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1859.

**“The sluggard will not plow because of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing.” Proverbs 20:4.**

LAZINESS is the crying sin of Eastern nations. I believe that the peculiar genius of the Anglo-Saxon character prevents our being, as a nation, guilty of that sin. Perhaps we have many other vices more rife in our midst than that, but, in the East, almost every man is a lazy man. If you tell a Turk in Constantinople that his street is filthy—and it certainly is, for there the offal lies and is never swept away—he says, sitting with his legs crossed, and smoking his pipe, “The Lord wills it.” If you tell him there is a fire at the bottom of the street, he does not agitate himself, but he says, “God wills it.” If you were to tell him that he was sitting on a heap of gunpowder and that he had better take heed lest a spark should blow him up, probably he would never move, or take his pipe out of his mouth, except to say, “God wills it.” Some of the most extraordinary instances of idleness are told us of those people by travelers in the East to this day. The further you go East, the less activity there is—the further you go West in the world, the more restless does the human mind become and, consequently, I suppose, the more active.

Yet, while the fact of the superabundance of idleness in the East is a great explanation of the reason why Solomon speaks so much against it in the Proverbs—and seeing that this Book was meant to be read, not only in the East, but everywhere else—I fear that there must also be some laziness in the West and, as this Book was meant to be read in England, I should imagine there must be a few sluggards in England! And this happens to be not a matter of imagination with me at all, for I know there are many such. You can brush against them at the corners of our streets. There are to be found many such who are slothful in business, who certainly are not worth their salt, who do not earn a livelihood for themselves even with regard to the things of this life. There are still far too many to whom the familiar lines of Dr. Watts may be applied—

*“‘Tis the voice of the sluggard; I heard him complain, ‘You have waked me too soon, I must slumber again.”*

It sometimes happens, too, that these idle people are religious people, or profess to be so, though I have no faith in that man’s religion who is lazy. He always reminds me of a certain monk who went to a monastery determined to give himself up entirely to contemplation and meditation. When he reached the place, he saw all the monks at work, tilling the ground, plowing, or trimming the vines around the monastery, so he very solemnly observed as he entered, “Labor not for the meat that perishes.” The brothers smiled and continued in their labors. He thought it his duty to reprove them a second time by saying, “Martha is cumbered with much serving, but I have chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from me.” However, it was taken from him, for the bell did not ring for him at the usual time for meals and our brother, after waiting some few hours in his cell in prayer, beginning to feel certain calls within, came out and, accosting the prior of the monastery, enquired, “Do not the brethren eat?” “Do you eat?” he asked. “I thought you were a spiritual man, for you said to the brethren, “Labor not for the meat that perishes.” “Oh, yes,” he replied, “I know I said that, but I thought the brethren ate.” “Yes,” answered the prior, “so they do, but we have a rule in our monastery that none eat but those who work. There is such a rule to be found in Scripture, too,” he reminded the monk, “Paul himself has said it, “If any man will not work, neither will he eat.” I think the master of that monastery acted and spoke wisely. A man must work in this life. He was sent to this world that he might be diligent in his calling, in the position in life in which God has been pleased to place him.

However, I do not intend to treat now of this phase of the subject. I am about to direct your attention to spiritual things. I am no legalist—I know that the works of the Law of God can save no man, for, “by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified.” I know that the work of salvation is by Grace, alone, and that all our good works are not our own, but are worked in us by Divine Grace, yet, at the same time, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that, although Scripture continually denies that salvation is by works, it always speaks of the work of Grace in the heart of man and of the experience of the Believer as being a hard work! For, do we not continually hear the Christian described as a pilgrim, as one who is on a long and a weary journey? He is described, not as a gentleman who is carried on other men’s backs, or who is borne along in a vehicle, but as a pilgrim who has to toil along the road—and he is told not to be weary and faint in his mind. He is warned that the road will be very rough and very long and that he will have to run with endurance the race that is set before him. The very use of such a figure as that does not look as if religion were a lazy thing!

Then, again, we find religion described as a battle. The Christian is continually exhorted to take unto himself the whole armor of God and to fight the good fight of faith. He is told to resist even unto blood, striving against sin. That does not look as if it were a very easy thing to be a Christian—as if Christianity were a kind of thing to be kept in a bandbox. It looks as if there were something to be done, some foe to fight, some great task to be accomplished. When I also find another figure used, which is, perhaps, yet more forcible, because it combines the idea of pressing forward with that of fighting—when I find the figure of agonizing used—“Agonize to enter in at the strait gate.” Press, push, labor, strive, toil—I cannot imagine that to be a Christian is to be an idler or a sluggard! No, my Brothers and Sisters, though salvation is not by our works, yet, as sure as ever the Lord puts Divine Life into us, we shall begin to labor for the meat that endures to eternal life, we shall strive to enter in at the strait gate, we shall run perseveringly the race that is set before us and we shall endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ!

Now it is just this point in religion that many men do not like. They prefer an easy religion—flowery meads, flowing streams and sunny glades—all those things they like, but they do not like the climbing of mountains, or the swimming of rivers, or going through fires, or fighting, struggling and wrestling. They go along the pilgrim’s way till they come to some slough and then they are offended. When it was all clean walking, they did not mind, but when they tumble into the bog, and begin to dirty themselves, they straightway creep out on that side of the slough that is nearest to their own house and—like Mr. Pliable in “The Pilgrim’s Progress,” of whom you have often heard—they go back to their house in the City of Destruction. They went on the right road for a little while, but they found that religion was not as easy a thing as they expected and, therefore, they turned back.

Now, it is of these people I am going to talk. “The sluggard will not plow because of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing.” When I have spoken about him, I shall talk a little to those of you who are plowing in God’s field, exhorting you not to make excuses, not to be dilatory in your Master’s service—but to plow all the harder the colder it is—because the day is coming when a joyful harvest shall reward all your pains!

I. First, I am going to speak of THIS SLUGGARD.  
Plowing is hard work and the sluggard does not like it. If he does go up and down the field once or twice, he makes a short turn of it and leaves a wide headland. And, moreover, he leans on the handle of his plow and, therefore, the plow does not go in very deep—not so deep as it would if he were to do as the active plowman does—hold the handles up in order that the plow may go deeply into the soil. But he goes nodding along, half-dragged by his horses and glad to do nothing. He would be very pleased, indeed, if his feet would go without being moved and if the clods would but move one another and lift his feet up for him, so that he might not have the trouble of carrying himself after his plow! But the lazy man knows that he will be laughed at if he says plowing is hard work, so he does not like to say that. “I must get a better excuse,” he thinks, so he says, “It is so cold! It is so cold! I would not mind going out to plow, but I am frozen almost to death. I shall get frostbite—I have not clothes enough to keep me warm! Oh, how the snow comes down! The ponds are all frozen, the ground is so hard—the plow will get broken—it is so cold!”  
Lazy fellow! Why don’t you say that plowing is hard work? That is the English of it! But no, he must have a more genteel excuse that he may not be so likely to be laughed at. Suppose it were not cold? Do you know what he would say? “Oh, it is so hot! I cannot plow! The perspiration runs down my cheeks. You wouldn’t have me plowing in this hot weather, would you?” Supposing it were neither hot nor cold? Why, then he would say, “I believe that it’s going to rain!” And if it didn’t rain, he would say the ground was too dry—for he holds a bad excuse is better than none and, therefore, he will keep on making excuses to the end of the chapter! He will do anything rather than go and do the work he does not like—that is, plowing.  
Now I have made you smile. I wish I could make you cry because there will be more to cry about than to smile at in this matter when I come to show you that this is spiritually the case with many. There are men and women who would like to go to Heaven without having any trouble. They want to enjoy the harvest, but they do not like the labor of plowing. They have not the common honesty to say, “I do not like religion.” What do you suppose they say? Why, they make another excuse! Sometimes it is this, “Well, I am as anxious as anybody to be a Christian, but, you know, these are such hard times.” Hard times? The times are always hard to such people as you are! “But in these times,” they say, “there is no warmth in Christians—they are all so cold-hearted. Why, I go up to the Chapel and nobody speaks to me! There is not one-half the religion that there used to be and what there is, is not half as good as it once was. The article is depreciated. Now, if I lived over in Ireland, then I would plow! If I lived over where there is the Revival, you know I would be a saint! Or if I had lived in the Apostle Paul’s days and heard such a preacher as that, or if I could have talked to those early Christians, I would not object to be a Christian! But these are such cold-hearted times—so many hypocrites and so few Christians—I don’t think I shall trouble about religion at all.”  
Ah, that is a pretty excuse, for you know that what you are saying is a lie! In the first place, you know that there is life in Christ’s Church even now and that there are still (if you would but look) a few good, loving, warm-hearted Christians to be found. You know that there are still faithful preachers left. The faithful have not failed from among men and although hypocrites are plentiful, there are still many sincere souls. And what if there were not? What business is that of yours? Are you content to be lost because the Church is not what it ought to be? Just look at the matter in that light. Because there are a great many hypocrites, you have made up your mind to go to Hell? Is that the English of it? Because there are such multitudes going there, you think you will go, too, and keep them company? Is that what you mean?  
“No,” you say, “not that!” That is it, Mr. Sluggard, though you don’t like to say so. It is a bad excuse you have made. It won’t hold water and you know it won’t! You know very well that when your conscience speaks, it tells you that this excuse is a bad one. It is one that will not satisfy you when you are lying on your dying bed and, above all, it is one that will vanish in the Day of Judgment, just as the mists vanish before the rising sun! What business can it be of yours what the Church is or what the Church isn’t? If you will not think about the things of God in these times, neither would you in the best of times—and if the present agency is not blessed to you, neither would you be converted though one rose from the dead!  
“But,” says Mr. Sluggard, “if that is not a good excuse, I will give another. It is all very well for you, Mr. Minister, to talk about being religious, but you don’t knew where I live. You don’t know my business and the sort of shop mates I work with. You know very well it is a hard matter for me to hold my own as it is, with merely going to a place of worship, but if I were really to throw all my heart into it, I would have them all down upon me. I tell you, Sir, my business is such that I could not carry it on, and yet be a Christian.” Then, Mr. Sluggard, if it is a business that you cannot carry on without going to Hell with it—give it up, Sir! “Ah, but then, Sir, we must live!” Yes, Sir, but then we must die! Will you please remember that, for that seems to me to be a great deal more of a necessity. Sometimes, when people say to me, “Why, you know we must live,” I do not see any necessity for that. Some of them would be almost as well dead as alive. “But we must live.” I am not sure of that. I am sure of another thing—you must die. Oh, that you would think rather of dying than of living! Besides, it is all nonsense about your business being one that you cannot carry on and be a Christian. I tell you, Sir, there is no business that is a legitimate one, which a man cannot carry on and adorn his Master in it! Or, if there is such a business, come out of it as you would out of the burning city of Sodom!  
“But then I am in such an ungodly household, Sir! I am so laughed at.” Yes, Sir, but if somebody were to leave you a thousand pounds on condition that you wore a red ribbon round your arm—you know you would be laughed at if you did! Or suppose the condition was that you were to wear a fool’s-cap for a week and you would have a thousand pounds a year for life, afterwards—would you not wear it? Ah, I should not like to trust you. I believe you would put it on and when people laughed, you would say, “You may laugh, but I am well rewarded for it.” Yet here your soul is at stake—and a little laughter, you say, drives you back? I do not believe you, Sir! I do not think you are such a fool as that, to be laughed into Hell—for you cannot be laughed out again by all their laughter! I believe your second excuse is as bad as your first one! I shatter it into a thousand pieces! The fact is, Sir, you don’t like religion—and that is the truth! You don’t want to give up your sins! You are willing to continue to be what you are—a sinner dead in trespasses and sins. That is the plain, simple English of it and all the excuses you can make will not alter it!  
“No,” says one, “but it is such a hard thing to be a Christian. Very often, when I hear the preacher saying what manner of persons we ought to be, I think, ‘Ah, I had better not set out, for I shall never go all the way. When I hear of the trials, temptations and troubles of the child of God, I think I will not go.’” There you are again, Mr. Sluggard, you will not plow because of the cold! But do you not remember what has been so often impressed upon your mind—though we have many troubles and many trials, yet Grace is all-sufficient for us? Do you not know that, though the way is long, yet our shoes are iron and brass? And though the work is hard, yet Omnipotence has promised to give us strength allsufficient? You only look at one side of the subject, and not at the other. Why not think for a moment on that Grace of God which guarantees to assist and to carry through all in whom it begins the good work? Sir, your excuse is an idle one! I tell you again that the naked truth is this— you love your sins—you love them better than Heaven, better than eternal life and that you are a lazy fellow! You do not like prayer, nor faith, nor repentance—and I warn you that your fate will be that of this sluggard who begged in harvest and had nothing!  
Someone else says, “I have no time, I have not indeed.” Time for what, Sir? What do you mean? “Why, I have no time to pray an hour in the morning!” Who said you had? “But I have no time to be attending to religion all the day long.” Who asked you to do so, Sir? I suppose you find time for pleasure—perhaps you find time for what you call recreation and the like. There are many precious portions of time that you sweep away and never use. Where there’s a will, there’s a way, and if the Holy Spirit has made you love religion and the things of God, you will find time enough. That is a worse excuse than any other, for God has given you the time, and if you have not got it, you have lost it! Look for it, for you will be accountable for it at the Last Great Day. You have been hiding your talent in a napkin and now you say you cannot find it! You had it, Sir—where it is, is your business, not mine. Look for it and God help you to shake off your sloth! And may you in earnest be constrained by the Holy Spirit to be a Christian and to espouse the life of the pilgrim—and run with diligence the race that is set before you!  
I have thus tried to describe the sluggard as the man who would not plow because of the cold—the man who would like to be a Christian, only he does not like the Cross—who would like to get to Heaven, only he does not like the road to there. He would be saved, but, oh, he cannot give up his sin, he cannot live in holiness. He would like to be crowned conqueror, but he does not like to fight the battle. He would like to reap a harvest, but he neither cares to plow nor to sow. Mr. Sluggard, I have three little sayings to repeat to you. Will you try to treasure them up? No pains, no gains. No sweat, no sweet. No mill, no meal. Will you just remember those three things? I will tell you again, lest you should forget them. No pains, no gains! No sweat, no sweet! No mill, no meal! So just get up, Sir, and may God grant that you may get up to some purpose! “Awake” you that sleep, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light.” “Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”  
But, Mr. Sluggard, this life is the time of plowing and sowing. It is wintertime with us now—but wait a while and the springtime shall come, and after that the harvest! There are some of us who are longing for the time when we shall reap the golden harvest—the harvest given to us by Divine Grace, but yet a harvest for which we have sown the seed, as Hosea beautifully puts it—“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy.” We sow in righteousness, but the harvest is not given us as the effect of righteousness, it is given us by mercy! Reap in mercy! What a joyous day that will be when God’s true sowers shall reap their harvests! The angels shall be with us! They shall cry harvest home with us and men and angels, hand in hand, shall enter the gates of Paradise, bringing their sheaves with them!  
Where’s our friend the sluggard? Oh, there he is! Is he cold now? No, but how different he looks! He looked to me quite a smart gentleman when he was sitting by the fire last winter, rubbing his hands and saying that he would not plow. What does he look like now? What is his disembodied spirit like? Alas, poor wretch, he is begging! The saints are shouting, but he is moaning. They are rejoicing, but he is sorrowing. They are taken into Heaven and housed in the Lord’s garner, but he is a houseless wanderer, begging! Look at him! He has just gone up to the great golden gate and he has lifted that knocker of pearl—listen to the noise—and he cries, “Lord, Lord, I have eaten and I have drunk in Your Presence!” Just like you, Mr. Sluggard, you are all for eating and drinking—“and You have taught in our streets”—very likely, Sir! You are just the man to be taught, but you never did anything that you were taught to do! Do you hear the terrible words of the loving Jesus, “I never knew you! Depart from Me, you worker of iniquity”? The golden

gate does not open to him. He is still begging, but the answer comes, “Your time of sowing you neglected and now your time of reaping must be a time of beggary forever.”  
Now he goes up to yonder angel and he cries, “Bright spirit, introduce me to the courts of Heaven! It is true, I wasted my time on earth, but, oh, how bitterly do I repent it now! Oh, if I could but have back my wasted hours, what would I not do? If I could but hear the Gospel preached again, I would hear it with both my ears and I am sure I would receive it and be obedient to it.” But the angel says, “I have no power to let you in. Besides, if I could, I would not. You had your day and it is gone—and now you have your night. You had your lamp, but you did not trim it. You took no care to have oil in your vessel for your lamp—and now your lamp is gone out and the Bridegroom’s door is shut and you cannot enter.” Now I see him and he is very sad, indeed—begging of a saint who has just come up, and saying to him, “Give me of your oil, for my lamp is gone out.” But the other replies, “Not so, for there is not enough for me and for you. God has given me Grace for myself, but I have none to spare for anybody else.”  
I remember a mother’s dream—a mother who once, after having exhorted her children and talked, prayed and wrestled with them, retired to rest. And she dreamt, at the Day of Judgment, she and her children arose from the family tomb. The trumpet was rending the air with its terrific blast and there she was—“saved!” But her children still unregenerate. She dreamt that they clasped her round the waist, clung to her garments and cried, “Mother, save us! Take us into Heaven with you!” But she dreamt that a spirit came—some bright angel—dashed them from her and wafted her aloft to Heaven, while they were left. And she remembered, too, in that dream, that she then had no care for them, no thought for them—her spirit was so swallowed up with the one thought that God was dealing justly with them—that they had had their day for sowing and that they had not sowed—and now must not expect a harvest. The Justice of God so filled her breast that she could not even weep for them when she was taken from them!  
Ah, sluggard, you will be begging in another world! And though you will not think of your soul’s concerns now, you will think of them then! There is a place where there is a dreadful prayer meeting every day and every hour in the day—a prayer meeting where all the attendants pray— not merely one, but all! And they pray, too, with sighs, and groans, and tears—and yet they are never heard. That prayer meeting is in Hell! There is a begging meeting there, indeed. Oh, that there were on earth half the prayer there will be there! Oh, that the tears shed in eternity had but been shed in time! Oh, that the agony that the lost ones now feel had but been felt beforehand! Oh, that they had repented before their life was ended! Oh, that their hearts had been made tender before the terrible fire of Judgment had melted them!  
But notice that though the sluggard begs in harvest, he gets nothing. Now, in harvest time, when everything is plentiful, every man is generous. If a man sees a beggar in the streets in harvest time, he will refuse him nothing. He may go and glean in the field, for there is enough and to spare for all. It is a season of abundance! No man grudges his poor fellow man then. But here is the terrible point, in that last harvest, when the slothful man shall beg for bread, no man will give him anything. I see him standing at the gate of Heaven and he looks in. There they are feasting and he says, “Give me a crumb—a crumb is all I ask! Let me have what the dogs have that feed under their masters’ table.” But it is denied him. There he is, in the flames of Hell, and he cries, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue,” but it is refused him. He begs in harvest and he has nothing! The begging becomes all the more terrible because its results are so disappointing. “And to think that others should have so much, yet I myself should have nothing—others be blessed, but myself cursed,” he laments.  
I do think that one of the stings of Hell will be for the sinner to see some of his own relatives and friends in Heaven and himself shut out. Think, my dear Hearer, what you will feel if you should see your wife in Paradise and yourself be eternally excluded! Mother, what if you should see those babies of yours, those precious infants who took an early flight to Heaven—what if you should see them above, but between you and them a great gulf fixed so that you can never reach them—you are shut out and they are glorified? Turn that thought over, I beseech you, and may God grant Grace to every one of you, that, by the love of Christ, you may be constrained to escape from Hell and fly to Heaven, for thus said the Lord unto you, “Escape, flee for your life, look not behind you, stay not in all the plain, but flee to the mountain of Christ Jesus—lest you be consumed.”  
Be wise today, O Sinner—tomorrow may never come! Now, now, repent! Now cast your soul on Christ! Now give up your sins! Now may the Spirit help you to begin a new life and to be in earnest about salvation for, remember, though you laughed when I described the sluggard just now, it will be no laughing matter if you are found in his hot shoes at the Day of Judgment—if his rags shall be on you and his begging shall be your everlasting portion! God grant that you may have done with your idle excuses! May you truly look at the matter as in the light of the Day of Judgment and God grant you Grace so to act that from this time on you may be found among the most diligent, the most fervent and the most anxious of the followers of Christ! May you be found plowing every day with a plow drawn by a Superior Power, but a plow which shall enter into the world and leave some furrow of usefulness behind it, so that, in the day of harvest, you may have your portion and not, like the sluggard, beg and have nothing!  
II. Well, now, having thus addressed the sluggard, I have a few minutes to spare in which to address THE PEOPLE OF GOD. And, knowing you to be by far the larger portion of those whom I address, I am sorry that I have so little time for you, but can only make just these few remarks.  
My dear Brothers and Sisters, the Lord has, by His Sovereign Grace, set our hand to the plow. We once, like our poor fellow sinners, hated this plow and we never would have come to it unless Sovereign Grace had brought us. Now we have shaken off that old sloth of ours and we are in earnest about the matter of salvation. But do we not, at times, feel this old sluggishness creeping on us? When we are asked to do something for the cause of Christ, do we not make excuses? There is a Brother over yonder—he ought to join the Church, but he does not, and his excuse is a very stupid one! I will not tell you what it is. There is another Brother—never mind who it is—the man the cap fits, let him wear it till it is worn out—and may it be worn out soon! He ought to teach in the Sunday school, he lives quite conveniently, but he does not like the school. There is another Brother—he ought to be doing something or other, but he says that, really, his position is, just now, such that he does not see that he can. The fact is, it is cold, my Brothers, and you don’t want to plow!  
Now, remember, those are always coldest that do not plow, for those that plow get warm. I have always noticed that the people in a Church who quarrel are the idle ones. Those that do nothing always grumble. They say, “Ah, there is no love in the Church”—because YOU haven’t any! “Ah,” you say, “but they don’t speak to one another.” You mean you don’t speak to them. “No,” says one, “but they are not active.” You mean you are not active, for that which you think they are, depend upon it, you are yourselves, for we mostly see ourselves in other people. The idea we get of others is close upon the heels of the idea we ought to have of ourselves, except when it is a good notion—and then the less we indulge the thought as being a picture of ourselves, the better!  
But whenever this sluggishness creeps upon you, I want you to think of One whom you love, who will be an example to you. Now, who do you suppose it is to whom I am about to direct your eyes if you begin to be weary and faint in your minds? Ah, it is not to a deacon of the Church, or to a minister! It is not to some renowned preacher of the olden time— yes, it is—I have made a mistake there—it is to a renowned Preacher of the olden time—One whom you love! Whenever you feel faint and weary, will you think of One who plowed more than you ever can plow, and deeper furrows, too, and plowed more terrible plowing, on a harder rock and a more terrible soil than you have to plow upon? Whenever you are weary and faint in your minds, consider Him! “And who is that?” you ask. Why, you know, it is your Lord and Master, Jesus Christ! Whenever sloth creeps on you and you begin to lean on the plow handles—and the devil whispers, “Look back”—do not look back! Look UP and see Him—the Crucified One—and you will no longer be weary, I am sure.  
Myconius, the friend of Luther, had made up his mind that he would not help Luther, but that he would stay in a monastery, quiet and alone. The first night he went there, he had a dream to this effect. He dreamed that the Crucified One appeared to him—with the nail prints still in His hands, and that He led him away to a fountain into which He plunged him—a fountain of blood! He beheld himself washed completely clean and, being very rejoiced for that, he was willing to sit down. But the Crucified One said, “Follow Me.” He took him to the top of a hill and down beneath there was a wide-spreading harvest. He put a sickle into his hand and He said, “Go and reap.” He looked round him and he replied, “But the fields are so vast, I cannot reap them.” The finger of the Crucified One pointed to a spot where there was one reaper at work—and that one reaper seemed to be mowing whole acres at once! He seemed to be a very giant, taking enormous strides. It was Martin Luther. “Stand by his side,” said the Crucified One, “and work.” He did so and they reaped all day. The sweat stood upon his brow and he rested for a moment. He was about to lie down when the Crucified One came to him and said, “For the love of souls, and for My sake, go on.”  
He snatched up the sickle, again, and on he worked! And at last he grew weary once more. Then the Crucified One came to him, again, and said, “For the love of souls, and for My sake, go on.” And he went on. But once he dared to pause and say, “But, Master, the winter is coming and much of this good wheat will be spoiled.” “No,” said He, “reap on. It will all be gathered in before the winter comes—every sheaf. I will send more laborers into the harvest, only do your best.” So now, I think, the Crucified One takes me to the brow of that hill, and yourselves with me, and shows us this great London, and says, “Look, this great field is ripe for the harvest, take your sickles and reap it.” You say, “Lord, I cannot.” “No,” says He, “but for the love of souls, and for the sake of the Crucified One, go on and reap.”  
Ah, Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you, cease not from your labor! Be more diligent than you have ever been! Think more of Christ and that will nerve you to duty and remove all sense of weariness! And if this suffices not, remember, Brothers and Sisters, it may be hard plowing—it may be true that this is a frozen time, that the winter is very sharp upon Christ’s Church—but let us plow on very hard, for the harvest will pay for all. Why, I can say that the harvest I have reaped already pays me for all my labors ten thousand times told! When I have grasped the hand of some poor woman who has been saved from sin through my ministry, I have felt it were worthwhile to die to snatch that one soul from Hell!  
Ah, it is a blessed harvest that God gives us here, but what a harvest will that be when we shall see all the saved souls gathered above—when we shall see the face of Christ and lay our crowns at His feet! Then look, labor, hope! An hour with your God will make up for all you may endure here. Oh, may God the Holy Spirit fill you with energy, give you fresh strength and may you, all of you, begin to plow straighter, deeper, longer furrows than you ever made before! Never look back, never take your hand from the plow, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not. Keep at it and be not like the sluggard who would not plow because of the cold—who shall beg in harvest, and have nothing.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **TITUS 3.**

Verse 1. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work. You see, they were a rough, wild, rebellious people in Crete, and Christianity came to civilize, to sober, to sanctify, to save.

2. To speak evil of no man. Oh, how necessary is this exhortation even to this day!  
2. To be no brawler, but gentle, showing all meekness, unto all men. Meekness and gentleness are two of the ornaments of our faith. I would that some professed Christians would understand that unholy contentiousness is not after the mind of Christ. It is not according to that gracious command, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls.” No, the Christian must be willing to suffer wrongfully and to bear it in patience. He is never to be one who renders evil for evil, or railing for railing.  
3. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish. Well, then, if other people are foolish, we ought to bear with them.  
4. Disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. That is what we were once—and if the Grace of God has made a change in us, we must not boast, we must not censure others, we must not set up as self-righteous judges of others. Oh, no, our action must be the very reverse of all that!  
4-7. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by His Grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a very practical Epistle. See how closely Paul keeps to the Doctrines of Grace. He is never like Mr. Legality—he never teaches that we are to be saved by works, but, being saved by the Grace of God alone, and being made heirs according to the hope of eternal life, we are then, out of gratitude to God, to abound in everything that is good, holy, kind and after the mind of Christ.

8, 9. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that you affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. But avoid foolish questions. There are always plenty of thorns about, and there are certain professors who spend half their lives in fighting about nothing at all. There is no more in their contention than the difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee, but they will divide a Church over it, they will go through the world as if they had found out a great secret—it really is not of any consequence whatever—but having made the discovery, they judge everybody by their new-found fad and so spread a spirit that is contrary to the Spirit of Christ.

9, 10. And genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretic—one who really turns aside from the Truth of God and sets up something contrary to the Word of God—what is to be done with him? “Burn him,” says the church of Rome. “Fine him, put him in prison,” say other churches. But the inspired Apostle says only this—

10. After the first and second admonition reject [him]. Just exclude him from the church, that is all. Leave him his utmost liberty to go where he likes, believe what he likes and do what he likes, but, at the same time, you as Christian people must disown him—that is all you ought to do— except to pray and labor for his restoration.

11-14. Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sins, being condemned of himself. When I shall send Artemas unto you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis for I have determined to winter there. Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that they need nothing. And let our people also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful. How the Apostle comes back to that point! Let all our people, our friends, our brethren, our kinsfolk, “let our people also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.”

15. All that are with me salute you. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.  
—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1670 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Pro 26.13

ONE LION, TWO LIONS, NO LION AT ALL!  
NO. 1670

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 8, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The slothful man says, There is a lion outside, I shall be slain in the streets.”  
Proverbs 22:13.**

**“The slothful man says, There is a lion  
in the way; a lion is in the streets.”  
Proverbs 26:13.**

THIS slothful man seems to cherish that one dread of his about lions as if it were his favorite aversion and he felt it to be too much trouble to invent another excuse. Perhaps he hugs it to his soul all the more because it is a home-born fear, conjured up by his own imagination, and as mothers are said to love their weakest children best, so is he fondest of this most imbecile of excuses! At any rate, it serves him for a passable excuse for laziness, and that is what he wants. If you can get the king of beasts to apologize for your idleness, there is a sort of royalty about your pretences! He hopes his sloth will appear the less disgraceful if he can paint a lion rampant upon its shield. I am not about to speak of slothful men in general, albeit that when a man does not diligently attend to his business, he is committing great wrong to himself and to others. When a man is slothful as a servant, he is unjust to his employers, and when he is in business on his own account, idleness is usually a wrong to his wife and family.

I know one who is the cause of poverty and need to those whom he ought to provide for—and all because honest labor and he have long since fallen out. He would not move an inch if he could help it, nor even open his eyes if he could manage to live and sleep all his life away. When a man is thoroughly eaten up with the dry rot of laziness, he generally finds some kind of excuse, though his crime is really inexcusable. “There is a lion in the way” and, therefore, the man judges it to be quite right that he should keep his bed, or that he should sit leisurely indoors and should not give himself too much trouble or run any risks! But all this is mere makeup to screen his loathsome vice.

No Christian ought to be slothful in his ordinary work—the Apostle describes the good man as “not slothful in business”—of whatever kind that business may be. If you have a right to undertake it. If you have a right to continue in it, you have no right to be a sluggard in it. There should be as wide a division as between the poles between the thought of a Christian and the idea of a sluggard! “Whatever you do, do it heartily.” An idler is a disgrace to himself and if he professes religion, he is a dishonor to it. Paul would starve him, for he says, “If any would not work, neither should he eat”—and that is as near starvation as can be.

Popery may create and foster lazzaroni, but the true faith bids every man eat his own bread. I leave worldly sluggards to the moralist—does not Nature, itself, teach us to labor diligently? Man was not made for an idle life. Labor is evidently his proper condition. Even when man was perfect, he was placed in the garden, not to admire its flowers, but to keep it and to dress it! If he needed to work when he was perfect, much more does he require the discipline of labor now that he is fallen. Lions or no lions, men must work, or find disease and death in sloth!

But we have many spiritual sluggards and it is to them that I speak. They are not skeptics; they are not confirmed infidels; they are not opposers of the Gospel. Perhaps their sluggish nature saves them from anything like energetic opposition to goodness. They claim that they are not averse to the Gospel—on the contrary, they are rather friendly to it—and one of these days they intend to be obedient to its great commands and to yield themselves as servants to Christ! But not just yet—the good time has not fully arrived. They have a very comfortable bed of sloth upon which they lie and they do not want to rise in a hurry and exert themselves too much.

They need to take this matter very leisurely and turn to Christ when it is quite convenient—when it will not require so much self-denial as at the present moment. “Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep,” is their continual cry! And although God’s watchmen disturb them terribly and cry aloud that they may wake them, yet they sleep so heavily that they just turn over when they are most disturbed and drop into their slumbers again. I want to cry aloud under the window of such sleepers, tonight, with the hope that perhaps some of them may be awakened! What do you mean, O Sleeper? Will you sleep your soul away? Will you lose Heaven rather than bestir yourself? Will you never lift up your eyes till Hell’s torments are hopelessly about you and within you?

Our texts speak concerning the sluggard and the first thing you notice about him is that his tongue is not slothful—“The slothful man says.” The man who is lazy all over is generally very busy with his tongue! “The slothful man says, There is a lion outside.” In both texts the slothful man is represented as having something to say and I think that there are no people that have so much to say as those that have little to do. Where nothing is done, much is talked about. Their goodness begins and ends in mere lip service. They talk about repentance, but they do not repent. They are willing to hear about faith and even to speak about it, but they do not believe!

They extol zeal and fervor, but they like to see these active Graces rather than to feel them. They will talk till midnight, but all ends in smoke. When you sit down to speak with them about the reason that they have not given their hearts to Christ, they are not at all short of reasons and apologies and excuses. Indeed, a man must be desperately hard pushed when he cannot make an excuse! If our first parents made garments of fig leaves, there is no fear that their descendants will fail to make coverings of some kind or other—and so the slothful man with his ready tongue declares that there is a lion in the way—and he shall be slain in the streets!

He is not idle with his mouth. He has a short hand, but a long tongue! His imagination, also, is not idle. There were no lions in the streets! One does not expect to find lions there. They may be in the desert; they may be in the jungle; they may be in the forest; but who expects to find lions in the streets of Jerusalem or the lanes of London? Laziness is a great lionmaker. He who does little, dreams much! His imagination could create not only a lion but a whole menagerie of wild beasts—and if some mighty hunter could hunt down all the lions that his imagination has let loose, he would soon distribute more herds of the terrible animals—with wolves and bears and tigers to match! An idler will never be short of difficulties as long as he has no heart for work.

As they say that any stick will do to beat a dog with, so any excuse will do to rain your soul with, for this man’s objection, after all, was not to lions in the way—he objected to the way itself—and he was glad to place a lion there so that he might be excused from going into the street. He did not want to get to his work and, therefore, there was a lion in the way to obstruct him! The lion was his friend. He had invented him on purpose to be the ally of his idleness. Yes, men will have their tongues busy and their imaginations busy, even though their hearts are idle and their hands are covered over with idle dirt. This man, using both his imagination and his tongue, gives me the opportunity of saying that he took great pains to escape from pains. He had to use his inventive ability to get himself excused from doing his duty.

It is an old proverb that lazy people generally take the most trouble and so they do. And when men are unwilling to come to Christ it is very amazing what trouble they will take to keep away from Him. Hear how they argue. Mark their ingenuity in avoiding the narrow way! Oh, if they were to argue half as well upon the question why they should be saved as they do upon the question why they should not be saved, their logic would be put to a much more useful purpose! When we have talked with them, we have seen them invent all kinds of difficulties and doubts, disputes and dilemmas. They are always ready with hard doctrines and texts that are hard to understand. They seem as if they raked Heaven and earth and Hell to find reasons why they should be lost and yet the only reason that they have for this is they do not want to give up their sins—they do not want to give up their self-righteousness!

They do not want to come to Jesus and be washed in His blood and owe everything to the charity of God through the Redeemer. They cannot be troubled with repenting and so they leave that doleful business, as they call it. They do not like to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, and so they invent the lions. They do not care for faith; they do not delight in Christ; and so they invent difficulties and take a world of trouble to avoid trouble—storing up for themselves, hereafter, a heap of misery in order to escape from the blessedness of being found in Christ both now and at the Last Great Day.

Now, in dealing with sluggishness and its vain excuse, my divisions, tonight, will be such that every child can take them home and remember them. The first head will be a lion. The second will be two lions. And the third will be no lions at all! Those three headings will surely abide in everybody’s memory and they are fairly derived from the two texts.

I. The first is “A LION.” “The slothful man says, “There is a lion outside, I shall be slain in the streets.” That is to say, it is time for him to get to the vineyard to work, but he does not get up and he pretends that he is best in bed, for there is a lion outside the door. Would you have him risk his precious life, so valuable to himself, at any rate, if to nobody else? He turns over upon his bed to sleep, again, for this is far more comfortable than to be meeting a lion and falling a prey to his teeth! He means, I think, that there is a great difficulty—a terrible difficulty—quite too much of a difficulty for him to overcome.

He has heard of lion-tamers and lion-killers, but he is not one. He has not the strength and the vigor to attack this dreadful enemy! He will even confess that he has not sufficient courage for such an encounter. The terrible difficulty which he foresees is more than he can face—it is a LION and he is neither Samson, nor David, nor Daniel—and, therefore, he had rather leave the monster alone. Are there not many, here, who say much the same? “Oh,” they say to the preacher, “you do not know our position, or the peculiar circumstances and special trials under which we labor! We would gladly be saved, but we cannot live as Christian men—our trade is a difficulty, our poverty is a difficulty, our lack of education is a difficulty—and the whole, put together, make up an impossibility. There is a lion in the way.”

Yes, I know, that is what your relative said many years ago. And as long as there is any of your family left, there will always be lions about—and you, being a true descendant of the slothful one, to speak honestly to you—can hear the lion roar under your window just as your great grandfather’s grandfather did in Solomon’s time! I am persuaded that your sons and daughters, if they have the same mind as you have—that is, a mind unwilling to come to Christ—will hear the voice of the lions, too! Wonderful difficulties will be in their way, as they are in yours. The ancient order of the Do-no-mores and the fruitful family of the Easys will keep their beds and their posts till the last trumpet shall sound!

Though the promise is, “You shall tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under feet,” they have no heart for the conflict and, therefore, never win a victory. Yes, but in this sluggard’s case it was a very fierce lion. The Hebrew of the second text implies that it was a mighty lion that was in the street. His imagination pictured a very extraordinary monster, much larger than usual! And so, my dear Friends, you have some difficulty much greater than anybody else ever had—at least you talk as if this were the case!

True, the martyrs swam through seas of blood to win the crown and thousands were burnt to ashes at the stake that they might be found faithful to Christ. But it would seem, from your talk, that those lions were nothing compared with your lion, which is of huge dimensions and extraordinary ferocity! What can this lion be? Perhaps if I were to examine a little closely it might come out that you are a great coward and the lion a wretched cur not worth noticing! Your lion is a mere mouse! Where is your manliness to tremble at so insignificant a trial? Perhaps you have an acquaintance who would be parted from you if you became a Christian. Is this your lion? It is a very young one! Or else you are following a bad trade and a bad business—and you know that you would have to give them up. Is this all?

Your shop would have to be shut on Sunday—is this the secret of the matter? You know that the tricks that you now practice and that you find so profitable, you cannot practice if you become a Christian. Perhaps that is your lion. I should not wonder, though you try to make others believe that it is so terrible, that you really cannot tell what it is and yet you fondly dream that it quite excuses you for being what you are—an idle lieabed, sleeping when the light of the Gospel is shining full in your face— and declining to decide for God and for Christ, though you know what the Lord requires of you.

I wish that Elijah were here tonight that he might cry, as he did on Carmel, “If God is God, serve Him! If Baal is God, serve him. How long will you waver between two opinions?”—

*“Wake, you sleepers, wake!  
What mean you?  
Sin besets you round about,  
Up and search the foes within you  
Slay or chase the traitors out.”*

Still you hesitate because this lion is such a terrible lion that there never was the like of it! In all the woods; in all the forests, never was there such a roaring beast as this! So you say, if you are wide awake enough to say as much as that. I tell you that you are trying to make yourself believe a lie, for your difficulties are no greater than many of us have surmounted by God’s Grace! Your difficulties are not half as great as were those of Paul and of those who lived in his day who had to carry their lives in their hands—and seemed every day given over to death for Jesus Christ’s sake—and yet bravely followed their Lord’s will, notwithstanding all!

Observe, again, that this sluggard said that there was a lion outside and he should be slain in the streets. It is rather a novel thing for people to be killed by lions in the streets. It has not occurred within my recollection and I do not think that it is ever likely to occur! But still, this man professed that he expected to be slain in the streets! In an age of liberty like this, he is afraid to be a Christian because of persecution, for persecution would be the death of him! Oh, dear! In a time like this, when, to be honest, to be upright is, for certain, the best thing for this world as well as for the world to come, yet men still tell us that they would lose by being Christians! It would ruin their business! They could never make a living! They would be slain in the streets.

If you had lived in Madagascar years ago, when to be a Christian involved your being hurled down a precipice or being speared, I could see something in the excuse. But in a land like this, the persecutions which are endured may be bitter and the losses which are incurred may be heavy, but they are hardly worth mentioning as compared with the sufferings of the first ages! I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the sufferings of the past times—and much less with the Glory that shall be revealed in us. It will not do for you to talk so! It is idle talk! You do not believe it, yourself, though you whine like a coward, “I shall be slain in the streets.” If you were half a man you would never fear the streets, or think it at all probable that a wild beast would pounce upon you there!

And then look at the base conclusion—“There is a lion outside, I shall be slain in the streets,” as if the lion would be sure to look for him if it did not meddle with anybody else—as if he were the only man in the street and not one among hundreds equally in danger—if such danger there really were. The lion, for certain, would kill him—he was quite sure of it— “I shall be slain in the streets.” This is how sluggards talk, as if all the troubles and trials that ever fell upon men that are decided for Christ would fall upon them! And, whereas many of God’s Daniels have lived in dens of lions and have been none the worse for it, they cannot look to Daniel’s God—and they do not expect Daniel’s rescue. They are sure that they shall be torn to pieces, though there is but one lion and that lion in the streets where there would be protection near and shelter at hand. If I met a lion at all, I should best like to meet his roaring majesty in the streets because there would probably be plenty of people at hand to help me. This consideration puts the case in a most ridiculous light. “Slain in the streets,” when there will be others there more courageous than himself who will rush to his rescue!

Now, look, you that talk about the difficulties of being Christians. Are there no other Christians besides you? Will you be the only Believers? When you are converted to God, will you be all alone? Will there be none to help you? Is there no Christian brotherhood left among us? Are there no advanced saints who will help you, as a young man, to struggle against your doubts and against the temptations that are in the way? Why, you know that you will not be alone in the streets of the Jerusalem of God! Once get into the City of God, which is His Church, and you will be safe, for “no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, but the redeemed of the Lord shall walk there”—and thus you shall be in the blessed company. You shall be in the place of safety when once you get into the streets of the City of our God!

Still, it is after such manner that idle people talk. They imagine perils. They are in fear where no fear is, frightened at their own shadows, troubled with imaginary ills! The real lion, after all, is sluggishness, itself, aversion to the things of God. Oh, how many we have in the Tabernacle whom I have looked to see coming forward to profess their faith in Christ, but they have not come and, for all that I can see, they are just where they were 10, 12, 20 years ago! The real difficulty lies in this—their heart is not right towards God. They have not yet humbly acknowledged their need of Jesus—it is too much trouble to confess their sins. They have not yet accepted the Lord Jesus as God presents Him, as the Propitiation for sin. Oh, if they were in earnest about these things—if their hearts were really anxious to find Christ—they would not see this lion in the way! I am quite sure that the monster would soon disappear.

Dear Friends, one very common species of lion is the plea of many that they cannot understand the way of salvation. Is that true? Then remember the text of last Sunday morning—“If our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world has blinded their minds.” It is an awful thing, then, to say, “I cannot understand it,” for it proves that you are under the power of the devil! Another man says, “I cannot believe it.” That is an equally dreadful thing to say. What is it? No. Who is it that you cannot believe? Can you not believe God? Is He a liar? Remember how John puts it and he is the most loving of all spirits—“He that believes not has made God a liar, because he has not believed on His Son.” It is a dreadful thing to say, “I cannot believe,” when God, who cannot lie, is the object of the remark!

If you make such an observation to your fellow man you disgrace him. But if you say it to God, oh, how you dishonor Him! That excuse will not do! If Jesus speaks the Truth, why do you not believe Him? The Gospel is plain to the understanding of those who wish to know the Truth of God and it carries such evidence with it that it ought to be at once received without any excuse. Can you deny this? Then where is your lion? “But,” says one, “if I did come to Christ, I am persuaded that after a little while I should fall back.” Be not so sure of that! If you give your heart to Christ, has He not promised to keep you? Is it not written, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of My hands”? Do you think that you are to keep yourself from falling? If so, read this doxology, and try to sing it—“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of God with exceeding joy—unto Him be Glory both now and forever.”

“Oh,” says another, “but I know that a great many Christians are hypocrites!” This is your lion, is it? Well, if there are so many hypocrites, it is time that there should be one honest man—and why should not you be that one? Besides, what have you to do to call God’s people hypocrites? You know that they are not! “Oh, but,” you say, “they are full of faults: all of them are false.” You do not dare say that, do you? If they all were false, nobody would want to be thought a Christian! How is it that a bad sovereign will pass? Why, because there are so many good ones and because good sovereigns are worth having—and the reason why a hypocrite passes through society is because there are so many genuine Christians to make him seem genuine—and it is a good thing to be a Christian! Instead of judging others, it is time that you sat and judged yourself, and that lion would soon be dead!

“Yes, but I have tried,” says one. Oh that is your lion, is it? But how did you try? You tried in your own strength, I know—and we do not invite you to do that any more—for your strength is perfect weakness! Had you committed yourself to the keeping of Christ, you would have another tale to tell and another song to sing, for He is faithful and He keeps those that are in His hands! If that is your lion, God grant that you may never hear it roar, again! You are not asked to save yourself, or keep yourself, but to submit yourself to the Grace of God—and surely that is able to keep you unto the end.

I have this to say to you before I pass to my second head. If there is a lion outside, is there no lion within? That is to say, if you come to Christ and perish, you will most surely perish if you do not come to Him! If you live as you are, what must become of you? If you die as you are, what must be your lot? Without a Savior to wash you from sin and a Mediator to plead for you before God, what must be your eternal portion? Why, it would be better to go out among a thousand lions than to stay within and to perish in your sins! The lion within doors, in your case, will certainly destroy you! Therefore up and away! Escape as a bird out of the snare of the fowler—that fowler is Satan and his nets are the deceitfulness of sin.

And what if there is a lion outside? Can you not fight it? If you ask the Lord to go with you, can you not contend with the lion and destroy him, even as David did? Saints of old have overcome through the blood of the Lamb! None of those who are in Heaven came there riding upon beds of ease, but—

*“They wrestled hard, as we do now,  
With sins and doubts, and fears.”*  
Do you expect to be carried into Heaven on a golden palanquin? You will

be mightily mistaken! Did Jesus die on a Cross and are you to be crowned with roses?—  
*“Must I be carried to the skies  
On flowery beds of ease?  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas?”*  
No, my Friend, there is no dainty road to Glory. If you are afraid of difficulty and self-denial, you judge yourself unworthy of the Kingdom. Remember, among the condemned, the fearful and unbelieving lead the van! Up and slay the lion, if a lion there is, and it shall be your joy to find honey in his carcass before long!  
If you do not feel that you can contend with the enemy—and certainly you cannot without Divine help—can you not cry for help? Our God hears and answers prayer! Why not cry to the Strong One for deliverance? Your lion is in the way. Shout, then, for a Friend to come and help you and with that call there stands One who is a wonderful lion-killer! There is the Son of David! Did He not destroy the works of the devil when He was here? Still He shows Himself strong for the defense of all them that put their trust in Him. Call to Him, “My Jesus, deliver me from the lion,” and He will be with you and take the lion by the beard and slay him! Therefore, Sluggard, your excuses will not do. They are broken vessels that hold no water. God help you to be weary of them.  
II. We leave our friend, the sluggard, for a little while in the 22nd chapter of Proverbs, and we turn on three or four pages till we come to the 26th chapter, at the 13th verse. And there we find the gentleman again. The slothful man is still talking and he says, “There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.” Is there any difference between this verse and the first one that I took for my text? Yes, I think there is this difference—that there are TWO LIONS here instead of one. He has waited because of that one lion and now he fancies that there are two lions.  
He has made a bad bargain of his delay. He said that he would have a more convenient season, but where is it? It was inconvenient, then, because there was a lion. Is it more convenient now? Not at all, for now there are two lions. “There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the street.” That is always the result of waiting—procrastination never profits—difficulties are doubled, dangers thicken. The countryman who had to cross the river foolishly determined to wait until the water had all gone past, for, at the rate it was going, he was quite sure that it must run dry. But when he had waited long, to his surprise he found that a flood had come down from the upland country and the river was much deeper than it had been before—the river was not dried, but swollen.  
Those who think, when they are young, that it will be so much more easy to seek and to find the Savior when they reach manhood, are greatly deceived. Those who think that they will wait till their family has grown up, or till they retire from business—for then they will be able to attend to it so much more easily—may live to discover that hardness of heart has come upon them as the result of delay. Life is like an evening—the longer you wait, the darker it becomes. Delay bristles with danger and the best fruit it can possibly bear is regret. When those who lingered are at last brought to Jesus, how much they wish that the precious years that had been wasted could come back to them! How heartily do they love that promise, “I will restore unto you the years which the locust has eaten”! I said last Sunday evening what I am sure is true—that our dear Savior knew the best time for the soul to come to Him. And what does the Spirit say is the best time? He says, “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord.” It is now that He gives the invitation, because now is the best time that is likely to come to us! You see in the second text there were two lions, and, according to the Hebrew, they were quite as bad as the other lion, for one of them was a young lion.  
“There is a young lion in the way.” And the second Hebrew word implies a great lion. “A strong lion is in the streets.” So now there were two active enemies—two unconquerable difficulties instead of one. And, as an old Puritan observes, the first time when the sluggard looked down the street and saw a lion lurking on the left, he could have gone the other way. But now when he looked out there was a lion to the right as well as to the left—and he could not go either way without facing a foe! With a lion at the front door and a lion at the back, there seemed to be no way of escape for him and this was the wretched result of waiting.  
And do not some of you who, years ago, hesitated over the difficulties of being a Christian, find more difficulties, now instead of less? When you were 21, you were deeply impressed and conscience was awakened. But you said, “No, not just now. It will be easier soon.” Certain cords of sin held you. But now you are forty! Well, what about it? Are those cords weaker? I believe that now they are like cart ropes to bind you and, whereas sin once chastised you with whips, it is now chastising you with scorpions! You are getting farther away from the melting power of the Gospel, hardening to your own destruction! You can hear a sermon, now, and hear it without pricking of conscience.  
The tears used to flow, in years gone by, and you have gone out of this place feeling as if you never dared come into it, again, for the preacher had cut and torn you to pieces! He tries to preach just the same and he hopes that he does, but his words have not the same effect upon you, now, as in earlier days. You are Gospel-hardened! And that is the worst kind of hardening! You have heard the Gospel so long that there is no novelty in it and you know the excuses so well that you have got to be one of the devil’s old soldiers, a veteran used to war!  
You know how to get over the Gospel, somehow. Like an old fox, you know all the traps and cannot be caught in them. You are sticking to the old trick about the lions, but now there are two lions, so you say. Thus you have a double-barreled excuse! How can I be so unreasonable as to expect you to come out often to a week-night service? You have three or four shops! How can you come out on a Sunday evening, some of you? You have half-a-dozen children! How is it possible that you should give much time to prayer? You are here, and there, and everywhere in your worldly calling! “Oh,” you say, “do not talk to us! Years ago it might have been possible for us to be Christians, but now, how can it be?” Therefore, I say to you young people, hasten to be blest! I beseech you do not delay! An old man took a little child up into his arms and put his fingers into the abundant curls of his sunny hair, and he said, “Oh! Dear child, while your mother sings to you and tells you about Jesus, think of Him and trust Him.” “Grandpa,” said the little boy, “don’t you trust Him?” “No, Dear,” he said, “I might have done so years ago, but my old heart has got so hard, now, nothing ever touches me anymore.” And the old man dropped a tear as he said it. “I wish,” said he, “that I had a curly head like yours and was beginning life like you.”  
Oh! Old man, are you here tonight? Let me tell you a secret! You may become a boy again! I am sure you may, for you may be born again! And he that is born again is but an infant and starts on a new life with freshly given strength! He shall have softer feelings than Nature lends to manhood! He shall have the feelings which Grace, alone, can produce! In a spiritual sense, his flesh shall come, again, unto him like that of a little child, though he cannot grow young again as to his bodily frame. The Holy Spirit can make him a new creature in Christ Jesus. But do not delay! Do not delay, you that are yet young! I am sure that Watts is right when he says—  
*“‘Tis easier work when we begin  
To serve the Lord early.”*  
It is assuredly so!  
Although Grace can bring in a person of any age, yet God delights to be found of them that seek Him early. It matters not who he may be—if any man comes to Jesus, he shall be received—but yet there is a susceptibility which pertains to the young which has often gone from those who, year after year, have heard the Gospel and yet have not yielded to its demands. Oh, I should like you who have two lions to frighten you to cry out to the Lord, tonight, to help you to go out and slay them both! “I am very old,” you say. Well, that is one of the lions, but the Grace of God can make a sinner who is a hundred years old into a babe in Christ!  
“Oh, but I have formed such bad habits.” Yes, those are horrible lions, but those habits can be broken by Divine power. “Ah, but my heart is so hard.” Let it soak in the fountain filled with blood and that will soften it! The Spirit of God—  
*“Can take the flint away  
That would not be refined,  
And from the riches of His Grace,  
Bestow a softer mind.”*  
He can take away the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh! Let us have done with the lions, whether there are two or 200, for the Lord will help us! Oh, for a lion hunt tonight!. Drive away the one and drive away the two! But that can never be while sluggards still are sluggards. The Lord quicken them and wake them up to real earnestness! III. That brings me to my last point, which is NO LION AT ALL. If there is a man here who would have Christ, there is no lion in the way to prevent his having Christ. “There are a thousand difficulties,” says one. If you truly desire Christ, there is no effectual difficulty that can really block you from coming to Him. You notice that Solomon does not say that there were any lions in the way—he only tells us that the sluggard said so. Well, you need not believe a lazy man! The sluggard said it twice—but that did not make it true. Everybody knew what a poor fool he was and that it was only in his own imagination that there were any lions at all. Do not believe your sluggish self, then, and do not believe the sluggish speeches of others. There are no lions except in your own imagination!  
John Bunyan pictures lions at the gate of the interpreter’s house and, according to some commentators, he meant the deacons and elders of the Church that are outside to watch those who desire to join the Church. I am one of those horrible lions—but the happy thought is that the lions are chained! Whenever you wish to join the Church, if you will only have courage to come and face us who are the dreadful lions in front of the palace gate, you will find that we are chained! And, what is more, if we were not chained, we would not harm you! We try to roar at those who are not our Master’s children and we would drive away all who come as thieves and robbers, for it is our duty to do so—but if you have a true heart and wish to cast in your lot with the Lord’s people—you shall not find that we are any terror to you!  
We shall be glad to say, “Come in, you blessed of the Lord. Why are you standing outside?” A Believer’s duty is to join a Christian Church— therefore fear not the face of man! I believe that some will never come to Christ until another and a real lion shall get at them. And then they will run to Jesus for shelter, lions or no lions! I mean if the lions of their sin should ever wake up and roar upon them, terribly, then they will not say that there are lions in the way! I used to be terribly afraid to come to Christ until I came to be more afraid of my sin than anything else in the world!  
And Mr. Bunyan, in one of his books, says that lion pictured Christ in his own mind as standing with a drawn sword to keep him away. “But at last,” he says, “I got so desperately worried by my convictions of sin that if the Lord Jesus had really stood with a sword in His hand, I would have thrown myself upon the point of it, for I felt that I must come at Him or perish.” Let some such desperate resolve impel you to His feet. Say—  
*“I can but perish if I go!  
I am resolved to try  
For if I stay away,  
I know I must forever die.”*  
Oh, throw yourself on the very point of the sword, for it is but in seeming that there is either sword or point! Hasten to Jesus, even though He seems to frown, for there is more love in a frowning Savior than in all the world besides! He cannot mean it. No sinner comes to Him but Christ is more glad to receive him than the sinner is to be received!  
Nothing charms Jesus like seeing a poor troubled one come to Him. He will in no wise cast out one who does so. If you were walking in the fields and a poor bird should fly into your bosom for shelter from a hawk, would you take it out of your bosom and throw it away and give it up to its enemies? I know that you would not! You would put your hands about it, and say, “Poor fluttering thing, you are safe enough, now. Nobody shall harm you. You have trusted a man that has humanity and he will take care of you.” And if you fly into the bosom of Jesus Christ, He will not give you over to your foe, but He will receive you and you shall be His forever! I have heard of a king upon the crown of whose pavilion, when it was pitched, a pair of birds came and built their nests. And he was gentle of heart and truly royal, for he said to his chamberlain, “The tent shall never be taken down till the birds have hatched their young. They have found shelter in a king’s pavilion and they shall not have to rue it.” And oh, if you will go like the swallows and the sparrows—and build your nests under the eaves of Christ, who is the Temple of God—you shall never have your nest pulled down! Yes, and if you can lay your young there, they shall be safe, too. There is no place half so secure for our children as Christ’s bosom! All who are in Christ shall be kept in safety and shall be cherished and blessed!  
Oh, come along with you! Come, you that are afraid of lions! There are no lions! The way is clear and open, for Jesus says, “I am the Way,” and, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Why do you still say that you will come by-and-by? Do not trifle so! I had almost rather that you cried, “I will not come at all!” Such perversity might end better than feigned promises and base delays. I pray God to give you a better mind than that and may you say, “Yes, this very night, please God, I will be saved! The sun has gone down, but there is a little twilight left, and I will yield before darkness quite sets in. I will now trust my Savior and hasten to Him and seek Him on my knees in prayer.”  
May the Spirit of God sweetly lead you to do this and, oh, our heart will be so glad of it! The Lord grant it, for His dear name’s sake. Amen.

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÷Pro 23.17

“ALL THE DAY LONG”  
NO. 2150

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 22, 1890, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Let not your heart envy sinners: but be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long. For surely there is an end, and your expectation shall not be cut off.” Proverbs 23:17, 18.**

LAST Lord’s-Day we had for our texts two promises [ *Everlasting Love Revealed*, #2149.] I trust they were full of comfort to the tried people of God and to souls in the anguish of conviction. Today we will consider two precepts so that we may not seem to neglect any part of the Word of God, for the precept is as Divine as the promise. Here we have a command given of the Holy Spirit through the wisest of men and therefore both on the Divine and on the human side it is most weighty. I said that Solomon was the wisest of men and yet he became, in practice, the most foolish. By his folly he gained a fresh store of experience of the saddest sort and we trust that he turned to God with a penitent heart and so became wiser than ever—wiser with a second wisdom which the Grace of God had given him—to consecrate his earthly wisdom.

He who had been a voluptuous prince became the wise preacher in Israel—let us give our hearts to know the wisdom which he taught. The words of Solomon to his own son are not only wise, but full of tender anxiety. They are worthy, therefore, to be set in the highest degree as to value and to be received with heartiness as the language of fatherly affection. These verses are found in the Book of Proverbs—let them pass current as Proverbs in the Church of God as they did in Israel of old. Let them be “familiar in our mouths as household words.” Let them be often quoted, frequently weighed and then carried into daily practice. God grant that this particular text may become proverbial in this Church from this day forward. May the Holy Spirit impress it on every memory and heart! May it be embodied in all our lives!

If you will look steadily at the text you will see, first, the prescribed course of the godly man—“Be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long.” Secondly, you will note the probable interruption of that course. It occurred in those past ages and it still occurs—“Let not your heart envy sinners.” We are often tempted to repine because the wicked prosper. When we do, the fear of the Lord within us is disturbed and envious thoughts arise— which will lead on to murmuring and to distrust of our heavenly Father unless they are speedily checked. So foolish and ignorant are we, that we lose our walk with God by fretting because of evildoers.

Thirdly, we shall notice, before we close, the helpful consideration which may enable us to hold on our way and to cease from fretting about the proud prosperity of the ungodly—“For surely there is an end, and your expectation shall not be cut off.”

I. Oh, for Divine Grace to practice what the Spirit of God says with regard to our first point, THE PRESCRIBED COURSE OF THE BELIEVER— “Be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long!” The fear of the Lord is a brief description for true religion. It is an inward condition causing hearty submission to our heavenly Father. It consists very much in a holy reverence of God and a sacred awe of Him. This is accompanied by a child-like trust in Him which leads to loving obedience, tender submission and lowly adoration. It is a filial fear. Not the fear which has torment, but that which accompanies joy when we “rejoice with trembling.” We must, first of all, be in the fear of God before we can remain in it “all the day long.”

This can never be our condition except as the fruit of the new birth. To be in the fear of the Lord, “you must be born again.” The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, as we are taught by the Holy Spirit who is the sole Author of all Grace. Where this fear exists, it is the token of eternal life and it proves the abiding indwelling of the Holy Spirit. “Happy is the man that fears always.” “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him.” This holy fear of the living God is the life of God showing itself in the quickened ones. This fear, according to the text, is for all the day and for every day—the longest day is not to be too long for our reverence, nor for our obedience. If our days are lengthened until the day of life declines into the evening of old age, still are we to be in the fear of God—yes, as the day grows longer, our holy fear must be deeper.

This is contrary to the habit of those persons who have a religion of show. They are very fine, very holy, very devout—when anybody looks at them—but this is the love of human approbation, not the fear of the Lord. The Pharisee, with a half-penny in one hand and a trumpet in the other, is a picture of the man who gives an alms only that his praises may be sounded forth. The Pharisee, standing at the corner of the street, saying his prayers, is a picture of the man who never prays in secret but is very glib in pious assemblies. “Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward.” Show religion is a vain show! Do nothing to be seen of men or you will ripen into a mere hypocrite.

Neither may we regard godliness as something off the common—an extraordinary thing. Have not a religion of spasms. We have heard of men and women who have been singularly excellent on one occasion, but never again—they blazed out like comets, the wonders of a season—and they disappeared like comets, never to be seen again. Religion produced at high pressure for a supreme occasion is not a healthy growth. We need an ordinary, common, everyday godliness, which may be compared to the light of the fixed stars which shines forevermore. Religion must not be thought of as something apart from daily life—it should be the most vital part of our existence.

Our praying should be like our breathing, natural and constant. Our communion with God should be like our taking of food, a happy and natural privilege. Brethren, it is a great pity when people draw a hard and fast line across their life, dividing it into the sacred and the secular. Say not, “This is religion and the other is business,” but sanctify all things. Our most common acts should be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer and thus made into sacred deeds. The best of men have the least change of tone in their lives. When the great Elijah knew that he was to be taken up, what did he do? If you knew that tonight you would be carried away to Heaven, you would probably think of something special with which to quit this earthly scene. But the most fitting thing to do would be to continue in your duty, as you would have done if nothing had been revealed to you.

It was Elijah’s business to go to the schools of the Prophets and instruct the young students—and he went about that business until he took his seat in the chariot of fire. He said to Elisha, “The Lord has sent me to Bethel.” When he had exhorted the Bethel students he thought of the other college and said to his attendant, “The Lord has sent me to Jericho.” He took his journey with as much composure as if he had a lifetime before him and thus fulfilled his tutorship till the Lord sent him to Jordan, from where he went up by a whirlwind into Heaven. What is there better for a man of God than to abide in his calling in which he glorifies God? That which God has given you to do you should do. That, and nothing else, come what may!

If any of you should, tomorrow, have a revelation that you must die, it would not be wise to go upstairs and sit down and read, or pray until the usual day’s work was finished. Go on, good woman, and send the children to school and cook the dinner. Go about the proper business of the day and then if you are to die you will have left no ends of life’s web to ravel out. So live that your death shall not be a piece of strange metal soldered on to your life, but part and parcel of all that has gone before. “Be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long.” Living or dying we are the Lord’s and let us live as such.

Ours must never be a religion that is periodic in its flow like certain, intermittent springs which flow and ebb, and flow only to ebb again. Beware of the spirit which is in a rapture one hour and in a rage the next. Beware of serving Christ on Sunday and Mammon on Monday. Beware of the godliness which varies with the calendar. Every Sunday morning some folks take out their godliness and touch it up while they are turning the brush round their best hat. Many women, after a fashion, put on the fear of God with their new bonnet. When Sunday is over and their best things are put away, they have also put away their best thoughts and their best behavior. We must have a seven-days’ religion, or else we have none at all! Periodical godliness is perpetual hypocrisy! He that towards Jesus can be enemy and friend by turns, is in truth always an enemy. We need a religion which, like the poor, we always have with us, which, like our heart, is always throbbing and, like our breath, is always moving.

Some people have strange notions on this point—they are holy only on holy days and in holy places. There was a man who was always pious on Good Friday. He showed no token of religion on any other Friday or, indeed, on any other day—but on Good Friday nothing would stop him from going to church in the morning after he had eaten a hotcross bun for breakfast. That day he took the Sacrament and felt much better—surely he might well enough do so since on his theory he had taken in grace enough to last him for another year! You and I believe such ideas to be ignorant and superstitious, but we must take heed that we do not err after a similar manner.

Every Friday must be a Good Friday to us. May we become so truly gracious that to us every day becomes a holy day! May our garments be vestments. May our meals be sacraments. May our houses be temples. May our families be churches. May our lives be sacrifices and ourselves kings and priests unto God! May the bells upon our horses be “holiness unto the Lord”! God send us religion of this kind, for this will involve our being “in the fear of the Lord all the day long.”

Let us practically note the details which are comprised in the exhortation, “Be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long.” The sun is up and we awake. May we each one feel, “When I awake I am still with You.” It is wise to rise in proper time, for drowsiness may waste an hour and cause us to be behind all day, so that we cannot get into order and act as those who quietly walk with God. If I am bound to be in the fear of God all the day long, I am bound to begin well, with earnest prayer and sweet communion with God. On rising it is as essential to prepare the heart as to wash the face—as necessary to put on Christ as to put on one’s garments.

Our first word should be with our heavenly Father. It is good for the soul’s health to begin the day by taking a satisfying draught from the river of the Water of Life. Very much more depends upon beginnings than some men think. How you go to bed tonight may be determined by your getting up this morning. If you get out of bed on the wrong side, you may keep on the wrong side all day. If your heart is right when you wake, it will be a help towards its being right till you go to sleep in the evening. Go not forth into a dry world till the morning dew lies on your branch. Baptize your heart in devotion before you wade into the stream of daily care. See not the face of man until you have first seen the face of God. Let your first thoughts fly heavenward and let your first breathings be prayer.

And now we are downstairs and are off to business, or to labor. As you hurry along the street, think of these words, “Be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long.” Leave not your God at home—you need Him most abroad. In mingling with your fellow men, be with them, but be not of them if that would involve your forgetting your Lord. That early interview which you have had with your Beloved should perfume your conversation all day long. A smile from Jesus in the morning will be sunshine all the day. Endeavor, when you are plying the trowel, or driving the plane, or guiding the plow, or using the needle or the pen, to keep up constant communication with your Father and your Lord. Let the telephone between you and the Eternal never cease from its use— put your ear to it and hear what the Lord shall speak to you—and put your mouth to it and ask counsel from the Oracle above. Whether you work long hours or short hours, “Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.”

But it is time for meals. Be in the fear of the Lord at your table. The soul may be poisoned while the body is being nourished if we turn the hour of refreshment into an hour of indulgence. Some have been gluttonous—more have been drunken. Do not think of your table as though it were a hog’s trough where the animal might gorge to the full, but watch your appetite and by holy thanksgiving make your table to be the Lord’s table. Eat the bread of earth as to eat bread at last in the kingdom of God! Drink that your head and heart may be in the best condition to serve God. When God feeds you, do not profane the occasion by excess, or defile it by loose conversation.

During the day our business calls us into company. Our associations in labor may not be so choice as we could wish, but he that earns his bread is often thrown where his own will would not lead him. If we were never to deal with ungodly men it would be necessary for us to go out of the world. He that is in the fear of God all the day long will watch his own spirit, language and actions—that these may be such as become the Gospel of Christ in whatever society his lot may be cast. Seek not to be a hermit or a monk—be a man of God among men! When making a bargain, or selling your goods to customers, be in the fear of God. It may be necessary to go into the market, or on the exchange—but be in the fear of the Lord amid the throng. It may be you will seldom be able to speak of that which is most dear to you, lest you cast pearls before swine—but you must abide always under holy and heavenly influence so as to be always ready to give a reason for the hope which is in you with meekness and fear.

“Be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long,” though yours ears may be vexed and your heart grieved with the evil around you. He that cannot be in the fear of God in London cannot in the country. The company has now gone and you are alone—maintain the fear of the Lord in your solitude. Beware of falling into solitary sin. Certain young men and women, when alone, pull out a wicked novel which they would not like to be seen reading. Others will have their sly nips though they would be reputed very temperate. If a man is right with God he is in his best company when alone and he seeks therein to honor his God and not to grieve Him. Surely, when I am alone with God, I am bound to use my best manners. Do nothing which you would be afraid to have known.

Be in the fear of the Lord when you are so much alone that you have no fear of men. The evening draws in, the shop is closed and you have a little time to yourself. Our young people in shops need a rest and a walk. Is this your case? “Be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long.” In the evening, as well as in the morning, be true to your Lord. Beware of ill company in

the evening! Take care that you never say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me.” “Be you in the fear of the Lord” when sinners entice you. Refuse any offer which is not pleasing to God. “Recreation,” says one. Yes, recreation. There are many helpful and healthy recreations which can, in moderation, be used to advantage. But engage in no pastime which would hinder your continuing in the fear of the Lord! In your recreation forget not your higher recreation in which you were created anew in Christ Jesus! Our chief rest lies in a change of service for our Lord. Our fullest pleasure in fellowship with Jesus.

Night has fallen around us and we are home with our families—let us not forget to close the day with family prayer and private prayer as we opened it. Our chamber must see nothing which angels might blush to look upon. Those holy beings come and go where holy ones repose. Angels have a special liking for sleeping saints. Did they not put a ladder from Heaven down to the place where Jacob lay? Though he had only a stone for his pillow, the earth for his bed, the hedges for his curtains and the skies for his canopy, yet God was there and angels flocked about him. Between God’s Throne and the beds of holy men there has long been a much frequented road. Sleep in Jesus every night so that you may sleep in Jesus at the last. From dawn to midnight “be you in the fear of the Lord.”

Let us now remember special occasions . All days are not quite the same. Exceptional events will happen and these are all included in the day. You sustain, perhaps one day, a great loss and unexpectedly find yourself far poorer than when you left your bed. “Be you in the fear of the Lord” when under losses and adversities. When the great floods prevail and storms of trials sweep over you, remain in the ark of the fear of the Lord and you shall be as safe as Noah was. Possibly you may have a wonderful day of success—but be not always grasping for it. Yet your ship may come home—your windfall may drop at your feet. Beyond anything you have expected, a surprising gain may fall into your lap—be not unduly excited, but remain in the fear of the Lord.

Take heed that you be not lifted up with pride, so as to dote upon your wealth, for then your God may find it necessary to afflict you out of love to your soul. It may happen, during the day, that you are assailed by an unusual temptation. Christian men are well armed against common temptations, but sudden assaults may injure them. Therefore, “be in the fear of the Lord all the day long” and then surprises will not overthrow you. You shall not be afraid of evil tidings, neither shall you be betrayed by evil suggestions if you are rooted and grounded in the constant fear of the Lord. During the day, perhaps, you are maliciously provoked. An evil person assails you with envenomed speech and if you lose your temper a little your adversary takes advantage of your weakness and becomes more bitter and slanderous. He hurls at you things which ought not to be thought of, much less to be said.

“Be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long.” “Cease from anger and forsake wrath.” “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” The adversary knows your tender place and therefore he says the most atrocious things against God and holy things. Heed him not, but in patience possess your soul and in the fear of the Lord you will find an armor which his poisoned arrows cannot pierce. “May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

It may be, that during the day you will have to act in a very difficult business. Common transactions between man and man are easy enough to honest minds—but every now and then a nice point is raised—a point of conscience, a matter not to be decided off-hand. “Be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long.” Spread the hard case before the Lord. Judge a matter as it will be judged before His bar and if this is too much for your judgment, then wait upon God for further light. No man goes astray, even in a difficult case, if he is accustomed to cry, like David, “Bring here the ephod.” This Holy Bible and the Divine Spirit will guide us aright when our best judgment wavers. “Be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long.”

But, alas, you are feeling very unwell—this day will differ from those of activity. You cannot go to business. You have to keep to your bed. Fret not, but “be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.” If the day has to last through the night because sleep forsakes you, be still with your thoughts soaring toward Heaven, your desires quiet in your Father’s bosom and your mind happy in the sympathy of Christ! To have our whole being bathed and baptized in the Holy Spirit is to find health in sickness and joy in pain. It may be, also, that you suffer from a mental sickness in the form of depression of spirit. Things look very dark and your heart is very heavy. Mourner, “Be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long.”

When life is like a foggy day—when Providence is cloudy and stormy and you are caught in a hurricane—still “be in the fear of the Lord.” When your soul is exceedingly sorrowful and you are bruised as a cluster trod in the winepress, yet cling close to God and never let go your reverent fear of Him. However exceptional and unusual may be your trial, yet know within your soul, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” I have sketched the matter roughly. Let me now suggest to you excellent reasons for being always in the fear of the Lord. Ought we not to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long, since He sees us all the day long? Does the Lord ever take His eyes from off us? Does the Keeper of Israel ever slumber? If God were not our God, but only our lawful master, I should say, “Let us not be eyeservants”—but since we cannot escape His all-seeing eyes—let us be the more careful how we behave ourselves. “Be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long” for Jehovah, whom you fear, sees you without ceasing.

Remember, also, that sin is equally evil all the day long. Is there an hour when it would be right to disobey God? Is there some interval in which the law of holiness has no force? I think not. Therefore, never consent to sin. To fear God is always right—to put away the fear of God from before our eyes would be always criminal—therefore, be ever in the fear of

God. Remember the strictness of Nehemiah’s integrity and how he said, “So did not I because of the fear of the Lord.” Walk in the fear of the Lord at all times because you always belong to Christ. The blood-mark is always upon you—will you ever belie it? You have been chosen and you are always chosen—you have been bought with a price and you are always your Lord’s. You have been called out from the world by the Holy Spirit and He is always calling you.

You have been preserved by Sovereign Grace and you are always so preserved—therefore, by the privileges you enjoy, you are bound to abide in the fear of the Lord. How could you lay down your God-given and Heaven-honored character of a child of God? No, rather cling forever to your adoption and the heritage it secures you. You can never tell when Satan will attack you, therefore be always in the fear of the Lord. You are in an enemy’s country. Soldiers, be always on the watch! Soldiers, keep in order of fight! You might straggle from the ranks and begin to lie about in the hedges and sleep without sentries if you were in your own country. But you are marching through the enemy’s land where an enemy lurks behind every bush. The fear of the Lord is your sword and shield—never lay it down!

Furthermore, remember that your Lord may come at any hour. Before the word can travel from my lips to your ears Jesus may be here. While you are in business, or on your bed, or in the field, the flaming heavens may proclaim His Advent. Stand, therefore, with your loins girt and your lamps trimmed, ready to go into the supper whenever the Bridegroom comes. Or you may die. As a Church we have had a double warning, during the last few days, in the departure of our two Beloved elders, Messrs. Hellier and Croker. They have been carried home like shocks of corn, fully ripe. They have departed in peace and have joyfully entered into rest.

We, also, are on the margin of the dividing stream—our feet are dipped in the waters which wash the river’s brim. We, too, shall soon ford the black torrent. In a moment, suddenly, we may be called away—let every action be such that we would not object to have it quoted as our last action. Let every day be so spent that it might fitly be the close of life on earth. Let our near and approaching end help to keep us “in the fear of the Lord all the day long.” If we keep in that state, observe the admirable results! To abide in the fear of the Lord is to dwell safely. To forsake the Lord would be to court danger. In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, but apart from it there is no security. How honorable is such a state!

Men ridicule the religion which is not uniform. I heard of a Brother who claimed to have long been a teetotaler, but some doubted. When he was asked how long he had been an abstainer, he replied, “Off and on for 20 years.” You should have seen the significant smile upon all faces. An abstainer off and on! His example did not stand for much! Certain professors are Christians “off and on” and nobody respects them. Such seed as this will not grow—there is no vitality in it. Constancy is the proof of sincerity. “Be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long”—this is to be happy! God has spoiled the Believer for being easy in sin. If you are a Christian you will never find happiness in departing from God. I say again, God has spoiled you for such pleasure! Your joy lies in a closer walk with God! Your Heaven on earth is in communion with the Lord!

If you abide in the fear of the Lord, how useful you will be! Your “off and on” people are worth nothing—nobody is influenced by them. What little good they do, they undo. The abiding man is also the growing man. He that is “in the fear of the Lord all the day long” gets to have more of that fear and it has more practical power over his life and heart. What a poor life they lead who are alternately zealous and lukewarm! Like Penelope, they weave by day, but unravel by night. They blow hot and cold and so melt and freeze by turns. They build and then break down and so are never at rest. Children of God, let your conduct be consistent! Let not your lives be like a checkerboard, with as many blacks as whites. Do not be speckled birds, like magpies, more famed for chatter than anything else.

Oh, that God would make us white doves! I pray you be not bold one day and cowardly another! Be not one day sound in the faith and the next day on the downgrade. Be not under excitement generous and in cool blood mean as a miser. Oh, that we might become like our Father in Heaven in holiness and then become like He in immutability, so as to be forever holy! From all this let us infer our great need. I think I hear somebody say, “You are cutting out a nice bit of work for us.” Am I? Believe me, I am looking to a stronger hand than yours. To be in the fear of the Lord for a single day is not to be accomplished by unrenewed nature—it is a work of Divine Grace.

See, then, what great Grace you will need for all the days of your life! Go for it and get it! See how little you can do without the Spirit of God— without His indwelling you will soon cast off all fear of the Lord. Plead the Covenant promise, “I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” Depend upon God for everything and as you know that salvation is of faith that it might be by Grace, exercise much faith towards God! Believe that He can make you to be in His fear all the day long. “According to your faith, be it unto you.” Believe holiness to be possible! Seek after it and possess it. Faith, as it is the channel of Divine Grace, must always be associated with the Truths of God.

True faith lives on the Truth of God. If you give up the doctrines of the Gospel, you will not be in the fear of God at all. And if you begin to doubt them, you will not be “in the fear of the Lord all the day long.” Get solid Truth for the foundation of your faith and let your firm faith bring you daily Grace that you may manifestly be always in the fear of the Lord.

II. Now I have rightly taken up most of my time with the principal topic and we will only have a word or two upon the next theme. Let us consider THE PROBABLE INTERRUPTION. It has happened to godly men in all ages to see the wicked prosper and they have been staggered by the

sight. You see a man who has no conscience making money in your trade while you make none. Sometimes you think that your conscientiousness hinders you—and I hope it is nothing else. You see another person scheming and cheating—to him honesty is mere policy and Sunday labor is no difficulty, for the Word of God is nothing to him. You cannot do as he does and therefore you do not seem to get on as he does.

Be it so—but let not his prosperity grieve you. There is something better to live for than mere money-making. If your life pleases God, let it please you. Never envy the ungodly. Suppose God allows them to succeed—what then? You should no more envy them than you envy fat bullocks the ribbons which adorn them at the show. They are ready for the slaughter! Do you wish yourself in their place? The fate of the prosperous sinner is one to be dreaded—he is set on high to be cast down. Do not, even in your wildest dream, envy the ungodly of their transient happiness! Their present prosperity is the only Heaven they will ever know. Let them have as much of it as they can.

I have heard of a wife who treated her unkind and ungodly husband with great gentleness for this very reason. She said, “I have prayed for him and entreated him to think about his soul. But at last I have come to fear that he will die in his sins and therefore I have made up my mind that I will make him as happy as I can in this life. I tremble to think of what his misery will be in the world to come and therefore I will make him happy now.” O men in your senses, surely you will not grudge poor swine their husks and swill! No, fill the trough and let the creature feed, for it has neither part nor lot in a higher life. Believer, take your bitter cup and drink it without complaining, for an hour with your God will be a hundredfold recompense for a life of trial.

One is the more tried because these men are very apt to boast. They crow over the suffering Believer, saying, “What comes of your religion? You are worse off than I am! See how splendidly I get on without God!” Care nothing for their boasting—it will end soon. Their tongue walks through the earth, but it only utters vanity. It is galling to see the enemies of God triumphant. Their policy for a time beats the plain protest of the lover of the Truth of God. Their deceit baffles the plain man. The lovers of error outnumber the men of God! Such men tread on creeds and trustdeeds and every other legal protection of honest people. What do they care? They despise the old-fashioned folk whom they oppress. Remember Haman, in the Book of Esther, and note how glorious he was till he was hung on the gallows!

There is no real cause for envying the wicked, for their present is danger and their future is doom. I see them now on yonder island, sporting, dancing, feasting merrily. I am standing as on a bare rock and I might well envy them their island of roses and lilies. But as I watch I see that their fairy island is gradually sinking to destruction. The ocean is rising all around—the waves are carrying away the shores—even while they dance the floods advance! Lo, yonder is one infatuated wretch sinking amidst the devouring flood! The rest continue at their play but it cannot last much longer. They will all soon be gone. Let me stand on my lone rock rather than sink amid their fleeting luxury. Let me abide in safety rather than dance where danger is all around.

Yes, dear Friends, if you envy the wicked it will do you serious harm. Envy helps in no way, but it hinders in many ways. If you envy the wicked you may soon wish to be like they are. If you do so wish, you are like they are now! He that would be willing to be wicked in order to prosper is wicked already! He who says, “I should like to do as they do, that I might grow rich as they do,” why, he is a man that has his price and would sell his soul if he could find a buyer! No, not for all the world would we share the lot of unbelievers! We would sit in the gate with Mordecai sooner than feast with the king with Haman. God help us, dear Friends, that we may not be disturbed by seeing the prosperity of the wicked.

III. We close with THE HELPFUL CONSIDERATION. The text says, “For surely there is an end, and your expectation shall not be cut off.” First, then, there is an end of this life. These things are not forever—on the contrary, all that we see is a dissolving view. Surely, every man walks in a vain show—even as a show it is vain. You talk of spiritual things as though they were shadows, but in very truth these are the only substance! Temporal things are as the mirage of the desert. The things about us are such stuff as dreams are made of and when we truly awake we shall despise their image. In all wealth and honor there is a worm and a moth. Think of the sinner’s end and you will no longer be troubled when he spreads himself like a green bay tree.

Next, there is an end of the worldling’s prosperity. He makes his money. What then? He makes more. What then? He makes more. What then? He dies and there is a little notice in the newspaper which says that he died worth so much, which, being interpreted, means that he was taken away from so much which he never possessed but guarded for his heir. There is an end in death and after death the judgment—“for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing.” What an end will that be! The sinner may live as carelessly as he pleases, but he must answer for it at the Judgment Seat of Christ! Loud may his laughter be! Sarcastic and bitter may his criticisms be upon religion! But there is an end and when the death-sweat beads his brow, he will lower his key and need help from that very Gospel which he criticized. “There is an end.” Let us not spend our lives for that which has an end—an immortal soul should seek immortal joys.

Dear Friends, to you there is an end in quite another sense. God has an end in your present trouble and exercise. Your difficulties and trials are sent as messenger from God with gracious design. “Be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long,” for every part of the day has its tendency to work out your spiritual education—your preparation for the Heaven to come! In everything that happens to you your heavenly Father has an end. The arrows of calamity are aimed at your sins. Your bitter cups are

moans to purify the inward parts of the soul. Fret not, but trust. There is an old proverb that you should never let children and fools see halffinished work. Even so, the work of God in Providence cannot be judged of by such poor children as we are, for we cannot see the end of the Lord’s design. My Brothers and Sisters, when we see the end from the beginning and behold God’s work complete, we shall have a very different view of things from what we have now, while the work is still proceeding!

Lastly, while there is an end to the wicked, there will be no failure to your expectation. What are you expecting? That God will keep His promise? And so He will. That God will give you peace in the end? And so He will. That He will raise you from the dead and set you in heavenly places with Christ? And so He will. And that you shall be forever with the Lord and He will grant you glory and bliss? And so He will. “Your expectation shall not be cut off.” Every Christian is a man of great expectations and none of them will fail. Let him cultivate his hope and enlarge its scope, for the hopes which are built on Jesus and His Divine Grace will never disappoint us! In our case the birds in the bush are better birds than those in the hand and they are quite as sure. The promise of God is in itself a possession and our expectation of it is in itself an enjoyment.

I have done, dear Friends. May the Holy Spirit speak these things home to your hearts! Christian people ought to be exceedingly glad, for if they have but a small estate, they have it on an endless tenure! The worldling may have a large house, but he has it only upon a short lease—he will soon have nothing. Just now there is a great noise made about leaseholds falling in. Every ungodly man may have his lease on life run out tomorrow! But the Believer has a freehold. What he has is his without reserve. “Their inheritance shall be forever.” By faith grasp the eternal! Treasure the spiritual! Rejoice in God and “be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.” God grant you this in His great Grace, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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THREE IMPORTANT PRECEPTS  
NO. 2152

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 22, 1890 BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 13, 1890,  
**“Hear you, my son, and be wise, and guide your heart in the way.” Proverbs 23:19.**

THE words are very direct and personal—and that is what I wish my sermon to be. My soul is more and more set upon immediate conversions. I have no voice with which to play the orator—I have only enough strength to be an earnest pleader with your souls. I want to come to close quarters with you and to plead with each man and woman here as if there were but one. Specially would I press my entreaties upon the young, that they may immediately begin that blessed walk which will lead them to the right hand of God. Here and now I desire your salvation! I may never preach again and you may never hear me again. “Now is the accepted time.”

Solomon, in this verse, gave forth three precepts. I am not very careful as to what limited meaning he personally attached to his words. I am going to baptize his precepts into the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. I shall put into them a fullness of Gospel meaning and I shall press them home upon the heart, praying the Holy Spirit to lead every unconverted person to whom these words shall come to obey these three precepts at once. My voice is to each one. I think I have a message from God for you. Be not disobedient to the heavenly summons. The first precept in my text is, “Hear.” The second is, “Be wise” and the third is, “Guide yours heart in the way.”

I. We will begin with the first precept, which is contained in the word, “HEAR.” Perhaps you will say, “We are all here ready to hear and do not, therefore, need the exhortation.” That you are in this great audiencechamber in the posture of attention is a matter in which I rejoice. So far, so good. But let me say to you this exhortation to hear is not only given in this verse, but it is often repeated in Holy Scripture. “Hear, O Israel!” is the voice of the Law and of the Prophets.

This is not optional—it is a matter of command and promise. “Incline your ear, and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live.” “Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good.” The very existence of a Revelation is a call to hear it. You cannot find eternal life through the eyes of the body. No actual bronze serpent is to be looked upon. You need not now look for solemn ceremonies, bleeding sacrifices and smoking incense. These shadows have vanished. The high road of the Truth of God to the heart runs through the ear. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by

the Word of God.” The Apostolic word is, “Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken unto me.”

The exhortation to hear is a very important one. As I understand it and use it at this time it means, hear the Gospel. “Take heed what you hear.” There is only one way of salvation. Mind that you hear the one and only Gospel! Be very careful of your Sundays—you will not have many of them. Do not go on the Sabbath to hear whatever comes in your way, or you may hear to your ruin. Go to hear the Gospel. “How shall I know where the Gospel is preached?” Well, you will not have to enquire long—you may readily judge for yourself. Unless the name of Jesus is sounded out often, depend upon it, you are in the wrong place. Unless you hear the words, “Grace,” “faith,” “salvation,” you may conclude that you are not on Gospel ground.

It is true that mere terms may not always be a sufficient guide, but, as a rule, as straws show which way the wind blows, so will these terms, by their presence or absence, be a guide to you. It will not take you long to find out whether the man preaches of works or of Grace, ceremonies or faith, man or Christ. You can soon discover the Gospel sermon or the moral essay, for the very temperature of them differs. Mere morality teaches men to dance, but it does not discern the fact that they have lost their legs. The Gospel gives the lame man his feet and then shows him how to use them. You need a Savior—you do not want to be deluded with some theory of saving yourself. Go where you hear about the Lord Jesus and His redeeming blood. If you hear no mention of “the blood,” clear out of the place and never go again.

When you have found the Gospel-house, take care that you hear with the view of obtaining faith in the Lord Jesus. Aim at that blessed thing. “Faith comes by hearing.” It will be idle for you to stop at home and say, “I will try to believe.” This is unreasonable and not according to the laws of mind. It is folly to attempt to try to believe—there is a far better way. Go and listen to what it is which you are to believe and, as you hear it, if it is faithfully proclaimed and if the preacher is, in his own person, a witness to the Truth, you will be greatly helped in the matter of believing. Faith comes from knowledge and evidence—and hearing brings you these. Besides, there is a power about the Gospel which tends to create faith—and the Holy Spirit is pleased to use the foolishness of preaching to breed faith—and so to save them that believe.

If the Gospel is allowed to work in its own way, the most unbelieving mind will soon yield itself to faith. The persons who do not believe the Bible, as a rule, have never read it. Those who do not believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, as a rule, know nothing about Him while, for certain, those who know His Gospel best find it easy to believe. A frequent hearer is likely to become a fervent Believer. Do not fall into the error of some who only patronize the house of God occasionally and think they are doing something very meritorious. If you are often hearing with an earnest mind you will not fail to get the blessing. He that only eats once a month will not grow very strong. He that only hears the Gospel now and then is not likely to be profited. Beware of hearing sermons as a pastime—this is no trifling matter. Hear the Gospel with the view of being saved by it.

Next, hear without prejudice. The Word of God does not please some people. That is not at all amazing for many people ought not to be pleased. Some have a preconceived idea of what the plan of salvation ought to be. They are in no humor to receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save their souls. Their objective is to find fault with the preacher, to pick a hole in his doctrine or in his manner. They must have something or other to criticize or censure. Do you wonder that such folks are not profited? They do not hear, but they sit in judgment. I have read that in the reign of Queen Elizabeth there was a law made that everybody should go to his parish church, but many sincere Romanists loathed to go and hear Protestant doctrine. Through fear of persecution they attended the parish church—but they took care to fill their ears with wool so that they should not hear what their priests condemned.

It is wretched work preaching to a congregation whose ears are stopped with prejudices! Are there not many such? The world, the flesh, the devil, the priests, the skeptics and the down-graders have stopped their ears and what good is likely to come of their attendance? If you come to carp at everything, how are you likely to be blessed? Hear! Hear! Hear what God the Lord will speak and there will be a message of peace for your soul. I would say, like the old pleader, “Strike, but hear!” Abuse me, but hear me! Do not shut the door of mercy against yourself.

Next, I would say, hear for yourself. The great object of a hearer should be to hear what God speaks to him. I am glad that God should speak to my neighbor, but my neighbor must listen for himself and not for me. The Roman orator began—

*“Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.”*He needs the loan, for people usually lend their ears to one another and not to the speaker. They will sit and wonder what Mrs. So-and-So thinks of the sermon. Leave her alone, Friend! Think about what is good for yourself. Do you not know that in every sermon there is something for yourself and your first duty is to give heed to that which is for you? Come with me to a house. A will is to be read. A dozen people have come home from the funeral and they are going to hear the will read. Perhaps they cried a good deal at the funeral, but they will not cry now if the person they have buried has left a decent sum among them.

They are all ears for what the lawyer has to read. They want to hear that will much more than many want to hear a sermon! See how they listen! There are long, ugly words about tenements and hereditaments, and this, and that, and the other—but they set themselves to hear it all as much as if it were a choice poem. Are they going to sleep? By no means! John Smith over yonder, the man’s brother—look how he doubles his attention at a certain point! As for the eldest son, how eagerly he drinks in about all the farm and stock and freehold land, and such like, all in the parish of A, in the county of B! It takes a long time to go through it, but each legatee loves every word which relates to him. He listens and his ears seem to grow longer while he hears!

That poor relative who gets 19 guineas lays the codicil to heart and can almost repeat it word for word, only wishing it had been 500 pounds! John Smith does not care so much about the rest of the document. In fact, he hopes there are not many more items. The extract which relates to himself he would like to copy out. Will you be wise enough to treat a sermon in that fashion? Please listen to that which concerns you most, take it down and carry it home. This is the exhortation of the text—“Hear”—but especially hear that which has most to do with you, whether it is rebuke, or promise, or command.

And then, dear Friends, hear when the sermon is done. “How can I hear when it is all done?” This is a very important point. I went to see a poor woman in the hospital one day and she said to me, speaking of the sermons she had heard, “Sir, you seem to talk to me all day and all night while I am lying here.” I said, “Well, I hope I do not keep you awake.” “No,” she said, “but as I am awake I hear you talking to me through everything I see. You have used so many things as illustrations that everywhere I am I have you in my memory.” I was pleased, and inwardly wished that I could always preach in the way which she described—and I should do so if I always had hearers such as that sick woman had evidently been.

Ah, dear Friends! The way to hear a sermon is to hear it when you get home. Pray remember the Scripture verse in my sermon of this morning, “Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.” [“All the Day Long,” No. 2150.] I want you to hear that word when you are dressing tomorrow, when you are taking down the shutters, when you are dealing across the counter and when you are among the children. If you are tempted to do a dishonest deed, I would have you hear a still small voice saying to you, “Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.” A sermon ought to be like a musical box—we wind it up when we preach it—and then it goes on playing till its tune is through. It should be said of a good sermon, “It being ended still speaks.” Hear what you hear in such a way that it shall be like a seed which will grow in the garden of your heart.

Above all, hear the Gospel as the voice of God. When a man hears the preacher, not as a man speaking on his own account but as God’s servant—and when the Truth spoken is not measured by its oratory, nor weighed by its logic, but is judged of by the Bible as to whether it is the very Truth of God or not—then it is that men hear to profit. Those who compare sermons with Scripture are noble, like the Bereans of old. If you can say, “I hear the word, not as the word of man, but as the Word of God,” it will have its effect upon your heart. Oh, that the word may come to you with demonstration of the Spirit! You will never lose the good effect of Gospel preaching if the Spirit of God seals it on your mind!

Is it so, or not? Do you come here to listen to me? Yours is a poor errand. If you come to listen to what God the Lord shall speak, however poorly I may interpret His mind as I find it in the Scripture, yet you will find a blessing in what you hear! A good many things are sold nowadays by means of pretty wrappings and in the same way worthless doctrines are spread by the fine style in which they are done up. But as you do not want the wrappings, but the goods, so in sermons the manner is not the main concern. If we should set a thing before you with all the grandeur of oratory and it did not come from God, it would be a gaudy nothing!

Though we spoke falsehood with the tongues of men and of angels, we should not be so good as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. But though we give you the Gospel of the blessed God in great feebleness and trembling, yet it is what you need and through it the blessing will come to you. He that has an ear towards God will find that God has an ear towards him. Thus have we dwelt upon the first exhortation. Hear often. Hear the Gospel! Hear for yourself. Hear attentively. Hear with a holy purpose. Hear the Gospel as a message from God.

II. The next precept is, “BE WISE.” What does that mean in this connection? It means, first, try to understand what you hear. Get to the bottom of it. Look it up; look it down; look it through. Look over it but do not overlook it. When you have heard the words of the Gospel, say to yourself, “I want to know what this Gospel is. With the ins and outs of it I am going to make myself acquainted, if the Lord will teach me. I will know what I must do to be saved and why I must do it and how it will save me.”

How much I wish that a sacred curiosity would seize upon my hearers so that they would say, “We must know the soul and spirit of this Word of the Lord. We want to know, each one for himself, who the Savior is and how He can be ours!” God give you thus to be wise by getting an understanding of the Gospel! I should not wonder, if I were to come round the congregation, if I found many here who do not know the Gospel, simple as it is. I will not come round, so do not be frightened—but I sadly fear that some of you who have been for years to places of worship are still ignorant of the elements of the faith. Should it be so? Do try to know saving Truth. Whatever else you do not learn, do learn the answer to that question, “What must I do to be saved?”

“Be wise”—that is, believe the Gospel as it comes from God. You will not be wise to doubt it, but you will be wise to believe it, for it is true and sure. This is an age of doubt—it is in the air. No man is, nowadays, thought to have any sense if he does not doubt even the best established truths—and yet I do not think that it takes any great quantity of brain to be a doubter! With a very strong effort I might manage to doubt—to doubt my father’s word (I have never done it, mark you)! To doubt my brother’s faithfulness. To doubt my wife’s love to me. By such efforts I should doubt myself into an abyss of misery and should become a glorious fool! To turn

the power of doubting upon spiritual realities would be even more fatal— for that would take away my hope beyond the grave and plunge me in despair.

Doubt is sterile—it produces nothing—it destroys, but it cannot create. I have long been a Believer and I find that my joys all come to me by the road of believing and none of them by the wretched lane of doubting. I have believed this Bible to be God’s Word and after all the destructive criticism which I have heard, I still believe it! I have believed Christ to be my Savior and after all the doubts of His Deity and Atonement lately vented and invented, I still believe it! Yes, and believe it none the less. I have believed God to be my Father and though I have seen His Fatherhood dragged in the mire, I still believe it. I believe Heaven to be my home—despite the insinuations of Satan I still believe it. I have never yet gained health, joy, comfort, holiness through doubting. No, I have never gained a piece of bread, or a drop of water through doubting. So many are doing the doubting and doing it very completely, that I need not trouble myself to assist them, but may quietly go on believing and enjoying the sweet results of faith. Our experience proves that it is wisdom to believe the Lord! He is God that cannot lie! Why should we doubt Him?

“Be wise”—that is, be affected by what you have heard. Yield your heart up to the Word of God. Some people are hard to move—they are more like stone than flesh. There are congregations where you may preach your own heart out but you cannot get at their hearts. You might as well preach to the statues in St. Paul’s Cathedral or Westminster Abbey as preach to them—they are impenetrable and immovable. He that is wise permits the Truth to come into full contact with him. Be wise, my Hearer! Yield yourself up to the Truth of God, for it will do you good and no harm. Do not resist it! Do not evade it! Let the heavenly wind blow on you, for it brings healing. If it bids you hate sin, hate sin. If it bids you repent, repent. If it entreats you to believe, believe. Be what the Gospel is meant to make you. You cannot make yourself a saint, but the Holy Spirit can do it through the Word of Truth.

And then take care that you do not wander into evil company. You say, “Surely you are leaving your text. Why bring that in?” Solomon brought it in. “Hear you, my son, and be wise. Be not among winebibbers, among riotous eaters of flesh” and so on. If you are wise you will keep out of bad company, especially out of the society of revelers, drunkards and gluttons. This warning may be very necessary to some to whom this sermon will come. You have lately come from the country to this wicked city. I am sure that you must be very sorry to have come to this horrible wilderness of bricks and mortar. Oh, for an hour or two of the green fields and the leafy woods and the blue sky!

Alas, designing persons are surrounding you—they are trying to draw you into evil. Be wise. “If sinners entice you, consent you not.” Be wise. Keep out of the way of their enticements. In ten years’ time, if you have gone into evil company in the interval, you will be, yourself, the best witness of how unwise you have been! And if you are kept out of it, kept especially from the wine cup and vice, I am sure you will thank God that you were wise in time. Choose good companions. Make saints your friends. Trust the true and good and quit the gay and frivolous.

Once more, “Be wise,” that is, take care to do what you hear. Have you ever seen persons crowding into a place of worship? Do they not, in this place, often press upon one another to hear the Word of God? Yes, yes and when they have come and they have heard it, what have they done with it? The great mass of them have done nothing with it! Did you ever go to a physician? Did you ever wait in the room for an hour or two before your turn came to see the great man? Did you give him your guinea? Did he hand you a prescription? Tell me, did you leave it on the table? Did you fold it up carefully and put it into your pocket? Did you keep it there? Did you not have the medicine made up? Did you not take it?

Suppose that in a month’s time someone should say, “Did you see the doctor?” You say, “Yes, I went to see him.” “Did you have a prescription?” “He gave me a bit of paper with something or other upon it, but I do not know what it was, for I cannot read Latin.” “You do not mean to say that you have not had it made up at the chemist’s?” “No,” you say, “I was satisfied with seeing the doctor.” Dear Friends, you smile at this description of folly, for it is such gross stupidity. Be wise, then—do not hear the Gospel in vain by neglecting its commands! If you know how to be saved, obey the command! Do not be lost in darkness with light shining upon your eyeballs! Do not go to Hell with the gate of Heaven standing open before you.

I pray you, hear and be wise. Turn what you hear into speedy practice. God help you to do so, for His mercy’s sake! I am talking to you in a very feeble and commonplace manner, but what more could I say if I had the eloquence of the greatest orator? What better could I do than in a loving and brotherly manner plead with every one of you not to play the fool with your souls? Hear the Gospel, but be not hearers only! Be wise enough to be diligent in practicing what you are taught. Believe in Jesus unto life eternal! May the good Spirit make you wise unto salvation! Why will you perish? Why run risks with your never-dying soul? Come, now, and seek the Lord. If you seek Him, He will be found of you.

III. Now comes the last of the three precepts. “GUIDE YOUR HEART IN THE WAY.” There is but one way. “In the way.” That is to say, in the way of wisdom and this is one, and one only. There are not two Gods, but one God. There are not two Christs, but one Christ. There are not two gospels, but one Gospel. There are not two heavens, but one Heaven and there are not two ways of life, but one way. There is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” and one Holy Spirit, and one life by His indwelling—and there is no going to Heaven by any but the one way!

Some people get comparing the different ways of salvation. This is frivolous and foolish, for he that preaches any other than the one Gospel is accursed! Suppose a man wants to go to York and he says, “Well, I want to go to York, but the road to London is a better road and a wider road.” What matters the character of the road if it does not lead where you want to go? You say you want to go to York—then what have you to do with any road but that which leads to York? There are many ways, but what have you to do with any but the way everlasting? There is one royal road which leads to God and eternal life and Heaven. Never mind what the other ways are, or are not—you go the right way!

When I go from this place, I want to go home to Norwood. The road down the Borough is level, but my road home is up a very steep hill to Norwood. Suppose I were to say, “I shall take the level road and cross London Bridge, and drive into the county of Essex”—what then? Why, I shall not get home if I take any other road than that which leads to the top of Norwood Hill. If it is steep, I cannot help it, but I must say, with John Bunyan at the Hill Difficulty, “This hill, though high, I covet to ascend.”

So with you, dear Friend. There is only one road to Heaven. And although there are a dozen roads which do not lead to holiness and God, it is idle to raise them up, for they will not serve your turn. Take the hilly road of Self-Denial. Climb up to Heaven on your hands and knees if it must be, but make up your mind that you are going there by God’s way. That way is often described in the Scriptures. Shall I tell you what the Bible says about this way? Well, it calls it the way of the Lord and you are not in the right way unless you walk with God day by day. A religion that has not God in it is irreligion. Atheism cannot bring you to Heaven nor can any form of deism, even though it is baptized into the name of Christianity. If God is not Chief, Head, King, Lord, Sovereign—you are not on the right road.

It is Christ’s way, too, for Christ says, “I am the Way.” You are not on the right way unless Christ is first and last with you. His precious blood to put away your sin, His glorious Resurrection to be your justification, His Ascension to Heaven to take possession of a place for you, His second coming to receive you to Himself—all these are the way. Christ is All in All to the man who is on the right road. Sometimes it is called the way of faith. That is the only way to Heaven. The way of works might have taken us to Heaven if we had not fallen in Adam and had never sinned on our own account—but having been once defiled by iniquity we cannot be saved by future innocence. Do what we may, we cannot mend the life which we have marred—the flaws and fractures will appear.

Justice will demand punishment for past transgressions—“The soul that sins, it shall die.” We must be saved by Divine Grace through faith, as it is written, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” The way of faith is the way to Glory! This way is also called the way of Truth. If your religion is based on a lie, it must deceive and ruin you. If it is founded on the Truth of God, it will truly save you and nothing else will. Alas, for many—the way of truth they have not known. Many hate the Truth of God and go about with a thousand inventions to get rid of it. If you love Truth and follow it and believe in it as God has revealed it in the Person of His Son, all is well with your soul!

It is also called the way of holiness. My dear Hearer, are you in that way? This is the King’s highway and it leads to the city of the great King. Do you hate sin? Do you follow after righteousness? Would you scorn a lie? Do you keep your word even when it is to your personal loss? Do you endeavor to act fairly to your workmen, kindly to your servants, faithfully to your masters, uprightly to all? When you feel that you have erred, are you humbled and grieved? Do you endeavor for the future to guard the point in which experience has proved you to be weak? Do you watch against temptation and daily cry to God for strength to overcome it? Depend upon it, he that would be happy hereafter must be holy now!

The road to Heaven is also called the “way of peace.” We must seek after peace of conscience, peace with God, peace with our fellow men. If our end is to be peace, our way must be peace—a quiet, contented mind is a thing to cultivate. Keep in this way! Let me tell you two or three more things which the Bible says about this way. It is the “old” way. It bids us ask for the old paths. True religion is no new thing. Your mother was saved—you do not doubt it. Be saved in the way which led your mother safely. If there might be a new way, I would not try it—one cannot afford to play experiments with the only soul he has! That which has saved those who have gone before us is quite good enough for me. I love to think of friends in Glory—their footprints cheer me! I love—

*“The way the holy Prophets went,  
The road that leads from banishment.”*

The moderns have struck out an altogether new path, for their road is both new and broad. What? Were the saints of former ages all mistaken? The martyrs—did they die for a lie and shed their blood for doctrines which criticism explodes? The men of whom the world was not worthy— were they all the dupes of theories which time has disproved? Did nobody know anything till Darwin appeared? Were those who believed, “The things which are seen were not made of things which do appear,” downright fools? Is it quite so certain as some think it is that the things which were made grew out of things already existing? Of course I know that nowadays men are so wonderfully intelligent that they have discovered that human life has been “evolved” from lower life. We are the heirs of oysters and the near descendants of apes!

It has taken some time to compass the evolution and yet I will grant that very hard shells are still to be met with and some men are not much above animals—especially such men as can be duped by this hypothesis! Were the old-fashioned Believers all wrong? No, my Brothers and Sisters, they were not wrong—their lives and their deaths prove that they were right! We shall be wrong if we leave the old and tried paths for these new

ruts which lead into fathomless bogs of unbelief. It was enough to condemn the idols of Israel that they were new gods, newly set up—and it is enough to condemn the gospels of the hour that they are such as were never heard of in the golden ages of the Church. “The old is better.”

Yet it is strange, but true, that the way to Heaven is in Scripture called the “new” way—the “new and living way”—that is to say, Christ’s blood, for when Christ came men began to understand the way of salvation more clearly and it came to them with a freshness of power which the old ceremonial law knew nothing of. The Incarnate Savior, by His death, has opened a new and living way to the secret pavilion of God! We need nothing newer than the opened way which is made by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ! That Gospel which came in with a dying and risen Savior is the Gospel for us!

Again, we are told in the Bible that it is a “narrow” way. We are expressly told that, “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are which go in there: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life.” “Oh,” says one, “I like a man who is broad in his views.” Do you? Possibly you are in the broad road yourself and if so, “a fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind.” How can you, in the teeth of Holy Scripture, admire the broad way? It surely leads to destruction! “I cannot endure narrow views,” cries one. You cannot? Then what are you going to do? Do you refuse to follow the narrow way? Yet that way leads to life and though, “few there are that find it,” I should have thought it well worth your while to be one of the few!

Of course great thinkers and great doubters shun it because it does not afford room enough for their greatness. But common men should choose it because it leads to the right place. It is curious, is it not, that our Lord Jesus Christ should describe this heavenly way as narrow and yet some who are themselves Christians would, if they could, make it out to be very broad? Everything broad commends itself to their taste. Well, well, however unpopular may be my teaching, I exhort the young men here to follow the narrow way, to keep close to Christ and the crimson way of His precious blood and to defy all ridicule on that account.

Follow after holiness and let the gaieties and vanities of the world go to those who love them. Keep you to the narrow way of secret prayer and hallowed fellowship with God and let those who want sing-song and theatricals go their own way. It may be you will appear to be losers by quitting the fellowship of the worldly religious—but your loss will be unspeakable gain to you in the long run. Dare to be as the Puritans—conscientious, scrupulous! Venture to follow Christ, even if you go alone, for so shall you go aright.

But I will not keep you much longer. I am still speaking upon this third precept—you are to put your heart into your religion. In no business can a man prosper if he is half-hearted. Religion without heart is a wretched affair. That man who professes to fear the Lord and yet only puts half his heart into his godliness will make a great failure of it. He is a poor, miserable creature who has enough religion to prevent his enjoying sin and not enough to make him enjoy holiness. He that goes right into the heart of godliness will be made happy by it—but no one else. I am speaking to young men and I would drive home this Truth in their case.

They will remember that, when they were boys, they went down to the river for a bath and certain of the lads went paddling in just above their ankles, or their knees. How they shivered with the cold! They did not much appreciate the bath. But one of the boys mounted the spring-board and leaped right into the water headfirst. I see him now, coming up all glowing and rosy—and I hear his cheery voice, shouting, “Splendid!” Just so. If you go tight into it, you will find true religion to be splendid—but if you go paddling about in the shallows of it, you will become chilled with doubts and fears—and the comfort of it will be far from you. If religion is important, it is all-important! If it is anything, it is everything! If false, leave it altogether—if true, love it altogether!

To show how the joy of religion is proportioned to the degree of it, I sometimes tell a story. It is a parable most instructive and fully to the point—and therefore I cannot help repeating it. It is a story of a man in America who was fond of growing the choicest apples. He asked a neighbor to come up to his orchard and taste his apples which he greatly praised as the best in the world. This high praise he sang many times in his friend’s ears, but he could not get him to come to his place to taste the fruit. He asked him again and again, but still the friend did not come. He therefore hinted that there must be a reason for his refusal. “Well,” said the other, “the truth is that one day, as I was driving by your orchard, I saw an apple or two that had dropped into the road and I picked one up and tasted it—and it was out of sight the sourest thing in all creation. I am very much obliged to you, but I have had enough for one lifetime.”

“Oh,” said the owner, “do you know I went 40 miles to buy those sour apples and I planted them all along the hedge, for I thought they would be good for the boys and keep them from picking and stealing? They are a fine sort for that particular purpose. But if you will come and see me, I will lead you inside the orchard, past those first two or three rows and you will find a sweetness and a flavor which will fill your mouth with delight.” “I see,” said the other, “I see.” Do you also see my drift? All round the outside of religion there are sour fruits of prohibitions, rebukes, repentances and self-denials—to keep the hypocrites out! Have you never seen how long they pull their faces, as if their religion did not agree with them? And that is because they have eaten the sour apples on the outskirts.

But oh, if you would come near to the faith and joy which are in Christ Jesus—if you would give all your heart to heavenly pursuits—you would find it quite another thing. Then would your heart “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” The text says, “Guide your heart in the way,” that is, get your very soul into the way of salvation. Get every portion of

your being under holy influence. Let every fragment of your heart and mind and soul and strength be consecrated. Your heart grows like a luxuriant plant and you must train every tendril, every shoot in the right direction. Nail every branch to the wall and keep it there. Try to guide your heart into the way of Truth, life and holiness—let none of it stray. Then will you be filled with delight. Then will you, in very deed, know that you are saved!

The last word I have to say is, oh, that everyone here present who is not saved would attend to these three precepts now! Hear now! Make up your mind that if there is salvation to be had, you will have it! Be wise at once, lest you be wise too late. Say, “It would be folly to delay for I may soon be dead and buried. I will have Christ today, my mother’s Christ, my father’s God.” Be wise and cry to God to help you! Cry for the Holy Spirit to enable you to lay hold on eternal life and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for immediate salvation. Trust Him! Remember what I told you of Luther the other night, when he said, “I shall not save myself. Christ is a Savior. It is His business to save.”

Put your soul into your Redeemer’s hands. He is a Savior and He will save all who trust Him. To trust Jesus is wise. It is wisest of all to do it at once and here. How constantly do I hear of friends suddenly falling dead, or being taken away by unobserved disease! If I were to point tonight to the pews that have been emptied in this place since the first of January, you would be greatly surprised. Your sitting was lately occupied by one who is now dead and this makes the spot a solemn one. Someone else will soon sit in your pew. Be wise! Be wise and seek the Lord at once!

Midsummer has come upon us. Let it not pass away without your soul being brought to Jesus. The hay-time is upon us and Death is sharpening his weapon. I can hear the rink-a-tink of that dread scythe at this very moment! And you, too, will soon be withered like the grass which has fallen before the mower. Therefore now, even now, seek my Savior! I implore you, seek Him without further delay! I wish that I were able to speak to you with a clear and powerful voice which would keep pace with my heart—but as I cannot do so, I do my best and use what voice I have. I would do anything to draw you to the Lord Jesus who is the Way of Life!

We shall soon stand at God’s great judgment seat and I shall have to answer for my preaching. Therefore I entreat you to be wise. Why should I give my account with grief? “Seek you the Lord while He may be found! Call you upon Him while He is near.” May the Lord lead you to do so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Proverbs 23:9-35**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—331, 545, 518. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #3449 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Pro 23.23

BUYING THE TRUTH  
NO. 3449

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 1915.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING JUNE 26, 1870

**“Buy the truth, and sell it not.”  
Proverbs 23:23.**

John Bunyan pictures the pilgrims as passing at one time through Vanity Fair, and in Vanity Fair there were to be found all kinds of merchandise, consisting of the pomp and vanities, the lusts and pleasures of this present life and of the flesh. Now all the dealers, when they saw these strange pilgrims come into the fair, began to cry, as vendors will do, “Buy, buy, buy—buy this, and buy that.” There were the priests in the Italian row with their crucifixes and their beads. There were those in the German row with their philosophies and their metaphysics. There were those in the French row with their fashions and with their pretty things. But the one answer that the pilgrims gave to all the dealers was this—they looked up and they said, “We buy the truth. We buy the truth.” And they would have gone on their way if the men of the Fair had not laid them by the heels in the cage and kept than there—one to go to Heaven in a chariot of fire and the other, afterwards, to pursue his journey alone. This is very much the description of the genuine Christian at all times. He is surrounded by vendors of all sorts of things, beautifully got up and looking exceedingly like the true article. And the only way in which he will be able to pass through Vanity Fair safely is to keep to this—that he buys the truth—and if he adds to that the second advice of the text, and never sells it, he will, under Divine Guidance, find his way rightly to the skies. “Buy the truth, and sell it not.”

Is not the parable we have just read a sort of enlargement of our text? When the merchantman had traveled all over the world to find some pearl that should have no flaw, some diamond of the purest water, fit to glisten in the crown of royalty, at last in his searches, he met with a gem the like of which he had never seen before and, knowing that here was wealth for him in the joy of his discovery, he sold all that he had that he might buy that pearl! Even so, the text seems to tell us that truth is the one pearl beneath the skies that is worth having, and whatever else we buy not, we must buy the truth! And whatever else we may have to sell, yet we must never sell the truth, but hold it fast as a treasure that will last us when gold has cankered, silver has rusted, the moth has eaten up all goodly garments and all the riches of men have gone like a puff of smoke, or melted in the heat of the Judgment Day like the dew in the beams of the morning sun! Buy the truth. Here is the treasure. Cost it what it may, buy it. Here is the piece of merchandise which you must buy, but must not sell! You may give all for it, but you may take nothing in exchange for it, since there is nothing that can be likened to it.

With this as a preface, let us now came straight to the text, and you shall notice—  
I. THE COMMODITY THAT IS SPOKEN OF.  
“Buy the truth.” I shall not speak tonight of those common forms of truth that relate to politics, to history, to science, or to ordinary life, yet would I say of all these—buy the truth. Never be afraid of the truth. Never be afraid in anything of having your prejudices knocked on the head. Always be determined, come what may, even though truth should prove you to be a fool, yet to accept the truth—and though it should cost you dearly, yet still pursue it, for in the long run they who build mere speculations, fancies and errors, though they may seem to build suitable structures for the time, shall find that they are wood, hay, and stubble, and shall be consumed—but he that keeps to what he knows, to matters of fact, and matters of truth, builds gold, silver, and precious stones, which the trying fire of the coming ages shall not be able to destroy! I would sooner discover one fact and lay down one certain truth, than be the author of ten thousand theories, even though those theories should, for a while, rule all the thought of mankind!  
But I speak now of religious truth. Buy that truth! Buy that truth above all others. And here we must have three heads. First, in the matter of doctrinal truth, buy the truth. Holy Scripture is the standard of the Truth of God. To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no truth in them. “Your Word is Truth.” Here is silver tried in the furnace and purified seven times. Speak of Infallibility? It is not at Rome, but it is here in this Book! Here is an Infallible Witness to the Truth of God, and he that is taught of the Holy Spirit to understand it gets at the Truth of God. Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, do aim to get the right Truth, the real Truth as to matters of Doctrine. Count it not a trifle to be sound in the faith. Think no error to be harmless, for the Truth of God is very precious, and error, even when we do not see it to be so, may lead to the most solemn consequences of mischief. In this world we see too much of salvation without Christ—I mean we meet with many who believe that they are saved because they have been baptized, or confirmed, or passed through the ceremonies of the church to which they belong. They have not looked to the precious blood! They are not depending simply upon the finished work of the Redeemer, but something else than Christ has become their confidence. Now, avoid that, and buy the Truth which lies here, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” We hear too much, now-a-days, of regeneration without faith—the supposed regeneration of unconscious babies, the new birth of people through drops of water when they are not able to understand what is performed upon them! I beseech you believe that there is no new birth where there is not a confidence in Christ, and that the regeneration which does not lead to repentance and faith, which is not, indeed, immediately attended therewith, is no regeneration whatever! Buy the truth in this matter. Stand to it that it is the work of the Holy Spirit in rational and intelligent beings, leading them to hate sin and to lay hold of eternal life! Alas, we have in some quarters too much of faith without works. A kind of faith is preached, a kind of faith is trusted in which is not practical. Men say they believe, but they do not prove it by their lives. They remain in sin and yet wrap themselves up in the belief that they are God’s chosen ones. From such, turn away, and remember that a faith without works is dead, and only the faith that changes the character, sanctifies the life and leads the man to God, is the faith which will save the soul! We must see to it that in our Doctrine we bow our judgment to the teachings of Scripture and try to be conformed to all the Revelation of God and especially to all the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ! May we not fall into one error or another. Scylla is there and Charybdis there, and he is a happy helmsman who can steer between the two! You shall fall into this ‘ism’ or into that, unless you keep to the Truth of God! Never mind whether you can make the Truth always consistent to your own judgment or not. If it is the Truth of God, believe it! And though it should seem to contradict another Truth, yet hold to it, if it is in the Word, waiting till clearer Light of God shall reveal to you that all these Truths stand in a wonderful harmony and consistency which, at first, you could not perceive. In Doctrine, buy the Truth!  
But, secondly, buy experimental Truth. I know not another word to use. I mean Truth within, the Truth experienced. See that this is real Truth. How easy it is to be deceived with the notion that we are converted when we still need to be converted—to fancy that because we have the approbation of our minister and of our Christian friends, we must, therefore, necessarily be the people of God! There is only one true new birth, but there are 50 counterfeits of it. In this respect, then, buy the Truth. Let me have you beware of an experience which has a faith in it that was never attended with repentance. I am afraid of a dry-eyed faith! That faith seems to me to be the faith of God’s elect, whose eyes are full of tears. If you have never felt yourself a sinner, never trembled under the Law of God, never felt that you have deserved to be cast into Hell, I am afraid your faith is a mere presumption and not the faith that looks to Christ. Beware of an experience that lies in talk and not in feeling! Mr. Talkative, in Bunyan’s Pilgrim could speak very glibly about religion—no man more so than he—he was fit to take the chair in an assembly of divines, but it was not heart-work, it was all surface-work. Plow deep, my Brothers and Sisters! Feel what you believe! Let it be with you real homework, soul-work, the work of God the Holy Spirit—not a temporary excitement, not head-knowledge, not theory! May the Truth of God be burned into your souls by the operation of the Holy Spirit! In this respect, buy the Truth.  
Alas, we see now-a-days in many professors, a great deal of life without struggle—and I think I have learned that all spiritual life that is not attended with struggles is a mistake, for Isaac, the child of the promise, is sure to be mocked by Ishmael! No sooner does the Seed of the woman come into the world than the seed of the serpent tries to destroy it. You must, and will, find a battle going on within you if you are a Believer! Sin will contest with Grace, and Grace will seek to reign over sinful corruptions. Be afraid of too easy an experience. “Moab is at ease from his youth; he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel; for the time comes when the Lord will search Jerusalem with candles and punish the men that are settled upon their lees.” There must be strivings within, or we may well beware of such an experience! And I think I have noticed a growing feeling abroad of confidence without self-examination. I would have you hold to believe God’s Word, but do not take your own state at haphazard. Do not conclude that you are a Christian because you thought you were one ten years ago. Day by day bring yourself to the touchstone. He that cannot bear examination will have to bear condemnation! He that dares not search himself will find that God will search him. He that is afraid to look himself in the face had need to be afraid to look the Judge in the face when the Great White Throne shall be placed, and all the world summoned to judgment! Confidence is quite consistent with self-examination and I pray you in this thing, buy the Truth and seek to have a religion that will bear the test—a true faith, a living faith, a faith that moves your soul, a deep-rooted faith, a faith which is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, for the time comes when, as the Lord lives, nothing short of this will stand you in good stead!  
Again, I spoke of three sorts of the Truths of God—doctrinal Truth, experimental Truth, and now practical Truth. By practical Truth I mean our actions being consistent, and those of a right and straightforward course. In this matter, buy the Truth of God! You profess to be a Christian—be a Christian! You say that you are a follower of Christ—follow Him, then! You know it is right to be a person of integrity and uprightness—be so! Let dirty tricks of trade, let no meanness, let none of those white lies which degrade commerce now days, ever come across your path except to be reprobated and abhorred. Walk straight forward. Learn not to tack. Do not wish to understand policy, craft and cunning. Buy the Truth. It will yet shame the world! He that speaks out his mind, says what he means, and means what he says, does the just thing, does the right thing, fears no man and lifts his head boldly in the face of all Creation if it dares to whisper that it will enrich him by his doing wrong—that is the man that buys the Truth practically. You know how it can be carried out in commerce readily enough, in the parlor, in the drawing room, and in the kitchen. There is a truthful way for a shoeblack to blacken shoes in the street, and there is a lying way of doing it. There is a truthful way of doing the most common actions, and there is a false method of doing the very same thing. In this respect, then, buy the Truth, as to the straightforwardness, the clean, sharp transparency of your moral character and of your Christian conduct! Never seem to be what you are not, or if you must, for a while, be in that position, count that you are unfortunate and escape from it as soon as you can! Never do what you are ashamed of—it matters not who sees. Think always that God sees, and with God for a Witness, you have enough observers! Only do that which you would have done if all eyes were fixed on you and you were observed even by your most cruel critics. Never stifle conscience. Carry out your convictions. If the skies fall, stand upright. What God’s Holy Spirit tells you, do. What you find in this Book, carry out. If you bring any mischief to other people through it, that is their business. If I stay on the correct side of the road and run over anybody—that is his fault—he should have stayed out of the way. I would not run over him if I could help it, but I cannot turn aside from the correct road. Stand in your place. Let malignant eyes look at you, but, like the sun, shine on. And if others envy you, fret not because of them, neither be grieved to do the Truth of God—but in this respect, again, fulfill the text and—“buy the Truth.”  
So have I shown you what the commodity is—doctrinally, experimentally, and practically. “Buy the Truth.” Now let us come and think especially of the first part of the text.  
II. HOW THIS COMMODITY IS OBTAINED.  
“Buy the truth.” Let us correct an error here. Some might suppose that Christ, the Gospel and salvation—all of which are included in the Truth of God—can be bought. They can, but they cannot. They can in the sense of the text. They cannot in any other sense. You cannot purchase salvation—merit cannot win it. Christ’s price is, “Without money and without price.” Has not the Prophet so worded it? “Yes, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price.” Salvation is of Free Grace, and is, from the very necessity of its nature, gratis. You cannot merit it! You cannot earn it! It is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of birth, but, “He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.”  
What, then, does the text mean? I will try to expound the Word. It means, first, to be saved, give up everything that must be given up in order to your receiving the free salvation. Every sin must be given up. No man shall go to Heaven while he lives in and favors any one sin. A man may sin, and be saved, but he cannot love sin and be saved! Give up, then, your drunkenness, if that is your sin. Give up, then, your unchaste living if that is your sin. Conquer that angry temper, that love of greed— whatever it is that keeps you back from Christ. Buy the Truth and give up these. You will not merit salvation, then, but if this must be given up, let it not stand in your way. Give it up, Man! Since you cannot have your sin and have Christ, too, get a divorce from your sin and take holiness and take the Savior! You must also give up all your self-righteousness. Some are trusting in their prayers. Some are trusting in their tears, their repentances, their feelings, their church or chapel attendance and I know not what men will not trust in! Give them all up. They are all lies! There is no reliance to be placed on anything you can do. Come and trust what Christ has done, and if it is, as it certainly is necessary for you to give up your own righteousness to win Christ and be found in Him, then do it, and in this sense part with all you have that you may buy Christ! Yourself—your sinful self and your righteous self—oh, that you might be willing to part with both, that you might buy the true salvation!  
And the text means this, again, that if, in order to be saved, it should cost you a deep experience and much pain, yet never mind it. It is better that you should bear all that and get the Truth of God, than that you should escape without this heart-searching work and be deceived at the last. If the price at which you shall have a true experience is that of sorrow, buy the Truth at that price

Be willing to let the doctor’s knife wound you, if thereby he shall heal you. Be willing to lose the right eye or the right hand if, thereby, you shall enter into eternal life!  
It also means this—buy the Truth of God—that is, be willing at all risks to hold to the Truth. Buy it as the martyrs did when they gave their bodies to be burned for it! Buy it as many have done when they have gone to prison for it. Buy it if you should lose your job for it. Lose your job sooner than tell a lie! Like the three holy children, be rather willing to go into the fiery furnace than to worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Run the risk of being poor. Do not believe, as all the world says, that you must live. There is no absolute necessity for it. Sometimes it is a grander thing to die. Let the necessity be, “We must be honest. We must do the right. We must serve God,” for that is a far greater necessity than that of merely living. Count all things but dross that you may be a true man, a godly man, a holy man, a Christly man, and in this sense make sacrifice of all, and thus “buy the Truth.”  
I think that is what the word means. I expound it to mean this—give anything and everything, sooner than part with Christ, part with the living work of Grace in your heart, or part with the integrity of your conduct. And now let me—  
III. PARAPHRASE THESE WORDS.  
“Buy the Truth.” Then I say, buy only the Truth of God. Do not be throwing away your life, your abilities, your zeal and your earnestness, for a lie. Some are doing it. Thousands of pounds are given to erect edifices for doing mischief. Multitudes of sermons are preached, very zealously, to propagate lies and sea and land are compassed to make proselytes, who shall be ten times more children of Hell than they were before! Buy only the Truth. Do not buy the glittering stuff they call truth. Never mind the label—look to see if it is the Truth of God. Bring everything that is propounded as the Truth of God to the test, to the trial. If it will not stand the fire of God’s Word, then do not buy it! No, do not have it as a gift! No, do not keep it in the house! Run away from it! It eats as does a canker—let it not come near you. Buy only the Truth of God!  
“Buy the Truth” at any price, and sell it at no price. Buy it at any price. If you lose your body for it, if you lose not your soul, you have made a good bargain! If you lose your estate for it, yet if you have Heaven in return, how blessed the exchange! You certainly will not need for it to lose your peace of mind, but you may lose everything else, and you shall make a good bargain. Come to no terms with Christ. Throw all into the soul bargain. Let all go as long as you may, but have Truth in the Doctrine, Truth in the heart, Truth in the life and Christ, who is the Truth, to be your treasure forever!  
Buy all the Truth. When you come to the Bible, do not pick and choose. Do not try to believe half of it and leave out the other half. Buy the Truth—that is, not a section of it that suits your particular idiosyncrasy, but buy the whole! Why need you break up pearls and dissolve them? Buy all that is true. One Doctrine of God’s Word balances another. He who is altogether and only a Calvinist probably only knows half the Truth of God, but he who is willing to take the other side, as far as it is true, and to believe all he finds in the Word of God, will get the whole pearl.  
Buy the Truth now —buy the Truth tonight. It may not be for you to buy tomorrow. You may be in that land where God has cast forever the lost souls away from all access to the Truth of God, where Truth’s shadow, cold and chill, shall fall upon you, and you, in outer darkness, shall weep and wail, and gnash your teeth because you shut out the Truth of God from you, and now Truth has shut you out, and all your knockings at her door shall be answered with the dolorous cry, “Too late, too late! You cannot enter now!”  
Thus I have paraphrased the text. Buy only the Truth. Buy all the Truth. Buy the Truth at any price and buy the Truth now. Briefly let me give you—  
IV. THE REASONS FOR THIS PURCHASE.  
You need the Truth of God and you will never be received by God at last unless you bring the Truth in your right hand. Only the truthful can enter those gates of pearl. You need the truth now. You are not fit to live any more than to die without an interest in the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. Accept Christ to be truly yours, so truly yours as to make you true! You know not how to fight the battle of life at all without the Truth. Your life will be a blunder, and the close of it will be a disaster unless you buy the Truth. God grant that you may buy the Truth now. You need it. You need it now, and you will need it forever. Oh, I would to God that that hymn we sang should not merely be heard by you, but felt by you— *“Hasten, Sinner, to be wise,  
And stay not for the morrow’s sun.”*  
Oh, that fatal “tomorrow!” Over the cliffs of “tomorrow” millions have fallen to their ruin! Tomorrow, yes, “tomorrow! Here are these put-offs, and these delays, and yet God has never given you a promise of mercy tomorrow! His Word is, “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” A better day shall never come than this day. Oh, that you would accept it now!—  
And till times are more propitious, if you wait, you will wait on forever and forever! God grant you may buy His Truth now, for the text is in the present tense, for now you need it. Let me direct you to—  
V. THE MARKET WHERE YOU CAN BUY IT.  
These are the Words of Jesus Christ when He appeared to His servant John, “I counsel you, buy of Me.” There is no place where Truth can be found in its power and life, except in Jesus Christ! Truth is in His blood—it will wash away what is false in you. Truth is in His Spirit—it will eradicate what is dark and vile in you. His love will make you true by conforming you to Himself. Come to Christ. Bring nothing with you. Come as you are, empty-handed, penniless and poor. The rivers of milk and wells of wine are all with Him. He is the banquet giver, and the Banquet, too. To trust Him is to live. To look to Him, alone, for salvation is to find salvation in that look! Oh, that these simple words might point someone to the place where he shall buy the Truth! And now let me repeat my text again, “Buy the Truth.”  
Do not misread it. It does not say hear about the Truth. That is a good thing, but hearing is not buying, as many of you tradesmen know to your cost. You may tell people where to go, but you do not want them merely to hear—you are not content with that—you want them to buy! Oh, that some of you, my Hearers, would become buyers of the Truth! I know some of you. I happen to look about and find out here and there one— some of you, whom I know, and respect, and esteem, and pray for. I had thought that you would have bought the Truth long ago—it often staggers me why you have not! Oh, that you were decided for God! I am afraid I am preaching some of you into a hardened state. If the Gospel does not save you, it will certainly be a curse to you—and I am afraid it is being so to some of you. Do think of this, I pray you! Why should you and I have the misery of doing each other hurt when our intention is on both sides, I am sure, to do that which is kind and good? Oh, yield to my Master! The Light of the World is, with His hand, softly knocking at your door tonight! Do you not hear the knock of the hand that was pierced? Admit Him! He comes not in wrath—He comes in mercy! Admit Him! He has tarried long, even these many years, but no frown is yet upon His brow. Rise now and let Him in! Be not ashamed. Though ashamed, be not afraid, but let Him in, and blushing, with tears in your face, say to Him, “My Lord, I will trust You. Worthless worm as I am, I will depend upon You!” Oh, that you would do it now, this moment! The Lord give you Grace to do it! Do not only hear about it, but buy the Truth!  
Do not merely commend the Truth by saying, “The preacher spoke well, and he spoke earnestly, and I love what he said.” The preacher had almost rather that you said nothing than that, if you do not buy the Truth! How it provokes the salesman when a customer says, “Yes, it is a beautiful article, and very cheap, and just what I need”—and then walks out of the shop! No, buy the Truth and you shall commend it afterwards—and your commendation shall be worth the hearing.  
And, I pray you, do not stand content with merely knowing about the Truth. Oh, how much some of you know! How much more you know than even some of God’s people! You could correct many of my blunders. But ah, he that knows is nowhere unless he also has. To know about bread will not satisfy my hunger. To know that there are riches at the bank will not fill my pocket. Buy the Truth, as well as know it! That is, make it your own.  
And do not, I pray you, intend to buy it. Oh, intentions, intentions, intentions! The road to Hell—not Heaven—that is a mistake of the proverb—the road to Hell is paved with good intentions. Oh, you laggards, pull up the paving stones and hurl them at the devil’s head. He is ruining you! He is decoying you to your destruction! Turn your intentions into actions and no longer intend to buy, but buy the Truth!  
And do not, tonight, wish that the Truth were yours, but buy it! You say the cost is too great. Too great? It is nothing. It is “without money and without price.” Do you mean, however, to say, that it is too great a cost to give up a sin? What? Will you burn in Hell rather than give up a lust? Will you dwell in everlasting burnings sooner than give up those cups that intoxicate you? Must you have your silly wantonness and lascivious mirth, or any kind of sin? Must you have it? Will you sooner have it than Heaven? Then, Sirs, your blood be on your own heads. You have been warned. I hope you are sober and have not yet gone to madness, but if you are, you will see that no pleasures of an hour can ever recompense for casting yourselves under the anger of God forever and forever! Buy the Truth! Do not merely talk about it and wish for it, but buy, buy the Truth! And then, lastly—  
VI. A WARNING AS TO LOSING THE PURCHASE.  
“Sell it not.” My time has gone and, therefore, as I never like to exceed it, there shall be but these few words. When you have once got the Truth, I know you will not sell it. You will not, I am sure, at any price. But the exhortation, nevertheless, is a most proper one. There have been some who have sold the Truth to be respectable. They used to hear the Gospel, but now they have got on in the world and have a carriage—and they do not like to go where there are so many poor people—so away they go where they can hear anything or nothing, so that they may be respectable! Ah, I have the uttermost contempt for this affectation of gentility and respectability that leads men to be so mean as to forsake their Christian friends! Let them go! They are best gone! Such chaff had better not be with the wheat, and those that can be actuated by such motives are too base to be worth retaining!  
Some sell the Truth for a livelihood. I pity these far more. “I must have a job, therefore I must do what I am told there. I must break this Law of God and that, for I must keep my family.” Ah, poor Soul, I pity your unfortunate position, but I pray that you may have Grace, even now, to play the man and never soil the Truth of God, even for bread.  
Some sell the Truth for the pleasures of the world. They must have enjoyment, they say, and so they will mingle with the multitude that do evil—and give up their Christian profession.  
Others seem to sell the Truth for nothing at all. They merely go away from Christ because religion has grown stale with them. They are weary of it, and they go away. I shall put the question painfully to all—will you also go away? Will you, to be respectable, will you to have a livelihood, will you to have the pleasures of sin for a season, will you out of sheer weariness—will you go away? No, we can add—  
*“What anguish has that question stirred, If I will also go!  
Yet, Lord, relying on Your Word,  
I humbly answer, No.”*  
Sell it not! Sell it not! It cost Christ too dear! Sell it not! You made a good bargain when you bought it. Sell it not. Sell it not! It has not disappointed you—it has satisfied you and made you blessed! Sell it not—you need it. Sell it not, you will need it. The hour of death is coming on and the Day of Judgment is close upon its heels. Sell it not! You cannot buy its like again—you can never find a better. Sell it not—you are a lost man if you part with it. Remember Esau, and the morsel of meat, and how he would again have found his birthright if he could. Remember Demas. Remember Judas, the son of perdition! You are lost without it. It is your life. Skin for skin, yes, for the Truth, part with all that you possess, and be resolved, come fair or come foul, come storm or come calm, come sickness or come health, come poverty or come wealth, come death, itself, in the grimmest form, yet none shall separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord, and none shall make you part from the Truths you have learned and received from His Word—the Truths you have felt and have had worked into your soul by His Spirit— and the Truths which in action you desire should tone and color all your life.  
God bless you, dear Friends, and keep you. And when the Great Shepherd shall appear, may you have the mark of the Truth of God upon you, and appear with Him in Glory.

**“If you tarry till you’re better, You will never come at all.”**  
EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **MATTHEW 13:24-50.**

Verse 24. Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. He knew that it was good. It had been tested—it was unmixed—it was good throughout.

25. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. It was a very malicious action. The thing has been done many times. Bastard wheat was sown in among the true wheat, so as to injure the crop.

26-27. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, did not you sow good seed in your field? From where, then, has it tares? We often have to ask that question. How did this come about? It was a true Gospel that was preached, from where, then, come these hypocrites—these that are like the wheat, but are not wheat? For it is not the tare that we call a tare in England that is meant here, but a false wheat—very like wheat, but not wheat.

28. He said unto them, An enemy has done this. The enemy could not do a worse thing than to adulterate the Church of God! Pretenders outside do little hurt. Inside the fold they do much mischief.

28-30. The servants said unto him, Will you, then, that we go and gather them up? But he said, No, lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather you together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. The separation will be more in season, more easily and more accurately done when both shall have been fully developed— when the wheat shall have come to its fullness and the counterfeit wheat shall have ripened.

31, 32. Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which, indeed, is the least of all seeds. Commonly known in that country.

32-35. But when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spoke He unto them: The kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. All these things spoke Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spoke He not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, saying, I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. How thoroughly impregnated our Lord was with the very spirit of Scripture! And He always acted as if the Scriptures were uppermost in His mind. They seemed to be always in their fullness before His soul.

36. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and His disciples came unto Him—Those house talks—those explanations of the great public sermons and parables—were sweet privileges which He reserved for those who had given their utter confidence to Him.

36-44. Saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the Kingdom; but the tares are the children of the Wicked One. The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world and the reapers are the angels. Therefore, as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. And shall cast them unto a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field which a man has found, and for joy over it—Stumbling upon it, perhaps, when he was at the plow—turning up the old crop in which it was concealed.

44. He goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field. Some persons do stumble upon the Gospel when they are not looking for it. “I am found of them that sought Me not” is a grand Free Grace text. Some of those who have been most earnest in the Kingdom of Heaven were at one time most indifferent and careless, but God, in Infinite Sovereignty, puts the Treasure in their way—gives them the heart to value it and they obtain it to their own joy!

45. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls. He does not stumble on it—he is seeking pearls.  
46, 47. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered fish of every kind— Bad fish and good fish, and creeping things and broken shells, and bits of seaweed, and pieces of old wreck. Did you ever see such an odd assortment as they get upon the deck of a fishing vessel when they empty out the contents of a drag net? Such is the effect of the ministry. It drags together all sorts of people. It is quite as well that we have not eyes enough to see one another’s hearts tonight, or else I dare say we would make about as strange a medley as I have already attempted to describe as being in the fisherman’s vessel!  
48. Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. All a mixture. We cannot sort one from the other, now, but when the net comes to shore, then will be the picking over the heap. No mistakes will be made. The good will go into vessels, and the bad, and none but the bad, will be cast away!  
49, 50. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Not fire, then, which annihilates, but fire which leaves in pain and causes weeping and gnashing of teeth!

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1995 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Pro 23/26

THE HEART—A GIFT FOR GOD  
NO. 1995

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 11, 1887,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“My son, give Me your heart.”  
Proverbs 23:26.**

THESE are the words of Solomon speaking in the name of Wisdom, which wisdom is but another name for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is made of God unto us Wisdom. If you ask, “What is the highest wisdom upon the earth?” it is to believe in Jesus Christ whom God has sent—to become His follower and disciple—to trust Him and imitate Him. It is God, in the Person of His dear Son, who says to each one of us, “My son, give Me your heart.” Can we answer, “Lord, I have given You my heart”? Then we are His sons! Let us cry, “Abba, Father,” and bless the Lord for the high privilege of being His children. “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”

I. Let us look at this precept, “My son, give Me your heart,” and notice, first, that LOVE PROMPTS THIS REQUEST OF WISDOM.  
Only love seeks after love. If I desire the love of another, it can surely only be because I, myself, have love toward him. We care not to be loved by those whom we do not love. It were an embarrassment rather than an advantage to receive love from those to whom we would not return it. When God asks human love, it is because God is Love. As the sparks mount toward the sun, the central fire, so ought our love rise toward God, the central source of all pure and holy love. It is an instance of infinite condescension that God should say, “My son, give Me your heart.” Notice the strange position in which it puts God and man. The usual position is for the creature to say to God, “Give me”—but here the Creator cries to feeble man, “Give Me.” The Great Benefactor, Himself, becomes the Petitioner—stands at the door of His own creatures and asks, not for offerings, nor for words of praise, but for their hearts! Oh, it must be because of the great love of God that He condescends to put Himself into such a position. And if we were right-minded, our immediate response would be, “Do You seek my heart? Here it is, my Lord.” But alas, few thus respond, and none do so except those who are, like David, men after God’s own heart. When God says to such, “Seek you My face,” they answer at once, “Your face, Lord, will we seek”—but this answer is prompted by Divine Grace. It can only be love that seeks love.  
Again, it can only be supreme Love which leads Wisdom to seek after the heart of such poor things as we are. The best saints are poor things and as for some of us who are not the best, what poor, poor things we are! How foolish! How slow to learn! Does Wisdom seek us for scholars? Then Wisdom must be of a most condescending kind. We are so guilty, too. We shall rather disgrace than honor the courts of Wisdom if she admits us to her school. Yet she says to each of us, “Give Me your heart. Come and learn of Me.” Only Love can invite such scholars as we are! I am afraid we shall never do much to glorify God—we have but small parts to begin with, and our position is obscure. Yet, common-place people though we are, God says to each one of us, “My son, give Me your heart.” Only infinite Love would come a-wooing to such wretched hearts as ours!  
For what has God to gain? Brothers and Sisters, if we did all give our hearts to Him, in what respect would He be the greater? If we gave Him all we have, would He be the richer? “The silver and the gold are Mine,” He says, “and the cattle on a thousand hills. If I were hungry, I would not tell you.” He is too great for us to make Him greater, too good for us to make Him better, too glorious for us to make Him more illustrious. When He comes a-wooing and cries, “Give Me your heart,” it must be for our benefit and not for His own! Surely it is more blessed for us to give than for Him to receive! He can gain nothing—we gain everything by the gift. Yet He does gain a child and that is a sweet thought. Everyone that gives God His heart becomes God’s child—and a father esteems his children to be treasures—and I reckon that God sets a higher value upon His children than upon all the works of His hand besides!  
We see the Great Father’s likeness in the story of the returning prodigal. The father thought more of his returning son than of all that he possessed besides. “It was meet,” said he “that we should make merry and be glad: for this, your brother, was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.” Oh, I tell you, you that do not know the Lord, that if you give your hearts to Him you will make Him glad! The Eternal Father will be glad to get back His lost son, to press to His bosom a heart warm with affection for Him, which heart before had been cold and stony towards Him. “My son, give Me your heart,” He says, as if He longed for our love and could not bear to have children that had forgotten Him! Do you not hear Him speak? Speak, Spirit of God, and make each one hear You say, “My son, give Me your heart”!  
You who are sons of God already may take my text as a call to give God your heart anew, for—I do not know how it is—men are wonderfully scarce now and men with hearts are rare! If preachers had larger hearts, they would move more people to hear them. A sermon preached without love falls flat and dead. We have heard sermons, admirable in composition and excellent in doctrine, but like that palace which the Empress of Russia built upon the Neva of blocks of ice! Nothing more lustrous, nothing more sharply cut, nothing more charming, but oh, so cold, so very cold! Its very beauty a frost to the soul! “My son,” says God to every preacher, “give Me your heart.” O Minister, if you cannot speak with eloquent tongue, at least let your heart run over like burning lava from your lips! Let your heart be like a geyser, scalding all that come near you, permitting none to remain indifferent!  
You that teach in the school, you that work for God in any way, do it thoroughly well! “Give Me your heart, My son,” says God. It is one of the first and last qualifications of a good workman for God that he should put his heart into his work. I have heard mistresses tell servants, when polishing tables, that elbow grease was a fine thing for such work. And so it is. Hard work is a splendid thing! It will make a way under a river, or through the Alps. Hard work will do almost everything—but in God’s service it must not only be hard work, but hot work! The heart must be on fire! The heart must be set upon its design. See how a child cries! Though I am not fond of hearing it, yet I note that some children cry all over! When they want a thing, they cry from the tips of their toes to the last hair of their heads! That is the way to preach! And that is the way to pray! And that is the way to live—the whole man must be heartily engaged in holy work.  
Love prompts the request of Wisdom. God knows that in His service we shall be miserable unless our hearts are fully engaged. Whenever we feel that preaching is heavy work, or Sunday school teaching, after six days’ labor, is tiresome, or going round a district with tracts is a terrible task— then we shall do nothing well! Put your heart into your service and all will be joyful—but no way else.  
II. Now, I turn my text another way. WISDOM PERSUADES US TO OBEY THIS LOVING REQUEST. To take our hearts and give them up to God is the wisest thing that we can do. If we have done it before, we had better do it over again and hand over, once more, the sacred deposit into those dear hands which will surely keep that which we commit to their guardian care. “My son, give Me your heart.”  
Wisdom prompts us to do it, for, first, many others crave our hearts, and our hearts will surely go one way or the other. Let us see to it that they do not go where they will be ruined. I will not read you the next verse, but many a man has lost his heart and soul eternally by the lusts of the flesh. He has perished through “her that lies in wait as for a prey, and increases the transgressors among men.” Happy is that young man whose heart is never defiled with vice! There is no way of being kept from impurity except by giving up the heart to the holy Lord. In a city like this, the most pure-minded are surrounded with innumerable temptations— and many there are that slip with their feet before they are aware of it, being carried away because they have not time to think before the temptation has cast them to the ground. “Therefore, My son,” says Wisdom, “give Me your heart. Everybody will try to steal your heart, therefore leave it in My charge. Then you need not fear the fascinations of the strange woman, for I have your heart and I will keep it safe unto the day of My appearing.” It is most wise to give Jesus our heart, for seducers will seek after it.  
There is another destroyer of souls. I will not say much about it, but I will just read you what the context says of it—“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. They that go to seek mixed wine. Look not you upon the wine when it is red, when it gives his color in the cup, when it moves itself aright. At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder. Your eyes shall behold strange women and your heart shall utter perverse things.” Read carefully the rest of the chapter and then hear the voice of Wisdom say, “My son, if you would be kept from drunkenness and gluttony, from wantonness and chambering, and everything that the heart inclines to, give Me your heart.”  
It is well to guard your heart with all the apparatus that wisdom can provide. It is totally well to abstain from that which becomes a snare to you, but, I charge you, do not rely upon abstinence, but give your heart to Jesus—for nothing short of true godliness will preserve you from sin so that you shall be presented faultless before His Presence with exceedingly great joy! As you would wish to preserve an unblemished character and be found honorable to the end, my son, I charge you, give your heart to Christ!  
Wisdom urges to immediate decision because it is well to have a heart at once occupied and taken up by Christ. It is an empty heart that the devil enters. You know how the boys always break the windows of empty houses, well, the devil throws stones wherever the heart is empty! If you can say to the devil when you are tempted, “You are too late; I have given my heart to Christ, I cannot listen to your overtures, I am affianced to the Savior by bonds of love that never can be broken,” what a blessed safeguard you have! I know of nothing that can so protect the young man in these perilous days as to be able to sing, “O God, my heart is fixed! My heart is fixed! Others may flit to and fro and seek something to light upon, but my heart is fixed upon You forever. I am unable to turn aside through Your sweet Grace.” “My son,” says the text, “give Me your heart,” that Christ may dwell there, that when Satan comes, the One who is stronger than the strong man armed may keep His house and drive the enemy back!  
Give Jesus your hearts, beloved Friends, for Wisdom bids you do it at once, because it will please God. Have you a friend to whom you wish to make a present? I know what you do—you try to find out what that friend would value, for you say, “I should like to give him what would please him.” Do you want to give God something that is sure to please Him? You need not build a Church of matchless architecture—I do not know that God cares much about stones and wood. You need not wait till you will have amassed money to endow a row of almshouses. It is well to bless the poor, but Jesus said that one who gave two mites, which made a farthing, gave more than all the rich men who cast in of their wealth into the treasury. What would God my Father like me to give? He answers, “My son, give Me your heart.” He will be pleased with that, for He, Himself, seeks the gift!  
If there are any here to whom this day is an anniversary of birth, or of marriage, or of some other joyful occasion, let them make a present to God and give Him their hearts! It is wonderful that He should word it so. “My son, give Me your heart.” I should not have dared to say such a thing if He had not said it, but He does put it so. This will please Him better than a bull that has horns and hoofs, better than smoking incense in the silver censer, better than all you can contrive of art, or purchase by wealth, or design for beauty. “My son, give Me your heart.”  
For notice, again, that if you do not give Him your heart, you cannot please Him at all. You may give God what you please, but without your heart it is all an abomination to Him! To pray without your heart is solemn mockery. To sing without your heart is an empty sound. To give, to teach, to work without your heart is

ll an insult to the Most High! You cannot do God any service till you give Him your heart! You must begin with this. Then shall your hand and purse give what they will and your tongue and brain shall give what they can, but first your heart—first your heart—your inmost self—your love—your affection. You must give Him your heart, or you give Him nothing!  
And does He not deserve it? I am not going to use that argument because, somehow, if you press a man to give a thing, at last it comes not to be a gift, but a tax. Our consecration to God must be unquestionable in its freeness. Religion is voluntary or else false. If I shall prove that your heart is God’s due, why, then, you will not give, but rather pay as though it were a debt! So I will touch that string very gently, lest, in seeking to bring forth music, I snap the chord. I will put it thus—surely it were well to give a heart for a heart. There was One who came and took human nature on Him and wore a human heart within His bosom—and that human heart was pressed full sore with sorrow till, it is written, that He wept. It was pressed still more with anguish till, it is written, “He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, falling to the ground.” He was still further overwhelmed with grief, till at last He said, “Reproach has broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness.” And then it is written, “One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side and forthwith came there out blood and water.” A heart was given for you—will you not give your heart? I say no more.  
I was about to say that I wished I could bring my Master here to stand on this platform, that you might see Him, but I know that faith comes by hearing, not by seeing! Yet would I set Him forth evidently crucified among you and for you. Oh, give Him, then, a heart for a heart, and yield yourself up to Him! Is there not a sweet whisper in your spirit that now says, “Yield your heart”? Listen to that still small voice and there shall be no need that I speak further.  
Believe me, beloved Friends, there is no getting wisdom except you give your heart to it. There is no understanding the science of Christ Crucified, which is the most excellent of all the sciences, without giving your heart to it. Some of you have been trying to be religious. You have been trying to be saved, but you have done it in an off-handed sort of style. “My son, give Me your heart.” Wisdom suggests to you that you should do it, for unless your whole heart is thrown into it, you will never prosper in it. Certain men never get on in business. They do not like their trade and so they never prosper. And, certainly, in the matter of religion, no man can ever prosper if he does not love it—if his whole heart is not in it. Some people have just enough religion to make them miserable. If they had none, they would be able to enjoy the world, but they have too much religion to be able to enjoy the world, and yet not enough to enjoy the world to come! Oh, you poor betweenites—you that hang like Mohammed ’s coffin between earth and Heaven! You that are like bats, neither birds nor beasts— you that are like a flying fish that tries to live in the air and water, too, and finds enemies in both elements! You that are neither this, nor that, nor the other—strangers in God’s country and yet not able to make yourselves at home with the devil—I pity you!  
Oh, that I could give you a tug to get you to this side of the border land! My Master bids me compel you to come in, but what can I do except repeat the message of the text? “My son, give Me your heart.” Do not be shilly-shallying any longer. Let your heart go one way or the other! If the devil is worth loving, give him your heart and serve him! But if Christ is worth loving, give Him your heart and have done with hesitation! Turn to Jesus once and for all! Oh, may His Spirit turn you and you shall be turned—and His name shall have the praise!  
III. And now I close with the third observation. LET US BE WISE ENOUGH AT ONCE TO ATTEND TO THIS ADMONITION OF WISDOM. Let us now give God our heart. “My son, give Me your heart.”  
When? At once! There is no intimation that God would have us wait a little. I wish that those persons who only mean to wait a little would fix a time when they will leave off waiting. They are always going to be right tomorrow. Which day of the month is that? I have searched the calendar and cannot find it. I have heard that there is such a thing as the fool’s calendar and that tomorrow is there—but then, you are not fools and do not keep such a calendar! Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow—it is a raven’s croak of evil omen! Today, today, today, today, today—that is the silver trumpet of salvation—and he that hears it shall live! God grant that we may not forever be crying out, “tomorrow,” but at once give our hearts to Him!  
How? If we attend to this precept, we shall notice that it calls upon us to act freely. “My son, give Me your heart.” You do not need to have it led in fetters. It might, as I have already said, prevent a thing from being a gift if you too pressingly proved that it was due. It is due, but God puts it, as it were, upon free will, for once, and leaves it to free agency. He says, “My son, give Me your heart. All that you have from Me comes as a gift of Free Grace—now freely give Me back your heart.” Remember, wherever we speak about the power of Grace, we do not mean a physical force, but only such force as may be applied to free agents and to responsible beings. The Lord begs you not to want to be crushed and pounded into repentance, nor whipped and spurred to holy living. But, “My son, give Me your heart.” I have heard that the richest juice of the grape is that which comes with the slightest pressure at the first touch. Oh, to give God our freest love! You know the old proverb that one volunteer is worth two pressed men? We shall all be pressed men in a certain sense, but yet it is written, “Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power.” May you be willing at once!  
“My son, give Me your heart.” It seems a pity that a man should have to live a long life of sin to learn that sin does not pay. It is a sad case when he comes to God with all his bones broken and enlists in the Divine army after he has spent all his youth in the service of the devil and has worn himself out. Christ will have him whenever he comes, but how much better it is, while yet you are in the days of your youth, to say, “Here, Lord, I give You my heart. Constrained by Your sweet love, I yield to You in the dawn of my being!”  
That is what the text means—give God your heart at once, and do it freely.  
Do it thoroughly. “My son, give Me your heart.” You cannot give Christ a piece of a heart, for a heart that is halved is killed. A heart that has even a little bit taken off is a dead heart. The devil does not mind having half your heart. He is quite satisfied with that because he is like the woman to whom the child did not belong—he does not mind if it is cut in halves. The true mother of the child said, “Oh, spare the child! Do not divide it!” And so Christ, who is the true Lover of hearts, will not have the heart divided. If it must go one way and the wrong way, let it go that way! But if it will go the right way, He is ready to accept it, cleanse it and perfect it—only it must go all together and not be divided. “Give Me your heart.”  
Did I hear somebody say, “I am willing to give God my heart”? Very well, then, let as look at it practically. Where is it now? You cannot give your heart up till you find out where it is. I knew a man who lost his heart. His wife had not got it and his children had not got it—and he did not seem as if he had got it himself. “That is odd,” you say. Well, he used to starve himself. He scarcely had enough to eat. His clothes were threadbare. He starved all who were round him. He did not seem to have a heart. A poor woman owed him a little rent. Out she went into the street! He had no heart. A person had fallen back a little in the payment of money that he had lent him. The debtor’s little children were crying for bread. The man did not care who cried from hunger, or what became of the children. He would have his money. He had lost his heart. I never could make out where it was till I went to his house, one day, and I saw a huge chest. I think they called it an iron safe—it stood behind the door of an inner room—and when he unlocked it with a heavy key, and the bolts were shot, and the inside was opened, there was a musty, fussy thing within it, as dry and dead as the kernel of a walnut seven years old. It was his heart! If you have locked up your heart in an iron safe, get it out! Get it out as quickly as you can! It is a horrible thing to pack up a heart in five-pound notes, or bury it under heaps of silver and gold. Hearts are never healthy when covered up with hard metal. Your gold and silver are cankered if your heart is bound up with them.  
I knew a young lady—I think I know several of that sort now—whose heart I could never see. I could not make out why she was so flighty, giddy, frothy, till I discovered that she had kept her heart in a wardrobe. A poor prison for an immortal soul, is it not? You had better fetch it out before the moth eats it as wool. When our garments become the idols of our hearts, we are such foolish things that we can hardly be said to have hearts at all! Even such foolish hearts as these, it were well to get out of the wardrobe and give to Christ.  
Where is your heart? I have known some leave it at the public house and some in places that I shall not mention, lest the cheek of modesty should crimson. But wherever your heart is, it is in the wrong place if it is not with Christ. Go, fetch it, Sir! Bring it here and give it into the hand of Him that bought it.  
But in what state is it? “Yes, there’s the rub.” For, as I told you that the miser’s heart was musty and fussy, so men’s hearts begin to smell of the places wherein they keep them. Some women’s hearts are moldy and ragged through their keeping them in the wardrobe. Some men’s hearts are cankered through keeping them among their gold. And some are rotten through and through, through keeping them steeped in vice! Where is the drunk’s heart? In what state must it be? Foul and filthy. Still God says, “Give Me your heart.” What? Such a thing as that? Yes, did I not tell you that when He asked for your heart, it was all for love of you and not for what He should get out of you? And what is such a heart as yours, my Friend, that has been in such a place and fallen into such a state? Still, give it to Him, for I will tell you what He will do—He will work wonders for your heart.  
You have heard of alchemists who took base metal, so they say, and transmuted it into gold? The Lord will do more than this. “Give Me your heart.” Poor, filthy, defiled, polluted, depraved heart!—give it to Him! It is stony now, corrupted now. He will take it and in those sacred hands of Christ, that heart shall lie till, in its place you shall see a heart of flesh, pure, clean, heavenly! “Oh,” you say, “I never could make out what to do with my hard heart.” Give it, now, to Christ and He will change it! Yield it up to the sweet power of His infinite Grace and He will renew a right spirit within you! God help you to give Jesus your heart and to do it now!  
There is going to be a collection for the hospitals. Stop, you collectors, till I have said my last word. What are you going to give? I do not mind what you are going to put into the boxes, but I want to pass round an invisible plate for my Lord. I desire to pass it round to all of you—and please, will you say to yourself when you drop your money into the box, “I am going to drop my heart into the invisible collection and give it up to Jesus. It is all that I can do”? Collectors, pass round the boxes, and you, O Spirit of God, go from man to man and take possession of all hearts for Jesus our Lord! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Proverbs 8.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—428, 522, 797. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2027 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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THE SLUGGARD’S FARM  
NO. 2027

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, JUNE 3, 1888, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I went by the field of the slothful and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding. And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw and considered it well: I looked upon it and received instruction.” Proverbs 24:30-32.**

NO DOUBT Solomon was sometimes glad to lay aside the robes of State, escape from the forms of court and go through the country unknown. On one occasion, when he was doing so, he looked over the broken wall of a little estate which belonged to a farmer of his country. This estate consisted of a piece of plowed land and a vineyard. One glance showed him that it was owned by a sluggard who neglected it, for the weeds had grown right plentifully and covered all the face of the ground. From this Solomon gathered instruction.

Men generally learn wisdom if they have wisdom. The artist’s eye sees the beauty of the landscape because he has beauty in his mind. “To him that has shall be given” and he shall have abundance, for he shall reap a harvest even from a field that is covered with thorns and nettles. There is a great difference between one man and another in the use of the mind’s eye. I have a book entitled, “The Harvest of a Quiet Eye,” and a good book it is—the harvest of a quiet eye can be gathered from a sluggard’s land as well as from a well-managed farm. When we were boys we were taught a little poem, called “Eyes and no Eyes.” There was much truth in it for some people have eyes and see not, which is much the same as having no eyes—while others have quick eyes for spying out instruction.

Some look only at the surface, while others see not only the outside shell but the living kernel of truth which is hidden in all outward things. We may find instruction everywhere. To a spiritual mind nettles have their use and weeds have their doctrine. Are not all thorns and thistles meant to be teachers to sinful men? Are they not brought forth of the earth on purpose that they may show us what sin has done and the kind of produce that will come when we sow the seed of rebellion against God?

“I went by the field of the slothful and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding,” says Solomon. “I saw and considered it well: I looked upon it and received instruction.” Whatever you see, take care to consider it well and you will not see it in vain. You shall find books and sermons everywhere—in the land and in the sea, in the earth and in the skies—and you shall learn from every living beast and bird and fish and insect and from every useful or useless plant that springs out of the ground. We may also gather rare lessons from things that we do not like. I am sure that Solomon did not in the least degree admire the thorns and the nettles that covered the face of the vineyard. But he nevertheless found instruction in

them.

Many are stung by nettles but few are taught by them. Some men are hurt by briars but here is one who was improved by them. Wisdom has a way of gathering grapes from thorns and figs from nettles and she distills good from herbs which in themselves are noisome and evil. Do not fret, therefore, over thorns but get good out of them. Do not begin stinging yourself with nettles—grip them firmly and then use them for your soul’s health. Trials and troubles, worries and turmoil, little frets and little disappointments may all help you, if you will.

Like Solomon, see and consider them well—look upon them and receive instruction. As for us, we will now, first, consider Solomon’s description of a sluggard—he is “a man void of understanding.” Secondly, we shall notice his description of the sluggard’s land—“it was all grown over with thorns and nettles had covered the face thereof.” When we have attended to these two matters we will close by endeavoring to gather the instruction which this piece of waste ground may yield us.

First think of SOLOMON’S DESCRIPTION OF A SLOTHFUL MAN. Solomon was a man whom none of us would contradict for he knew as much as all of us put together. And besides that, he was under Divine inspiration when he wrote this Book of Proverbs. Solomon says a sluggard is “a man void of understanding.” The slothful does not think so. He puts his hands in his pockets and you would think from his important air that he had all the Bank of England at his disposal. You can see that he is a very wise man in his own esteem for he gives himself airs which are meant to impress you with a sense of his superior abilities.

How he has come by his wisdom it would be hard to say. He has never taken the trouble to think, and yet I dare not say that he jumps to his conclusions because he never does such a thing as jump—he lies down and rolls into a conclusion. Yet he knows everything and has settled all points—meditation is too hard work for him and learning he never could endure. But to be clever by nature is his delight. He does not want to know more than he knows, for he knows enough already and yet he knows nothing. The Proverb is not complimentary to him and I am certain that Solomon was right when he called him, “a man void of understanding.”

Solomon was rather rude according to the dainty manners of the present times because this gentleman had a field and a vineyard and as Poor Richard says, “When I have a horse and a cow every man bids me good morrow.” How can a man be void of understanding who has a field and a vineyard? Is it not generally understood that you must measure a man’s understanding by the amount of his ready cash? At all events you shall soon be flattered for your attainments if you have attained unto wealth. Such is the way of the world—but such is not the way of Scripture. Whether he has a field and a vineyard or not, says Solomon, if he is a sluggard he is a fool—or if you would like to see his name written out a little larger—he is a man empty of understanding.  
Not only does he not understand anything but he has no understanding to understand with. He is empty-headed if he is a sluggard. He may be called a gentleman, he may be a landed proprietor, he may have a vineyard and a field. But he is none the better for what he has—no, he is so much the worse—because he is a man void of understanding. and is, therefore, unable to make use of his property.

I am glad to be told by Solomon so plainly that a slothful man is void of understanding for it is useful information. I have met with persons who thought they perfectly understood the Doctrines of Grace, who could accurately set forth the election of the saints, the predestination of God, the firmness of the Divine decree, the necessity of the Spirit’s work and all the glorious Doctrines of Grace which build up the fabric of our faith. But these gentlemen have inferred from these doctrines that they have to do nothing and thus they have become sluggards. Do-nothing-ism is their creed. They will not even urge other people to labor for the Lord, because, say they, “God will do His own work. Salvation is all of grace!”

The notion of these sluggards is that a man is to wait and do nothing. He is to sit still and let the grass grow up to his ankles in the hope of heavenly help. To arouse himself would be an interference with the eternal purpose which he regards as altogether unwarrantable. I have known him to look sour, shake his aged head and say hard things against earnest people who were trying to win souls. I have known him to run down young people and like a great steam ram, sink them to the bottom by calling them unsound and ignorant. How shall we survive the censures of this dogmatic person? How shall we escape from this very knowing and very captious sluggard?

Solomon hastens to the rescue and extinguishes this gentleman by informing us that he is void of understanding. Why, he is the standard of orthodoxy, and he judges everybody! Yet Solomon applies another standard to him and says he is void of understanding! He may know the doctrine but he does not understand it. Or else he would know that the Doctrines of Grace lead us to seek the Divine Grace of the doctrines. And he would know that when we see God at work we learn that He works in us, not to make us go to sleep but to will and to do of His good pleasure. God’s predestination of a people is in His ordaining them unto good works that they may show forth His praise. So, if you or I shall, from any doctrines, however true, draw the inference that we are warranted in being idle and indifferent about the things of God, we are void of understanding.

We are acting like fools. We are misusing the Gospel. We are taking what was meant for meat and turning it into poison. The sluggard, whether he is sluggish about his business or about his soul, is a man void of understanding. As a rule we may measure a man’s understanding by his useful activities. This is what the wise man very plainly tells us. Certain persons call themselves “cultured,” and yet they cultivate nothing. Modern thought, as far as I have seen anything of its actual working, is a bottle of smoke out of which comes nothing solid. Yet we know men who can distinguish and divide, debate and discuss, refine and refute and all the while the hemlock is growing in the furrow and the plow is rusting.

Friend, if your knowledge, if your culture, if your education does not lead you practically to serve God in your day and generation, you have not learned what Solomon calls wisdom and you are not like the Blessed One, who was incarnate Wisdom, of whom we read that, “He went about doing good.” A lazy man is not like our Savior, who said, “My Father works up to now and I work.” True wisdom is practical—boastful culture vapors and theorizes. Wisdom plows its field, wisdom hoes its vineyard, wisdom looks to its crops, wisdom tries to make the best of everything. And he who does not do so, whatever may be his knowledge of this, of that, or of the other— is a man void of understanding.

Why is he void of understanding? Is it not because he has opportunities which he does not use? His day has come, his day is going and he lets the hours glide by to no purpose. Let me not press too harshly upon anyone but let me ask you all to press as harshly as you can upon yourselves while you enquire each one of himself—“Am I employing the minutes as they fly?” This man had a vineyard but he did not cultivate it. He had a field but he did not till it. Do you, Brethren, use all your opportunities? I know we each one have some power to serve God—do we use it? If we are His children He has not put one of us where we are of necessity, useless.

Somewhere we may shine by the light which He has given us, though that light be only a farthing candle. Are we thus shining? Do we sow beside all waters? Do we in the morning sow our seed and in the evening still stretch out our hand? If not, we are rebuked by the sweeping censure of Solomon, who says that the slothful man is a “man void of understanding.” Having opportunities he did not use them and being bound to the performance of certain duties he did not fulfill them. When God appointed that every Israelite should have a piece of land under that admirable system which made every Israelite a landowner, He meant that each man should possess his plot—not to let it go to waste—but to cultivate it.

When God put Adam in the garden of Eden it was not that he should walk through the glades and watch the spontaneous luxuriance of the unfallen earth, but that he might dress it and keep it. And He had the same end in view when He allotted each Jew his piece of land. He meant that the holy soil should reach the utmost point of fertility through the labor of those who owned it. Thus the possession of a field and a vineyard involved responsibilities upon the sluggard which he never fulfilled and therefore he was void of understanding. What is your position, dear Friend? A father? A master? A servant? A minister? A teacher? Well, you have your farms and your vineyards in those particular spheres.

If you do not use those positions aright you will be void of understanding because you neglect the end of your existence. You miss the high calling which your Maker has set before you. The slothful farmer was unwise in these two respects and in another also. For he had capacities which he did not employ. He could have tilled the field and cultivated the vineyard if he had chosen to do so. He was not a sickly man who was forced to keep to his bed but he was a lazybones who was there of choice. You are not asked to do in the service of God that which is utterly beyond you—it is expected of us according to what we have—not according to what we have not.

The man of two talents is not required to bring in the interest of five but he is expected to bring in the interest of two. Solomon’s slothful man was too idle to attempt tasks which were quite within his power. Many have a number of dormant faculties of which they are scarcely aware and many more have abilities which they are using for themselves and not for Him who created them. Dear Friends, if God has given us any power to do good, let us do it, for this is a wicked, weary world. We should not even cover a glow-worm’s light in such a darkness as this. We should not keep back a syllable of Divine Truth in a world that is full of falsehood and error.

However feeble our voices, let us lift them up for the cause of the Truth of God and righteousness. Do not let us be void of understanding because we have opportunities that we do not use, obligations that we do not fulfill and capacities which we do not exercise. As for a sluggard in soul matters, he is indeed void of understanding, for he trifles with matters which demand his most earnest heed. Man, have you ever cultivated your heart? Has the plowshare ever broken up the clods of your soul? Has the seed of the Word ever been sown in you? Or has it taken no root? Have you ever watered the young plants of desire? Have you ever sought to pull up the weeds of sin that grow in your heart?

Are you still a piece of the bare common or wild hearth? Poor Soul! You can trim your body and spend many a minute at the glass—do you not care for your soul? How long you take to decorate your poor flesh which is but worm’s meat, or would be in a minute if God took away your breath! And yet all the while your soul is uncombed, unwashed, unclad—a poor neglected thing! Oh, it should not be so! You take care of the worse part and leave the better to perish through neglect. This is the height of folly! He that is a sluggard as to the vineyard of his heart is a man void of understanding. If I must be idle, let it be seen in my field and my garden, but not in my soul.

Are you a Christian? Are you really saved and are you negligent in the Lord’s work? Then, indeed, whatever you may be, I cannot help saying you have too little understanding. For surely, when a man is himself saved, and understands the danger of other men’s souls, he must be in earnest in trying to pluck the firebrands from the flame. A Christian sluggard! Is there such a being? A Christian man on half-time? A Christian man working not all for his Lord—how shall I speak of him? Time does not tarry, DEATH does not tarry, HELL does not tarry. Satan is not lazy, all the powers of darkness are busy—how is it that you and I can be sluggish, if the Master has put us into His vineyard? Surely we must be void of understanding if, after being saved by the infinite love of God, we do not spend and are not spent in His service. The eternal fitness of things demands that a saved man should be an earnest man.

The Christian who is slothful in his Master’s service has no idea what he is losing. For the very cream of religion lies in holy consecration to God. Some people have just enough religion to make it questionable whether they have any or not. They have enough godliness to make them

uneasy in their ungodliness. They have washed enough of their face to show the dirt upon the rest of it. “I am glad,” said a servant, “that my mistress takes the sacrament, for otherwise I should not know she had any religion at all.” You smile and well you may. It is ridiculous that some people should have no goods in their shop and yet advertise their business in all the papers—should make a show of religion and yet have none of the Spirit of God.

I wish some professors would do Christ the justice to say, “No, I am not one of His disciples. Do not think so badly of Him as to imagine that I can be one of them.” We ought to be reflections of Christ. But I fear many are reflections upon Christ. When we see a lot of lazy servants we are apt to think that their master must be a very idle person himself, or he would never put up with them. He who employs sluggards and is satisfied with their snail-like pace cannot be a very active man himself. O, let not the world think that Christ is indifferent to human woe, that Christ has lost His zeal, that Christ has lost His energy—yet I fear they will say it or think it if they see those who profess to be laborers in the vineyard of Christ not better than mere sluggards.

The slothful man, then, is a man void of understanding. He loses the honor and pleasure which he would find in serving his Master. He is a dishonor to the cause which he professes to venerate and he is storing up thorns for his dying pillow. Let that stand as settled—the slothful man, whether he is a minister, deacon, or private Christian—is a man void of understanding.

Now, secondly, LET US LOOK AT THE SLUGGARD’S LAND—“I went by the field of the slothful and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding. And lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof.” Note, first, that land will produce something. Soil which is good enough to be made into a field and a vineyard must and will yield some fruit or other. And so you and I, in our hearts and in the sphere God gives us to occupy, will be sure to produce something. We cannot live in this world as entire blanks. We shall either do good or do evil, as sure as we are alive. If you are idle in Christ’s work, you are active in the devil’s work.

The sluggard, by sleeping, was doing more for the cultivation of thorns and nettles than he could have done by any other means. As a garden will either yield flowers or weeds, fruits or thistles, so something either good or evil will come out of our household, our class, or our congregation. If we do not produce a harvest of good by laboring for Christ, we shall grow tares to be bound up in bundles for the last dread burning. Note again that if it is not farmed for God, the soul will yield its natural produce. And what is the natural produce of land if left to itself? What but thorns and nettles, or some other useless weeds?

What is the natural produce of your heart and mine? What but sin and misery? What is the natural produce of your children if you leave them untrained for God? What but unholiness and vice? What is the natural produce of this great city if we leave its streets and lanes and alleys without the Gospel? What but crime and infamy? There will be harvests and the sheaves will be the natural produce of the soil, which is sin, death and corruption. If we are slothful, the natural produce of our heart and of our sphere will be most inconvenient and unpleasant to ourselves.

Nobody can sleep on thorns, or make a pillow of nettles. No rest can come out of an idleness which lets ill alone and does not by God’s Spirit strive to uproot evil. While you are sleeping, Satan will be sowing. If you withhold the seed of good, Satan will be lavish with the seed of evil and from that evil will come anguish and regret for time—and it may be for eternity. O Man, the garden put into your charge, if you waste your time in slumber, will reward you with all that is noisome and painful. “Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you.”

In many instances there will be a great deal of this evil produce. For a field and a vineyard will yield more thistles and nettles than a piece of ground that has never been reclaimed. If the land is good enough for a garden it will present its owner with a fine crop of weeds if he only stays his hand. A choice bit of land fit for a vineyard of red wine will render such a profusion of nettles to the slothful man that he shall rub his eyes with surprise. The man who might do most for God, if he were renewed, will bring forth most for Satan if he is let alone. The very region which would have glorified God most if the Grace of God were there to convert its inhabitants will be that out of which the vilest enemies of the Gospel will arise.

Rest assured of that. The best will become the worse if we neglect it. Neglect is all that is needed to produce evil. If you want to know the way of salvation I must take some pains to tell you. But if you want to know the way to be lost, my reply is easy. For it is only a matter of negligence— “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” If you desire to bring forth a harvest unto God, I may need long to instruct you in plowing, sowing and watering. But if you wish your mind to be covered with Satan’s hemlock, you have only to leave the furrows of your nature to themselves. The slothful man asks for “a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep”—and the thorns and thistles multiply beyond all numbering and prepare for him many a sting.

While we look upon the lazy man’s vineyard let us also peep into the ungodly sluggard’s heart. He does not care about repentance and faith. To think about his soul, to be in earnest about eternity, is too much for him. He wants to take things easy and have a little more folding of the arms to sleep. What is growing in his mind and character? In some of these spiritual sluggards you can see drunkenness, uncleanness, covetousness, anger and pride and all sorts of thistles and nettles. Or where these ranker weeds do not appear, by reason of the restraint of pious connections, you find other sorts of sin. The heart cannot possess it.

My dear Friend, if you are not decided for God you cannot be neutral. In this war every man is for God or for His enemy. You cannot remain like a sheet of blank paper. The legible handwriting of Satan is upon you—can you not see the blots? Unless Christ has written across the page His own sweet name, the autograph of Satan is visible. You may say, “I do not go into open sin. I am moral,” and so forth. Ah, if you would but look and

consider and search into your heart you would see that enmity to God and to His ways and hatred of purity are there. You do not love God’s Law nor love His Son, nor love His Gospel. You are alienated in your heart and there is in you all manner of evil desires and vain thoughts and these will flourish and increase so long as you are a spiritual sluggard and leave your heart uncultivated.

O, may the Spirit of God arouse you! May you be stirred to anxious, earnest thoughts, and then you will see that these rank growths must be uprooted. Then you will see that your heart must be turned up by the plow of conviction and sown with the good seed of the Gospel—till a harvest rewards the great Husbandman.

Friend, if you believe in Christ, I want to peep over the hedge into your heart, also—if you are a sluggish Christian. For I fear that nettles and thistles are a threat to you, also. Did I not hear you sing the other day—“It is a point I long to know”? That point will often be raised, for doubt is a seed which is sure to grow in lazy men’s minds. I do not remember reading in Mr. Wesley’s diary a question about his own salvation. He was so busy in the harvest of the Master that it did not occur to him to distrust his God.

Some Christians have little faith in consequence of their having never sown the grain of mustard seed which they have received. If you do not sow your faith by using it, how can it grow? When a man lives by faith in Christ Jesus and his faith exercises itself actively in the service of his Lord, it takes root, grows upward and becomes strong till it chokes his doubts. Some have sadly morbid forebodings. They are discontented, fretful, selfish, murmuring—and all because they are idle. These are the weeds that grow in sluggards’ gardens. I have known the slothful become so peevish that nothing could please them.

The most earnest Christian could not do right for them. The most loving Christians could not be affectionate enough. The most active Church could not be energetic enough. They detected all sorts of wrong where God Himself saw much of the fruit of His Spirit. This censoriousness, this contention, this perpetual complaining is one of the nettles that are quite sure to grow in men’s gardens when they fold their arms in sinful ease. If your heart does not yield fruit to God it will certainly bring forth that which is mischievous in itself—painful to you and injurious to your fellow men. Often the thorns choke the good seed. But it is a very blessed thing when the good seed comes up so thick and fast that it chokes the thorns.

God enables certain Christians to become so fruitful in Christ that their graces and works stand thick together and when Satan throws in the tares they cannot grow because there is not room for them. The Holy Spirit by His power makes evil to become weak in the heart so that it no longer keeps the upper hand. If you are slothful, Friend, look over the field of your heart and weep at the sight. May I next ask you to look into your own house and home? It is a dreadful thing when a man does not cultivate the field of his own family.

I recollect in my early days a man who used to walk out with me into the villages when I was preaching. I was glad of his company till I found out certain facts and then I shook him off and I believe he hooked on to somebody else, for he must needs be gadding abroad every evening of the week. He had many children and these grew up to be wicked young men and women and the reason was that the father, while he would be at this meeting and that, never tried to bring his own children to the Savior. What is the use of zeal abroad if there is neglect at home? How sad to say, “My own vineyard have I not kept.”

Have you ever heard of one who said he did not teach his children the ways of God because he thought they were so young that it was very wrong to prejudice them and he had rather leave them to choose their own religion when they grew older? One of his boys broke his arm and while the surgeon was setting it the boy was swearing all the time. “Ah,” said the good doctor, “I told you what would happen. You were afraid to prejudice your boy in the right way but the devil had no such qualms. He has prejudiced him the other way and pretty strongly, too.”

It is our duty to prejudice our field in favor of corn, or it will soon be covered with thistles. Cultivate a child’s heart for good—or it will go wrong of itself—for it is already depraved by nature. O that we were wise enough to think of this and leave no little one to become a prey to the Destroyer. As it is with homes, so it is with schools. A gentleman who joined this Church some time ago had been an atheist for years and in conversing with him I found that he had been educated at one of our great public schools and to that fact he traced his infidelity.

He said that the boys were stowed away on Sunday in a lofty gallery at the far end of a Church, where they could scarcely hear a word that the clergyman said but simply sat imprisoned in a place where it was dreadfully hot in summer and cold in winter. On Sundays there were prayers and prayers and prayers but nothing that ever touched his heart until he was so sick of prayers that he vowed if he once got out of the school he would have done with religion. This is a sad result, but a frequent one. You Sunday school teachers can make your classes so tiresome to the children that they will hate Sunday. You can fritter away the time in school without bringing the lads and lasses to Christ and so you may do more hurt than good.

I have known Christian fathers who by their severity and want of tenderness have sown their family field with the thorns and thistles of hatred to religion instead of scattering the good seed of love to it. O that we may so but love our Father who is in Heaven. May fathers and mothers set such an example of cheerful piety that sons and daughters shall say, “Let us tread in our father’s footsteps, for he was a happy and a holy man. Let us follow our mother’s ways, for she was sweetness itself.” If piety does not rule in your house, when we pass by your home we shall see disorder, disobedience, pride of dress, folly and the beginnings of vice.

Let not your home be a sluggard’s field, or you will have to rue it in years to come. Let every deacon, every class leader and also every minister enquire diligently into the state of the field he has to cultivate. You see, Brothers and Sisters, if you and I are set over any department of our

Lord’s work and we are not diligent in it we shall be like barren trees planted in an orchard. They are a loss altogether because they occupy the places of other trees which might have brought forth fruit unto their owners. We shall cumber the ground and do damage to our Lord unless we render Him actual service.

Will you think about this? If you could be put down as a mere cipher in the accounts of Christ, that would be very sad. But, Brothers and Sisters, it cannot be so—you will cause a deficit unless you create a gain. Oh that through the Grace of God we may be profitable to our Lord and Master. Who among us can look upon His life-work without some sorrow? If anything has been done aright we ascribe it all to the Grace of God. But how much there is to weep over! How much that we would wish to amend! Let us not spend time in idle regrets but pray for the Spirit of God that in the future we may not be void of understanding but may know what we ought to do and where the strength must come from with which to do it. And then pray for Divine Grace to give ourselves up to the doing of it.

I beg you, once more, to look at the great field of the world. Do you see how it is overgrown with thorns and nettles? If an angel could take a survey of the whole race, what tears he would shed, if angels could weep! What a tangled mass of weeds the whole earth is! Yonder the field is scarlet with the poppy of popery and over the hedge it is yellow with the wild mustard of Mohammedanism. Vast regions are smothered with the thistles of infidelity and idolatry. The world is full of cruelty, oppression, drunkenness, rebellion, uncleanness, misery. What the moon sees! What God’s sun sees! What scenes of horror! How far is all this to be attributed to a neglectful Church?

Nearly nineteen hundred years are gone and the sluggard’s vineyard is but little improved! England has been touched with the spade but I cannot say that it has been thoroughly weeded or plowed yet. Across the ocean another field equally favored knows well the Plowman and yet the weeds are rank. Here and there a little good work has been done but the vast mass of the world still lies a moorland never broken up, a waste, a howling wilderness. What has the Church been doing all these years? She ceased after a few centuries to be a missionary Church and from that hour she almost ceased to be a living Church. Whenever a Church does not labor for the reclaiming of the desert it becomes itself a waste.

You shall not find on the roll of history that for a length of time any Christian community has flourished after it has become negligent of the outside world. I believe that if we are put into the Master’s vineyard and will not take away the weeds, neither shall the vine flourish nor shall the corn yield its increase. However, instead of asking what the Church has been doing for this nineteen hundred years, let us ask ourselves, What are we going to do now? Are the missions of the Churches of Great Britain always to be such poor, feeble things as they are? Are the best of our Christian young men always going to stay at home?

We go on plowing the home field a hundred times over, while millions of acres abroad are left to the thorn and nettle. Shall it always be so? God send us more spiritual life and wake us up from our sluggishness, or else when the holy watcher gives in His report, He will say, “I went by the field of the sluggish Church, and it was all grown over with thorns and nettles and the stone wall was broken down, so that one could scarcely tell which was the Church and which was the world, yet still she slept and slept and slept and nothing could waken her.”

I conclude by remarking that THERE MUST BE SOME LESSON IN ALL THIS. I cannot teach it as I would like. I want to learn it myself. I will speak it as though I were talking to myself. The first lesson is that unaided nature always will produce thorns and nettles and nothing else. My Soul, if it were not for Divine Grace, this is all you would have produced. Beloved, are you producing anything else? Then it is not nature but the Grace of God that makes you produce it. Those lips that now most charmingly sing the praises of God would have been delighted with an idle ballad if the Grace of God had not sanctified them.

Your heart, that now clings to Christ would have continued to cling to your idols—you know what they were—if it had not been for Divine Grace. And why should Divine Grace have visited you or me—why? Echo answers, Why? What answer can we give? “It is even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” Let the remembrance of what Divine Grace has done move us to manifest the result of that Grace in our lives. Come, Brothers and Sisters, inasmuch as we were aforetime rich enough in the soil of our nature to produce so much of nettle and thistle—and God only knows how much we did produce—let us now pray that our lives may yield as much of good corn for the great Husbandman.

Will you serve Christ less than you served your lusts? Will you make less sacrifice for Christ than you did for your sins? Some of you were whole-hearted enough when in the service of the Evil One. Will you be half-hearted in the service of God? Shall the Holy Spirit produce less fruit in you than that which you yielded under the spirit of evil? God grant that we may not be left to prove what nature will produce if left to itself.

We see here, next, the little value of natural good intentions. This man who left his field and vineyard to be overgrown always meant to work hard one of these fine days. To do him justice we must admit that he did not mean to sleep much longer, for he said—“Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.” Only a little doze and then he would tuck up his sleeves and show his muscle. Probably the worst people in the world are those who have the best intentions but never carry them out. In that way Satan lulls many to sleep. They hear an earnest sermon. But they do not arise and go to their Father. They only get as far as saying, “Yes, yes, the far country is not a fit place for me. I will not stay here long. I mean to go home by-and-by.”

They said that forty years ago but nothing came of it. When they were quite youths they had serious impressions. They were almost persuaded to be Christians and yet they are not Christians even now. They have been slumbering forty years! Surely that is a liberal share of sleep! They never intended to dream so long, and now they do not mean to lie in bed much longer. They will not turn to Christ at once but they are resolved to do so one day. When are you going to do it, Friend? “Before I die.” Going to put

it off to the last hour or two, are you? And so, when unconscious and drugged to relieve your pain, you will begin to think of your soul? Is this wise?

Surely you are void of understanding. Perhaps you will die in an hour. Did you not hear the other day of the alderman who died in his carriage? Little must he have dreamed of that. How would it have fared with you had you also been smitten while riding at your ease? Have you not heard of persons who fall dead at their work? What is to hinder your dying with a spade in your hand? I am often startled when I am told in the week that one whom I saw on Sunday is dead—gone from the shop to the Judgment Seat.

It is not a very long time ago since one went out at the doorway of the Tabernacle and fell dead on the threshold. We have had deaths in the House of God, unexpected deaths. And sometimes people are hurried away unprepared who never meant to have died unconverted—who always had from their youth up some kind of desire to be ready, only still they wanted a little more sleep. Oh, my Hearers, take heed of little delays and short pauses. You have wasted time enough already—come to the point at once before the clock strikes again. May God the Holy Spirit bring you to decision.

“Surely you do not object to my having a little more sleep?” says the sluggard. “You have waked me so soon. I only ask another little nap.” “My dear man, it is far into the morning.” He answers, “It is rather late, I know, but it will not be much later if I take just another doze.” You wake him again and tell him it is noon. He says, “It is the hottest part of the day—I daresay if I had been up I should have gone to the sofa and taken a little rest from the hot sun.” You knock at his door when it is almost evening and then he cries, “It is of no use to get up now, for the day is almost over.” You remind him of his overgrown field and weedy vineyard and he answers, “Yes, I must get up, I know.” He shakes himself and says, “I do not think it will matter much if I wait till the clock strikes. I will rest another minute or two.”

He is glued to his bed, dead while he lives, buried in his laziness. If he could sleep forever he would, but he cannot, for the Judgment Day will rouse him. It is written, “And in Hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment.” God grant that you spiritual sluggards may wake before that. But you will not unless you bestir yourselves, for “now is the accepted time.” And it may be now or never. Tomorrow is only to be found in the calendar of fools. Today is the time of the wise man, the chosen season of our gracious God.

Oh that the Holy Spirit may lead you to seize the present hour, that you may at once give yourselves to the Lord by faith in Christ Jesus! And then from His vineyard—“Quickly uproot the noisome weeds, that without profit suck the soil’s fertility from wholesome plants.”

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THE BROKEN FENCE  
NO. 3381

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1913. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered its surface, and the stone wall was broken down.***

***Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked on it and received instruction.” Proverbs 24:30-32.***

THIS lazy man did no hurt to his fellow men—he was not a thief, nor a ruffian, nor a meddler in anybody else’s business. He did not trouble himself about other men’s concerns, for he did not even attend to his own—it required too much exertion. He was not grossly vicious. He had not energy enough to care for that. He was one who liked to take things easily. He always let well enough alone and, for the that matter, he let ill alone, too, as the nettles and the thistles in his garden plainly proved! What was the use of disturbing himself? It would be all the same a hundred years hence and so he took things just as they came. He was not a bad man, so some said of him, and yet, perhaps it will be found at last that there is no worse man in the world than the man who is not good, for in some respects he is not good enough to be bad! He has not enough force of character about him to serve either God or Baal. He simply serves himself, worshipping his own ease and adoring his own comfort. Yet he always meant to be right. Dear me, he was not going to sleep much longer, he would only have forty winks more and then he would be at his work—and show you what he could do! One of these days he meant to be thoroughly in earnest and make up for lost time. The time never actually came for him to begin, but it was always coming. He always meant to repent, but he went on in his sin. He meant to believe, but he died an unbeliever. He meant to be a Christian, but he lived without Christ. He halted between two opinions because he could not trouble himself to make up his mind! And so he perished of delay.

This picture of the slothful man and his garden and field overgrown with nettles and weeds represents many a man who has professed to be a Christian, but who has become slothful in the things of God. Spiritual life has withered in him. He has backslidden. He has come down from the condition of healthy spiritual energy into one of listlessness and indifference to the things of God. And while things have gone wrong within his heart and all sorts of mischiefs have come into him and grown up and seeded themselves in him, mischief is also taking place externally in his daily conduct. The stone wall which guarded his character is broken down and he lies open to all evil. Upon this point we will now meditate. “The stone wall was broken down.”

Come, then, let us take a walk with Solomon and stand with him and consider and learn instruction while we look at this broken-down fence. When we have examined it, let us consider the consequences of brokendown walls. And then, in the last place, let us try to wake up this sluggard that his wall may yet be repaired. If this slothful person should be one of ourselves, may God’s Infinite Mercy awaken us before this ruined wall has let in a herd of prowling vices! First, let us take—

I. A LOOK AT THIS BROKEN FENCE.  
You will see that in the beginning it was a very good fence, for it was a stone wall. Fields are often surrounded with wooden fences which soon decay, or with hedges which may very easily have gaps made in them. But this was a stone wall. Such walls are very usual in the East and are also common in some of our own counties where stone is plentiful. It was a substantial protection to begin with and well shut in the pretty little estate which had fallen into such bad hands. The man had a field for agricultural purposes and another strip of land for a vineyard or a garden. It was fertile soil, for it produced thorns and nettles in abundance—and where these flourish, better things can be produced—yet the idler took no care of his property, but allowed the wall to get into bad repair and in many places to be quite broken down.  
Let me mention some of the stone walls that men permit to be broken down when they backslide.  
In many cases sound principles were instilled in youth, but these are forgotten. What a blessing is Christian education! Our parents, both by persuasion and example, taught many of us the things that are pure and honest and of good repute. We saw in their lives how to live. They also opened the Word of God before us and they taught us the ways of right both toward God and toward men. They prayed for us and they prayed with us till the things of God were placed round about us, and shut us in as with a stone wall! We have never been able to get rid of our early impressions. Even in times of wandering, before we savingly knew the Lord, these things had a healthy power over us—we were checked when we would have done evil—we were assisted when we were struggling towards Christ. It is very sad when people permit these first principles to be shaken and to be removed like stones which fall from a boundary wall! Young persons begin at first to talk lightly of the old-fashioned ways of their parents. By-and-by it is not merely the old-fashionedness of the ways, but the ways, themselves, that they despise! They seek other company and from that other company they learn nothing but evil. They seek pleasure in places which it horrifies their parents to think of. This leads to worse—and if they do not bring their fathers’ gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, it is no virtue of theirs. I have known young men who really were Christians, sadly backslide through being induced to modify, conceal, or alter those holy principles in which they were trained from their mother’s knee. It is a great calamity when professedly converted men become unfixed, unstable and carried about with every wind of Doctrine. It shows great faultiness of mind and unsoundness of heart when we can trifle with those grave and solemn Truths of God which have been sanctified by a mother’s tears and by a father’s earnest life! “I am Your servant,” said David, “and the son of Your handmaid.” He felt it to be a high honor and, at the same time, a sacred bond which bound him to God, that he was the son of one who could be called God’s handmaid. Take care, you who have had Christian training, that you do not trifle with it! “My son, keep your father’s commandments and forsake not the law of your mother: bind them continually upon your heart and tie them about your neck.”  
Protection to character is also found in the fact that solid Doctrines have been learned. This is a fine stone wall. Many among us have been taught the Gospel of the Grace of God and have learned it well, so that we are able to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Happy are they who have a religion that is grounded upon a clear knowledge of eternal Truths of God! A religion which is all excitement and has little instruction in it, may serve for transient use, but for permanent life purposes there must be a knowledge of those great Doctrines which are fundamental to the Gospel system. I tremble when I hear of a man’s giving up, one by one, the vital principles of the Gospel and boasting of his liberality! I hear him say, “These are my views, but others have a right to their views also.” That is a very proper expression in reference to mere, “views,” but we may not thus speak of Truth, itself, as revealed by God that is one and unalterable, and all are bound to receive it! It is not your view of the Truth, for that is a dim thing, but the very Truth of God, itself, which will save you if your faith embraces it. I will readily yield my way of stating a Doctrine, but not the Doctrine, itself! One man may put it in this way, and another man, another way, but the Truth, itself, must never be given up. The spirit of the Broad School robs us of everything like certainty. I should like to ask some great men of that order whether they believe that anything is taught in the Scriptures which it would be worthwhile for a person to die for—and whether the martyrs were not great fools for laying down their lives for mere opinions which might be right or might be wrong? This Broad Churchism is a breaking down of stone walls and it will let in the devil and all his crew and do infinite harm to the Church of God if it is not stopped! A loose state of belief does great damage to any man’s mind.  
We are not bigots, but we should be none the worse if we so lived that men called us so. I met a man the other day who was accused of bigotry and I said, “Give me your hand, old fellow. I like to meet with bigots now and then, for the fine old creatures are getting scarce! And the stuff they are made of is so good that if there were more of it, we might see a few men among us again and fewer mollusks.” Lately we have seen few men with backbones—the most have been of the jelly-fish order. I have lived in times in which I should have said, “Be liberal and shake off all narrowness,” but now I am obliged to alter my tone and cry, “Be steadfast in the Truth of God!” The faith once delivered to the saints is now all the more attractive to me because it is called narrow, for I am weary of that breadth which comes of broken hedges! There are fixed points of the Truth of God, and definite certainties of creed—and woe to you if you allow these stone walls to crumble down! I fear that the slothful are a numerous band and that ages to come may have to deplore the laxity which has been applauded by this negligent generation!  
Another fence which is too often neglected is that of godly habits which had been formed. The sluggard allows this wall to be broken down. I will mention some valuable guards of life and character. One is the habit of secret prayer. Private prayer should be regularly offered, at least in the morning and in the evening. We cannot do without set seasons for drawing near to God. To look into the face of man without having first seen the face of God is very dangerous—to go out into the world without locking up the heart and giving God the key is to leave it open to all sorts of spiritual vagrants! At night, again, to go to your rest as the swine roll into their sty, without thanking God for the mercies of the day, is shameful! The evening sacrifice should be devoutly offered as surely as we have enjoyed the evening fireside. We should thus put ourselves under the wings of the Preserver of Men. It may be said, “We can pray at all times.” I know we can, but I fear that those who do not pray at stated hours seldom pray at all! Those who pray in season are the most likely persons to pray at all seasons. Spiritual life does not care for a cast-iron regulation, but since life casts itself into some mold or other, I would have you careful of its external habit, as well as its internal power. Never allow great gaps in the wall of your habitual private prayer!  
I go a step farther. I believe that there is a great guardian power about family prayer and I feel greatly distressed because I know that very many Christian families neglect it. Romanism, at one time, could do nothing in England because it could offer nothing but the shadow of what Christians had already in substance. “Do you hear that bell tinkling in the morning! What is that for? To go to church to pray!” “Indeed,” said the Puritan, “I have no need to go there to pray. I have had my children together and we have read a passage of Scripture, prayed, sang the praises of God—we have a church in our house.” Ah, there goes that bell again in the evening. What is that for? Why, it is the vesper bell! The good man answered that he had no need to trudge a mile or two for that, for his holy vespers had been said and sung around his own table, of which the big Bible was the chief ornament! They told him that there could be no service without a priest, but he replied that every godly man should be a priest in his own house. Thus have the saints defied the overtures of priestcraft and kept the faith from generation to generation! Household devotion and the pulpit are, under God, the stone walls of Protestantism! And my prayer is that these may not be broken down.  
Another fence to protect piety is found in weeknight services. I notice that when people forsake weeknight meetings the power of their religion evaporates. I do not speak of those lawfully detained to watch the sick and attend to farm-work and other business, or as domestic servants and the like—there are exceptions to all rules—but I mean those who could attend if they had a mind to do so. When people say, “It is quite enough for me to be wearied with the sermons of the Sunday. I do not want to go out to Prayer Meetings, lectures and so forth”—then it is clear that they have no appetite for the Word of God—and surely this is a bad sign. If you have a bit of wall built to protect the Sunday, and then six times the distance left without a fence, I believe that Satan’s cattle will get in and do no end of mischief!  
Take care, also, of the stone wall of Bible reading, and of speaking often, one to another, concerning the things of God. Associate with the godly and commune with God and you will thus, by the blessing of God’s Spirit, keep up a good fence against temptations, which otherwise will get into the fields of your soul and devour all goodly fruits!  
Many have found much protection for the field of daily life in the stone wall of a public profession of faith. I am speaking to you who are real Believers and I know that you have often found it a great safeguard to be known and recognized as a follower of Jesus! I have never regretted—and I never shall regret—the day on which I walked to the little river Lark, in Cambridgeshire, and was there buried with Christ in Baptism! In this I acted contrary to the opinions of all my friends whom I respected and esteemed—but as I had read the Greek Testament for myself, I felt bound to be immersed upon the profession of my faith, and so I was. By that act I said to the world, “I am dead to you, and buried to you in Christ, and I hope henceforth to live in newness of life.” That day, by God’s Grace, I imitated the tactics of the general who meant to fight the enemy till he conquered and, therefore, he burned his boats that there might be no way of retreat! I believe that a solemn confession of

Christ before men is as a thorn hedge to keep one within bounds and to keep off those who hope to draw you aside. Of course, it is nothing but a hedge—and it is of no use to fence in a field of weeds—but when wheat is growing, a hedge is of great consequence. You who imagine that you can be the Lord’s and yet lie open like a common, are under a great error! You ought to be distinguished from the world and obey the Voice which says, “Come you out from among them, be you separate.” The promise of salvation is to the man who with his heart believes and with his mouth confesses. Say right boldly, “Let others do as they will! As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” By this act you come out into the King’s highway and put yourself under the protection of the Lord of Pilgrims—and He will take care of you. Oftentimes, when otherwise you might have hesitated, you will say, “The vows of the Lord are upon me—how can I draw back?” I pray you, then, set up the stone wall and keep it up! And if it has at any corner been tumbled over, set it up again and let it be seen by your conduct and conversation that you are a follower of Jesus Christ—and are not ashamed to have it known!  
Keep to your religious principles like men and do not turn aside for the sake of gain or respectability! Do not let wealth break down your wall, for I have known some make a great gap to let their carriage go through and to let in wealthy worldlings for the sake of their society. Those who forsake their principles to please men will in the end be lightly esteemed, but he who is faithful shall have the honor which comes from God. Look well to this hedge of steadfast adherence to the faith and you shall find a great blessing in it.  
There is yet another stone wall which I will mention, namely, firmness of character. Our holy faith teaches a man to be decided in the cause of Christ and to be resolute in getting rid of evil habits. “If your eye offends you”—wear a shade? No—“pluck it out.” “If your arm offends you”—hang it in a sling? No—cut it off and cast it from you.” True religion is very thorough in what it recommends. It says to us, “touch not the unclean thing.” But many persons are so idle in the ways of God that they have no mind of their own—evil companions tempt them, and they cannot say, “No.” They need a stone wall made up of noes! Here are the stones, “no, no, No.” Dare to be different! Resolve to keep close to Christ! Make a stern determination to permit nothing in your life, however gainful or pleasurable, if it would dishonor the name of Jesus! Be dogmatically true, obstinately holy, immovably honest, desperately kind, fixedly upright! If God’s Grace sets up this hedge around you, even Satan will feel that he cannot get in and will complain to God, “have You not set a hedge about him?” I have kept you long enough looking over the wall! Let me invite you in and, for a few minutes, let us—  
II. CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF A BROKEN-DOWN FENCE.  
To make short work of it, first, the boundary is gone. Those lines of separation which were kept up by the good principles which were instilled in him by religious habits, by a bold profession and by a firm resolve, have vanished. And now the question is, “Is he a Christian, or is he not?” The fence is so far gone that he does not know which is his Lord’s property and which remains an open common. In fact, he does not know whether he is still included in the Royal domain, or left to be mere waste of the world’s manor! This is for lack of keeping up the fences. If that man had lived near to God, if he had walked in his integrity, if the Spirit of God had richly rested on him in all holy living and waiting upon God, he would have known where the boundary was and he would have seen whether his land lay in the parish of All-Saints, or in the region called No-Man’s-Land, or in the district where Satan is the lord of the manor! I heard of a dear old saint the other day who, when she was near to death, was attacked by Satan and, waving her finger at the enemy in her gentle way, she routed him by saying, “Chosen! Chosen! Chosen!” She knew that she was chosen and she remembered the text, “The Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you.” When the wall stands in its integrity all around the field, we can resist the devil by bidding him leave the Lord’s property alone! “Begone! Look somewhere else. I belong to Christ, not to you.” To do this you must mend the hedges well, so that there shall be a clear boundary line—and then you can say, “Trespassers, beware!” Do not yield an inch to the enemy, but make the wall all the higher, the more he seeks to enter. O that this adversary may never find a gap to enter by!  
Next, when the wall has fallen, the protection is gone. When a man’s heart has its wall broken, all his thoughts will go astray and wander upon the mountains of vanity. Like sheep, thoughts need careful folding, or they will be off in no time. “I hate vain thoughts,” said David, but slothful men are sure to have plenty of them, for there is no keeping your thoughts out of vanity unless you stop every gap and shut every gate. Holy thoughts, comfortable meditations, devout longings and gracious communing will be off and gone if we sluggishly allow the stone wall to get out of repair.  
Nor is this all, for as good things go out, so bad things come in. When the wall is gone, every passer-by sees, as it were, an invitation to enter! You have set before him an open door and in he comes. Are there fruits? He plucks them, of course. He walks about as if it were a public place and he pries everywhere. Is there any secret corner of your heart which you would keep for Jesus? Satan or the world will walk in—and do you wonder? Every passing goat, or roaming ox, or stray ass visits the growing crops and spoils more than he eats! And who can blame the creature when the gaps are so wide? All manner of evil lusts, desires and imaginations prey upon an unfenced soul. It is of no use for you to say, “Lead us not into temptation.” God will hear your prayer and He will not lead you there, but you are leading yourself into it, you are tempting the devil to tempt you! If you leave yourself open to evil influences, the Spirit of God will be grieved and He may leave you to reap the result of your folly. What do you think, Friend? Had you not better attend to your fences at once?  
And then there is another evil, for the land itself will go away. “No,” you say, “how can that be?” If a stone wall is broken down around a farm in England, a man does not thereby lose his land, but in many parts of Palestine the land is all ups and downs on the sides of the hills—and every bit of ground is terraced and kept up by walls. When the walls fall, the soil slips over, terrace upon terrace, and the vines and trees go down with it! Then the rain comes and washes the soil away and nothing is left but barren crags which would starve a lark! In the same manner, a man may so neglect himself, so neglect the things of God and become so careless and indifferent about Doctrine, and about holy living, that his power to do good ceases and his mind, his heart, and his energy seem to be gone. The Prophet said, “Ephraim is a silly dove, without heart.” There are flocks of such silly doves. The man who trifles with religion, sports with his own soul and will soon degenerate into so much of a trifler that he will be averse to solemn thought and incapable of real usefulness! I charge you, dear Friends, to be sternly true to yourselves and to your God! Stand to your principles in this evil and wicked day! Now, when everything seems to be turned into marsh, mire and mud—and religious thought appears to be silently sliding and slipping along, descending like a stream of slime into the Dead Sea of Unbelief—get solid walls built around your life, around your faith and around your character! Stand fast and having done all, still stand! May God the Holy Spirit cause you to be rooted and grounded, built up and established, fixed and confirmed, never “casting away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward.” Lastly, I want, if I can, to—  
III. WAKE UP THE SLUGGARD.  
I would like to throw a handful of gravel up to his window. It is time to get up, for the sun has drunk up all the dew. He craves “a little more sleep.” My dear Fellow, if you take a little more sleep, you will never wake at all till you lift up your eyes in another world! Wake at once! Leap from your bed before you are smothered in it. Wake up! Do you not see where you are? You have let things alone till your heart is covered with sins like weeds. You have neglected God and Christ till you have grown worldly, sinful, careless, indifferent, ungodly! I mean some of you who were once named with the sacred name! You have become like worldlings and are almost as far from being what you ought to be, as others who make no profession at all! Look at yourselves and see what has come of your neglected walls. Then 1ook at some of your fellow Christians and mark how diligent they are. Look at many among them who are poor and illiterate— and yet they are doing far more than you for the Lord Jesus! In spite of your talents and opportunities, you are an unprofitable servant, letting all things run to waste! Is it not time that you bestirred yourself? Look again at others who, like yourself, went to sleep, meaning to wake in a little while. What has become of them? Alas, for there are those who have fallen into gross sin, dishonored their character and who have been put away from the Church of God—yet they only went a little further than you have done! Your state of heart is much the same as theirs and if you should be tempted, as they have been, you will probably make shipwreck as they have done! Oh, see to it, you that slumber, for an idle professor is ready for anything. A slothful professor’s heart is tinder for the devil’s tinderbox! Does your heart thus invite the sparks of temptation?  
Remember, lastly, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Shall He come and find you sleeping? Remember the judgment. What will you say to excuse yourself for opportunities lost, time wasted and talents wrapped up in a napkin when the Lord shall come?  
As for you, my unconverted Friend, if you go dreaming through this world without any sort of trouble, and never look to the state of your heart at all, you will be a lost man beyond all question! The slothful can have no hope, for “if the righteous scarcely are saved,” who strive to serve their Lord—where will those appear who sleep on in defiance of the calls of God? Salvation is wholly and alone of Grace, as you well know—but Grace never works in men’s minds towards slumbering and indifference—it tends towards energy, activity, fervor, importunity, selfsacrifice! God grant us the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, that all things may be set in order, sins cut up by the roots within the heart and the whole man protected by sanctifying Grace from the wasters which lurk around, hoping to enter where the wall is low. O Lord, remember us in mercy, fence us about by Your power, and keep us from the sloth which would expose us to evil, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 119:1-20.**

It is not easy to see the special subjects that are spoken of by David in each of the short portions of eight verses, yet I do not doubt that if each portion were carefully examined, we would see that there is some thread running through. We have not here simply a number of pious sentences about the excellency of God’s Word, but we have choice gems, each of them set in a golden ring of spiritual intent and purpose. I think the first eight verses, all of which begin with that letter Aleph, or A, set forth the excellence of abiding in holiness and walking continually in the way of the Lord. Not so much the restoring and comforting power of the Word, as the blessedness of that Word in leading us to conduct ourselves in consistency of character at all times.

Verse 1. Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the LORD. There is another blessing which comes before this. “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered.” And we can never know the blessing of this 119th Psalm unless we have felt in our own souls that first blessing—the blessedness of forgiven sin! But when, through the forgiveness of sin, we are put upon Gospel ground and are saved—then, not according to the Law, but according be the Gospel—does this blessing come upon us. “Blessed are the undefiled in the way.” The men who have kept their garments unspotted from the world—who from the time of their conversion even until now have been under the influence of the Divine Spirit, and so have been enabled to walk in holiness without once defiling their garments with any great and public sin—who walk in the Law of the Lord, not occasionally, but always—whose daily walk is in conformity with the Divine Mind—these are truly blessed!

2. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies and that seek Him with the whole heart. For he that has most of God, yet needs to seek more. We keep the testimonies—those we know, for we are taught of the Lord according to the promise, “All your children shall be taught of the Lord.” Yet we still seek more. With our whole heart we are pressing on still to something higher and better! Even the undefiled in the way are so, comparatively—they are not absolutely undefiled, so as to be absolutely perfect in the sight of God—hence they feel their imperfection and they press after something better. They seek Him with the whole heart.

3, 4. They also do no iniquity, they walk in His ways. You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently. So that if we do, we are unprofitable servants. We have done no more than was our duty to do! When His Divine Grace has renewed us and has enabled us to walk in all sobriety, truthfulness and holiness, even then we have nothing to boast of! “You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently.”

5. O that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes! “Oh, that I may never defile my garments!” And he who has not defiled his garments still prays the same prayer that he may be kept still and directed still. “Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!”

6. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments. It gives a man boldness. Integrity of heart before God breeds sacred courage. He has nothing to be ashamed of and he is not ashamed when he has respect unto all God’s commandments.

7. I will praise You with uprightness of heart when I shall have learned Your righteous judgments. Not, “I will praise myself.” Not, “I will take credit, myself, for my clean walking,” but, “When You have taught me and I learn Your ways, then all the praise shall be rendered unto You.” This is the fruit of evangelical obedience! Legal obedience, even could it be rendered, would be sure to claim the servant’s wage and take to itself the praise—but the obedience of a child of God leads to the laying of honor at Jehovah’s feet.

8. I will keep Your statutes: O forsake me not utterly! Strong resolution, but a deep consciousness of weakness and unworthiness— *“I will, but oh’…how can I do it?  
Oh, for this, no strength have I—  
My strength is at Your feet to lie.  
Oh, forsake me not utterly.”*

Now, in the next eight verses it seems to me that the subject is somewhat different. We have seen the excellence of an undefiled way. Now we have before us one who wants to prove the power of the Word to keep him in that undefiled way, and so he begins with this question.

9. How shall a young man cleanse his way? His passions are strong, his experience little. His tempers are many—his friends cannot always be at his side. “How shall he cleanse his way?” It is very apt to become miry. The answer is—

9. By taking heed thereto according to Your Word. The Word of God will keep him in the clean path—will warn him of all the mire into which he would have fallen—and if he takes heed to his steps, he shall not trip.

10. With my whole heart have I sought You: O let me not wander from Your commandments. There is the young man’s fear and it may be the old man’s fear, too. “I have sought You sincerely and earnestly, but do not permit my weaker passions to get the mastery over me—do not suffer me in some unguarded hour to be carried captive by my lusts. Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments. It were better to die than to wander from Your way.” The true convert dreads sin! He loathes the very thought of the most pleasurable folly. “Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments.”

11. Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You. There is the dread, you see—the dread of sinning—the dread of defiling his way. So he says that he has adopted this Divine remedy. A good division of this text, if anyone would preach from it, is the best thing, “Your Word,” in the best place—“have I hid in my heart,” for the best of purposes—“ that I might not sin against You.”

12. Blessed are You, O LORD: teach me Your statutes. As if he said, “Teach me your statutes that I may be blessed, too. You are a happy God. Teach me Your way that I may be happy, too. Blessed are the undefiled. Teach me to be so, that as You are blessed, so I may be.”

13, 14. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. A man’s walking will be right when his delight is of this kind, for where the heart goes, the life will go. To some people religion is a task. It will never have much power over them. But when it becomes a delight, then will their walk be affected by it. A well-known and renowned infidel of the last generation, travelling in Wales, said to a little girl whom he saw reading her Bible, “Well, my Dear,” he said, “I see you are getting through your task.” “Task, Sir?” she said, “What do you mean? I am reading the Bible.” He said, “I thought your mother had set you a chapter to read.” “Oh, no, Sir. If my mother wanted to punish me, she would not make me read the Bible. It is the most delightful book in all the world and it is a great joy to me when I can get a little time alone to read my Bible.” It touched his heart. As he confessed afterwards, he was delighted to find something like genuine religion. And where you find delight in religion, there it is genuine! True, genuine religion is like some of the German waters. They come up all fresh and sparkling. I like to see the sparkling in it—a little sparking religion—a little flash of joy and of delight. But very much that we get now-a-days is flat, stale, dull, unprofitable. They keep it corked, but badly corked, usually, and when we see it, there is nothing in it that we should desire it! It is a poor article. God give us delight in Himself, for that is true religion!—

*“I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies As much as in all riches.”*

15. I will meditate in Your precepts, and have respect unto Your ways. An excellent way of keeping the life clean is to keep the thoughts clean. Our boys are brought to prison by reading the abominable trash that is poured forth for juveniles—and many and many a crime has been the result of the fiction of the present day! It is often not only light reading, but filthy reading, too. If we would read God’s Word more, and meditate in it better, our hearts would be kept sweet and so would our lives!

16. I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your Word. God grant that we never may.  
17. Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live, and keep Your Word. Does it need much Grace, then, to keep a child of God alive—even to keep him alive? Yes, it does! Little Grace will be of no use to us. We must have great Grace, for our needs are great. Sometimes our troubles are great. At other times our temptations are great. We are always in great necessity and You, Lord, must have a large bank, and you must give it liberally to us, or else we, poor, penniless beggars, must utterly die of need. Merely to live, then, needs the bounty of God. “Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your Word”—for there is no living in truth, except as we keep the Word of God. Those who live in the neglect of God’s Word are not living at all, but they are dead while they live! God deliver us from such life.  
18. Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law. They are there, but I cannot see them unless You open my eyes. It is not that Your Word is dark, but that my eyes are dim. Yes, by nature they are blinded altogether. Oh, You who are the great Physician of the blind, open my eyes!  
19. I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Your commandments from me. Do you see the drift of that? He says, “I am a stranger here. Then, Lord, if You do not become and continue to be my Acquaintance, I am altogether alone.” It is true of the Christian that he cannot find anything here that can satisfy his soul. He must, therefore, have the Lord, or else he is in a very sorry case. Oh, Beloved, the more you find yourselves strangers in this world, the more are you becoming like your God! The Psalmist says elsewhere, “For I am a stranger with You.” Not, “to You,” but, “with You, like You,” for God is a stranger in this world. Men do not recognize Him or delight themselves in Him. “So, since, Lord, I have no other friend, and can find no other satisfying portion, hide not Your commandments from me. On the contrary, let me see more of You, because I have nothing else.”  
20. My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto Your judgments at all times. We cannot always say that, for we sometimes wish that our hearts would break. Sometimes we sing—  
“My **heart rejoice or ache—  
Resolve this doubt for me.  
And if it is not broken, break  
And heal it if it be.”**

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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GOD’S GLORY IN HIDING SIN  
NO. 2838

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 5, 1903.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 15, 1877.

**“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but  
the honor of kings is to search out a matter.”  
Proverbs 25:2.**

THE translation of our text, if it had been more literal, would have run thus, “It is the glory of God to cover a matter, but the honor of kings is to search out a matter.” For the sake of variety in language, our translators sometimes gave two different interpretations to the same word and though that makes the verbiage more smooth, it is generally a great mistake and apt to mislead us. The word, “conceal,” is just the same word that we get in the passage, “Blessed is he... whose sin is covered.” So the text runs thus—I will give it to you again that I may further impress it upon you—“It is the glory of God to cover a matter, but the honor of kings is to search out a matter.”

First of all, I will give you the common interpretation which is given to these words and the topic which is suggested to most minds thereby, namely, that it is God’s glory to conceal much of the great Truth which concerns Himself and His dealings with the sons of men. “Clouds and darkness are round about Him.” It is His glory that He is not seen, His glory that He is concealed, while, as for kings, it is their honor “to search out a matter.” This is the general interpretation which almost every expositor gives of this passage, but I am not able wholly to agree with it. However, I will speak upon it for little while.

It is certain that such an explanation as this would have to be taken in a limited sense, for it cannot absolutely and without qualification be the glory of God to conceal a thing, for, if so, He might have concealed everything from us. It is evidently for His glory that some things should be revealed or else, why has He revealed them? He might have dwelt forever in that wondrous solitude in which we suppose He did dwell before He commenced the work of Creation. We know not what He was doing in that past eternity of which it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to conceive—when there was no creation, when not a single star had begun to shine, nor an angel had fled through space on rapid wings. If it were God’s glory to be absolutely concealed, it seems to me that He would have remained alone in the thick darkness that surrounded Him, for He would not have wanted to have a single creature to know His love, to realize His power, or to contemplate His wisdom. It is at once obvious that if this is the true and correct interpretation, “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing,” it must be taken in a very limited sense. If it had been His glory to conceal everything, He would have continued to conceal it, but, as far as I can see, His manifested glory is His glory. The glory of God is not so much to conceal as to reveal Himself to those whom He prepares to receive the Revelation!

There are many things which it would not be for God’s glory to conceal. You could not say of everything, “It is the glory of God to conceal this.” Take, for instance, His righteous Law—would it have been for His glory to have left our race utterly ignorant of it? I cannot conceive of such a thing! And then His matchless Redemption He has revealed to us in many wonderful ways. Would He have taken all the pains that He has done to reveal Himself in Christ Jesus if it had been for His glory to conceal Himself in that respect? Would He bid us go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature if it could be for His glory to conceal that? No, it is high treason against the majesty of Heaven for any man to obscure the blessed Revelation of God in Christ Jesus. I am afraid that all of us, preachers of the Word, do that, in some measure, by reason of our infirmity—but God forbid that we should ever willfully keep back a single ray of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!

There are many great and glorious Truths which do not need that God should conceal them. If we do not perceive them, probably it is because it is not necessary that they should be concealed, for their own inherent glory is their concealment. If I were to take, for instance, the mysterious Doctrine of the Eternal Filiation of the Lord Jesus Christ, or the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son—these wondrous Truths need not be concealed from us because they are, in themselves, such deep mysteries that, however clearly they may be revealed to us, it is not possible for us to understand them! Even the grand Doctrine of the Trinity which is so plainly set forth in the Scriptures—the Trinity in the Unity of the Godhead—need not be concealed as, indeed, it has not been, yet we cannot comprehend it! God need not seek out any method of concealment for, if He were to unveil His face among us, the Glory would be too bright to be beheld! Go and stand, O mortal man, and gaze upon the sun at mid-day! Can you do it? Would not your eyes be thereby blinded? Yet, yon sun is only one of the myriads of servants in the courts of God! Then what must the face of the King, Himself, be? It needs not that He should veil it—His own Glory is, surely, veil enough unto itself!

Our minds are finite, contracted, limited. There were certain men, who called themselves “Encyclopedists,” because they fancied that they knew everything, yet they knew nothing perfectly and many of them broke down in their attempt to learn even all that might be known by men. But, as for God Himself, who can possibly comprehend Him? The archangel who stands nearest to His august Presence, must veil his face with his wings, for even he is not able to gaze upon the Glory of that excessive light! It does not seem to me to be so great a Truth that it is the glory of God to conceal as that His very Glory conceals itself, not by being concealed, but by being so exceedingly unveiled! The Glory, itself, blinds, for the finite mind of man is not able to gaze upon it!

Yet the Truth of God which our English Version seeks to convey to us may be accepted without hesitation if we regard it thus—if God has concealed anything, it is God’s glory to conceal it and it is right that it should be hidden. If God has not told us any Truth, it is for His glory not to tell it to us. Perhaps we have as much reason to bless the Lord for what is not in the Bible as for what is there—and what He has not revealed may be as much for our benefit and, certainly, is as much for His glory, as what He has revealed. For instance, if He does not tell us all about Himself and the mystery of His Person, do we need to know it? Can we not believe in Him and love Him all the better because we do not understand Him? Surely a God whom we could understand would be no God! We delight in being out of our depth—in finding waters to swim in— where understanding, with its little plumb line, finds no bottom, but where love, with a restful spirit, finds perfect peace. Doubtless, there is a glory in the Lord not revealing Himself, so far as the past or present is concerned.

As to the future, it is, no doubt, for the glory of God that He has not revealed to us all concerning the history of this world. It may be all in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation. Some friends think it is, and it may be, but this I venture to say—there is no man who understands it and I do not think any men will understand it until the Word shall explain itself! And then, possibly, when history becomes the commentary upon the prophecy, we shall wonder that we did not see it. Yet we cannot do so at present. It is to the glory of God and to your own profit that you do not know what will happen to you tomorrow. You know not what afflictions may await you, nor when you shall die—it is well for you that you do not know. If it had been for God’s glory that you should read your history from its first page to its last and be able to foretell every event in your own life, or in the history of the nations of the earth, God would have revealed it to you! Be content not to know what God does not tell you and say, in your spirit, “Let it be so, for, in some things, it is the glory of God to conceal a thing.”

Still, I think that this is not the teaching of the text. I conceive that it has quite another meaning which I will try to give you. You know that in a proverb like this, with a, “but,” in the middle, there is what we call an antithesis, or an expression of opposites. The text does not run thus, “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to publish a thing.” That is not what is said here—it is quite a different sentence which is not an antithesis at all. Then, again, the antithesis is not complete—“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter,” for it is not so much the business of kings to search out matters that refer to wisdom as it is the business of wise men to do so. If there are doctrines that are not known to us because God conceals them, it is the business of wise men to search them out—not so much the business of kings to do so. Neither can we read the passage thus, “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of kings to make things plain,” because the third verse of the chapter does not agree with this rendering. Solomon did not think that it was to the honor of kings to make things plain. He was a believer in diplomacy, for he says, “The Heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.” He could not, therefore, have intended to convey that meaning.

Now let me give you what I think is the true meaning of the passage. What is the business of kings? Why are they set up above their fellow men? What is their honor? Why, it is the honor of kings to search out matters that concern the administration of justice, to bring prisoners before their bar, laying bare their crimes and convicting them if they are guilty. It is the glory of God to cover a matter, that matter being sin—but it is the honor of kings to search that matter out and bring the guilty one to justice. You know that we think less and less of our police if they are not able to identify criminals. It has sometimes happened that justice misses its mark. Perhaps there is an attempt made to get a certain important witness out of the way, or to bribe another, or to suppress some testimony that might be brought against the accused persons. It is never to the honor of kings when that is done. When, for instance, a murder has been committed, and the criminal cannot be traced, it is not to the credit of the governing powers that it should be so. And though it must be so, sometimes, for no human government can be perfect in its detective forces, yet it is not to the honor of “the powers that be.” It is to the honor of kings that they search matters out till they bring home the guilt to the proper individual. Nor is it to the honor of kings if they give their verdict and sentence at first sight according to prejudice. It is their honor to search out a matter—to hear both sides of the case. The magistrate who sits in the king’s name is bound to enquire thoroughly into the matter brought before him and, at last, to adjudicate as justice demands. This is sometimes very difficult, but it is to the honor of kings and their representatives when they attempt it.

Now, to God, such a thing as this is impossible. Nothing is concealed from Him—the whole universe is but one great prison for those who offend Him and He can find them at any time that He pleases—and He can execute His just sentence upon them without a moment’s delay! He needs no witnesses. He need not summon this person or that, who has seen a certain deed done, for the transgression has been committed in His own sight! His glory is that He covers the matter—and as it is the glory of God to cover the matter, it is also the honor of kings to search the matter out, that matter, in each case, being the breach of law. I am persuaded that this is the meaning of the text. Even if it were not, it is a grand Truth of Scripture, well worthy of our meditation.

So, we shall dwell upon it thus. First, it is the glory of God to cover sin. Secondly, this is a great encouragement to penitent sinners. And, thirdly, it ought to be a great stimulus to saints.

I. First, IT IS THE GLORY OF GOD TO COVER SIN.

This is the expression which is commonly used in Scripture to describe the putting away of sin and forgiving it. God covers the very thing which the magistrate searches out—guilt, the breach of His Law, the aggravations, the multiplied repetitions of sin, the base motives, the many excuses and deceits with which sin is sought to be extenuated—all this God covers. Hear this and be astonished, O you Sinners—God can cover all your sins! No matter how black they are, or how many, or how deep their dye, He can cover them all!—

*“This is His grand prerogative,  
And none can in this honor share.”*  
But He can do it, glory be to His blessed name!

He can cover the sin which is known and confessed. He never covers the sin which is not confessed. When a man will not acknowledge himself to be guilty, he stands convicted of his rebellious refusal to take his proper position before the Lord. But if you stand, O Sinner, and confess your guilt—if you say, O Rebel, “There is no doubt about the matter, I acknowledge that I am guilty,” it is the glory of God that He can cover that sin which no other can cover and which your own conscience will not permit you to conceal! He can cover the transgression of that man whose mouth is stopped by the consciousness of his guilt. O glorious act of Divine Grace that sin and transgression can be covered—covered, though it is confessed and acknowledged, and covered because it is confessed and acknowledged!

The glory of this Truth lies in the fact that God can do this justly through the work of Jesus. To cover up sin, why, standing, as it does, alone and without any qualification, it might seem to be a dreadful thing for God to do! But He can do it righteously. Without the slightest violation of His Law, without endangering the stability of His Kingdom, He can forgive and cover up all manner of sin and blasphemy so that it shall never be seen again! Do you ask me how this can be done? The answer lies in the great substitutionary Sacrifice of Jesus Christ! God steps down from His eternal Throne when man must be punished for his sin and He says, “I will bear the punishment! Lay it all on Me.” And that He might bear it, Jesus took upon Himself the form of a Man and dwelt among men and, at last, upon the accursed tree He bore the guilt of man! It was a wondrous recompense which He made to His own Law by being Himself punished in the place of the offender! Now, beneath the whole heavens there can be none who can justly object to the covering of sin by the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That amazing, that remarkable, that unique transaction of the Just suffering for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, has enabled God to cover our sin and to do it justly.

Further, He can do this without exacting any sort of compensation from the offender. Marvelous is this Truth—too marvelous for some to believe! The Roman Catholic Church teaches us that we must do penance if our sin is to be forgiven. There must be so many lashes for the bare back, or so long abstention from food—and purgatorial pains to be inflicted after death and I know not what besides! Yes, but this is the glory of God— that He can cover all this sin now, upon the spot, without any price being paid by the sinner, or any suffering being endured by him! He has but to come and confess his sin and accept the Divine covering, namely, the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ—and the whole of it shall be covered once and for all!

It is the glory of God that He can do all this without any injury to the person who is forgiven. It sometimes happens that if a man has offended you, and you forgive him again and again, he may thereby become hardened in his sin. But the Lord’s sweet way of covering sin is one which always melts and changes the heart. Sin is never so heartily hated as when it is covered by the blood of Christ! No man ever thoroughly loathes sin till he has seen it put away in Christ. And when he has seen Jesus put it away by His own griefs and death, then he really hates the sin that made the Redeemer mourn and nailed Him to the tree. It is the Glory of God that He can cover sin in such a fashion as this, so as not to injure the offender whom He forgives!

And He can do it without causing any injury to the rest of mankind. There is no man who is any the worse because his fellow man is saved. The example of saved souls is never injurious. There are some, I know, who can twist the truth till they find in it an excuse for sin, but the Truth that God is able to forgive the grossest sin—no, more—that He has forgiven it in the case of many and has pressed them to His bosom as His own dear children—has done no injury, but much helpful service to the morals of mankind. Go where you will, and read the story of the prodigal son—on board ship among rough sailors, or away there in the barracks among wild soldiers, or go into the worst slums of London and read to fallen women that wondrous story of God’s pardoning love and see if it will do them any injury! You know that it will not. On the contrary, it conveys to them a message of hope which helps to lift them up from that black despair which is one of the strongest chains by which the devil can hold lost souls in captivity! I am not at all afraid of the effect of preaching that it is the glory of God to blot out sin, for He put His Son between Himself and the sinner, as we sometimes sing—

*“Christ and then the sinner see,  
Look through Jesus’ wounds on me.”*

The greatest blessing of all is, dear Friends, that, when God covers sin, He does it so effectually that it never appears again. He declares that He casts it into the depths of the sea. He says that as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove it from us. He even goes the length of saying, “The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none.” So far as anything can be annihilated, that is what will happen to the sin of the Lord’s people. You know that the work of the Messiah was “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness”—and that is the work of which He said, “It is finished.” Then it is finished! There is an end of it! That is the glorious way in which the Lord covers sin and it is His peculiar glory that He is continually doing this. Kings may search out matters and they ought to do so, or government will not be safe—but it is to the honor of God to forgive sin.

II. Now, secondly, to make a practical use of this Doctrine, THIS SHOULD BE VERY GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT TO THOSE WHO ARE SEEKING MERCY AT GOD’S HANDS.  
Beloved Friend, do you wish to have your sin forgiven? Then do not attempt to cover it yourself, for it is the glory of God to cover that matter, so do not try to rob Him of His glory. If you could have covered your sin, there would have been no need for a Redeemer! Do not attempt to excuse or extenuate your guilt, but make a clean breast of it. You are a sinner. Therefore say that you are a sinner. In all your approaches to God, seeking mercy at His hands, come in your true colors. Do not even plead your own repentance, or your tears, or your feelings. Plead as David did, “For Your name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity: for it is great.” Call your sin great, as it really is. Never try to make it out to be little. You know that if you were wounded on a battlefield and a surgeon came where you were, you would not say to him, “Oh, I have very little the matter with me!” Oh no! I guarantee you that you would cry as loudly as you could, “Doctor, bind up my gaping wounds lest I die!” You know that in such a case you would make the most of it, and you would act wisely in doing so. And it is never wise for a sinner to make himself out to be a little sinner. It is the glory of God to cover sin, so do not you attempt to do it! I say again, lay it all bare before Him and ask Him to cover it with the atoning Sacrifice of His dear Son.

Now, poor Sinner, I pray the Holy Spirit to enable you to give God glory, at this moment, by believing that He can cover sin. When the conscience is thoroughly awakened, it seems impossible that sin should ever be covered. The convicted sinner says, “My sin, my sin, I always see it! Can it ever be hidden from the sight of God?” Can you not believe that God in Christ can cover your sin? Glorify God, O son, glorify God, O daughter, by believing that He can do so! Do not limit His mercy by thinking that He cannot pardon you, for He has forgiven so many that, assuredly, there is proof enough that He can pass by iniquity, transgression and sin and remember not the guilt of those who trust His Son! If you believe that, give glory to God now by believing that He is willing to pass by your sin. Every man is willing to do that which honors himself and it is inconceivable that God should be reluctant to do that which glorifies Himself. So, as it is for His glory to cover it, He must be willing to cover it! Therefore, may the Holy Spirit help you to believe, now, that He can and will cover your sin!

There is Christ on the Cross—look to Him with the eyes of faith and take Him to be your own Savior. Christ on the Cross is nothing to you until you trust in Him, but it glorifies Christ when a poor guilty sinner cries to Him, “Purge me with hyssop.” You know what the use of the hyssop was. They took a bunch of it and dipped it in the blood of the sacrifice, and those who were sprinkled with it were made ceremonially clean. David prayed, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” And that is the prayer for you to present. You believe that if God were to wash another man in the blood of Jesus, He would become whiter than snow, but can you not believe it for yourself? May the blessed Spirit take away your unbelief, dear Heart! Can you not believe that He can wash you and make you whiter than snow? He will do it in a moment if you but trust Him, rely upon Him and receive His dear Son to be your salvation! This is the true covering of sin. Oh, how the Hebrews loved that word, “covering.” Noah’s ark was pitched inside and outside with pitch—that was its covering. So everything under the Mosaic Law had its covering and God has a way of covering sin and covering the sinner, too, inside and outside till all his sin is gone! And he that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ may know at once that his transgression is forgiven, his sin is covered.

“But,” someone asks, “am I to do nothing?” Nothing but believe in Him that justifies the ungodly! If you do that, you will begin to do something more directly, afterwards, for you will love God for having pardoned you and you will say, “I am not my own now, for I am bought with a price and, therefore, I will live to His Glory.” But, in order to get your sin forgiven, you have nothing to do except—

*“Cast your deadly doing down,  
Down at Jesus’ feet—  
Stand in Him, in Him alone—  
Gloriously complete!”*

“For he that believes on Him is not condemned.” “He that believes in Him is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the Law of Moses.” Oh, what an encouragement this ought to be to all sinners who are seeking the Savior!

III. Now, lastly, THIS GRAND DOCTRINE OUGHT TO BE A GREAT STIMULUS TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD.  
First, it should excite you to glorify God in having covered your sin. Do not go and talk to everybody about what you used to be before conversion, as I have known some to do. They will almost revel in what they were! I have more than a little hesitation about what is sometimes said by converted burglars and men of that sort. I am glad they are converted, but I wish they would not talk so much about that which is covered. Let it be covered. Still, never be backward to glorify God for having covered your sin. Speak of it with delicacy and modesty, but, if the Grace of God has saved you, tell all men of it and do not let people imagine that God has done only a small thing for you. When He saved you, it was the grandest thing He could do for you. Do you not think so? Well, then, tell the story of it—  
*“Tell it unto sinners, tell,  
I am—I am—out of Hell.”*  
“And what is more, I never shall go there, but shall see God’s face with acceptance in Heaven!” Tell this to sinners while you live—and when you get to Heaven, make the streets of Heaven ring with the tidings of the Almighty Grace that covered all your sin!  
The next thing for you Christian people to do, now you know that God can cover sin, is to aim at the covering of the sins of your friends and neighbors by leading them to the Savior. To see sin should always be a tearful sight to you. As soon as ever you see it, breathe the prayer, “Lord, cover it.” Do you live where you can hardly lie in your bed at night without hearing sounds of ribaldry and blasphemy? Then the moment you hear them, say, “Lord, cover that sin.” Do you see, in the streets, foul transgression that makes you blush? Never see it without saying, “Lord, cover that sin.” If we were in a right state of heart, this would be our habit—every sin that we noticed in ourselves or in others—in our children, or our servants, or our neighbors, or that we read of in the newspapers, would make us pray, “Lord, cover that sin.” So always be telling others about the covering of sin by Christ’s precious blood! Show them what a perfect covering it is. You know that the Lord spoke through Isaiah of “a covering which is narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it.” But the atoning Sacrifice of Christ is a covering which will cover all sin and cover the sinner from head to foot! Therefore tell others about it with all your might.  
And, once more, you who have proved the power of this covering, imitate the Lord in forgetting the sins of those who repent. If ever they offend you, let that Atonement which satisfied God for sin, also satisfy you, and say, “Though this man has offended me, I ask no atonement at his hands, because Christ’s Atonement is to my soul the satisfaction for every sin against me as well as against God.” Never harbor any resentment for a single moment, Beloved. “Even as Christ forgave you, so also do you.” Do you think that Christ’s blood and righteousness are not sufficient to cover those unkind words of your brother, or that ungenerous action of your son, or that slanderous speech of your neighbor? Go and put all offenses against yourself where God has put all offenses against Himself! It is a dreadful thing to hear a man talking about God having forgiven him ten thousand talents and then to see him take his brother by the throat, saying, “Pay me what you owe!” Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespass.” This spirit of forgiveness would keep us always in a state of love—and this is exactly what the Lord Jesus aims at. “It is the glory of God to cover a matter.”  
Then, you cover matters, too. I know some people who always like to be poking into any filth there is. They keep a long stick and stir it up, and they seem to be quite pleased with the sweet perfume. Let it alone, Brother—let it alone! “Oh, but you do not know how they have offended me!” No, and I do not want to know. But I am quite sure that they have not offended you as much as you have offended God—and yet He has forgiven you! Then why do you not forgive them? The less said, you know, in such matters, the sooner are they mended. Solomon wisely says, “Where no wood is, there the fire goes out.” Blessed are they who always act as firemen, throwing cold water upon every spark of dissension or ill-will that they see! It is the Glory of God to cover it up, so you, also, cover it up with the spirit of love and the mantle of gentleness! And, above all, with the reflection that the precious blood of Christ, that made peace between you and God, has also made peace between you and all mankind.  
And now, for love of Christ, if they strike you on one cheek, you should turn the other, also. If they will have your cloak, for love of Jesus let them have your coat, also, sooner than live in the spirit of perpetual contention and strife. May God enable you to act thus, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **EXODUS 25:10-22; PSALM 32.**

Exodus 25:10, 11. And they shall make an Ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And you shall overlay it with pure gold, within and without shall you overlay it, and shall make upon it a crown of gold round about. The Ark of the Covenant was the most sacred object in the tabernacle in the wilderness. It stood at the extreme end of the Holy of Holiest. It was the place over which the bright shining light called the Shekinah, which was the token of the Presence of God, shone forth. The Ark was, doubtless, typical of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a sacred chest made to contain the Law of God. Blessed are they who know the Law in Christ. Out of Christ, the Law condemns. In Christ, it becomes a blessed guide to us. This Ark was made of wood, perhaps to typify the human nature of our blessed Lord—but it was of wood which did not rot—acacia—which resists the worm and, truly, in Him there was no corruption in life by way of sin, and no corruption sullied Him in death when He slept for a while in the grave! Wood is a thing that grows out of the earth, even as Jesus sprang up like a root out of a dry ground. But the Ark must be made of the best kind of wood—no presence of rot and untainted. Yet the Ark, though made of wood, did not appear to be so, for it was completely overlaid with pure gold, so, everywhere, the Deity, or, if you will, the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ could be seen. The Ark was of shittim wood, yet it was an Ark of gold— and He, who was truly Man, was just as truly God, blessed be His holy name! Round about the top of this Ark there was a crown of gold. How glorious is Christ, in His mediation, as covering the Law and preserving it within Himself! He is King, glorious in holiness and honored in the midst of His people.

12-14. And you shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them on the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it, and you shall make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And you shall put the staves into the rings by the sides of the Ark, that the Ark may be borne with them. The rings were, of course, for the staves to pass through, and the staves were for the priests to carry the Ark as it moved from place to place. It went with the children of Israel in all their journeys—and our Lord Jesus is always with us. He goes with us wherever we go and tarries with us wherever we abide. Though His glorified Person is in Heaven, yet His Presence is not restricted to any one place, as He said to His disciples, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

15. The staves shall be in the rings of the Ark: they shall not be taken from it. So that it was always ready to be moved.  
16. And you shall put into the Ark, the Testimony which I shall give you. That is to say, the two tablets of stone were to be put into the Ark of the Covenant.

17. And you shall make a Mercy Seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. It exactly fitted upon the top of the Ark, and so completely covered whatever was put within. It was of pure gold. This, perhaps, was the most important part of this very important article of the tabernacle furniture. It was the Mercy Seat, the cover that hid the Law of God, the place where God promised to meet with His people.

18-20. And you shall make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shall you make them, on the two ends of the Mercy Seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the Mercy Seat shall you make the cherubims on the two ends thereof, and the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the Mercy Seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the Mercy Seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. They were part and parcel of the Mercy Seat. They were made of the same precious metal and all formed one piece. They may represent the angels who stand desiring to look into the mysteries of God, and they may also represent the Church, which is all of a piece with Christ, forever one with Him.

21, 22. And you shall put the Mercy Seat above upon the Ark, and in the Ark you shall put the Testimony that I shall give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the Mercy Seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment unto the children of Israel. It was the meeting place of God and men, where the Law was covered with a solid plate of gold, so is Jesus the meeting place between God and sinners, where the Law is covered with His perfect righteousness.

Psalm 32:1. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. That is a wonderful word—almost the same in Hebrew as in English—covered, hidden, concealed, put away, removed, dismissed forever.

2. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. For, when sin is gone, men become honest before God. The fear of punishment makes them endeavor to evade the Truth concerning sin, but, when they see sin pardoned, then are they honest before the Lord.

3. When I kept silent, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. I have heard that certain diseases, when they are suppressed, are all the more terrible and deadly. And, certainly, suppressed sin, or suppressed sorrow for sin which has no vent by way of confession before God, is a dreadful thing. It seems to eat into the very bones—“My bones waxed old,” like a strong acid eating into the very pillars of our manhood!

4. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me. The mere touch of God’s finger would be enough to crush us, but when He comes to deal with us in conviction and lays His heavy hand upon us, it is, indeed, terrible! We are then like Gideon’s fleece when he squeezed all the moisture out of it.

4, 5. My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressors unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah. Being confessed, it was forgiven! Being acknowledged, it was blotted out!

5. For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found. If You, O Lord, hear a sinner cry unto You, then surely You will hear your saints when they cry unto You yet more and more! If seekers become finders, then others will become seekers, too.

6, 7. Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him. You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. What a blessed experience that is—to be surrounded with songs, to hear music on the right and music on the left, singing behind me for mercy received, singing before me for hopes yet to be fulfilled—singing above me, the angels welcoming me when my time comes to go Home to my Father’s House! “You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance.” Now the Lord speaks to His servant—

8. I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes. “Therefore, keep your eye on Me; notice every movement of My eyes and be ready and obedient, at the slightest sign, to do My will.”

9. Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you. Be not hard in the mouth. Be not stubborn, willful, obstinate, rebellions.

10. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked. They pursue pleasure as if it belonged to them alone. They talk about “a short life and a merry one.” Poor things, how sadly mistaken they are! “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.” They have a terrible inheritance and a dreadful entail of suffering!

10, 11. But he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy. Be demonstrative about it, make other people hear of it. Do not be ashamed to let your holy joy be known. Be not so very proper and orderly as to mumble out your praises as some do—“Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy,”

11. All you that are upright in heart.  
—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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GOOD NEWS  
NO. 2866

A SERMON  
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**“As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.” Proverbs 25:25.**

THIS is a text for summertime rather than for a winter’s evening. It is only on one of our hottest summer days that we could fully appreciate the illustration here employed. We need to be parched with thirst to be able to feel the value of cold waters to quench our thirst. At the same time, I think that we can, without any very great stretch of imagination, put ourselves into the position of some to whom cold waters have been almost like life from the dead. Look at Hagar in the wilderness with her child, whom she has cast under one of the shrubs that she may not see him die. The water in the bottle is spent and she longs for a cooling draught that might save the young lad’s life. Then the Lord opened her eyes so that she saw a well of water in the desert and, as she filled her bottle from it, she understood what cold waters are to a thirsty soul. Think also of the whole nation of Israel in the wilderness crying out in agony because there was no water for them to drink. Then they began to murmur against the Lord and against Moses—but how joyful they were when the smitten Rock poured forth its cooling stream and they rushed to it and drank to the full.

If you want another personal example of the blessing of cold water to a thirsty soul, think of Samson. Heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass he has slain a thousand men! But the dust of the conflict, the heat and the exhaustion had caused such an intense thirst to come upon him that he is ready to die. Then he lifts up his voice to the Lord and the same God who had made the jawbone to be so mighty a weapon against the Philistines, opens for him a spring of water in that very jawbone—and he drinks and is refreshed—and magnifies the name of the Lord. So, you see, there are occasions when cold waters are inexpressibly precious to thirsty souls. And Solomon, who seems to have known something of their value, says that good news from a far country is equally pleasant, refreshing and reviving.

This proverb is true in its most literal interpretation. When we are in a far country, separate from those we love, there is no greater pleasure than that of receiving letters with tidings of their welfare from them. Even the little details about household affairs—the minor events which we would scarcely have noticed if we had been there—become exceedingly interesting to us and the longer we have been away from home, the more dear everything becomes to us when we hear of it in the far country where, for a while, our lot has been cast. I suppose that merchants who have costly ventures in distant parts, also long for good news from the far country which is still their home wherever they may be. Solomon had sent his ships to various foreign countries and when the news came from Joppa that the vessels were in sight which had come back from India, or from the Pillars of Hercules, bringing all manner of precious things, the merchant prince was highly pleased and felt that, “as cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.” And this, which is a literal fact, may become an illustration of the spiritual Truth of God—and I am going to use it in that way as God, the Holy Spirit, may guide me.

First, good news from God for sinners is like cold waters to a thirsty soul. Secondly, good news from Heaven for saints is like cold waters to a thirsty soul. And, thirdly, good news in Heaven from earth—the good news which reaches that far country every now and then—is to angels and glorified saints as cold waters to a thirsty soul.

I. First, then, (and may God bless this first head very richly!) GOOD NEWS FROM GOD FOR SINNERS is like cold water to the thirsty.  
Sin has led the sinner into a far country. That part of the description of the prodigal son who gathered all and went into a far country aptly describes the condition of the whole human race. Man, before the Fall, was near to God. He communed with Him. But when Adam and Eve “heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,” after they had disobeyed Him, they “hid themselves from the Presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.” Practically, by his sin, Adam set out on a long journey away from his happy home and, soon, he was so far off that when God came where He had formerly communed with him, He had to cry to him, “Adam, where are you?” In like manner, we are alienated from God by wicked works, far off from Him in character, for He is Light and we are darkness. He is Truth and we are falsehood. He is Love and we are just the opposite. We are also far off from God in our aims and objectives, for we aim not at the good of others, nor at His Glory, but we seek earthly things. We are, by nature, far off from God in the whole bent and current of our life which no longer runs in a parallel line with the life of God as first imparted to man, but runs rather according to the fashion of the life of Satan—so that we yield ourselves up to the evil influence of that foul spirit who works in the children of disobedience.  
When a sinner is awakened by the Holy Spirit, he becomes conscious of this distance and he feels, in a measure, like the lost spirits in Hell who realize that there is a great gulf fixed between them and God. At first the convicted sinner fancies that gulf can never be passed and the longer he looks into its awful depths—the longer his eyes try to gaze across it to the other side—the more he discovers that he is far off from his God and that there is, indeed, a vast, yawning chasm between him and his Maker. If any of you, dear Friends, are conscious of being thus at a distance from God, I have come as a messenger from Him bringing to you His words of mercy and Grace which should be to you as good news from a far country!  
And the first piece of good news that I have to give you is that God has not forgotten you. You are a lost sheep and you have almost forgotten your Shepherd. Perhaps you have altogether forgotten Him—but your Shepherd has been counting over the number of His sheep and He finds that there is one missing, for there are only 99 where there should be a hundred and He is deeply concerned about the one that has gone astray!  
God has not only remembered that there is such a person as you but he remembers you with pity. It is wonderful to notice how He speaks. Sometimes He cries, “How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim?” Like as a father pities his children, so is it with our God—He pities those who wander away from Him. “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” God takes no delight in your sin and no delight in the shame and sorrow which your sin will bring upon you unless you turn from it—but He will take delight in you if you return to Him! He still cries to you, “Return you, now, everyone from his evil way!” And He still remembers you in pity and compassion. Notwithstanding your forgetfulness of Him and your willful rebellion against Him, He does remember you, for God is Love and there is love in His heart even towards sinners who are dead in trespasses and sins. That, surely, is good news to you! And if God thus thinks of you in pity, should not you think of God with deep, heartfelt penitence and contrition?  
But there is even better news from God for you than this, namely, that He has prepared the way by which you may come back to Him. Do you ask, “How can that be, for there is a wall of partition between us? How can I ever get to God? Surely, the justice of God, on account of my sin, raises an impassable barrier between us. That justice stands like the cherubim with a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the Tree of Life, lest, haply, I should attempt to return to my God.” That is quite true, yet listen to this, poor, guilty Sinner. God must be just, that is certain and, being just, He must punish your sin. But have you not heard that He has given His only-begotten Son that He might stand in the sinner’s place and bear the punishment that was due on account of the sinner’s guilt? That cherub’s flaming sword has been quenched in Jesus’ precious blood! That middle wall of partition Christ has broken down, even as the veil of the Temple was torn in two, from the top to the bottom! Oh, what a mighty rip was that! Not a little slit, part of the way down, but from the top to the bottom!  
So has Jesus Christ demolished the barrier which stood between a justly angry God and a guilty but repenting sinner—and now there is a way of approach for the very worst of men and women—right up to the Throne of the Most High! By the blood of Jesus, once shed for many for the remission of sins, the guiltiest foot of man may come. Yes, by that blood-besprinkled way, the most condemned sinner may come without fear of being repulsed! The chasm has been filled, the gulf bridged over and if you truly believe in Jesus Christ, you may, in His name, and for His sake, come back to your Heavenly Father! That wise resolve within your heart which says, “I will arise and go to my Father,” should be at once carried into effect, for your Father has prepared the way by which you may come back to Him and, to encourage you, He has sprinkled it with the blood of His dear Son—the surest sign and token of His love to sinners that even God, Himself, could give! Here, then, is good news from a far country. Your Father thinks of you, poor prodigal, and He has paved the way for you to come back to His own house and heart!  
Is there any more good news for you? Yes, that there is, far more than I can tell you! This is another piece of it—God has sent you His Word and sent you His servants to invite you to come back to Him. It is very gracious for God to prepare the way, but it is even more gracious for Him to invite you to make use of that way. There are, sometimes, cases of necessity when a man thrusts himself upon the notice of another and seeks his aid in some great emergency. It is a dark and stormy night and the wanderer, who has lost his way, knocks at the first door he sees and asks for shelter. But that is not your case. You, also, are a wanderer and you need shelter, but Mercy’s door stands wide open and God has sent His messengers to invite you to come in! If the door had been closed, it would have been a wise action on your part to knock and ask for admission, or even to cause the Kingdom of Heaven to suffer violence and to take the blessing by force. But that is not necessary.  
Think, then, of the goodness of God who invites, entreats, exhorts and persuades sinners to come to Him. No, more, there is a text—a blessed text, I think—which says, “Compel them to come in.” The great King bids His servants to seize them by the mighty force of Love and to draw them in with tears and entreaties again and again repeated, until they yield! “Compel them to come in,” He says, “that My house may be filled.” This is good news indeed! Such gracious invitations as these make up still more good news—“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: for I have redeemed you.” “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” “Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” Is not this good news for poor sinners? O my Master, bless You, Your own Words of Grace and mercy to all who hear or read them—and make them to be like cold waters to a thirsty soul!  
There is still more good news beyond all this and I will tell you some of it. It is good news that many have already returned to their Father and have been welcomed. Some of these are your own friends and relatives— your brother, your sister, your father, your mother. This good news does not relate to anything which is merely a matter of experiment. The experiment has been made so often—the blessed experiment of proving whether God will receive repenting sinners or no—that it is now a matter of certainty! Why, you even know one who used to be your companion in every kind of folly and sin—and he has sought and found the Savior! Did he not tell you so the other day? And there was one who seemed to be even worse than you—at least he went further in open sin than you have ever done—yet he sought the Lord and he was not rejected! Now, when I see so many come to Christ and find that He never casts out one of them, what ought I to infer from that? Why, that, He will not cast me out if I come to Him!  
If from my Master’s door I saw a stream of sinners coming back with sad countenances and all shaking their heads, and saying, “We have been denied admittance. We were too guilty to go in.” Or, “We were not fit,” or, “We were not sensitive enough,” or something of that kind, then I think I should not dare to go. But if the footprints of sinners all run towards Christ and never is there a single footprint of a penitent sinner turned back by Him—if I see Him drawing men unto Himself according to His word, “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me”— and if I never see Him repelling or repulsing one sinner, however black or crimson he may be, I may well say, “Come, my poor guilty Soul, why should you not have acceptance, too?” At any rate—  
*“I’ll to the gracious King approach,  
Whose scepter pardon gives.  
Perhaps He may command my touch,  
And then the suppliant lives!  
I can but perish if I go,  
I am*

*resolved to try—  
For if I stay away, I know  
I must forever die.  
And if I die with mercy sought,  
When I the King have tried  
This were to die (delightful thought!)  
As sinner never died”—*  
for no sinner ever did seek Jesus Christ by faith in vain! That, surely, is good news from a far country!  
And, once again, we have to bring this good news—that the Lord has not only made a way for His poor wandering children to come back to Him, but He has provided all the means needed to bring them back. You remember that when Joseph sent for his father, Jacob, to come to him in Egypt, Jacob could not believe that Joseph was still alive. The news that he was, under Pharaoh, ruler over all Egypt, seemed too good to be true! But when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent, then his spirit revived. “Wagons” is the word in our translation, but I expect that Joseph also sent some of the best chariots that Egypt could produce to carry poor old Jacob and all his family down into Egypt. And I do not wonder that the spirit of the Patriarch revived when he saw those wagons or chariots! There is many a poor sinner who says, “Yes, I know that there is a way of salvation, but, then, my feet are lame, so how can I run along that way? I know that there is saving Truth of God in the Bible, and blessed be God for that, but how shall I ever learn that Truth? I know that Christ is Himself the Truth, but how can that Truth be mine? I know that there is eternal life and that Christ is the Life as well as the Truth and the Way, but I am spiritually dead—can I ever have that life?”  
Yes, you can, for our Lord Jesus Christ is not merely the Way, but He is also the power by which we run in that way! He is not only the Truth, but He gives us the illuminating Spirit to lead us into the Truth! And He is not only the Life, but He puts that Life into us and sustains and perfects it! You have nothing to do, Sinner, but to give yourself up to the leading, guiding, directing, assisting, quickening of the blessed Spirit of God! It is true that you must believe, but He will give you the Grace of faith. It is true that you must repent, but it is also true that He works repentance in us. There must and there will be a change of life in all true converts but it is the Holy Spirit who converts you and turns you completely around. There must be sanctification in genuine Believers, but it is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies you. There is nothing asked of you in the Gospel but what the Gospel itself gives you! Those things which, in one part of Scripture, are put as precepts, are, in other parts of Scripture, among the promises! What the Lord bids the sinner do, He enables the sinner to do, just as when Jesus said to the man that was paralyzed, “Take up your bed and walk”—with the command He gave the power to obey it! And when He said to another man, “Stretch out your hand, withered though it is,” the miraculous power that gave the nerves and muscles force, again, went with the mandate from the lips of Jesus! In like manner, trust the Lord to give you the power to lay hold on the Gospel. The very eye with which to look at the bronze serpent is His gift—and that gift He is prepared to bestow upon all who come to Him for it. Is not this good news from a far country?  
And this, too, is good news—that you may come to Christ at once. If, at this moment, you are enabled to trust the Lord Jesus, He is yours! The way home looks very far, but the good news I have to bring you is that you can be there in a moment. That is to say, far off as you are from God, if you believe in Jesus, you are brought to God that very instant. As soon as the Holy Spirit enables you to trust in Jesus, you are brought near to God at once. What said our Savior to the dying thief? “This day shall you be with Me in paradise.” You perhaps will not have an immediate entrance into the paradise above, but may live a little longer here, but, as soon as you do believe in Jesus, you shall be reconciled to God by the death of His Son—you shall have instantaneous forgiveness and, at the same time, it shall be as permanent as it is instantaneous, and as complete as it is immediate. This is the good news which comes to you by the Gospel.  
And what you have to do with it is this—believe the Father’s Word and trust yourself wholly to what Christ has done for sinners. May the Divine Spirit take you off from all other ways of salvation and bring you to trust to this alone, and make you abhor and loathe even to detestation anything like confidence in your prayers, or your tears, your doings, your suffering, your preparation, your repenting—or anything else—for it is none but Jesus who can bring a sinner near to God! All that you spin, you will have to unravel. All that you build, will have to come down. All that you can bring to God, you will have to take back. You must come to Him empty-handed, with nothing of your own, and simply rest where God Himself rests—in the blessed Person and the finished work of the Lord Jesus who is All in All!  
Now, if you are spiritually thirsty, this good news will be to you as a draught of cold water. But if you are not thirsty, you will not partake of it. It is little use to praise cold water to a man who is already drunk with the world’s intoxicating draughts, or to those who have no thirst and who will despise it. If there is anyone here who does not feel that he is a sinner, or who thinks that he has no great guilt and who has no true sorrow of heart on account of his sin—I might as well walk into St. Paul’s Cathedral and talk to the statues there, or into Westminster Abbey and preach to the dust beneath my feet, as preach to you! Cold waters are for the thirsty and the good news of mercy and salvation is for the guilty. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would make you feel your deep need and give you intense spiritual thirst, for, then, Jesus Christ and the good news from the far country would be precious to you!  
II. Now I turn to the second part of our subject which is, GOOD NEWS FROM HEAVEN FOR SAINTS. That also is as cold waters to a thirsty soul.  
Does someone ask, “Is there any news from Heaven?” Yes, there is, and that shall be my first remark in this part of my theme—that news does still come from Heaven. There is an invisible telegraph between us and the Glory Land. We are not cut off from communication with those who are there. Jacob dreamed of a ladder reaching to Heaven, but it was not merely a dream. Never was there anything more real than that vision of the night, for there is a blessed means of communication between this far-off land and the goodly land beyond the river. Our prayers and sighs and tears, our praises and thanksgivings get there all right—they are not lost en route. They reach the great heart of God and messages come down to us from Him in response to them. How do they come? Well, they come by the Holy Spirit sealing home to the soul the promises of the Word. Do you know, experimentally, what I mean by that?  
Every now and then some blessed portion of Scripture seems as if it were set on fire and, as you read it, it blazes out before your eyes just as, sometimes, we see the lamps that are being prepared for an illumination. There is some grand device and, before it is lit up, it is little more than an array of pipes—but how different it looks after they have lit it all! So, there is many a text of Scripture which is like that design—you can see something of what it means, but you should see it when it is lit up! How very different it is then! You sometimes get a promise from the Word whispered into your ear and it is just as new to you as if it had never been written down 1,800 or three or four thousand years ago! It is as fresh to you as if the eternal pen had written it today and written it for you, alone. Some of us—I hope many of us—know how the Spirit of God takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to us—leads us into the very heart and soul of the precious blessings of the Covenant of Grace. This is as good news from a far country, and is as cold waters to a thirsty soul!  
And often, too, the Lord Jesus Christ sends us news concerning the fellowship which He intends us to enjoy with Him. Still do godly men walk with God as Enoch did. Do not imagine that God has gone away and that no longer may we speak to Him as a man speaks with his friend. No, for, “truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Still does Jesus lay bare His heart to His beloved. Still may we say with the spouse and have the prayer answered, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine.” There is still sweet communion and blessed love passages between Christ and His chosen, of which the world knows not, but “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them His Covenant.” Yes, there is good news from a far country for the saints of God!  
And, dear Friends, it should be our earnest aim to keep unbroken our communion with Heaven, for it is the most refreshing thing beneath the sun. This world is like an arid desert where there is no water except as we maintain our communion with Christ. So long as I can say that the Lord is mine, all things here below are of small account. But if I once get a doubt about that matter and if I cease to walk with God, then what is there here below that can content my immortal spirit? Without Christ, this world is to us as thorns without the roses and as bitters without the sweets of life. But You, O Lord, make earth to be a Heaven to Your saints even when they lie in dungeons when Your Presence cheers them. But were they translated to the palaces of kings and thereby lost Your blessed company, those palaces would be worse than prison to them. It is most important that you who are obliged to mingle with the world, should maintain your communion with Christ, for that is the only way to keep yourself clear from its corruptions. And you who have much to do in the Church, must keep up your communion with Christ, for that is the only way of preserving your service from becoming mechanical and of preventing you from doing good works as a mere matter of routine. You, too, who have much to suffer or even much to enjoy, must keep up this holy communion or else your soul will soon be like a thirsty land where there is no water.  
It may be that I am addressing some who have not had much news lately from the far country of Heaven. You are going there, one day, and—

*“There your best friends, your kindred, dwell.*

*There God your Savior reigns”—*  
but you have had no news from there lately. If it is so with you, I hope you feel as some of us did a little while ago, when we were in the South of France. “No letters?” we asked, as the time came for our usual post. When the next day came and there were still no letters, we enquired, “What is the matter?” And they said, “There is deep snow on the railway, the trains cannot travel, so the mails cannot be brought in.” Another day passed and as the snow was not gone, we had no letters. When the letters did come, they were very sweet—and all the sweeter because we had had to wait for them. And there were more of them than usual, for those that had been delayed came tumbling in two or three at a time. I hope it may be so with you and your good news from Heaven! If there have been any snow-drifts between your soul and Christ—and that does happen sometimes in this cold world—if there is, between you and the Savior, a chilly air and a frozen mass of unbelief so that the trains cannot travel to and fro—oh, cry mightily to the Lord to melt the snows and clear them away! And, I guarantee you, if you do so, when you get communication restored and fellowship renewed, it will be exceedingly sweet.

I hope you will often feel that you cannot have too much of it and seek to have more and more. Say, as the spouse did in the Song, “It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves: I held Him and would not let Him go.” Let this dark season of interrupted fellowship into which you have passed only make you the more desperately in earnest to get out of it, so that when that fellowship is restored, you may be able to say, “I held Him, and would not let Him go.” Get such a firm grip of Him, again, such a grip as you had when first you knew Him—when the love of your espousals was upon you—when you were newly married to the blessed Bridegroom and say again, “I held Him, and would not let Him go.” God grant to you that there may be no more lukewarmness, no more of being neither cold nor hot—and may the cold atmosphere through which you have passed in His absence make your heart grow all the warmer towards Him now that you have Him again! May you now cling to Him with an intensity of affection that you have never reached before!

What is this good news of which I have been speaking? Well, dear Friends, I think that this good news may be summed up thus. God is working in Providence and making all things work together for your good if you belong to Him. Your heart is heavy just now and your harp is hanging on the willows. Yet God is permitting that to happen for your good. The bitter medicines you have to take are nauseous to you, but they are to work together with other things for your good—therefore, be of good cheer!

The next piece of good news is that Jesus is pleading for you. Remember how He said to Peter, “Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.” Jesus has your name upon His breastplate—yes, “engraved on the palms of His hands.” You are not forgotten of Him! Is not that good news? When somebody comes to you in a foreign land, you like to hear him say, “When I was at your home, they were all talking about you and they all sent loving messages to you. I saw your portrait in a locket and I could tell that you were not forgotten.” You are glad to hear that—and Jesus has your names engraved on the palms of His hands and He is pleading for you before the Mercy Seat—you are not forgotten up there!

Another piece of good news is that He is coming here again—coming here for you—coming to be admired by you and the rest of His redeemed family when He comes to take His people up to their eternal home. The message which He has sent is, “Behold, I come quickly.” What is your answer to that? I think I hear you say, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” It will not be very long before you will be with Him, or else He will be with you! In a short time you will have ended your pilgrimage here. The days of your banishment from Home will be over. Wait a little longer—only a few more tears and, then—

*“Safe in the arms of Jesus,  
Safe on His gentle breast.”*

Is not that good news?  
There is another piece of news which you have often heard before— that is, that a great many of the saints have got Home already. There is good news from the Fair Havens! Many have entered there—thousands, millions—who have had as stormy a sea to traverse as you, yourself, have had, but their Pilot has brought them to their desired haven. Many, whom we loved on earth, have gone Home to be “forever with the Lord.” They are all right. All is well with them. The sheep are getting Home to the fold! The children are going Home to their Father’s house above!

I have another piece of good news and that is, beloved Brother or Sister, that there is a house there for you! Our Lord Jesus Christ has made it ready for you. There is a crown there which nobody’s head but yours can ever wear. There is a seat in which none but yourself can sit. There is a harp that will be silent till your fingers strike its strings. There is a robe, made for you, which no one else can wear. And let me also tell you that they are needing you up there. “Oh,” you say, “they are so happy and so perfect that they surely do not need me.” But they do. What does Paul say in the Epistle to the Hebrews? “They without us should not be made perfect.” Nor can they—there cannot be a perfect body till all the members are there! It cannot be a perfect Heaven till all the saints are there! Jesus Christ has not all the jewels of His crown, yet, and He will have a perfect crown. So they are looking for you and waiting and watching for you—and all is ready for your reception. You shall go Home soon, therefore live in hope and having this hope within you, purify yourselves, come out from the world more and more. “Our conversation is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.” There is good news for you! Is it not like cold waters to a thirsty soul?

III. Now, lastly, and very briefly. SOMETIMES, IN HEAVEN, THEY GET GOOD NEWS FROM EARTH.  
Our text may be applied to the angels and to the spirits of just men made perfect—“As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.” We do not know how they receive news about us and it is no use speculating concerning the matter, but there is one thing that we are sure of—that is, in Heaven they know when a sinner repents, for our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.” That is, to them, good news from a far country! The angels all know about Jesus having died. And every time they see a repenting sinner washed in the blood of the Atonement, they must rejoice for Jesus’ sake because He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.  
I believe, too, Brothers and Sisters, that they get good news from a far country when you who are running the Christian race run well. For how does Paul put it in the 12th of Hebrews? Does he not tell us that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses? And who are these witnesses? Why, those he had been speaking of—those brave men and women who had performed such valorous deeds by the power of faith— whose names he had inscribed on the triumphal arch of the 11th Chapter of his Epistle. These are they who gaze upon us from their lofty seats and they see us as we run the race and note how we do it. And they clap their hands, as the spectators were known to do in the old Roman foot races, and rejoice over the Grace that is manifested in us—and it is as cold water to their souls when they see what God does for His struggling, suffering people.  
And, moreover, there is another piece of good news that reaches the far country. That is when the Church of God is being built up and the Gospel is spreading in the earth. When the world was created, did not the morning stars sing together and shout for joy? And do you not think that as this new spiritual world is being fashioned by the pierced hands, the spirits above are looking down and watching the wondrous process? I am sure they do. “When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His Glory and appear, not only to those who are watching here below, who are workers together with Him, but also to those who have gone above, who rejoice together with Him in His gracious work below!  
And I believe it is also good news from a far country when the saints, one by one, finish their course. They get tidings up there when another saint is crossing the Jordan of death. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints,” and it must be precious, also, in the sight of the angels and the redeemed from among men. John Bunyan pictures the shining ones as coming down to the river’s brink and I can easily conceive that it is so. I can well imagine their glad welcome to the spirit as, disencumbered of this poor body, it comes forth from the stream of death and taking it up to the pearly gates of the celestial city. Then that is good news from a far country!  
I sometimes like to send a message Home by some whose hands I grasp as they are in the last article of death. Rowland Hill, when he was very old, said to one aged Christian who was dying, “I hope they have not forgotten to send for old Rowley.” And then he added, “Take my love up to the three glorious Johns, the Apostle John, John Bunyan and John Newton.” I have sometimes felt inclined to do the same. Surely, a spirit there will not forget anything that was good here below and pass, in utter unconsciousness, into the next world. It will have enough to do to think of Christ and to behold His Glory, but, perhaps the mind will be so expanded as to be able to think of other things besides. This, however, I do not know. But this I am sure of—that as one by one they for whom the Savior died, come Home, there must be joy. As they rejoice over repenting sinners, so do they rejoice over perfected saints who are without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing and who come up cleansed and delivered from anything like sin through the precious blood of the Lamb. Then is there good news for them from the far country!  
I cannot help feeling that I am addressing some who know nothing about the good news of which I have been speaking. For their benefit, let me tell you a story I have heard concerning one of our English pilots. A vessel was off the coast of Kent, gently sailing, as the seamen thought, towards their desired haven. A pilot who was watching them, observing the extreme danger in which they were, went at his utmost speed to warn them of their peril. He was hardly aboard before he shouted to the captain, “The Goodwins! The Goodwins!” They were almost on to those fatal sands and they did not know it. At once the course of the vessel was changed and all possible sail was set—and they were saved as by the skin of their teeth!  
So, I come to you thoughtless, careless ones, and I cry to you, “Hell lies right ahead of you—eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord and the glory of His power! Steer your helm hard aport, up with such sail as you have and may God send the breath of His Eternal Spirit to blow you off these breakers which already seem booming with the certainty of your eternal doom!” O God, almighty and ever-merciful, save them by Your Grace! Save them by the precious blood of Jesus, for His dear name’s sake! Amen and Amen.

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CHEER FOR DESPONDENCY  
NO. 3183

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1910. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“You know not what a day may bring forth.”  
Proverbs 27:1.  
[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon the whole verse is #94, Volume 2—TOMORROW— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

WHAT a great mercy it is that we do not know “what a day may bring forth”! We are often thankful for knowledge, but in this case we may be particularly grateful for ignorance. It is the Glory of God, we are told, to conceal a thing and it most certainly is for the happiness of mankind that He should conceal their future. Supposing that bright lines were written for us in the book of destiny and that we could read those bright lines now, and be sure of them—we would probably loiter away our time until we arrived at them—and would have no heart for the present. If, on the other hand, we knew that there were dark days of trouble in store for us, and had a full conviction as to when they would come, probably the thought of them would overshadow the present so that the joys which we now drink would be left untasted by reason of our nervous fears as to the distant future! To know the good might lead us to presumption—to know the evil might tempt us to despair. Happy for us is it that our eyes cannot penetrate the thick veil which God hangs between us and tomorrow, that we cannot see beyond the spot where we now are and that, in a certain sense, we are utterly ignorant as to the details of the future. We may, indeed, be thankful for our ignorance!

Although, however, we do not know what a day may bring forth or though we cannot see into what I may call, “the immediate future,” yet we have reason to be thankful that we do know something about what is to come and that we do know what is in the far-reaching future. We differ from the animals in this respect. When, two or three nights in the week, I pass on my way home a flock of sheep, or a little herd of bulls—all going down to the butcher’s, travelling in the cold, bright moonlight towards the slaughterhouse—I feel thankful that they do not know where they are going, for what would be their misery if they knew anything about death? The lamb’s thoughts are in the fold and all unconscious of the shambles. It licks the hand that kills it, not knowing of its coming speedy death. It is the happiness of the brute not to know the future!

But in our case, we know that we must die—and if it were not for the hope of the Resurrection and of the hereafter, this knowledge would distinguish us from the brutes only by giving us greater misery. There must be an intention on God’s part for us to live in a future state or else He would, out of mere benevolence, have left us ignorant of the fact of death. If He had not meant our souls to begin to prepare for another and a better existence, He would have kept us ignorant, even, of the fact that this one will pass away. But having given us an intellect and a mind which, both from observation and inward consciousness must know that death will come, we believe that He would have us prepare for that which will follow and look out for that which is beyond. We do know the future in its great rough outlines. We know that if the Lord comes not first, we shall die. We know that our soul shall live forever in happiness or in woe and that, according to whether we are found in Christ or without Christ, our eternal portion shall be one of never-ending agony or of ceaseless bliss! We may be thankful that we do know this, so that we may be prepared for it. But still—to return to that with which we started—we may also be thankful that we do not really know the great future in its details, that it is shut from our eyes lest it should have an evil influence upon our life.

Now, Solomon, in the Book of Proverbs, applied the Truth that we know not about tomorrow to the boaster, the man who said, “Tomorrow I will go into such a city and buy, and sell, and get gain, and then go to another city, and get more gain, and then, when I have amassed so much wealth, I will say, ‘Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease—eat, drink and be merry.’” Solomon seems to come in and put his hand upon the man’s shoulder and to say, virtually, “You fool, you know nothing about all this! You do not know what shall be on the morrow—your goods may never come to you, or you may not be here to trade with these goods at all. So you build a castle in the air! You think your fancies are true. You are as one that dreams of a feast and wakes to find himself hungry! How can you be so foolish?” Solomon dwells upon the text very solemnly and says, “Boast not yourself of tomorrow, for you know not what a day may bring forth.”

I do not intend, however, to use the text with this objective tonight. It struck me that as Solomon uses it here with one design, it might be very properly used for another. That as he intends to shame our growing pride and certainty of prosperity, so it might be used especially to cheer those who have a tendency to gloom—and to shed a ray of light into the thick darkness of their fear.

I. It will, first, comfort THOSE WHO ARE FEARING AND TREMBLING CONCERNING SOME EVIL WHICH IS YET TO COME.  
My Friend, you are afraid tonight. You cannot enjoy anything you have because of this terrible and fearful shadow which has come across your path of an evil which you say is coming tomorrow, or in one or two months’ time—or even in six months. Now, at least, you are not quite certain that it will come, for you know not what may be on the morrow. You are as alarmed and as afraid as if you were quite certain that it would appear. But it is not so, “You know not what a day may bring forth,” and since it is uncertain whether it shall be or not, had you not better leave your sorrow till it is certain? And meanwhile, leave the uncertain matter in the hands of God, whose Divine Purposes will be wise and good in the end, and will be even seen to be so! At the very least, slender as the comfort may be, yet there is still comfort in the fact that you know not what may be on the morrow!  
Let us expand this thought a little to those of you who are fearing about tomorrow. We very often fear what never will occur. I think that the major part of our troubles are not those which God sends us, but those which we invent for ourselves. As the poet speaks of some who— *“Feel a thousand deaths in fearing one”—*so there are many who feel a thousand troubles in fearing one trouble, which trouble, perhaps, never will have any existence except in the workshop of their own misty brain! It is an ill task for a child to whip himself—it might be good for him to feel the whip from his father’s hand, but it is of little service when the child applies it himself! And yet, very often the strokes which we dread never come from God’s hand at all, but are the pure inventions of our own imagination and our own unbelief working together. There are more who have to howl under the lash of unbelief than there are who have to weep under the gentle rod of God’s Providential dispensation. Now, why should you go about to fill your pillow with thorns grown in your own garden? Why so busy, good Sir, about gathering nettles with which to strew your own bed? There are clouds enough without your thinking that every little atom of mist will surely bring a storm. There are difficulties enough on the road to Heaven without your taking up stones to throw into your own path to make your own road more rough than there was any need that it should be! You know not what may be on the morrow. Your fears are absurd! Perhaps your neighbor knows they are absurd, but certainly you ought to know it is so! Do you not know that the trouble you are dreading, God can utterly avert? Perhaps tomorrow morning there will come a letter which will entirely change the face of the matter. A friend may interpose when least you could expect one, or difficulties which were like mountains may be cast into the depths of the sea. “You know not what a day may bring forth,” and the trouble which you so much dread may never occur at all!  
Moreover, do you not know that even if the trouble should come, God has a way of overruling it? So that even you, poor Trembler, shall stand by and see the salvation of God and wonder at two things—your own unbelief and God’s faithfulness! You say that the sea is before you, that the mountains are on either side and that the foe is behind you—but you know not what shall be on the morrow! Your God shall lead you through the depths of the sea and put such a song in your mouth as you never could have known if there had been no sea, no Pharaoh and no mountains to shut you in! These trials of yours shall be the winepress out of which shall come the wine of consolation to you! This furnace shall rob you of nothing but your dross, which you will be glad to be rid of—but your pure gold shall not be diminished by so much as a drachma, but shall only be the purer after it all! The trouble, then, may not come to you at all, or if it comes, it may be overruled.  
And there is one thing more. Supposing the trial does come, your God has promised that as your days, so shall your strength be. Has He not said it many times in His Word, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you”? He never did promise you freedom from trouble. He speaks of rivers and of your going through them! He speaks of fires and of your passing through them! But He has added, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” What matters it to you, then, whether there is fire or not if you are not burned? What matters it to you whether there are floods or not if you are not drowned? As long as you escape with spiritual life and health and come up out of all your trials the better for them, you may rejoice in tribulations! Thank God when your temptations abound! And be glad when He puts you into the furnace because of the blessing which you are sure to receive from it. So then, since you know not what may be on the morrow, take heart, you fearing one, and put your fears away! Do as you have been told—delight yourself in the Lord— and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved. Did not David say, speaking by the Holy Spirit, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all”? I charge you, therefore, to be of good comfort since you know not what may be on the morrow. This is the message to fearful saints.  
II. But now we will use the text to another class of Christians whose painful position really deserves more pity than that of those who only invent their fears, or who are troubled about the future. I mean THOSE WHO ARE AT THE PRESENT MOMENT DISCONSOLATE THROUGH IMMEDIATE DISTRESS AND PRESENT AFFLICTION.  
We little know, my Brothers and Sisters, when we gather here, how many cases of distress may be assembled in this house at any one time. Verily the poor have not ceased out of the land! The poor we have always with us and some of the poor, too, who need to have other mouths to speak for them, since from their very independence of spirit and their Christian character they are slow to speak for themselves. There may be a trouble in my neighbor’s heart which is almost bursting it while I am sitting peacefully enjoying the Word. We should remember those who are in bonds, as bound with them—and sympathize with those who are troubled as being ourselves, also, in the body.  
It will not be a waste of time, then, if I say to you who are troubled about worldly matters that there is comfort for you in this passage. “You know not what a day may bring forth.” You say, “It is all over with me! I will give up in despair.” No, Friend, do not do so for one day longer, for you know not what a day may bring forth! And if tomorrow bring you not deliverance, hope on at least for one day more, for, “you know not what a day may bring forth.” And I would keep on with the same advice till the last day of life! At least for one day more there is no room for despair. You cannot conclude that God has forsaken you, or that Providence has utterly turned against you! At least you know not what may be on the morrow, so wait till you have seen that day out! Give not yourself up as a hopeless victim to despair till you have seen what tomorrow may bring you!  
What unexpected turns there have been in the lives of those who have trusted in God! You who are trusting in yourselves may help yourselves as best you can, but you who are trusting in God have ample reasons to expect that God will come to your assistance! It is yours to watch and yours to work as if everything depended upon you, but it is yours, also, to remember that everything does not depend upon you! Sometimes God has come in to help His servants so exactly at what we call, “the nick of time,” that they have hardly been able to believe their own senses! “Strange,” they say, “it is like a miracle!” And so, indeed, it is, for the difference between the old dispensation and the new is that God used to work His wonders by suspending the Laws of Nature, whereas now He does greater things than this, inasmuch as He achieves His purposes quite as marvelously and lets the Laws of Nature remain as they are! He does not make the ravens bring His people bread and meat, but He lets them have their bread and their meat when they need them.  
God does not, nowadays, make the manna drop down from Heaven. No doubt some people would like Him to do so, but still He brings the manna, for all that—there is the bread and there are the clothes—and therewith should the Christian be content! He supplies His people’s needs by ordinary means and herein is He to be wondered at and to be adored! Look up, then! Wipe away that tear. Do not talk for a moment of murmuring against God. Do not go home with that sorry tale to your wife and children and tell them that God is not faithful to you. Wait till tomorrow, at any rate, for “you know not what a day may bring forth.”  
And to you who are disconsolate about spiritual things I might quote the same text. You say, “Ah, I have been hearing the Word a very long time and all that I have got from it is a sense of sin, or hardly that. Oh, how I wish that God would bless the Word to my soul! I am longing to be saved! What would I not give to be a Christian—a true and sincere Christian—one in whom the Spirit of God has worked a new heart and a right spirit! Oh,” you say, “I have sought it by listening to the Word and I have sought it in earnest prayer—but months have passed and I have made no advance. I have no more hope, now, than I had long ago! I seem as far off the attainment of eternal life as I was when first I heard the Word. No, if possible, I am further off! The Word has been a savor of death unto death to me, and not a savor of life unto life.” Well, my dear Friend, do not give up listening to the Word! Do not give up treading the courts of the Lord’s house, for if you have up to now got no blessing, yet, being in the way, the Lord may meet with you—for you know not what may be on the morrow!  
How many years these poor creatures waited around the pool when they expected that an angel would, at a certain season, come and trouble the water! There they waited. And though they were disappointed scores of times by others stepping in before them, yet, seeing it was the only hope they had, they waited! Now, it is in the use of the means that you are likely to get a blessing. “Faith come by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Do not, therefore, be persuaded to cease hearing, for you know not what may be on the morrow! The very next sermon you shall hear may be the means of your enlightenment! The very next address at the Prayer Meeting may give you encouragement. The very next time the Gospel trumpet sounds, you may obtain your liberty—and what a blessing will that liberty be! When you do find it, you will say it was well worth waiting for.  
Let me add another exhortation. Do not give up praying! It is a common device of Satan to say to the seeking soul, “The Lord will never hear you. You are one of the reprobate! He has never written your name in the Book of Life.” Soul, pray as long as you have breath! Let it be your firm resolve to remain at the Throne of Grace! Say to yourself—  
*“If I perish, I will pray,  
And perish only there.”*  
It is not said that the gate of Mercy will open at the first knock. If it were, there would be no room for the virtue of importunity! But the Lord, who delights in our importunity, encourages us with the promise that one day the gate will be opened. “Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.” And who knows how soon this may be? Why, before you close your eyes tonight, you may be able to look to Christ Crucified and find joy and peace in believing! Instead of the weeping prayer at the bedside, there may be a happy prayer of another kind—not with tears of sorrow, but with tears of holy joy—to think that the Lord has enlightened your darkness, that you have looked unto Christ and now your face is not ashamed! Why should it not be so tonight? Why should it not be so on the morrow? God grant, poor disconsolate one, that it may be so very speedily!  
At any rate, will you let me repeat the advice I have already given? Since you cannot know that God will not hear you. Since it never was revealed to any man and never will be, that God will not regard his cry, if you can get no further than the king of Nineveh did, yet go on and, “who can tell” what may be, for you know not what a day may bring forth! I will tell you one thing and you may take it as being God’s own Truth—if you go to Christ empty-handed, guilty, yet willing to take all your salvation from Him as a free gift—and if you cast yourself upon Him, I will tell you what the day will bring forth! It will bring forth eternal life to you— salvation, joy and peace! It will bring forth adoption, for you shall be received into the Divine Family! It will bring forth to you the foretaste of the Heaven which God has prepared for His people! You shall know a blessed day here that shall be a foretaste of a never-ending day hereafter—a day that shall be as one of the days of Heaven upon earth!  
I wish that the Lord would bless these words of mine to disconsolate ones. I think there may be some who may be sustained for a while and kept up by what I have said. But it will be better, still, if they shall now be filled with a desperate resolve to cast themselves at the foot of the Cross. Then little do they know what the day will bring forth! They cannot imaging the joy they shall have, nor the peace they shall receive! The pardon which Christ shall give them is far more rich than they have thought it could be—and the success with which their prayers shall be crowned is far more marvelous than even their best hopes have conceived! “You know not what a day may bring forth.”  
III. Now thirdly, turning this time not to those who are fearing the future, nor yet to those who are disconsolate about present affliction, I thought of addressing a few words to THOSE WHO ARE WEARIED IN THE MASTER’S SERVICE.  
I can scarcely sympathize, as I could wish to do, with those who have worked for Christ unsuccessfully. To say, “Master, I have toiled all the night and have taken nothing,” has never been my lot and, therefore, I can only speak from what I suppose to be the feeling of unsuccessful men. For these many years I have been preaching the Gospel in this great London and I know not that at any time God has blessed us more than He is blessing us now! Neither can I say that at any time He has blessed us less, for it seems as if He has always been giving us more than we can receive and blessing the Word exceedingly above what we asked or ever thought! There is room for nothing in my case but gratitude and encouragement, for humble dependence upon God for the future and adoring joy for the past and the present.  
But, what hard

work it must be for a minister or a Sunday school teacher to go on preaching and laboring positively without success, or with so little that it is only like a cluster here and there upon the topmost bough! I can imagine such Brothers and Sisters feeling that they can speak no more in the name of the Lord. And, as they weep over their failure, saying with Isaiah, “Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” I should not wonder but that my text may whisper in their ears a comfortable thought, “You know not what a day may bring forth.”  
Do not cease from your labor, dear Brother! You are fainting today, but tomorrow you may arise with new strength. Or feeling as if you were but weakness, itself, in the morning, though you may hardly know how it came about, in the evening you may be happy and cheerful! The Divine Presence may overshadow your heart and drive your fears away, consoling you in your distress and making you feel as if it were well to be God’s servant even if one had no present reward!  
And what if, coming at the back of this, you should find yourself, next time you go to your work, discharging it with unusual zest and with new power? What if the pulpit, instead of being, as it has been, a prison to you, should suddenly come to be a palace? What if, instead of there being a mere bush in the wilderness, God should dwell in the bush and make it all ablaze, like that unconsumed burning bush which Moses saw? What if the stammering tongue should suddenly be unloosed and the cold heart be all aglow with Divine enthusiasm? What if the poor tongue of clay should suddenly become a tongue of fire? What a change it would be! Ah, but “you know not what a day may bring forth.”  
And what if, while you are yourself thus quickened, there should fall a like spirit upon the people, upon the children in the class, upon the hearers in the House of Prayer? What if, instead of the dull, lead eyes which looked as if Death, itself, were gazing from them—what if, instead of stony and motionless hearers, there should suddenly be a holy sensitiveness given to the people—what would you say to that? Yet why should there not be? Sometimes such Grace comes all at once! The rock has been long smitten, yet it would not break—but, all of a sudden there has come a blow of the hammer, and that, perhaps, not so hard as many that have fallen before, but it has hit the rock in the right place and lo!—the mass of stone flies to shivers! “Oh!” you say, “I could keep on at my work if I thought that this would happen.” Keep on at your work, then, Brother, for you do not know what will come next! Pray for great things and you may then expect them! You may not make sure of such blessing, of course, if you have not prayed for it! But, having sought it, why should it not come?  
I believe all Sunday school teachers find that sometimes such sudden melting comes over their classes, and ministers often realize that all of a sudden, they scarcely know how, but there is a change in the very aspect of their hearers, so that it is quite a different thing to preach. I am very conscious of the difference there is between the various congregations I address. Almost every day, and sometimes twice a day, I am preaching. Occasionally it is dreadful misery because, say what we will, we know we have not a sympathizing audience. We feel as though we were dragging a plow over the rough ground! But when we feel that the Spirit of God is there, then we realize that we are sowing this Good Seed, that it is falling on good ground—and we expect the joyful sheaves which are to be our reward! And yet, Brothers and Sisters, we are as much the servants of God when we are doing the one thing, as when we are doing the other— and are as much in His service when we are unsuccessful as when we are successful! We are not responsible to God for the souls that are saved, but we are responsible for the Gospel that we preach and for the way in which we preach it. And “who can tell” whether those of us who have been least successful may not suddenly exchange our heavy toil for the most delightful service, for we know not what a day may bring forth!  
And how do you know, my Brothers and Sisters, what may yet happen? You were saying, this morning, “It is a dark age for the Church.” Well, so it is. You were saying, “I believe it is quite a crisis.” So it is. Every year, in fact, seems to be a crisis. “Ah,” you say, “but there are peculiar dangers now.” No doubt there are! And I think the oldest man here remembers that there were peculiar dangers when he was a boy—there always have been and always will be peculiar dangers! But if there is danger from this revival of Ritualism and, no doubt there is—yet who among us can tell what a day may bring forth? Are we certain that God will not yet turn back the tide of Romanizing error? Are we sure that He has not a man somewhere, or even 50 men who shall be the instruments of accomplishing this? Has it not often occurred that the very men who have been the hottest advocates of a certain system have afterwards been the greatest enemies of that system? The Christian Church could never have expected to get an Apostle from among the Pharisees and, least of all, could they have supposed that they would find in Saul of Tarsus, the blood-thirsty persecutor, the great Apostle of the Gentiles—not one whit behind the very chief of the twelve! You and I do not know what God has in store. There may be somewhere at this very moment a man, unknown to you, who is reading the Word and, as he reads it, he may, like the monk, Luther, get such of the Light of God through the reading that he who once helped to build up, will be the instrument in God’s hand to destroy! I am getting more and more hopeful about these matters. I entertain the most sanguine expectation that the God who has put His enemies to rout in years gone by will do it now once again! And instead of sitting down in anything like heaviness of spirit, or oppression of heart, I would speak hopefully and have you, my Brothers and Sisters, be filled with hope, for we do not know what a day may bring forth!  
Suddenly the whole current of the public mind may be turned! There may come a great tide of conversions which shall be the strength and the joy of the Christian Church! On a sudden, slumbering Churches may awake, gracious revivals may come! Upon the land the Holy Fire may once again descend from Heaven. The Christian Church may start up to find that the God who answered by fire is still in her midst! The mourning Christian may put off his ashes and sackcloth, and put on his beautiful array and a shout of joy may go up, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” where you and I expected to hear nothing but, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”  
Let us, then, if we are working for the Master, instead of growing tired with service, hear Him say to us, “Be not weary in well doing, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not.” Let us, my beloved Brothers, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. You know not how soon you shall see this success, for you know not what a day may bring forth. I hope every city missionary who hears me, every Bible woman, every minister, every tract-distributor, every Sunday school teacher, will try and look this very sweet thought in the face! Expect that God is going to do great things and He will do them, for He does very much according to His people’s expectations. According to your faith shall it be done unto you!  
IV. I will now say a few words, in the fourth place, to THOSE WHO ARE DISPIRITED IN PRAYER—to some who have been engaged in special supplication for some objective, but who, up till now, have received no answer—and are ready to give up praying. Let me encourage such to persevere by repeating to them the words of Solomon, “You know not what a day may bring forth.”  
There is a story I have often heard told by our Methodist friends of a woman who had long prayed for her husband. She resolved that she would pray for him every day a certain number of times. I think it was for 10 years and after that, she would pray no longer, supposing that if her prayer was not heard by that time, it would be an intimation that God did not intend to grant the blessing. I do not think she was right in setting any limit to God at all, or that she had any right to act so. However, on this occasion, God winked at His servant’s infirmity and, so the story goes—and I do not doubt its correctness—on the day on which she was to cease from prayer, her husband suddenly turned thoughtful and asked her the question which she had so longed to hear from him, “What must I do to be saved?” I am sure that those who have watched over their success in prayer will have met with cases quite as startling as that— things which your neighbor would not believe if you were to tell him, but which you treasure up among those inward experiences which are true to you, however improbable they may seem to other people! You know, dear Friends, that you have obtained answers to prayer, very amazing ones, and have obtained them very promptly and very punctually. You have had your prayers met just as an honest merchant meets his bills at the appointed time. On the expected day God has met with you and given you what you wanted and what you sought for—just at the very time you needed it.  
But now I will suppose that you are tried thus. That dear child of yours, instead of hopefully rewarding your prayers, seems to be going from bad to worse! Perhaps, dear Brother, it is your son. And I know there are many such cases. The devil has told you that it is no use to pray for him, for God will never hear you. Or else good Sister, it is your brother—and your prayers for him has been incessant—indeed, it has been a constant burden on your mind. Now, in such cases, I charge you, I earnestly entreat you never to listen to the malicious insinuation of Satan that, “you may as well leave off praying, for you will not be heard,” for, at the very least, and I am now putting it on the very lowest ground, possible, “You know not what a day may bring forth.” You cannot tell but that the hard heart may yet be softened and the rebellious will be subdued. You would be surprised to go home and find your son converted, would you not? Well, but such things have occurred! You would be surprised if your wife came in some Sunday evening and said, “I have been hearing So-and-So, and God has met with me.” Yet why should it not be so? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is His arm shortened that it cannot save? Is His ear heavy that it cannot hear? Even if you should die without seeing your children converted, or your dear ones brought in— you do not know, even then, what a day may bring forth! They may be converted after you are dead—and it will tend, possibly, to swell the joy of Heaven when you shall see them, after years of wandering, brought to follow their father, their father whom in life they despised, but whom after he was gone they came to imitate! Persevere in prayer, Christian! “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” Praying breath is never sent in vain. Still besiege the Throne of God! The city may hold out for a while, but prayer should capture it. Beleaguer the Throne of Grace—it is to be taken. Never raise the siege until you get the blessing—the blessing shall certainly be yours.  
V. And now I cannot talk longer on this matter, so I will close with just another thought to THOSE OF US WHO ARE CHEERFUL AND HAPPY.  
I hope there are many of us who are neither afraid and fretting about the future, nor depressed about the present, neither worn out with toil in the Master’s service, nor dispirited in prayer. There are some of us to whom the Lord is so gracious that our cup runs over. Now we may just put another drop on the top of the full cup. Dear Friend, “you know not what a day may bring forth.” It may perhaps bring forth to you and to me our last day. What a blessed day that would be—our last day! Our dying day! No, do not call it so, but the day of our translation—the day of our great change, the day of our being taken up—that of our being carried away in the fiery chariot to be forever with the Lord!  
You know not but what this may be your case tomorrow. Oh, what joy! I am doubting and fearing, today, but I may see His face tomorrow! And see it so as never to lose sight of it again! From my poor tenement of poverty I am going to the mansions of eternal blessedness! From the sickbed, where I have tossed in pain, I shall mount to everlasting joy! The streets of gold may be trod tomorrow and the palm branch of victory may be waved tomorrow—the streets trod by these weary feet and the palm branch waved by these toil-worn hands! Yes, tomorrow the chants of angels may be in your ears and the swell of celestial music may make your soul glad. Tomorrow you may see the beautiful vision and may behold the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off. I like to live in the constant anticipation of being “with Christ, which is far better.” Do not put it off, Christian, as though it were far away! If we had to wait a hundred years they would soon pass, like a watch in the night. But we shall not live as long as that. We may be with our Lord tomorrow! We may sup here on earth and breakfast in Heaven! We may breakfast on earth and hear Christ, say, “Come and dine,” or we may go from our Communion Table here to the great Supper of the Lamb above, to be with Him forever!  
This is the best of it. When somebody said to a Christian minister, “I suppose you are on the wrong side of fifty?” “No,” he said, “thank God, I am on the right side of fifty, for I am sixty and am, therefore, nearer Heaven.” Old age should never be looked upon with dismay by us—it should be our joy! If our hearts were right in this matter, instead of being at all afraid at the thought of parting from this life, we should say— *“Ah me! Ah me that I  
In Kedar’s tents here stay!  
No place like this on high.  
There, Lord! Guide my way.  
O happy place!  
When shall I be,  
My God, with You,  
And see Your face?”*  
I have not time to say much to others here who are not concerned in these sweet themes, but I will at least say this. Let the careless and thoughtless here remember that they do not know what a day may bring forth. Tomorrow it may not be that grand party to which you are intending to go. Tomorrow it may not be that sweet sin of which your evil nature is thinking. Tomorrow may see you on a sickbed. Tomorrow may see you on your deathbed. Tomorrow, worst of all, may see you in Hell! O Sinner, what a state to live in—to be in daily jeopardy of eternal ruin, to have the wrath of God, who is always angry with the wicked, abiding on you—and not to know but that tomorrow you may be where you can find no escape, no hope, no comfort! Tomorrow in eternity! Tomorrow banished from His Presence forever! Tomorrow to have that awful sentence thrilling in your soul, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #94 New Park Street Pulpit 1

TOMORROW  
NO. 94

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 25, 1856, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT MABERLEY CHAPEL, KINGSLAND,

On behalf of the Metropolitan Benefit Societies’ Asylum, Ball’s Pond Road, Islington.

**“Boast not yourself of tomorrow; for you know  
not what a day may bring forth.”  
Proverbs 27:1.**

GOD’S most holy Word was principally written to inform us of the way to Heaven and to guide us in our path through this world to the realms of eternal life and the Light of God. But as if to teach us that God is not careless concerning our doings in the present scene, and that our benevolent Father is not inattentive to our happiness even in this state, He has furnished us with some excellent and wise maxims which we may put into practice. Not only in spiritual matters but in temporal affairs, also. I have always looked upon the Book of Proverbs with pleasure, as being a book not only teaching us the highest spiritual wisdom, but as more especially speaking on the “now”—the time that is present with us—giving us maxims that will make us wise for this world and instruct us in conducting our affairs while we are here among our fellow men. We need some temporal wisdom as well as spiritual illumination. It need not always be that the children of the Kingdom should be more foolish than the children of darkness. It is well that we should be wise to order our common affairs aright, as well as to set our house in order for the grave and, therefore, we find in Scripture maxims and teachings for them both. Since God has been pleased, thus, to instruct us in the avocations of life, I shall not, then, be out of place if I use my text, in some degree, in a merely temporal manner and endeavor to give advice to my friends concerning the business of this life. Afterwards, I shall dwell upon it more spiritually. There is, first, the abuse of tomorrow forbidden in the text. In the second place, I shall mention the right use of tomorrow.

I. First, then, there is THE ABUSE OF TOMORROW mentioned in the text and we shall look upon it, first, in a worldly point of view—and yet, I trust—in a way of wisdom. “Boast not yourself of tomorrow.” Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, whoever you are, whether you are Christians or not, this passage has a depth of wisdom in it for you! “Boast not yourself of tomorrow,” and this, for many very wise reasons.

First of all, because it is extremely foolish to boast at all. Boasting never makes a man any the greater in the esteem of others, nor does it improve the real state of his body or soul. Let a man brag as he will, he is none the greater for his bragging, no, he is the less, for men invariably think the worse of him! Let him boast as much as he pleases of anything that he possesses, he shall not increase its value by his glorying. He cannot multiply his wealth by boasting of it, he cannot increase his pleasures by glorying in them. True, to be content with those pleasures and feel a complacency in them, may render them very sweet—but not so with such a treasure as this—for it is a treasure which he has not, yet, and, therefore, how foolish he is to glory in it! There is an old, old proverb, which I dare not quote here. It is something to do with chickens. Perhaps you can remember it. It bears very well upon this text, for tomorrow is a thing that we have not yet obtained, and, therefore, not only if we had it would it be foolish to boast of it, but because we have it not and may never have it, it becomes the very extremity of foolishness to glory in it! Glory, O man, in the harvest that may come to you next year when your seed is sown—but glory not in tomorrow—for you can sow no seeds of morrows! Morrows come from God—you have no right to glory in them. Glory if you will, O fowler, that the birds have once flown to your net, for they may come again. But glory not too soon, for they may find another decoy that shall be better to their taste than yours, or they may fly far off from your snare! Though many a day has come to you, think not that another will certainly arrive. Days are not like links of a chain— one does not ensure the other. We have one, but we may never see its fellow. Each may be the last of its kind. Each springs of a separate birth. There are no twin days! Today has no brother, it stands alone—and tomorrow must come alone—and the next and the next, also, must be born into this world without a brother. We must never look upon two days at once, nor expect that a whole herd of days shall be brought forth at one time.

We need not boast of tomorrow, for it is one of the frailest things in all creation and, therefore, the least to be boasted of. Boast of the bubbles on the breaker. Boast of the foam upon the sea. Boast of the clouds that skim the sky. Boast of what you will, O man—but boast not of tomorrow—for it is too unsubstantial! Tomorrow—it is a fleeting thing. You have not seen it. Why do you boast of it? Tomorrow—it is the pot of gold which the idiot dreams lies at the foot of the rainbow. It is not there, nor has he found it. Tomorrow—it is the floating island of Loch Lomond, many have talked of it, but none have seen it. Tomorrow—it is the wrecker’s beacon, enticing men to the rock of destruction. Boast not yourself of tomorrow—it is the frailest and most brittle thing you can imagine! No glass were half so easily broken as your tomorrow’s joys and your tomorrow’s hopes! A puff of wind shall crush them, while yet they seem not to be full blown. He said, good easy man, “Full surely my greatness is a ripening,” but there came a frost—a killing frost which nipped his shoot and then he fell. Boast not of tomorrow, you have it not. Boast not of tomorrow—you may never have it! Boast not of tomorrow—if you had it, it would deceive you. Boast not of tomorrow, for tomorrow you may be where morrows will be dreadful things to tremble at!

Boast not yourself of tomorrow, not only because it is extremely foolish but because it is exceedingly hurtful. Boasting of tomorrow is hurtful to us in every way. It is hurtful to us now. I never knew a man who was always hoping to do great things in the future, that ever did much in the present. I never knew a man who intended to make a fortune, by-andbye, who ever saved sixpence a week now! I never knew a man who had very great and grand hopes on the death of some old grandmother or the coming-in of some property from chancery, or the falling to him of something because his name was Jenyns. I never saw him very prosperous in the meantime. I have heard of a man going to be rich tomorrow and boasting of it—but I never knew him do much. Such men spend so much time in building castles in the air that they have no stones left wherewith to build so much as a cottage on the ground! They were wasting all their energies on tomorrow—consequently they had no time to reap the fields of the present, for they were waiting for the heavy harvests of the future. The heavily laden boats of today come in with abundance of fish from the depths of time—but they said of them, “They are nothing. There will be heavier draughts tomorrow, there will be greater abundance then. Go away, little ships, an argosy shall come home tomorrow—a very fleet of wealth.” And so they let today’s wealth go by because they expected the greater wealth of tomorrow—therefore, they were hurt even for the present.

And worse than that. Some men were led into extraordinary extravagance from their hopes of the future. They spend what they are going to have, or rather what they never will have! Many have been ruined by the idle dream of speculation—and what is that but boasting of tomorrow? They have said, “True, I cannot pay for this which I now purchase—but I shall tomorrow—for tomorrow I shall roll in wealth. Tomorrow, perhaps, I shall be the richest of men. A lucky turn of business (as they term it) will lift me off this shoal.” So they keep still and not only do they refuse to toil, to push themselves off the sand, but worse than that—they are throwing themselves away and wasting what they have—in the hope of better times coming in the future! Many a man has been made lame, blind and dumb, in the present because he hoped to be greater than a man in the future. I always laugh at those who say to me, “Sir, rest a while. You will work all the longer for it. Stay a while, lest you waste your strength, for you may work tomorrow.” I bid them remember that such is not the teaching of Scripture, for that says, “Whatever your hand find to do, do it with your might,” and I would count myself worse than a fool if I should throw away my todays in the expectation of tomorrows and rest upon the couch of idleness today, because I thought the chariot of tomorrow would make up for all my sloth! So, Beloved, if we love our God, we shall find enough to do, if we have all our tomorrows and use all our todays, too! If we serve our God as we ought to serve Him, considering what He has done for us, we shall find that we shall have more than our hands full. Let our life be spared as long as Methuselah’s—enough for every moment, enough for every hour, long as life may be. But hoping to do things in the future takes away our strength in the present, unnerves our resolution and unstrings our diligence. Let us take care that we are not hurt in the present by boasting of tomorrow!

And, remember, that if you boast of tomorrow, it will not only hurt you today, but hurt you tomorrow, also. Do you know why? Because, as sure as you are alive, you will be disappointed with tomorrow, if you boast of it before it comes. Tomorrows would be very good things if you did not give them such a very good character. I believe one of the very worst things a minister can possess is to have anybody to recommend him—for the people say, “Here comes a man! How he will preach, how eloquent he will be!” The poor creature cannot come up to their expectations and so they are disappointed. So with tomorrow—you give him such flattering encomiums—“Oh, he is everything, he is perfection.” Todays—they are nothing—they are the very sweepings of the floors! But tomorrows—they are the solid gold. Todays—they are exhausted mines and we get little from them. Tomorrows—they are the very mines of wealth! We have only to get them, and we are rich, immensely rich! The tomorrows are everything—and then the tomorrows come laden with mercy and big with blessings of God—but, notwithstanding—we are disappointed because tomorrow is not what we expected it to be, even when tomorrow is marvelously abundant! But sometimes tomorrow comes with storms and clouds and darkness, when we expected it to be full of light and sunshine, and oh, how terrible is our feeling, then, from the very reason that we expected something different! It is not at all a bad beatitude, “Blessed is the man that expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.”

If we know how to practice that, and expect nothing, we shall not be disappointed! It is certain. And the less we expect and the less we boast of our expectations, the more happy will the future be—because we shall have far less likelihood of being disappointed. Let us remember, then, that if we would kill the future, if we would ruin the tomorrows, if we would boast of their hopes, if we would take away their honey—we must press them in the hand of boasting—and then we shall have done it! “Boast not yourself of tomorrow,” for you spoil the tomorrow by boasting of it.

And then, remember, what solemnly disastrous circumstances have occurred to men in this life after tomorrow has gone, from boasting of tomorrows. Yes, there is many a man who set all his hope upon one single thing—and the tomorrow came which he did not expect—perhaps a black and dark tomorrow—and it crushed his hopes to ashes. How sad he felt afterwards! He was in his nest—he said, “Peace, peace, peace,” and sudden destruction came upon his happiness and his joy. He had boasted of his tomorrow by over-security, and look at him now—what a very wreck of a man he is because he had set his hope on that—now his joy is blasted! Oh, my Friends, never boast too much of the tomorrows, because if you do, your disappointment will be tremendous when you shall find your joys have failed you and your hopes have passed away! See there that rich man—he has piled heaps on heaps of gold—but now, for a desperate venture, he is about to have more than he ever possessed before, and he reckons on that tomorrow. Nothingness is his, and why his disappointment? Because he boasted of imagined wealth! See that man? His ambition is to raise his house and perpetuate his name. See that heir of his—his joy, his life, his fullness of happiness? A handful of ashes and a coffin are left to the weeping father! Oh, if he had not boasted too much of the certainty of that son’s life, he had not wept so bitterly after the tomorrow had swept over him, with all its boast and mildew of his expectations! See yonder, another—he is famous, he is great. Tomorrow comes a slander and his fame is gone and his name disgraced! Oh, had he not set his love on fame, he had not cared whether men cried, “crucify,” or, “hallelujah”—he had disregarded both alike! But believing that fame was a stable thing, whereas its foot is on the sand, he reckoned on tomorrows. And mark how sad he walks the earth, because tomorrow has brought him nothing but grief. “Boast not yourself of tomorrow.”

And I would have you remember just one more fact and that I think to be a very important one—that very often when men boast of tomorrow and are overconfident that they shall live, they not only entail great sorrow upon themselves, but upon others. I have, when preaching, frequently begged of my friends to be quite sure to make their wills and see to their family affairs. Many are the solemn instances which should urge you to do so. One night a minister happened to say, in the course of his sermon, that he held it to be a Christian duty for every man to have his house set in order, so that if he were taken away, he would know, that as far as possible, everything would be right. And there was one member of his Church, there, who said to himself, “What my minister has said is true. I should not like to see my babes and my wife left with nothing, as they must be if I were to die.” So he went home and that night he made his will and cleared up his accounts. That night he died! It must have been a joyful thing for the widow, in the midst of her sadness, to find herself amply provided for and everything in order for her comfort. Good Whitefield said he could not lie down in bed a night, if he did not know that even his gloves were in their place. For he said he should not like to die with anything in his house out of order. And I would have every Christian very careful to be so living one day, that if he were never to see another, he might feel that he had done the utmost that he could—not only to provide for himself—but also for those who inherit his name and are dear to him. Perhaps you call this only worldly teaching. Very good. You will find it very much like heavenly teaching one of these dark days, if you do not practice it. “Boast not yourself of tomorrow.”  
II. But now I come to dwell upon this in a spiritual manner, for a moment or two. “Boast not yourself of tomorrow.” Oh, my beloved Friends, never boast of tomorrow with regard to your soul’s salvation!

They do so, in the first place, who think that it will be easier for them to repent tomorrow than it is today. Felix said there would be a more convenient season and then he would again send for Paul, that he might hear him seriously. And many a sinner thinks that just now it is not easy to turn and to repent, but that by-and-bye it will be. Now, is not that a very string of lies? In the first place, is it ever easy for a sinner to turn to God? Must not that be done, at any time, by Divine Power? And again, if that is not easy for him, now, how will it be easier in later life? Will not his sins bind fresh fetters to his soul, so that it will be even more impossible for him to escape from his iron bondage? If he is dead, now, will he not be corrupt before he reaches tomorrow? And when tomorrow comes, to which he looks forward as being easier for a resurrection, will not his soul be yet more corrupt and, therefore, if we may so speak, even further from the possibility of being raised? Oh, Sirs, you say it is easy for you to repent tomorrow, why, then, not today? You would find the difficulty of it, if you would try it—yes, you would find your own helplessness in that matter! Possibly you dream that on a future day, repentance will be more agreeable to your feelings. But how can you suppose that a few hours will make it more pleasant? If it is vinegar to your taste, now, it shall be so, then! And if you love your sins, now, you will love them better, then, for the force of habit will have confirmed you in your course. Every moment of your lives is driving in another rivet to your eternal state. So far as we can see, it becomes less and less likely (speaking after the manner of men) that the sinner should burst his chains of each sin that he commits—for habit has bound him yet faster to his guilt and his iniquity has got another hold upon him. Let us take care, then, that we do not boast of tomorrow, by a pretense that it will be so much easier to repent tomorrow! It is one of Satan’s lies, for it will only be the more difficult.

He boasts of tomorrow, again, who supposes that he shall have plenty of time to repent and to return to God. Oh, there are many who say, “When I come to die, I shall be on my deathbed and then I shall say, ‘Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner.’” I remember an aged minister telling me a story of a man whom he often warned, but who always said to him, “Sir, when I am dying, I shall say, ‘Lord, have mercy on me,’ and I shall go to Heaven as well as anybody else.” Returning home from market one night, rather “foul” with liquor, he guided his horse with a leap right over the parapet of a bridge into the river—the last words he was heard to utter were a most fearful imprecation! And in the bed of the river he was found dead, killed by the fall. So it may be with you. You think you will have space for repentance, but it may be that sudden doom will devour you! Or, perhaps, even while you are sitting there in the pew, your last moment is running out. There is your hourglass. Look! It is running. I marked another grain just then and then another fell. It fell so noiselessly, yet I thought I heard it fall. Yes! There it is! The clock’s tick is the fall of that grain of dust down from your hourglass. Life is getting shorter every moment with all of you—but with some the sand is almost out— there is not a handful left. A few more grains. See, now they are less, two or three. Oh, in a moment it may be said, “There is not one left.” Sinner, never think that you have time to spare! You never had, man never had! God said, “Hurry you,” when He bid men flee from Sodom. Lot had to hurry. And depend upon it, when the Spirit speaks in a man’s heart, He does always bid him hurry! Under natural convictions, men are very prone to tarry. But the Spirit of God, when He speaks in the heart of man, always says, “today.” I never knew a truly anxious soul, yet, who was willing to put off till tomorrow! When God the Holy Spirit has dealings with a man, they are always immediate dealings. The sinner is impatient to get deliverance. He must have pardon, now! He must have present mercy, or else he fears that mercy will come too late to him! Let me beseech you, then, (and may God the Holy Spirit grant that my entreaty may become successful in your case), let me beseech everyone of you to take this into consideration—there is never time to spare—and that your thought that there is time to spare is an insinuation of Satan! When the Holy Spirit pleads with man, He pleads with him with demands of immediate attention. “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.”

“Boast not yourself of tomorrow,” O Sinner, as I doubt not you are doing in another fashion. “Boast not yourself of tomorrow,” in the shape of resolves to do better. I think I have given up resolutions, now. I have enough of the debris and the rubbish of my resolutions to build a cathedral with, if they could but be turned into stone! Oh, the broken resolutions, the broken vows all of us have had! Oh, we have raised castles of resolutions, structures of enormous size, that out vied Babylon, itself, in all its majesty! Says one, “I know I shall be better tomorrow. I shall renounce this vice and the other. I shall forsake this lust. I shall give up that darling sin. True, I shall not do so now—a little more sleep and a little more slumber—but I know I shall do it tomorrow.” Fool! You know not that you shall see tomorrow! Oh, greater fool! You ought to know that what you are not willing to do, today, you will not be willing to do, tomorrow! I believe there are many souls that have been lost by good intentions which were never carried out. Resolutions strangled at their birth brought on men the guilt of spiritual infanticide—and they have been lost with resolutions sticking in their mouths! Many a man has gone down to Hell with a good resolution on his lip, with a pious resolve on his tongue. Oh, if he had lived another day, he said he would have been so much better! If he had lived another week, oh, then he thought he would begin to pray! Poor soul! If he had been spared another week, he would only have sunk deeper into sin! But he did not think so and he went to Hell with a choice morsel rolling under his tongue—that he would do better directly and that he meant to amend, by-and-bye! There are many of you present, I dare say, who are making good resolutions. You are apprentices—well, you are not going to carry them out till you get to be journeymen! You are journeymen—well, you cannot carry them out till you get to be master! You have been breaking the Sabbath—but you intend to leave it off when you are in another job. You have been accustomed to swear— you say, “I shall not swear any more when I get out of this company, they try my temper so.” You have committed this or that petty theft— tomorrow you will renounce it, because tomorrow you will have enough and you can afford to do it. But of all the lying things—and there are many things that are deceptive—resolutions for tomorrow are the worst of all! I would not trust one of them! There is nothing stable in them. You might sooner sail to America across the Atlantic on a sere leaf than float to Heaven on a resolution!

It is the frailest thing in the world, tossed about by every circumstance and wrecked with all its precious freight—wrecked to the dismay of the man who ventured his soul in it—wrecked, and wrecked forever! Take care, my dear Hearers, that none of you are reckoning on tomorrows. I remember the strong but solemn words of Jonathan Edwards where he says, “Sinner, remember, you are at this moment standing over the mouth of Hell upon a single plank and that plank is rotten. You are hanging over the jaws of Perdition by a solitary rope, and lo! the strands of that rope are creaking—breaking, now—and yet you talk of tomorrows?” If you were sick, Man, would you send for your physician tomorrow? If your house were on fire, would you yell, “fire,” tomorrow? If you were robbed in the street on your road home, would you cry, “stop thief,” tomorrow? No, surely. But you are wiser than that in natural concerns. But man is foolish, oh, too foolish in the things that concern his soul! Unless Divine and Infinite Love shall teach him to number his days, that he may apply his heart unto true wisdom, he will still go on boasting of tomorrows until his soul has been destroyed by them!

Just one hint to the child of God. Ah, my beloved Brother or Sister, do not, I beseech you, boast of tomorrow yourself. David did it once—he said, “My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved.” Do not boast of your tomorrows! You have feathered your nest pretty well, yes, but you may have a thorn in it before the sun has gone down and you will be glad enough to fly aloft. You are very happy and joyful, but do not say you will always have as much faith as you have now—do not be sure you will always be as blessed. The next cloud that sweeps the skies may drive many of your joys away. Do not say you have been kept, up to now, and you are quite sure you will be preserved from sin tomorrow. Take care of tomorrows! Many Christians go tumbling on without a bit of thought, and then, all of a sudden, they tumble down and make a mighty mess of their profession! If they would only look sharp after the tomorrows—if they would only watch their paths instead of star-gazing and boasting about them, their feet would be a great deal surer! True, God’s child need not think of tomorrow as regards his soul’s eternal security, for that is in the hands of Christ and safe, forever, but as far as his profession, comfort, and happiness are concerned, it will well become him to take care of his feet every day! Do not get to boasting! If you get to boasting of tomorrow, you know the Lord’s rule is always to send a canker where we put our pride. And so if you boast of tomorrow, you will have a moth in it before long! As sure as ever we glory in our wealth, it becomes cankered, or it takes to itself wings and flies away! As certainly as we boast of tomorrow, the worm will gnaw its root, as it did Jonah’s gourd—and the tomorrow under which we rested shall, with drooping leaves—only stand a monument of our disappointment! Let us take care, Christian Brothers and Sisters, that we do not waste the present time with hopes of tomorrow—that we do not get proud and so off our guard, by boasting of what we most assuredly shall be, then, as we imagine.

III. And now, in the last place, if tomorrows are not to be boasted of, are they good for nothing? No! Blessed be God! There are a great many things we may do with tomorrows. We may not boast of them, but I will tell you what we may do with them if we are the children of God. We may always look forward to them with patience and confidence that they will work together for our good. We may say of the tomorrows, “I do not boast of them, but I am not frightened of them. I would not glory in them, but I will not tremble about them”—

*“What may be my future lot,  
Well I know concerns me not!  
This does set my heart at rest,  
What my God appoints, is best.”*

We may be very easy and very comfortable about tomorrow. We may remember that all our times are in His hands, that all events are at His command. And though we know not all the windings of the path of Providence, yet He knows them all. They are all settled in His book, and our times are all ordered by His wisdom. Whether they are—

*“Times of trial and of grief  
Times of triumph and relief  
Times the tempter’s power to prove,  
Times to taste a Savior’s love—  
All must come, and last, and end,  
As shall please my heavenly Friend.”*

And, therefore, we may look upon the tomorrows as we see them in the rough bullion of time, about to be minted into every day’s expenditure— and we may say of them all—“They shall all be gold, they shall all be stamped with the King’s impress and, therefore, let them come. They will not make me worse—they will work together for my good.”

More, a Christian may rightly look forward to his tomorrows, not simply with resignation, but also with joy. Tomorrow to a Christian is a happy thing, it is one stage nearer Glory! Tomorrow! It is one step nearer Heaven to a Believer! It is just one knot more that he has sailed across the dangerous sea of life and he is so much the nearer to his eternal port—his blissful Heaven! Tomorrow—it is a fresh lamp of fulfilled promises that God has placed in His firmament—that the Christian may hail it as a guiding star, in the future, or at least as a light to cheer his path. Tomorrow—the Christian may rejoice at it. He may say of today, “O day, you may be black, but I shall bid you good-bye, for lo, I see the morrow coming and I shall mount upon its wings, and shall fly away and leave you and your sorrows far behind me.”

And, moreover the Christian may await tomorrow with even more than simple hope and joy. He may look forward to it with ecstasy in some measure, for he does not know but that tomorrow his Lord may come! Tomorrow Christ may be upon this earth, “for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes.” Tomorrow all the glories of millennial splendor may be revealed. Tomorrow, the thrones of Judgment may be set and the King may summon the people to judgment! Tomorrow, we may be in Heaven! Tomorrow we may be on the breast of Christ. Tomorrow, yes, before then, this head may wear a crown, this hand may wave the palm, these lips may sing the song, these feet may tread the streets of gold, this heart may be full of bliss, immortal, everlasting, eternal! Be of good cheer, oh, fellow Christian—tomorrow can have nothing black in it for you, for it must work for your good! And it may have in it a precious, precious jewel. It is an earthen pitcher and it may have in it some dark black waters, but their bitterness is taken away by the Cross. But, also, it may have in it the precious jewel of eternity, for wrapt up within tomorrow may be all the glories of immortality! Anoint your head with fresh oil of gladness at the prospect of each coming day! Boast not of tomorrow, but often comfort yourself with it. You have a right to do so. It cannot be a bad tomorrow for you. It may be the best day of your life, for it may be your last!

And yet, another hint. Tomorrow ought to be observed by Christians in the way of Providence. Though we may not boast of tomorrow, yet we may seek to provide for the morrow. On one occasion I pleaded for a benefit society and not knowing a more appropriate text, I selected this, “Take no thought for the morrow, for tomorrow shall take thought for the things of itself.” Some of my hearers, when I announced my text, feared the principle of it was altogether hostile to anything like an insurance, or providing for the future, but I just showed them that it was not, as I looked upon it. It is a positive command that we are to take no anxious thought concerning tomorrow. Now, how can I do that? How can I put myself into such a position that I can carry out this commandment of taking no thought for the morrow? If I were a man struggling in life and had it in my power to insure for something which would take care of wife and family in later days, if I did not do it, you might preach to me to all eternity about not taking thought for the morrow. But I could not help doing it when I saw those I loved, around me, unprovided for! Let it be in God’s Word, I could not practice it! I would still be, at some time or other, taking thought for the morrow. But let me go to one of the many excellent institutions which exist and let me see that all is provided for, I come home and say, “Now, I know how to practice Christ’s command of taking no thought for the morrow. I pay the policy-money once a year, and I take no further thought about it, for I have no occasion to do so now, and have obeyed the very spirit and letter of Christ’s command.” Our Lord meant that we were to get rid of cares—now it is apparent that those distressing cares are removed—and we are able to live above anxiety by that single process!

Now, if that is so, if there is anything that enables us to carry out Christ’s commands, is it not in the very heart of the commandments to do that? If God has pleased to put into the hearts of wise men to devise something that would, in some way, improve the misfortunes of their kind and relieve them from the distresses and casualties of God’s Providence, how can it but be our duty to avail ourselves of that wisdom which, doubtless, God gave to men that we might, thereby, in these times be enabled to carry out in the fullest extent the meaning of that passage, “Take no thought for the morrow”? Why, if a man says, “I shall take no thought for the morrow, I will just spend all I get and not think of doing anything or taking any thought for the morrow,” how is he going to pay his rent? Why, the text could not be carried out if it meant what some people think. It cannot mean that we should carelessly live by the day, or else a man would spend all his money on Monday and have nothing left for the rest of the week! That would be simple folly. It means that we should have no anxious, distressing thought about it. I am preaching about benefit societies—I would not attempt to recommend many of them and I do not believe in the principles of half of them! I believe a great deal of mischief is done by their gatherings in alehouses and pothouses. But wherever there is a Christian Society, I must endeavor to promote its welfare, for I look on the principle as the best means of carrying out the command of Christ, “Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for itself.” Allow me to recommend this Asylum to your liberality as a refuge in adversity for those who were careful in prosperity. It is a quiet retreat for decayed members of Benefit Societies and I am sorry to inform you that many of its rooms are vacant, not from lack of candidates, but from a lack of funds. It is a pity that so much public property should lie unemployed. Help the committee, then, to use the houses!

And, now, in concluding, let me remind the Christian that there is one thing he has not to do and that is, he has not to provide salvation, nor Divine Grace, nor sustenance nor promises for the morrow. No, Beloved, but we often talk as if we had. We say, “How shall I persevere through such-and-such a trial?” “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” You must not boast of today’s Grace as though it were enough for tomorrow. But you need not be afraid. With tomorrow’s difficulties, there will be tomorrow’s help! With tomorrow’s foes, there will be tomorrow’s friends! With tomorrow’s dangers, there will be tomorrow’s preservations! Let us look forward, then, to tomorrow as a thing we have not to provide for in spiritual matters, for the Atonement is finished, the Covenant ratified and, therefore, every promise shall be fulfilled and be, “yes and amen” to us, not only in one tomorrow, but in fifty thousand tomorrows, if so many could run over our heads!

And now just let us utter the words of the text again, very solemnly and earnestly. O young men in all your glory! O maidens in all your beauty! “Boast not yourselves of tomorrow.” The worm may be at your cheeks very soon. O strong men, whose bones are full of marrow! O you mighty men, whose nerves seem of brass and your sinews of steel! “Boast not of tomorrow.” “Howl, fir tree,” for cedars have fallen before now—and though you think yourselves great—God can pull you down. Above all, you gray-heads, “Boast not yourselves of tomorrow,” with one foot hanging over the unfathomable gulf of eternity and the other just tottering on the edge of time! I beseech you do not boast yourselves of tomorrow! In truth I do believe that gray-heads are not less foolish on this point than very childhood. I remember reading a story of a man who wanted to buy his neighbor’s farm next to him and he went to him and asked him whether he would sell it. He said, “No. I will not,” so he went home and said, “Never mind, Farmer So-and-So is an old man! When he is dead, I shall buy it.” The man was seventy and his neighbor sixty-eight—he thought the other would be sure to die before him! It is often so with men. They are making schemes that will only walk over their graves when they will not feel them! The winds shall soon howl across the green sward that covers their tomb, but they shall not hear its wailing. Take care of the “todays.” Look not through the glass of futurity but look at the things of today! “Boast not yourself of tomorrow; for you know not what a day may bring forth.”

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2627 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Pro 27.10

THE BEST FRIEND

NO. 2627

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JUNE 18, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGE0N,  
A**T THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 23, 1882.

**Your own friend, and your father’s friend, forsake not. Proverbs 27:10.**

TRUE friends are very scarce. We have a great many acquaintances and, sometimes, we call them friends and so misuse the noble word, “friendship.” Perhaps, in some later day of adversity, when these socalled friends have looked out for their own interests and left us to do the best we can for ourselves, that word, friendship, may come back to us with sad and sorrowful associations. The friend in need is a friend, indeed, and such friends, I say again, are scarce. When you have found such a man and proved the sincerity of his friendship. When he has been faithful to your father and to you, grapple him to yourself with hooks of steel and never let him go! It may be that because he is a faithful friend, he will sometimes vex you and anger you. See how Solomon puts it in this very chapter—“Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.” It takes a great deal of friendship to be able to tell a man his faults. It is not friendship that flatters! It is small friendship that holds its tongue when it ought to speak. But it is true friendship that can speak at the right time and, if necessary, even speak so sharply as to cause a wound. If you are like many other foolish folk, you will be angry with the man who is so much your friend that he will tell you the truth. If you are unworthy of your friend, you will begin to grow weary of him when he is performing on your behalf the most heroic act of pure charity by warning you of your danger and reminding you of your imperfection! Solomon, in prospect of such a case, knowing that this is one of the greatest trials of friendship among such poor imperfect beings as we are, tells us not to forsake, for this reason—nor indeed, for any other reason—the man who has been to us and to our family a true friend. “Your own friend, and your father’s friend, forsake not.”

I do not think that I would waste your time if I were to give you a lecture upon friendship—its duties, its dangers, its rights and its privileges—but it is not my intention to do so. There is one Friend to whom these words of Solomon are especially applicable. There is a Friend who is the chief and highest of all friends and when I speak of Him, I feel that I am not spiritualizing the text in the least. He is a true and real Friend and these words are truly and really applicable to Him. And if ever the text is emphatic, it is so when it is applied to Him, for there was never such another Friend to us and to our fathers! There is no Friend to whom we ought to be so intensely attached as to Him. “Your own Friend, and your father’s Friend, forsake not.”

I want, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to speak upon this subject. First, here is a descriptive title which may be fitly applied to Christ by many of us. He is our own Friend, and also our father’s Friend. Secondly, here is suggestive advice concerning this Friend. “Forsake Him not.” And before I have done, I shall say a little upon a consequent resolution. I hope that we shall turn the text into a solemn resolve and say, “My own Friend, and my father’s Friend, I will not forsake.”

I. First, then, here is A DESCRIPTIVE TITLE for our blessed Lord and Master.  
First, he is a Friend, the Friend of man. I know that Young calls him the “great Philanthropist.” I do not care to see that title—it is not good enough for Him—though truly the great Lover of man is Christ. Better still is the title which was given to Him when He was upon earth, “the Friend of sinners.”—  
*“Friend of sinners is His name.”*  
Their Friend—thinking of them with love when no other eye pitied them, and no other heart seemed to care for them. Their Friend, entering in most tender sympathy into the case of the lost, for “the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.” Their Friend—giving them good and sound advice and wholesome counsel, for whoever listens to the Words of Christ shall find in His teaching and in His guidance the highest wisdom. Their Friend, however, giving far more than sympathy and mere words—giving a lifetime of holy service for the sake of those whose cause He had espoused and going further even than this—doing for them the utmost that a Friend can do, for what is there more than that a man should lay down his life for his friend? Friend of man and, therefore, born of man. Friend of sinners and, therefore, living among them and ministering to them. Friend of sinners and, therefore, taking their sin upon Himself and bearing it “in His own body on the tree,” so fulfilling Gabriel’s prophecy that He would come “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.”  
Christ has done for us all that needed to be done! He has done much more than we ever could have asked Him to do, or expected Him to do. He has done more for us than we can understand, even now that He has done it, and more than you and I are likely ever to understand even when our intellect shall have been developed and enlarged to the utmost degree before the eternal Throne of God, for even there I do not think we shall ever fully know how much we owe to the friendship of our best Friend! However self-denying and tender other friends may be, our Lord must always stand at the head of the list and we will not put a second there as worthy of any comparison with Him!  
It is a very blessed thing, next, to have the Lord Jesus Christ as having been our father’s Friend. There are some of us to whom this has been literally true for many generations. I suppose that there is some pride in being the 14th earl, or the 10th duke, or having a certain rank among men. But, sometimes, quietly to myself, I glory in my pedigree because I can trace the line of spiritual Grace back as far as I can go to men who loved the Lord and who, many of them, have preached His Word. Many of you, I know, in this Church, and in other Churches, have a glorious heraldry in the line of the Lord’s nobles. It is true that some of you have had the great mercy of being taken, like trees out of the desert, and planted in the courts of our God, for which you may well be glad. But others of you are slips from vines that, in their turn, were slips from other vines loved and cared for by the great Husbandman! You cannot tell how long this blessed succession has continued—your fathers, and your fathers’ fathers, as far back as you can trace them, were friends of Christ! Happy Ephraim, whose father Joseph had God with him! Happy Joseph, whose father Jacob saw God at Bethel! Happy Jacob, whose father Isaac walked in the fields and meditated in communion with Jehovah! Happy Isaac, whose father Abraham had spoken with God and was called “the Friend of God!” God has a habit of loving families. David said, “The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them.” Grace does not run in the blood, but often the stream of Divine Mercy has run side by side with it and, instead of the fathers, have been the children whom the Lord has made to be princes in the earth!  
Some of you, perhaps, have fathers and mothers still living, whose example you may fitly follow. I charge you, never forsake your father’s God, or, what is still more tender, the God of your mother! Others of you have parents in Heaven. Well, they are still yours—that sacred relationship is not broken. You remember your mother’s last grasp of your hand when she bade you follow her to Heaven. You recollect your father’s appeals to you, in his long sickness, when he pleaded with you to take heed to your ways and not neglect the things of God, but seek Him in the days of your youth. Well, did you ever hear your father say anything against his God? Did your mother ever, in her confiding moments, whisper in your ear, “Mary, do not trust in God, for He has betrayed your mother’s confidence”? No! I know they did not talk like that, for He was their best Friend and He who was such a Friend to the dear old man whom you can never forget. He who cheered the heart of that gracious matron whose sweet face rises before you now—oh, I beseech you, forsake Him not! “Your own Friend, and your father’s Friend, forsake not.”  
Still, the sweetest part of the text lies in these words, “Your own Friend.” I do not think that I can preach on those words. I can take them in my mouth and they are like honey for sweetness, but they must be personally enjoyed to be fully appreciated. There are some precious lines we sometimes sing—  
*“The health is of my countenance,  
Yes, my own God is He”—*  
which exactly describe the blessedness of “your own Friend.”  
Now, if it is true that Christ is your own Friend, then you have spoken with Him. You have held sweet conversations with Him, you have placed your confidence in Him, you have told Him your lost estate and sinfulness and you have reposed in Him as your own Savior. You have put your cause into His hands and you have left it there. If He is, indeed, your own Friend, then He has helped you. You were a stranger and He has taken you in. You were naked and He has clothed you. You were spiritually sick and in prison, and He came to you and healed you. Yes, and He wore your chains and bade you go free! And He took your sicknesses and bade you take His health—and so He made you whole. Yes, and He restored you even from the grave—and went into that grave, Himself, that by His death, you might live! You know that it is so and day by day you keep up communion with Him—you could not live without Him, for He is such a Friend to you, and you rest on Him with all your weight as you come up from the wilderness with Him, leaning on your Beloved, “your own Friend.”  
Nor is the friendship all on one side, though your side is a very little one. You would make it greater if it were in your power, for you have confessed His name, you have united yourself with His people, you love to join with them in prayer and praise. You are not ashamed to be called by Christ’s name as a Christian, or to speak well of that name, and you desire to consecrate to Him all that you have. Better than all this, while you do call Him, Friend, He also calls you, Friend, as He said to His disciples, “You are My friends, if you do whatever I command you.” Dare I say the words, yet, dare I doubt the truth of the words—Jesus is my Friend? There is one we read of in the Bible who was David’s captain of the host, and there was another who was David’s counselor. But there was one man whom we always call, “David’s friend, Jonathan.” And I envy him such a title. Yet Jesus gives this name to all those who come and put their trust in Him and so find Him to be their Friend!  
Now, inasmuch as the Lord Jesus is “your own Friend, and your father’s Friend,” the injunction of the text comes to you with peculiar force—“Forsake Him not.” Can you forsake Him? Look at His face, all red with bloody sweat for you. Nor His face, alone, for He is covered all over with that gory robe wherein He worked out your redemption. He that works for bread must sweat, but He that worked for your eternal life did sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground! Can you forsake Him? He stands at Pilate’s bar, He is mocked by Herod’s men of war. He is scourged by Pilate, and all for you—and can you forsake Him? He goes up to the Cross of Calvary and the cruel iron is driven through His hands and feet and there He makes expiation for your guilt. He is your Friend, even to the ignominy of a felon’s death—and can you forsake Him? He lays His pierced hand on you and He says, “Will you, also, go away?” Or, as He worded it to the twelve, “You also will not go away, will you?” So it might be read, “Many of my supposed friends have gone and so have proved themselves to be not friends, but traitors. But you, also, will not go away, will you?” And He seems to make an appeal to them with those tearful, tender eyes of His—“as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set”—“You also will not go away, will you?”  
And when you turn your eyes another way and think not merely of the shame your Friend endured for you, but recollect what is an equal proof of His love—that He is not ashamed of you now that He is in His Glory! Amidst the throng of angels and cherubim and seraphim that frequent His courts above He does not disdain to know that He is the Brother of these poor earthworms down below, for even there He wears the body which proves Him to be our next of kin—yes, and wears the scars which proved that for us He endured the death penalty, itself, and even now He is not ashamed to call us Brethren! As you think of all this, can you forsake Him? Because you are somewhat better off than you once were, will you leave the little gathering of poor folk with whom you used to worship so happily, and will you go to some more fashionable place where there is music, but little of the music of the name of Jesus—where there is gorgeous architecture, it may be, and masquerading, and mummery and I know not what, but little of the sweet savor of His Presence, and the dropping of that dew which He always brings with Him wherever He comes? Oh, it is a pity, it is a sorrowful pity, it is a meanness that would disgrace a mere worldling—when a man who once confessed Christ and followed Him—must turn his back upon his Lord because his own coat is made of better material than it used to be, and his balance at the bank is heavier! I had almost said—“Then let the Judas go, be his own place what it may—it were almost a dishonor to Christ to wish the traitor back!  
Oh, will you go away, either from the Crucified or from the Glorified? If you will forsake this Friend, “Behold, He comes!” Every hour brings Him nearer! The chariots of His Glory have glowing axles and you may almost hear them as they speed toward us! And then what will you do when you have forsaken your own Friend and your father’s Friend, and you hear Him say, “I never knew you; I never knew you”? God grant that it may never be the lot of any of us here present to hear those awful words!  
II. Now I pass on to our second head, as the Holy Spirit may help me. It is, SUGGESTIVE ADVICE—“Your own Friend, and your father’s Friend, forsake not.”  
There is, to me, in the text, a suggestion which the text itself does not suggest. That is to say, it suggests something by not suggesting it. The text does not suggest to me that my own Friend and my father’s Friend will ever forsake me. It seems to hint that I may forsake Him, but it does not suggest that He will ever forsake me—and He never will! If the Lord had ever meant to forsake me, He has had so many good reasons for doing it that He would have done it long ago! The Apostle says of those who are journeying to the better country that, “if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.” And, certainly, our blessed Lord and Master, if He had desired to leave us to perish, had many an opportunity to return to Heaven before He died. And, since then He has had many more occasions when He might have said, “I really must withdraw My friendship from you,” if He had ever wished to do so. But His love is constant—“Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” His is a friendship which never changes! You shall never fall back on Him and find that He has withdrawn the arms with which He formerly upheld you. You shall find, in life and in death, that “there is a Friend that sticks closer than a brother.” Let us be cheered by the assurance that He will never forsake us!  
Now let us go on to what the text does suggest in so many words. It suggests to us the question, In what sense can we forsake Christ? Well, there is more than one sense in which a man may forsake Christ. Two passages rise to my mind at this moment. “Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.” That was one sort of forsaking—they were all afraid and ran away from their Lord in the hour of His betrayal into the hands of sinners. But it is quite another kind of forsaking when we read, “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him.” The first forsaking was the result of a sudden fear, much to be deplored and very blameworthy, but still, only temporary in its effects. The other was the deliberate act of those who, in cold blood, refused to accept Jesus Christ’s doctrine, or to follow Him any farther, and so turned back and walked no more with Him. This last forsaking is incurable. The former one was cured almost as soon as the sudden fear that caused it was removed, for we find John and even Peter following the Master to the judgment hall and the whole of the disciples soon gathered around Him after His Resurrection.  
I would say to you, dear Friends, “Your own Friend, and your father’s Friend, forsake not” in any sense at all. Forsake Him not even in your moments of alarm. Pray God that then you may play the man and not forsake Him

and flee. And then, in the other sense, let no quarrel ever arise between you and Christ’s most precious Truth so as to lead you deliberately to leave Him, for this is the worst of all kinds of forsaking! If we never forsake Him in any sense at all, then it is quite certain that we shall never forsake Him in the worst sense. I remember a little merriment I had with a good Wesleyan brother, the clerk of the works, when the Tabernacle was being built. He wanted me to go up a ladder right into those lantern lights and I said, “No, thank you. I would rather not.” “But,” he replied, “I thought you had no fear of falling.” “Yes,” I answered, “that is quite true. I have no fear of finally falling away, but the belief that the Lord will preserve me does not exercise any evil influence over me, for it keeps me from running unnecessary risks by climbing up ladders! But you, good Brother, who are so afraid of falling, do not seem to show it practically in your conduct, for you go up and down the ladders as nimbly as possible.”  
I have sometimes met with persons who think that if we believe that we shall never fall so as to perish, we are apt to become presumptuous— but we do not, dear Brothers and Sisters! There are other Truths of God that come in to balance this one, so that what they think might come of it is, by God’s good Grace, prevented. And I am not quite sure that those who think that they may finally fall and perish are sufficiently impressed with that belief so as to always be careful. The fact is, that your carefulness of walk does not depend merely upon your view of this doctrine or that, but it depends upon your state of heart and a great many other things—so that you have no reason to judge what you might do if you believed such-and-such a Truth of God, because if you did believe it, perhaps you would, at the same time, be a better man—and the possibility that appears to linger around the doctrine would vanish so far as you are concerned. Let this be the language of all of us who love the Lord, as we look up confidently and reverently to Him—  
*“We have no fear that You should lose  
One whom eternal love could choose,  
But we would ne’er this Grace abuse.  
Let us not fall. Let us not fall!”*  
I know that if we are truly the Lord’s, He will not allow us to forsake Him. But I must have a wholesome fear lest I should forsake Him, for who am I that I should be sure that I have not deceived myself? I may have done so and, after all, may forsake Him after the loudest professions, and even after the greatest apparent sincerity in vowing that I never will turn away from Him.  
So, I ask again—In what sense can we forsake our Lord? Well, there are many senses, but perhaps you will see better what I mean if I describe a general process of forsaking a friend. I hope that you have never had to undergo it. I do not know that I ever have, but, still, I can imagine that it is something like this. The old gentleman was your father’s friend. He also had been your own friend and has done you many a good turn. But, at last, he has said something which has provoked you to anger, or he has done something which you have misunderstood or misinterpreted—and now you feel very cool towards him when you meet. You pass the time of day and, perhaps, say very much the same things which you used to say, but they are said in a very different fashion. Now, that is how we begin to forsake our God. We may keep up the appearance of friendship with Christ, but it is a very cool affair. We go to a place of worship, but there is no enjoyment, no enthusiasm, no earnestness.  
Then the next thing is that you do not call to see your friend as frequently as you used to do. It has not come to an open rupture between you, so you do look in at certain set times when you are expected, but there are none of those little flying visits and that popping in upon him unawares, just to get a look at his face as you used to do. And, on his part, he does not come to see you much, either. And that is how our forsaking of Christ generally continues. We do not go to talk with Him as we once did, and when we do go to His House, we find that He is not there. “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” Then, by-and-by, perhaps there is a sharp word spoken, and your friend feels that you do not need him. You have said something that cuts him to the quick and grieves him. It was not anything so very bad if it had been spoken to a stranger—but to be said to him who was your father’s friend, to him whom you always expected to come in and whom you loved to see—to say it to him was very hard and he naturally took offense at it.  
That is how it comes to pass between Christ and professors. There is something done which might not be of so much account in the case of non-professors or the openly ungodly, but it is very bad in one who professed to have Christ for his Friend. And do you know what happens, byand-by, when your friend is being discarded? At last he does not call at all—and you do not go to see him. Perhaps the breach is still further widened and little presents are sent back or treated with contempt. There is that oil painting which your father would have, though he could scarcely afford it, because he loved his friend so much, and which he hung up in so conspicuous a place in his house. Well, the other day, the string broke and you did not buy a fresh piece of cord to hang it up again. In fact, you put the picture away in the cellar and you do not really care what becomes of it! The little tokens of past affection are all put away, for there is an open rupture, now, and when somebody spoke to you about him, lately, you said, “Oh, pray don’t mention him to me! He is no friend of mine now! I used to be on intimate terms with him, once, but I have altered my opinion about him altogether.”  
So do some professors act towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Those little tokens of love which they thought they had from Him, they send back. They do not remain in fellowship with His Church. They do all that they possibly can to disown Him. In the meanwhile, the blessed Lord of Love is obliged to disown them, too! And His Church disowns them. And, byand-by, the rupture has become complete. May that never be the portion of any of you!  
“No,” says one, “it never will be.” My dear Friend, if you are so confident as that, you are the person about whom I am most afraid! I remember one who used to pray among us, but we had to put him out of the Church for evil living. And there was one of our members who said, that night, “If that man is not a child of God, I am not one, myself.” I said, “My dear Brother, do not talk like that. I would not pit my soul against the soul of any man, for I do know a little of myself, but I do not know other men as well as I know myself.” I am very much afraid that neither of the two men I have mentioned was a child of God. By their speech they seemed to be Christians, but their acts were not like those of God’s people. It does not do for us to talk as that man did, but to pray to the Lord, “Hold me up and I shall be safe.” That is the proper prayer for us—or else it may happen even to us as happened to them—and we may forsake our own Friend and our father’s Friend.  
Now, what reasons can we possibly have for forsaking Christ? We ought to do nothing for which we cannot give good reasons. I have known persons very properly forsake their former friends because they have, themselves, become new creatures in Christ Jesus and they have, rightly and wisely, given up the acquaintances with whom they used to sin. They cannot go, now, to the house where everything is contrary to their feelings. But it is not so with Christ. Some so-called friends drag a man down, lower him, injure him, impose upon him and, at last, he is obliged to let them go. But we cannot say that of Christ. His friendship has drawn us up, helped us, sanctified us, elevated us—we owe everything to that friendship! We cannot have a reason, therefore, for forsaking this Friend. I have known some to outgrow an acquaintance or friend. They really have not been able to continue to have common views and sympathies, for, while their friend has remained in the mire, they have risen into quite different men by reason of education and other influences. But we can never outgrow Christ. That is not possible! And the more we grow in a right sense, the more we shall become like He. A man who has been the friend of our father and of ourselves is the very man to still have as a friend because he probably understands all about the family difficulties, the family troubles and he also understands us. Why, he nursed us when we were children and, therefore, he knows most about us. I remember that, when lying sorely sick, I had a letter from a kind old gentleman who said that he had, that day, celebrated his 80th birthday, and the choicest friend he had at his dinner table was the old family doctor. He said, “He has attended to me so long that he thoroughly knows my constitution. He is nearly as old as myself, but the first time I was ill I saw him and he has attended me, now, for 40 years. Once,” he said, “when I had a severe attack of gout, I was tempted to try some very famous man who very nearly killed me and, until I got back to my old friend, I was never really well again.”  
So he wrote to advise me to get some really good physician and let him know my constitution and to stick to him, and never go off to any of the patent medicines or the quacks of the day! Oh, but there is a great deal of truth in that in a spiritual sense! With the utmost reverence, we may say that the Lord Jesus Christ has been our family Physician. Did He not attend my father in all his sicknesses, and my grandfather, too? And He knows the ins and outs of my constitution—He knows my ways, good and bad, and all my sorrows and, therefore I do not go to anyone else for relief. And I advise you, also, to keep to Jesus Christ, do not forsake Him! If you are ever tempted to go aside, even for a little while, I pray that you may have Grace enough to come back quickly and to commit yourself again to Him, and never go astray again. There is the blessing of having One who is wise, One who is tried, One whose sympathy has been tested, One who has become, as it were, one of your family, One who has taken your whole household to His heart and made it part and parcel of Himself. Such a Friend to your own soul, and to your father’s soul, forsake not!  
Do not forsake Him, dear Friends, because, I almost tremble to say it—you will need Him some day. Even if you would never need Him in the future, you ought not to forsake Him. I do not quite like that verse of the hymn at the end of our hymn book—  
*“Ashamed of Jesus! Yes, I may,  
When I’ve no guilt to wash away,  
No tear to wipe, no good to crave,  
No fears to quell, no soul to save.”*  
No, I may not. When all my guilt is gone, I shall not be ashamed of Jesus. When I am in Heaven and need no more the pardon of sin, I certainly shall not be ashamed of Him who brought me there! No, but I shall glory in Him more than ever! Your friendship to Christ, and mine, ought not to depend upon what we are going to get out of Him. We must love Him now for what He is, for all that He has already done, and for His own blessed Person and personal beauties which every day should hold fast our love, and bind us in chains of affection to Him.  
But suppose you do think of forsaking Christ, where are you going to get another Friend to take His place? You must have a friend of some sort—who is going to sit in Christ’s chair? Whose portrait is to be hung up in the old familiar place when the old Friend is discarded? To whom are you going to tell your griefs and from whom will you expect to receive help in time of need? Who will be with you in sickness? Who will be with you in the hour of death? Ah, there is no other who can ever fill the vacuum which the absence of Christ would make! Therefore, never forsake Him.  
III. Now I must close with THE CONSEQUENT RESOLVE about which I can say very little, as my time has gone.  
Let this be your resolve, by His Grace, instead of forsaking Him, you will cling to Him more closely than ever. You will acknowledge Him when it brings you dishonor to do so. You will trust Him when He wounds you, for “faithful are the wounds of a friend.” You will serve Him when it is costly to do it, when it involves self-denial, resolved that, by the help of His ever-blessed Spirit, without whom you can do nothing, you will never, in any sort of company, conceal the fact that you are a Christian! Never, under any possible circumstances, wish to be otherwise than a servant of such a Master, a friend of such a Lord! Come now, dear young friends who are getting cool towards Christ, and elder friends to whom religion is becoming monotonous—come to your Lord once more and ask Him to bind you with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar! You have had time to count the cost of all Egypt’s treasure—forego it and forswear it once and for all. But the riches of Christ you can never count—so come and take Him again to be your All-in-All!  
Those about to be baptized will feel, I trust—as we shall when we look on—and say, each man and woman for himself, or herself— *“‘Tis done! The great transaction’s done!  
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine.”*  
Nail your colors to the mast! Bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Yes, let everyone of us who has been baptized into Christ feel that our whole body bears the watermark, for we have been “buried with Him by baptism into death.” It was not for the putting off of the filthiness of the flesh, but as a declaration that we were dead to the world and quickened into newness of life in Christ Jesus our Savior. So let it be with you, too, dear Friends, as you follow your Lord through the water! Cling to Him, cleave to Him! “Your own Friend, and your father’s Friend, forsake not.” May God add His blessing, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOHN 15:9-27.**

Verse 9. As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Oh, drink this nectar down! It is as when Cleopatra dissolved the pearl into a single draught, for here is the choicest pearl of the Truths of God that was ever dissolved into a single verse to be a delicious draught for His people to drink! “As the Father has loved Me”—as surely as the Father has loved Me and, then, “as”—that is—in the same manner “as the Father has loved Me”—without beginning, without ending, without measure, without change, “so have I loved you.”

9, 10. Continue you in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love. Note this point of the Lord’s discipline—not that Christ ever casts away His people, but that He does take from them the sweet sense of His love, the realization of it, if they are disobedient to Him and keep not His commandments.

10, 11. Even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you. That He might joy in us—feel a sacred delight in thinking of us as He does when He sees us keeping His commandments and treasuring up His Words, and so living in His love and being mighty in prayer.

11. And that your joy might be full. If Christ is not pleased with us, we cannot be glad. And if He has no joy in us, we cannot have joy in Him. These two things rise and fall together. When the father of the family looks with joy upon his boy, then the boy is happy. But when the father has no joy in his son, then be sure of this, the son has no joy in his father, but he is sad at heart. O God, may we never grieve You, for if we do, we shall be grieved! At least, I trust that we shall—we would not have it otherwise. But, oh, that we might have the testimony that Enoch had before his translation, that we have pleased God! Then shall we have true pleasure in ourselves.

12-14. This is My commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. Obedience, then, is rewarded with a holy friendship, for Christ becomes in the highest sense our Friend! But we are not His friends till we cease to delight in sin and turn away from it into the paths of holiness.

15. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you. The servant works in a building and it is enough for him that he is laying part of a line of brick or stone. Perhaps he has never seen the design of the structure, nor had a wish to do so. But you and I have the great Architect constantly coming to us to tell us what the building is to be and to explain to us His plans— and so we work with greater pleasure and joy than a mere laborer might. The very heart of Christ is laid bare to His people. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” Happy are His people—glad to be His servants—more glad, still, to be His friends!

16. You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you. There you see Divine Election leading on to fruit-bearing and perpetuated in perseverance—“that your fruit should remain.” It brings to every one of its objects this conspicuous favor, prevailing power in prayer—“that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you.”

17. These things I command you, that you love one another. O you professors who have no love to one another, you are breaking the King’s commandment! You are living in direct violation of a plain command that is most dear to His heart. Oh, that we might constantly hear it and obey it! “These things I command you, that you love one another.”

18. If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. That is what you have reason to expect, and you may feel honored if they treat you as they have treated your Lord.

19-22. If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep your’s also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name’s sake, because they know not Him that sent Me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. There is an awful increase of sin produced by Christ appearing to a man. And if any of you have been very near to the Kingdom, and your conscience has been awakened, and your mind has been impressed by the Truth of God and yet you have gone back to your sin, you have multiplied that sin a thousand-fold! The times of your ignorance God may have winked at, but now you are sinning against the Light of God and knowledge—and unless you repent, your doom will be terrible!

23-26. He that hates Me, hates My Father, also. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this came to pass that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come. And He has come! He is here! He has never been taken away! He still abides with and in the Church!

26. Whom I’ll send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me. By this mark you may know whether that which has been taught you is of the Spirit of God. If it does not testify of Christ—if He is not the head and front of it all—there is nothing in it for you to accept. If any man comes to you with what he calls a revelation, if it is not all concerning Christ, by this shall you judge it—it is not of the Spirit of God if it does not testify of Christ.

27. And you also shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning. May we all bear witness according as we have been with Christ, for there is no bearing witness to Christ unless we have first been with Him.

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THE WAY TO HONOR  
NO. 1118

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

**“Whoever keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he who waits on his master shall be honored.”  
Proverbs 27:18.**

IF a man in Palestine carefully watched his fig tree and kept it in proper condition, he was sure to be abundantly rewarded in due season, for it would yield him a large quantity of fruit of which he would enjoy the luscious taste. So, according to Solomon, good servants obtained honor as the fruit of diligent service. In those early days, when there were far better relations between servants and masters than, unhappily, there are nowadays, if a servant carefully waited upon his master he was sure to be honored for his faithfulness.

The Bible is full of such cases. Eleazar, the servant and steward of Abraham, met with much honor at his master’s hands. Deborah was a faithful nurse and what sorrow there was for her at Allonbachuth, or the oak of weeping. Elisha poured water upon the hands of his master Elijah and became, himself, a Prophet, endowed with a double portion of his master’s spirit. In the New Testament we read of the centurion who so honored his servant that in his sickness he sent to the Lord Jesus, earnestly entreating Him to come and heal him. There were exceptions, of course. There were faithful servants who met with ungenerous treatment. But what rule is there without an exception? The rule was that he who was faithful to his master received honor.

I could wish it to be more general for there to be intimate friendly relationships between men and their servants. I would gladly see a restoration of family loyalty between heads of households and their dependents. In these times, servants, and persons in the employ of others, are looked upon as hands to be worked rather than as souls to be cared for. It may be that servants have degenerated, but it may also be the truth that masters have degenerated, too. I believe that every Abraham will be likely to find an Eleazar and every Rebekah a Deborah. Good masters make good servants. Good servants make good masters. Happy is the family where, without forgetting the proper distinctions of position, all are knit together in firm friendship.

Alas, the bonds of society have been too much loosened. Oppression on the one hand and discontent on the other have split the commonwealth. Yet there still survive among us instances of personal attachment where servants have served the same masters from their youth up. They have continued with them in sickness—and in misfortune have remained faithful to the family when the master has been scarcely able to remunerate

them for their services, and have continued faithful even unto death. I am sure when we have read such stories, or see such servants, ourselves, we have felt that they deserved to be held in honor and there is a general respect, still, which is manifested by mankind to the servant that waits upon his master.

However, I am not going to speak about the duties of masters and servants this evening. At other times we have not hesitated to speak our mind upon that matter and we shall not fail to do so as occasion requires. But now we shall speak of a higher Master who was never unfaithful to a servant, yet, and never will be. And we shall speak of a superior service which brings to those who are engaged in it the highest possible degree of honor. Blessed are they who are servants of the King of kings! Happy is he who takes even the lowest place and fulfils the meanest office for the Lord Jesus, if any service can be mean that is rendered to our all-glorious Immanuel!

We will begin by considering the relation of the Lord Jesus Christ to us and ours to Him. Then we shall consider the conduct which is consistent with that relation. And then the reward which is promised to such conduct.

I. And, first, the RELATION WHICH SUBSISTS BETWEEN OURSELVES AND OUR LORD. He is our Master—our Master. I speak now, of course, only to you who are converted, to you who are true Believers and are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus is, to you, your Master in the sense of contrast to all other governing powers. You are men and naturally moved by all that which moves other men, but still the master motive power with every one of you who is a Christian is the supremacy of Christ. There are some among your fellow servants to whom you render respect, just as in a large firm there are foremen, set over different parts of the work, to whom a measure of deference is fitly rendered.

Still, as the overseer is not the chief authority, so your earthly superiors are not in the highest sense masters over you. The highest of your fellow workmen in your Lord’s service is far, far, far below the Master. Ministers and fathers in Christ are not the ultimate authorities to whom you bow and whatever esteem you may pay even to such glorious names as those of Peter, James and John, you still regard them but your fellow servants. “One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren.” In this sense we are not servants of men—no, we know no man after the flesh. We are in subjection to the Father of Spirits, not to a Pope in Rome, nor bishops at home. We are the Lord’s free men and cheerfully obey those whom He sets over us in His Church—but we yield to none who claim lordship over us and would divert us from obeying only the Lord Jesus.

The Christian man has, of course, to attend to the concerns of this life. And while he is attending to them he must throw a measure of his heart into them, or he cannot do them properly. Still, the master of our heart is not our business, but our Savior. A Christian man is thoughtful and he studies, and reads, and investigates. Still, for all that, philosophy does not rule him, nor the news of the day, nor the science of the times. Christ is our Master—master of our thoughts and meditations—the great Leader and Teacher of our understanding. We are His disciples and disciples of none else besides. We are affected by the love of family, the love of friendship, the love of country—but there is a love that is higher than all these—a master love, and this is love to Jesus our Well-Beloved, the Bridegroom of our souls.

That text is frequently misread—“No man can serve two masters.” The stress is not to be laid upon the word “two.” In reality, a man might serve three or half-a-dozen, or twenty. The stress is to be laid upon the word “masters”—“No man can serve two masters.” Only one thing can be the master passion. Only one power can completely master us, so as to be supremely dominant and exercise imperial lordship over us. No man can have two imperial master faculties, master motives or master ambitions. One is our Master, and that one is Christ.

Brothers and Sisters, as I have said before, we are compelled while we are in this body to yield to this impulse and to that, we are urged forward by this motive and by that. We pursue this end and that, and subordinately none of these things may be sinful, but the master impulse must be the love of Christ. The master aim must be Christ’s Glory. And the master power that possesses us, as the Spirit took possession of the Prophets of old and carried them away, must be loyalty to Jesus Christ our Lord. He is our Master and we stand before Him as servants who desire to obey His bidding.

What is, then, the reason why the Lord Jesus Christ has become to us a Master? If we were contending with the ungodly who challenge us for calling Christ, “Master,” we could give them a ready enough answerer by telling them that He is the Master Man of all men. We would ask them to turn over the pages of history and find a man it was worthwhile to serve in comparison with the Man, Christ Jesus. We would appeal to His Character and ask, was there ever a character which could compel homage as His Character does? Why, He is a right royal Man in all respects—there is nothing about Him of meanness or weakens. To know Him is to become enthusiastic in His cause.

We would then point to His kingdom and the nature and character of it, and ask whether there was a kingdom for which men ought to fight, for which men ought to strive and be willing to die, compared with His kingdom. We would point to the benefits which He confers upon mankind, the blessings which the faith of Jesus Christ has scattered among the nations, and ask if there ever was a cause so worthy of zeal as the cause of Christ which is the cause of humanity, the cause of truth, the cause of right, the cause of God! His are the principles which alone can redeem men from their degradation and misery. We count it easy enough to answer the ungodly in this matter. Whoever their leader may be, he is not fit to loosen the shoe lace of our Master’s sandal. Whoever he may be, and however they may lift him up, he is only fit to lie in the dust beneath the

feet of our Immanuel. Christ is so excellent and in His Nature so preeminent, that we defy anyone to call us foolish for choosing Him to be our Master!

But behind all this, deep down in our souls, we have other reasons for calling Him our Master, namely, that we belong to Him by the purchase of His blood, by the rescue of His Grace. And again, by the surrender, the willing surrender, which we have made to Him. Christ is our Master because He bought us. When we were sold under sin. When by the justice of God we were condemned to die. When we were utter slaves, He purchased us and redeemed us from all iniquity with a cost which sometimes has seemed to us, for His sake, to be too great. What were 10,000 times 10,000 sinful worms compared with the Son of God? Yet that glorious Son of God laid down His life for us! He loved His Church and gave Himself for it—a matchless price, indeed, to pay!

And now we are not our own, but are bought with a price. We feel that we should be unjust to Jesus, base to our best Benefactor, if we were to ignore the solemn obligations under which His redemption has placed us. We had been on the road to Hell if it had not been for His blood—shall we not walk in the way of His commands? After what He has done for us, nothing is too great for us to do for Him. Our body, our soul, our spirit, we cheerfully render up to His dominion! Neither do we count anything of our nature to be our own. As He has redeemed us entirely, so in the entirety of our manhood we belong altogether to Him. And if there is a part of our nature which has not been subdued to Him, we desire Him to conquer it by force of arms—for its rebellion against Him is sorrow to ourselves. Jesus is our rightful Lord. His wounds attest it and if any other lord has dominion over any other portion of our nature, that lordship is usurped and ought to be cast down.

I said, moreover, that Christ has won us by His power as well as by His blood. There are two redemptions—redemption by price and redemption by power—redemption by price was typified in the paschal lamb and the Passover. Redemption by power in the passage of the Red Sea when the children of Israel went through it dry shod and the Egyptians were drowned. Remember how Jacob spoke to his son Joseph and said, “I have given to you one portion above your brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow”? Now, the Lord Jesus Christ claims us in the same way as Jacob claimed that particular portion, for we are His spoil, taken in battle. Almighty Grace bowed us down when we were stiff-necked. Almighty Grace delivered us from our habits of sin when we were fast bound by them. Almighty Grace broke the iron bars of our despair and led us into liberty.

Let all the Glory be ascribed unto the Almighty Redeemer! With a high hand and an outstretched arm He brought us forth from the Egypt of our lusts and taught our willing feet the way to the heavenly Canaan. And now we grace His chariot wheels as servants, not in manacles of iron, but in silken fetters of love—

*“As willing captives of our Lord  
We sing the triumphs of His Word,”*  
and confess Him to be our Master and none beside. Remember that I also said we are His servants and He our Master because we have willingly

surrendered ourselves to Him. Recall to your memories that blessed time when you gave yourselves up to Jesus under the sweet constraint of His love. Was it not a good day in which you said—

*“Now, Lord, I would be Yours alone  
Come, take possession of Your own,  
For You have set me free!  
Released from Satan’s hard command,  
See all my members waiting stand,  
To be employed by You.”*

And now at this day, remembering the love of your espousals when you went after your Lord into the wilderness, would you have it otherwise? You were married to Him—do you now wish to sue for a divorce against your glorious Bridegroom? No, but you can sing with Doddridge—

*“High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow, That vow renewed shall daily hear:  
Till in life’s latest hour I bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear.”*

Now, Beloved, as I have shown that Christ has a right to be our Master from the very dignity of His Character and that we yield Him service because of His love to us, it only remains for me to add that our position of servants to Christ is an irreversible one. The servant of old, when he might go out from bondage, sometimes said, “I love my master and I love his children, and I love his house. I desire to be his bondsman forever.” And after the same manner would I speak this day. And then, you remember, they took an awl and they bored the man’s ear and fastened it to the doorpost, that he might be a servant as long as he lived. Even after that fashion would I say, “My ears have You opened, and I was not rebellious.” Who among us would not wish to bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus, to receive the brand which would betoken the irretrievable confiscation of all sinful liberty?

Do we not wish to be forever bound to Christ and crucified with Him? This was the teaching of our Baptism. When we were baptized we were buried in the water. The teaching was that we were from that time forward to be dead and buried to the world and alive, alone, to Jesus. It was the crossing of the Rubicon—the drawing of the sword and the flinging away of the scabbard. If the world should call us, we now reply, “We are dead to you, O world!” One of the early saints, I think it was Augustine, had indulged in great sins in his younger days. After his conversion he met with a woman who had been the sharer of his wicked follies.

She approached him winningly, and said to him, “Augustine,” but he ran away from her with all speed. She called after him, and said,

“Augustine, it is I,” mentioning her name. He then turned round and said, “But it is not I. The old Augustine is dead and I am a new creature in Christ Jesus.” That to Madam Bubble and to Madam Wanton, to the world, the flesh and the devil, should be the answer of every true servant of Christ—“I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. You are the same, O fair false world—you are the same, but not I! I have passed from death unto life, from darkness into light. Your siren charms can fascinate me no more. A nobler music is in my ears and I am drawn forward by a more sovereign spell towards other than yours. My boat shall cut her way through all seas and waves till it reaches the fair haven and I see my Savior face to face.”

It is irretrievable, then, this step which we have taken, the absolute surrender of our whole Nature to the sway of the Prince of Peace! We are the Lord’s. We are His forever and forever. We cannot draw back, and blessed be His name, His Grace will not suffer us to do so. “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day.”—

*“Leave You? No, my dearest Savior,  
You, whose blood my pardon bought?  
Slight Your mercy, scorn your favor?  
Perish such an impious thought!  
Leave You—never!  
Where for peace could I resort?”*

II. The second point of our reflection is to be this. Seeing that we are servants to Jesus, there is A CONDUCT WHICH IS CONSISTENT THEREWITH. What conduct is consistent in a servant? Is it not, first, that he should acknowledge himself to be his master’s? Such a servant as is mentioned in the text does not call himself his own, or his time his own. No person who is a servant can say during his work hours—“This time is my time, I can do what I like with it.” No, he is a false servant if, having sold his time for a reward, he takes it to himself.

Servants of Jesus have no time at their own disposal. We have no wealth of our own. We are only stewards. We have no talents, they are our Lord’s. When we have traded with our stock and have multiplied it diligently, we shall say to our Lord, “Your pound has gained 10 pounds.” We dare not call the talent ours. If we are true servants, we are always about our Master’s business. If we eat or drink, or rest or sleep, we desire to do all to the Glory of God. We are never off duty. A policeman may be, but we never are. A soldier may have a furlough, but a Christian, never— he must wear both night and day the whole armor of God. We are always to bear the shield, and the sword is always to be in our hands.

Even in our recreation we are to remember that our Master may come at any hour and therefore we are still to be looking for His coming. As servants it is our duty to learn our Master’s will. I am grieved to observe that some of my fellow servants do not want to know their Lord’s will. There would not be so many divisions in the Church if we all came to Holy Scripture and searched the Law and the Testimony to know the Lord’s will. The Lord’s will is fully set forth there and no other book is of the slightest authority among saints. The Lord’s will is not in the Prayer Book, it is in the Bible. The Lord’s will is not in the canons.

The Lord’s will is not in the creed of the Baptist Church, or the Wesleyan Church, or the Congregational Church, or the Episcopalian Church. His will is in the Scriptures—and if we searched them more and more and were determined, irrespective of anything that may have been done by the Church, or the world, or by government, or by anybody else— that we would follow our Lord’s will, we should come to closer union. We are divided because we do not study the Lord’s will as we should. Brothers and Sisters, we ought to be prepared to give up any doctrine, however venerable, any institution, however comely, if we do not see it to be the Divine will. Obedience is the path of the servant, obedience is his safety and happiness. What have I, as a servant, to do with anybody but my Master?

I am set to do a certain thing and if passersby make a remark that I am not doing it according to the usual rules of the trade, what is that to me? Rules and customs are of small consequence. My Master’s will must be everything to me if I am a true servant. Somebody will sneeringly remark, “You are acting very singularly.” Well, the Master must be accountable for the singularity of conduct which He prescribes. If we are true servants we obey even in the jots and tittles at all hazards. But we must search the Word, for unread Bibles are evidences against rebels and are unbecoming in Believers. When his master’s will is known, every true servant is bound immediately to do it. A servant is not to say, “Sir, I will attend to that tomorrow.”

If the command is ascertained, it will be as surely disobedience to postpone obedience as to reject the duty altogether. If delay is a part of the command, the delay is justifiable, but, if not, the servant must not tarry. “But surely you forget that the consequences of obedience may be costly and involve great sacrifices?” Servants have nothing to do with consequences—those belong to their masters. “But, perhaps, if I were to follow out the Master’s command, I might place myself in a position where I should not be as useful as I now am.” You have nothing whatever to do with that except as it may prove a test of your faith—it is a lame obedience which only follows the Master where carnal judgment approves. A servant of God is not to use his judgment as to the rightness of his Master’s command—he is to do as he is bid, for his Lord is Infallible.

What if the heavens fell through our doing right? God does not want us to sin in order to prop them up! His Throne is not rotten so as to need buttresses of iniquity! Consequences of true principles ought never to be considered. There is nothing more vicious in the world than policy—it may be admired in the House of Commons—but it should be detested in the Church of God. Far from our minds is every question of policy. If an act is right, let it be done! If Christ bids it, let it be done! And let there be no hesitation in the matter. It is ours, also, if we are servants, to obey the

Master willingly and for love of His Person. The text says, “He that waits upon his master shall be honored.” Suppose I, as a minister, know something to be God’s will, yet, nevertheless, attend to it with the view of serving you and doing you good as God’s Church?

I shall possibly receive honor from you whom I serve, but that is not the honor which a Christian minister ought to seek. The Church is not his master—his Master is in Heaven—and if he desires real honor, he must earn it by waiting upon his Master for his Master’s sake. Suppose any of you are children and are doing right in order to please your parents—I will not censure the motive—you will get honor from your parents. But the right honor is gained by seeking to please God. You must labor as Believers to wait upon your Master—to come to the House of God, for instance, not because it is the custom, but because you would honor the Lord in prayer and praise. You must give to the poor, not because others have given so much, but because Jesus loves His people to be mindful of poor saints. You must do good, not that others may say, “See what a zealous man he is!” but for your Master’s sake.

I am afraid we sometimes serve ourselves even in our holiest things and, in carrying out our judgment of the Lord’s will, we are often the victims of prejudice or whim, and are not so much determined to do the Lord’s will as to have our own, or to carry out what we call our “principles” in order to show that we are not to be cowed by human opposition. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, there must be no motive with us but our Master’s honor! “He that waits on his master shall be honored.” Wait on your Master. Take care that you have an eye always to Him. Do your duty because He bids you. Then you shall win the honor of which the text speaks. Then observe that this waiting upon the Master is to be performed personally by the servant. It is not, “The servant who employs another to wait upon his master shall be honored,” I do not so read the text. But “He who waits upon his master” himself, doing personal service to a personal master—he shall have honor.

Jesus Christ did not redeem us by proxy. He, Himself—His own Self— bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Let us not attempt to serve God by merely contributing to the Foreign Missions, or City Mission, or helping to support the minister, or something of that sort. We should do that, but we should not put it in the place of the other. Let us constantly give our personal service, speaking for Christ with our lips, pleading for His kingdom with our heart, running on His errands with our feet and serving Him with our hands. “He that waits on his master shall be honored,” even though the waiting is almost passive. Sometimes our Master may not require us to do anything more than stand still. But you know John, the footman, behind his master’s chair—if his master bids him stand there— he is as true a servant as the other attendant who is sent upon an errand of the utmost importance.

The Lord, for wise reasons may make us wait awhile. Having done all, we may yet have to stand still and see the salvation of God and find it to be the hardest work of all. In suffering, especially, is that the case, for it is painful to be laid aside from the Master’s service. Yet the position may be very honorable. There is a time for soldiers to lie in the trenches as well as to fight in the battle. David made a Law that those who tarried with the baggage were to share the spoil with those who went down to the fight. This is the rule of the Church militant to this day. Some cannot march to the battle, yet are they to share in the spoil. They are waiting on their Master and they shall be honored.

On the whole, summing all up in a word, it is ours to abide near to Christ. Servants wait best when they can see their master’s eyes and hear his wishes. We are to wait upon our Master humbly, reverently, feeling it an honor to do anything for Him. We are to be self-surrendered, given up always to the Lord—free men—and yet most truly serfs of this Great Emperor. We are never so truly free as when we admit our sacred serfdom. We are always the body servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Often Paul calls himself the servant of the Lord and even the slave of Christ. And he glories in the branding iron’s marks upon his flesh. “I bear,” says he, “in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus; therefore let no man trouble me.” We count it liberty to bear the bonds of Christ! We reckon this to be the most supreme freedom, for we sing with the Psalmist, “I am Your servant; I am Your servant. You have loosed my bonds.” “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar.” Such is the conduct which our servitude to our Lord requires.

III. The third point is THE REWARD WHICH SURELY COMES TO FAITHFUL SERVANTS. “He that waits on his master shall be honored.” You will observe that he finds his honor in waiting on his master. Now, the Christian may have other honors besides the one of waiting on his Master. He may have poor, wretched, miserable, heavy honors. I am always sorry when I see a Christian making himself some great one in the world’s esteem. I knew one and I esteemed him much. He was an earnest Christian man, but his great ambition was to be the chief magistrate in a certain city which I shall not name.

He lived to reach that post and his heart exulted greatly. But I noticed that the very night he attained the honor the hand of the Lord went forth against one whom he greatly loved and in a short time he, himself, sickened and went home to his Father and his God. No joy came with the honor, for he had looked at it too long, and with too keen an eye. Not I alone, but those who knew him, judged so, too, and we almost thanked God that he did not suffer the child of God, whose crown was in Heaven, to be satisfied with being a magistrate here. I have seen men grow very eager after gold, they have had a good business, but have clutched at more and got it. And then sought after still more. And when I have seen chastening come, and sorrow in the household, I have not marveled at it for I have understood that Christ meant His servant not to take honor from Him, and if he would look after other honor he would find it but a bittersweet.

There is a law, I believe, that no subject of Our Majesty may take princely rank from any foreign potentate, and it is a Law in the kingdom of Christ. What honor can this world confer upon a servant of Christ? I count that to be a dishwasher in Christ’s kitchen would be a greater honor than to be the Czar of all the Russias, or to exercise imperial sway over all the kingdoms of the earth at once. Honor? You confer honor upon the servant of Christ—you worldlings? As well might ants upon their anthills hope to confer dignity upon an angel! Already infinitely superior, it is but degradation to a saint to be honored by the sons of men! The servant of Christ finds his honor in the service itself. The cultivator of the fig tree looks for figs from the fig tree. The servant of the Master looks for honor from the Master and he covets no honor besides. Every faithful servant of Christ is honored in his Master’s honor.

If you serve Christ aright you will have to bear His reproach. You must take your share of the Cross, for you have already your share of the crown. Thanks be to God, who always causes us to triumph in every place! Paul and the other Apostles, when they were suffering for Christ, were always triumphing in Christ at the same time. If there is any honor in the cause of Truth and righteousness, and the salvation of men, Christ has it all, but He reflects some of it upon those of His servants who serve His righteous cause and propagate His Truth. “He that waits on his Master is honored” by being permitted to wait upon such a Master.

The honor of the Master falls upon the servant who is honorably distinguished by wearing the livery of the great Prince. He is honored, too, with his Master’s approval. Did you ever feel that Christ approved of you? You did some little act of love which nobody knew of but your Lord. He smiled on you—you knew He did—and you felt superabundantly rewarded! You served Him and you were reviled for it, but you took it very joyfully, for you felt that He knew all about it, and as long as your Master was satisfied it did not matter what man could do to you. For the true Christian his Lord’s approval is honor enough. Sometimes the Lord honors faithful servants by giving them more to do. If they have been faithful in that which is least, He tries them in that which is great. If they have looked after a few little children and fed the lambs, He says, “Come here and feed My sheep.”

If they have trimmed a vine, or a fig tree in a corner, He calls them out and sets them among the chief vines of the vineyard and says to them, “See after these clusters.” Many a man would have been called to wider fields of labor if he had not been discontented or slothful in his narrow sphere. The Lord watches how we do little things and if great care is taken in them He will give us greater things to do. Elisha poured water upon the hands Elijah and then the Lord said, “Elijah’s mantle shall fall upon his faithful servant, and he shall do even greater miracles.” God also honors the faithful in the eyes of their fellow servants. When I take down from my library shelf the biography of a holy man, I honor him in my soul. I do not care whether he was a bishop or a Primitive Methodist preacher, a blacksmith or a peer. I do him honor in my heart. If he served his Master, he will be sure to be elevated into a position of honor in the memory of succeeding ages.

There are some men whose doctrines you and I could not endorse, who yet were faithful to the light they had and therefore we number them among the honored dead. And we are glad to remember how bold they were against the foe, how meek they were with the little ones, how faithful they were in believing their God and how courageous in rebuking sin. If you would have honor from your fellow servants, you will never get it by seeking honor from them. You must go to your Master and honor Him by waiting upon Him and then there will come to you honor in the eyes of your fellow men. But, Beloved, the chief honor of a faithful servant comes from the blessed Trinity. “If any man will serve Me, him will my Father honor.”

Does it not appear too good to be true that a poor man should be honored of God the Father, the Creator, the great I Am!? I will not speak about it, but leave you to think it over. And then Jesus Christ will honor us, for He says that when the Master comes and finds the servant waiting for Him, He will gird Himself and serve him! Can you understand that? There was a certain festival among the Romans which was observed once a year, in which the masters changed places with the servants entirely and the servants sat at the table and commanded their masters as they liked, while the masters served them. It has been thought by some that our Savior has drawn the figure from that singular celebration. I hardly think that it can be so, for He would scarcely have cared to use such an illustration.

To think of the great Master serving us is strange, indeed, yet He has done it! He did so when He took a towel and washed His disciples’ feet. And He will do it again—He will gird Himself and serve us. The Holy Spirit will honor us, too, for the Holy Spirit often puts great honor upon a faithful man in a way that I cannot explain to you except by a figure. Moses had been a faithful servant and the skin of his face shone when he came down from the mountain. Stephen was a faithful servant and when he stood up to confront his adversaries, he was full of the Holy Spirit, and a glory gleamed from his face. When the Spirit of God is richly in a man and that man is faithful to his Master, some gleaming of a supernal splendor will come from him—not visible to human eyes but potent over human hearts. Believers will feel its power, for as one of our poets says, when a good man is in company ‘tis even as though an angel shook his wings. You feel the influence of the man and almost without a word from him, he has honor in the eyes of them that sit at meat with him, for the Holy Spirit is upon him.

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, I close by saying we ought faithfully to serve, for we have before us the greatest conceivable reward, a reward which Grace enables us to gain. That precious blood which cleanses us, cleanses our service also. It makes us white as snow and it makes our service white, too. We and our work are both accepted in the Beloved. A

Christian’s works are good works—let no one say they are not, for they are the work of the Spirit of God—and who shall say they are not good? It is an encouragement to go forward when we know that “he that keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof.” And that “the servant who waits on his master shall be honored.”

There is a black side to this, upon which I must speak one word. He who does not serve Jesus Christ will not be honored. In the day when the Lord comes many that sleep in the dust shall awake—some to Glory—but some to shame and everlasting contempt. Oh, the contempt that will be poured upon ungodly men at the Last Judgment! When God holds up the mirror and they see themselves, they will despise their own image. And when God holds up their characters to men and angels, revealing to all created beings their secret deeds, their evil motives, their base designs, their filthy imaginations—there will go up against such men, dying without faith in Christ, a universal hiss of general cursing to think that they would not believe God, but made God a liar—would not accept the Sacrifice of Christ, but trod the blood of the Covenant under foot as an unholy thing!

Redeemed men will cry, “Shame!” Unfallen angels will cry, “Shame!” Holy spirits from a thousand worlds will cry, “Shame!” And it will be everlasting contempt. Nothing stings a man like contempt. The poorest among us does not like to be despised, however poor he may be. You do not like to be pointed at and be made the object of derision, yet, Sinner, this will be your portion. If you die without believing in Jesus, you will wake up to shame and to everlasting contempt. “Shame shall be the portion of fools”—such shame! Oh, be ashamed today, that you may not be ashamed then! Penitent shame will lead you to fly to Christ and put your trust in Him—and then your transgressions shall be blotted out forever!

May the Spirit lead each one of you to repentance for Jesus’ sake. Amen.  
PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 25.  
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THE HONORED SERVANT  
NO. 2643

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 8, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 22, 1882.

**“Whoever keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waits on his master shall be honored.” Proverbs 27:18.**

IN Solomon’s day, every man sat under his own vine and fig tree and there was peace throughout the whole country. Then, God’s Law about dividing out the land among the people, so that every man had his own plot, was rightly observed and each one had a fig tree of his own, to which he gave his personal attention. And, in due time, having waited upon the fig tree and kept it, he ate the fruit thereof. Solomon says, in another place, “In all labor there is profit,” and it is well when men feel that it is so, for then they will be inclined to labor. A man would not long keep a fruitless fig tree. If he was quite sure that no fruit would be the result of his toil, he would leave the tree to itself, or else he would say, “Cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?”

There were some men, in Solomon’s day, who, for divers reasons, became servants to others—as there still are and always must be—and they looked for some return from their service. And the wise man here tells them that just as, “Whoever keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof,” so, “he that waits on his master shall be honored.” It is a commonplace truth that those who are faithful servants ought to be honored. I wish, in these times, that matter was more often thought of and that men did honor those who are faithful to them. There are some people who permit others to minister to their comfort, but it never occurs to them to provide for the comfort of their servants. They will allow a man to spend most of his life in increasing their business and yet, when he is getting old, he is discharged and left to perish by starvation so far as they are concerned. I notice this kind of thing frequently, with very much regret—and I am not always able to make exceptions on behalf of Christian masters, for, sometimes they seem only to remember their business and to forget that they are Christians—and they act as cruelly as did that Amalekite in David’s day, who left his servant to die because he was sick. I pray that the time may come when there shall be so good an understanding between all men that Solomon’s words shall be true, “he that waits on his master shall be honored.”

I am sorry that they are not always true in that sense, now, but I am going to leave that literal meaning of the words and apply the text to those who wait upon the Lord Jesus, having made Him to be their Master, for, most certainly, as surely as he who keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof, even much more certainly shall those who wait upon our great Master in Heaven find a sweet return from their service, for they shall be honored by Him. Very simple will my talk be and you, Beloved, who are His servants, do not need anything else, I am sure.

I. The first observation is that OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS OUR MASTER.  
He said to His disciples, after He had washed their feet, “You call Me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am.” Is it so with you, dear Friends? Let conscience answer the question. Is Jesus Christ really Master and Lord to each one of us? It is a wonderful way in which He masters us if we are, indeed, His servants. I can never forget how, in my own case, it came to pass that I, who had been bought with His precious blood and, therefore, belonged to Him, had yet lived forgetful of His claims. He passed by and looked on me—and that very look made me go out to weep bitterly! But He did more. He laid His hand on me—it was a pierced hand and from that day I had a twist in my understanding and my judgment! Those who knew me saw that something extraordinary had happened to me which had altogether changed me. From that time I thought very little of men, and very much of One whom, until then, I had despised! Many of my former pursuits ceased to have the slightest charm for me and I had, for my one pursuit, the desire to do everything to His honor and glory! From that twist I have never been able to escape and I have never wanted to do so—from that mystic influence which He cast over me, I have never come forth and, what is more, I trust I never shall!  
I know that I am describing many of you as well as myself. Oh, did He not master you from head to foot? If you are really converted, it was not the conversion of the feelings only, or the intellect only—it was the subjugation of everything within you to that sweet power of His! You were quite broken down. You had no strength to stand up against Him any longer—and the joy of it was that you had not any wish to do so! When He was about to fix the chains of His love on you, you held out your hands saying, “Here, Lord, bind my wrists.” You put forth your feet, crying, “Place the fetters here.” You asked Him to cast a chain around your heart—you made a covenant with Him and agreed to be bound all over— for that part of you which was unbound, you reckoned to be enslaved and only that which He did bind, you considered to be free! When He had so mastered us, we longed to lie forever at His feet and weep ourselves away. Or we wished to sit forever at His feet and listen to His wondrous Words and learn His blessed teaching. Yet we also wanted to run about the world on His errands—it mattered not to us where He might send us—we would not make any choice of our sphere of service! If He would but employ us, that would be all we would ask. We wanted, then, to have a dozen lives and to spend them all for Him! Yes, we remember singing— *“Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer’s praise!”*

We said—and we meant it—  
*“Had I ten thousand hearts, dear Lord,  
I’d give them all to You,”*

and we did give ourselves up wholly to our Lord. We could not help doing so! We were carried right away, as when a mountain torrent comes, removes the earth from the young tree that is growing by the river side and gradually undermines it until the tree falls into the stream, and the current sweeps it on and on, and never lets it rest again, but bears it right down to the sea! So was it with us that blessed day when first we knew that we could call Christ, “Master and Lord.”

Brothers and Sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ has so completely mastered us that now, today, He is our only Master. It is not always a thing to ennoble a man when he is able to call another person his master, but we feel that the more fully we are mastered by Christ, the better will it be for us—and the more absolutely we can become His servants, the more noble and honored shall we be! In many passages of Scripture where our translation uses the term, “servant,” the true word is, “slave,” and I think the time has come when we had better speak of it as it ought to be, that we may learn the full force of the expression! We do not mean that there is any cruel slavery of Christ’s people to Himself, but we do mean that just as much as the slave completely belonged to his master, to do his master’s bidding, to live or die at his master’s will, so have we given ourselves up to Christ! He has become our only Master. There are others who struggle for the mastery over us, but no man can serve two masters. He may serve two rival powers—one struggling against the other for a while—but they cannot both be masters. Only one can be supreme within the spirit. In this way Christ has become so completely the Believer’s Master that sin shall not have dominion over him—and he shall not be any longer under the domination of Satan. Christ is the Master of all His people, whatever happens to them. We may wander like sheep, but Christ is still our Shepherd, and He will bring the straying sheep back, for they are still His property even when they are wandering away from Him!

What do you say, Brothers and Sisters? Do you acknowledge any other master beside Christ? If you do, in that divided sovereignty you shall find ten thousand miseries! Oh, if your right eye is contrary to Christ, pluck it out and cast it from you! If your very life should stand up in rivalry with Christ, it would be much better for you that you should die than that you should lead such a life as that! Our Lord Jesus is our only Master!

And what a choice Master He is! If we had had the opportunity, in our old state, of choosing our master, we were so blind and foolish that we would not have chosen Him. But if we had known, then, what we know, now, we would have chosen Him. And if we knew infinitely more about Him, we could never discover a reason why He should not be our Master, but we would continually find stronger arguments why we should be His servants forever! There was never such a Master as our Lord Jesus Christ, who took our nature that He might be able to master such servants as we are, who even died to win us and whose only mastership, after all, is that of love! He rules us sovereignly, yet in His hand is the silver scepter, not the rod of iron!

Our Master is, at the same time, our Husband, whom we must obey. Oh, it is blessed to obey Him to whom our hearts are fully surrendered and in whom all loveliness is centered! When a husband truly loves his wife, it becomes easy for the wife to be obedient unto her husband and, as Christ loves us infinitely, we must love Him and serve Him in return. Look, by faith, into His blessed face—it is Jehovah’s joy to look upon Him—and it shall be forever ours! Was there ever such another Countenance? Was ever such loveliness imagined as really exists in Him? Look at all His Character, from Bethlehem even until now—peep in upon Him in His loneliness, or see Him in the midst of the crowd and will you not say of Him, “He is the standard-bearer among ten thousand; yes, He is altogether lovely”? Pick out all the charms that ever could be found in the most amiable character, gather up all the virtues that ever glittered in the most spiritual man or woman, and bring them all here. Ah, but they are not worthy to be compared with the glory and beauty and excellency of the Well-Beloved! All their goodness came from Him, therefore let them all lie at His feet, for there is none to be compared with Him!

Next, our spirit exultingly says, “As He is our choice Master, so He is our chosen Master. Since He has chosen us, we have learned to choose Him.” The love was, at first, all on His side, but now, through the effectual working of His Grace, it is on our side, too. We can, each one, say, “I love my Master. I love His house. I love His children. I love His service. I have chosen Him to be mine forever. If He should dismiss me from His service, I would come back to Him. If He gave me what men call, liberty, I would beg of Him to withdraw such accursed liberty and let me be, forever, and only, and completely, and entirely His, for, as He has chosen me by His Grace, so has His Grace led me to choose Him.” I know that many of you can say the same and I daresay, while I have been speaking, you have been thinking of George Herbert’s lines—

*“How sweetly does ‘my Master’ sound! ‘My Master!’ As ambergris leaves a rich scent  
Unto the taster—  
So do these words give a sweet content  
An oriental fragrance, ‘My Master.’”*

We delight to use this title concerning our Lord, for He is, further, our gracious Master. That word, “Master,” seems to lose the idea of masterfulness when it is applied to Him. He is most graciously and wondrously our Lord, but yet we no more call Him, “Baali,” that is, “my Lord,” but we call Him, “Ishi,” that is, “my Man,” “my Husband.” There is, truly, a service to which we are called, yet His message to His disciples was, “Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what His lord does, but I have called you, Friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.” We can never forget that with all His love, He is our Lord! It is our joy to remember that, yet what loving service we have received at His hands! He has been so much our servant that we have sometimes had to ask ourselves, “Who is the servant?” He is Servus Servorum—the Servant of Servants—as He proved when He washed His disciples’ feet. He has done more than that for us, for He stooped so low as to be despised of men and rejected of the people in order that He might save us. Then, surely, it shall be our joy, bliss and glory to henceforth call Him Master and Lord!

He is also our lifelong Master. No, that is a mistake, for there was, alas, a time when we lived, yet we lived not unto Him. Some of us were but boys when we first began to serve Him. I always feel glad to think that I wore a boy’s jacket when I was baptized into His name. I had not assumed the garb of a man, but my whole soul was His and I was buried with Him. I wish it had been still earlier! O dear young people, there is no such joy as that of knowing Christ in your early youth! We hear, sometimes, of life-long teetotalers, but I could wish that I had been a life-long abstainer from self-righteousness, a life-long drinker of the river of the Water of Life! But, as all of us have failed to serve the Lord at the beginning of our life, let us try, with all our hearts, to serve Him right to the end! Oh, to have Him for our lifelong Master—with no little intervals of running away, no furloughs, no holidays!

Brothers and Sisters, we have our recreations in Christ’s service, but we never have any holidays. That is to say, He re-creates us, but He permits us to continue in His work without cessation or intermission. It would be no recreation for us to have a furlough from the great work of the Lord—we only wish that we could live, labor, spend ourselves and find our rest, as some birds do, on the wing—flying, mounting, singing and so resting and making this to be our continual joy! So, you see, we are in our Master’s service for life. We have entered His employ and we are bound to Him—and “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” and Master—forever blessed be His name!

II. Now I hasten, in the second place, to remind you that OUR BUSINESS IS TO SERVE OUR MASTER.  
That business is expressed in the Hebrew of our text by the word, “keep.” I will read you the text as it should be rendered and as the translators will make it read if they use their senses in their revision of the Old Testament. That is, if they give the same meaning to a word in all places. The previous translators thought that the Bible would sound tautological if they gave the same translation of a word everywhere, so, to charm the ears, they changed the words. But then, alas, they sometimes changed the sense. Here, the original ought to be rendered thus—“Whoever keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that keeps his master shall be honored.” Is not that a wonderful word? In the interpretation I am giving to the passage, it means that as certainly as the farmer keeps and tends a fig tree, so you and I are to keep and tend Christ! Is it really true that He has committed Himself to our keeping? Yes! On earth, among the sons of men, there is One who keeps Israel, but Israel, in another sense, is made to be a keeper, and is to keep the Lord Jesus Christ!  
How are we to do that? Well, first, we must keep Him by always remaining His servants. We must keep Him as our Master. I like the idea of that man who once said to his master, “Sir, you talk about discharging me, but you see, Sir, if you don’t know when you have a good servant, I know very well when I have a good master—and I don’t mean to be discharged. If you put me out of the front door, I shall come in at the back, for I have been your servant ever since I was a boy. I was born in your father’s house and I mean to die in this house.” The gentleman saw that it was quite hopeless to try to get rid of the old man, as he would not go, so he decided they should not be parted. And I think some of us have come to the same point with our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Truly, He knows that, in us, He has, even at our best, only unprofitable servants, but then He accepted us. He knew all that we were and all that we should be. He had a clear foresight of our whole future and He has still engaged us for life!  
Some of our friends think He only engaged them for a quarter or half a year, or for a limited period, but I know that He took me on for life—and for eternity, too! And my soul rejoices in the fact that He will keep to the bargain. Like the old man, I am determined that if He puts me out at the front door, I will come in at the back, for I know that I have a good Master and I will not leave Him. Do you not say the same, Beloved? Then hold on to Him and tell Him that you will not let Him go! Should He chasten you with the rod of men and lay many stripes on you, yet be like some dogs that seem to love their masters all the better the more they beat them! And so, dear Friends, love your Lord all the better when He treats you roughly—kiss the hand that smites you, and let this be your settled resolution—that from Him you will never go.  
What else are we to do in order to keep our Master? I think, next, we are to keep Him by defending Him. We must defend our Lord’s name, honor and cause at all costs and all hazards. We must not let Him sleep like King Saul, with his spear stuck in the ground by his bolster, and his bodyguard asleep! But if the enemy should ever come to attack our Master, our watchword must be, “Up, guards, and at them!” Give them a warm reception from whatever quarter they may come. You and I, Beloved, are put in charge of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and every child of God is bound to be upon the defensive just as if the keeping of the Gospel depended entirely upon him. I believe that I am as much bound to preach against error, and to war for the Truth of Christ, as if there were not another minister living—and I think that every other minister stands in the same responsible position! And it is the same with every Christian. Keep your Master and all that He has in safety—let no traitor come near Him! Guard His ordinances, His doctrines, His precepts! Adore His matchless Person and extol His blessed work—and so keep Him against all comers.  
Then, dear Friends, keep Him by guarding all His interests. It is the duty of a servant to reckon that what belongs to his master is, in a certain sense, his, and, therefore, to be sacredly defended. I have heard of servants in the olden times, saying, “That is our park!” “This is our country house,” or, “this is our town house!” “These are our horses” and one of them was heard by his master to say, “There come our children, bless their little hearts!” Well, they were no children of his, were they? Yes they were, for they were his master’s children and he had become so identified with his master’s interests that he regarded his master’s children as belonging to him! So ought we to think of everything that appertains to Christ—and if the Lord has, anywhere, a little child who needs to be cared for, each of us who are His servants should be prepared to nurse it and watch over it for Him—and say to Him, with good Dr. Doddridge— *“Have You a lamb in all Your flock  
I would disdain to feed?  
Have You a foe, before whose face  
I fear Your cause to plead?*  
Thus, dear Friends, keep your Master! Watch over your Master’s possessions! Guard your Master’s Truth! Defend your Master’s honor! Care for your Master’s children! As far as your power goes, try to keep everything that belongs to Him, labor for the good of His cause, struggle for the advancement of His interests and for the overthrow of His adversaries, just as every loyal soldier seeks to preserve his sovereign’s dominions intact and to keep his king’s arms from suffering any dishonor. Thus let us keep our Master and all that belongs to Him.  
Now let us come back to our own Authorized Version—“he that waits on his master shall be honored.” This also is a very good translation, if not equal to the other, and I think it conveys an important meaning for us. You and I are like servants who wait upon our Master. And that waiting consists, in part, in waiting for His orders, trying to ascertain what they are and, when we know them, waiting until He bids us carry them out. It is not intended that you and I should be inventors of rites, ceremonies, novelties of worship and all manner of strange doctrines! Our position is simply that of servants. Our Master has a certain way of setting out His Table and inviting His guests to it. And I have no business to go to Him and say, “Look how the king of Syria arranges his table? Is not that a better plan than Yours?” No, that would be utter disloyalty! I have to set the Table according to my Master’s plan and custom. There are some old country squires who have acquired odd ways of their own and the servants whom they employ must drop into them, whatever their own notions may be. Now, the ways of the Lord are right—and it is your duty and mine to ask what they are and to conform our practice to them.  
The same rule is to be observed in matters of church government and discipline, in the ordinances of the Lord’s house, in the Truths of God to be preached, and in the way we go about our Master’s business. It is not for us to make our own laws, or to invent our own methods, but to wait upon our Master and learn His will concerning everything. If we do not do that, we shall get into a world of trouble! But if we wait upon Him for our orders and then obey the orders we receive from our Master, we shall be honored.  
Next, we must wait upon Him for strength to obey His orders; for if we do not, we shall either fail in our attempts, or else we shall fail altogether to make the attempt. We must also wait upon our Master, seeking His smile. I am afraid we do a great deal to get the smiles of our fellow men— and if they think we have done well, we congratulate ourselves. But, oh, to preach for the Master, to pray for the Master, to teach that class for the Master—not for your pastor! Not for the elders or deacons! Not for your fellow members, that they may say, “What a zeal for the Lord this person has!” Let it all be done for the Master! “He that waits on his master shall be honored.” Do you not think that sometimes you and I wait upon ourselves, and that, while we are very busy and fancying we are working for the Lord, we may be doing it entirely for self? Because we find some sort of pleasure in it, we keep on doing it just for that pleasure, or because we feel that some kind of credit must come to ourselves as the result of it. If we are serving self, not our Master, we shall have a reward, but it will be a poor commonplace reward—like that of the Pharisees, of whom the Master said, “Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.” That is the end of it! They have had their reward and they cannot expect to be paid twice for what they have done.  
We are, dear Friends, further to wait upon the Lord by expecting Him to fulfill His promises. And His promises will only be fulfilled in His own time. We are not to run before the Lord, nor to seek to hurry the Lord as though we thought He was slow in accomplishing His purposes. If we ever cry, “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord,” we shall probably receive for an answer, “Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion.” It is we who are asleep—the Lord never is. And so we are to wait upon Him and plead the promises that He has given us.  
This waiting also includes acquiescence in His will. Not only doing it, but doing it willingly—being ready for anything that He may appoint. Perhaps lying on a sick bed for months. Why, if we never rose again and had to lie bedridden until we died, we ought to be perfectly willing to do so to wait on our Master! You remember the story of poor old Betty who said that the Lord told her to do this and that, and she tried to do it, and at last He said to her, “Betty, go upstairs and lie in your bed and cough.” She said, “I am doing it, and I take satisfaction even in coughing if that is according to my Lord’s will.” If you have no will of your own in such matters, you will have very little sorrow. Our troubles mostly grow from the root of self-will—but when self-will is conquered and we hold ourselves entirely at God’s disposal, then there is a sweetness even in wormwood and gall—and our heaviest cross becomes our joy and delight and we say, with holy Rutherford, “I find the Cross of Christ no more a burden to me than wings are to a bird, or sails are to a ship.” That saintly man said that sometimes he felt so deeply in love with his cross that he almost feared lest his sufferings and grief should become so lovely to him as to be a rival to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no such danger, I am afraid, with the most of us, for we are as bulls unaccustomed to the yoke—and we kick against the pricks. But if you can wait upon your Master and say, “Do with me as You will, Lord,” all will be well. Try to be like the shepherd on Salisbury Plain, whose story should never be forgotten. When he was asked, “Is it good weather?” he answered, “Yes, it is all good weather that God sends.” “But does this weather please you?” “If it pleases God, it pleases me,” was his reply. That is the point to get to— may God bring us there by His Grace!  
III. When we get there, we shall come to our last point, OUR SERVICE WILL BRING US HONOR—“He that waits on his master shall be honored.”  
O Brothers and Sisters, the thought of waiting upon Christ and being His servant is an unspeakable honor! Therefore I will not try to speak about it, but ask you to just sit still and think about it. You are His servants, the servants of the eternal Son of God! Perhaps somebody is going to be made an earl or a duchess. I do not think that would be any honor to you, for you have already a higher honor than that, for you are a servant of the Lord! There will be a coronet for somebody to wear, but really, I do not see that it could add any luster to you, for you are a prince of the blood-royal of the skies! As for our pedigree, there is none like it. We do not trace it to the Normans, but to Calvary! We are of that seed that was to crush the serpent’s head. Our coat of arms is much more ancient than any that the Heralds’ College can ever issue! We need no other honor and can have no higher glory than to be servants of Christ! Are you only a little nurse-girl? Well, if you belong to Christ, you are one of those whom He counts right honorable! Are you a chimneysweep, my Brother? Never mind that—if the Lord has washed you in His precious blood, you are as noble as any peer of the realm and nobler than most of them! Do you have to go to the workhouse for weekly help? Never mind about your poverty—you are not so poor, now, as your Lord was—for He had nowhere to lay His head. Do not talk about being mean and obscure—why, you are descended from the King of Kings! “This honor have all His saints.” “Unto you that believe, He is an honor”—that is the meaning of the Greek—and I take it that it is honor enough for us to have such a Savior to believe in and such a Master to serve!  
You shall have honor, dear Friends, among poor fellow Christians. If you really honor only your Master’s name, it will not be long before they will honor and esteem you. I notice that the moment a man begins to seek honor for himself, he loses the esteem of his fellows. Do you ever hear any minister who preaches very grandly? If so, you think to yourself, “What a splendid preacher he is!” But you will find that, as a rule, God’s people do not care much about him. Notice any worker in the church who wants to be very prominent and push himself forward— everybody desires to kick him! But there is another Brother who serves Christ in the rear rank and who blushes when he is pushed to the front—he is the man to whom his Brothers and Sisters look up to and though they may say little to him, they delight to honor him in their hearts. Perhaps the most honorable thing in Christ’s house is the doormat—when all the brethren wipe their dirty boots upon it, they are so much the cleaner.  
I know some people who do not like to be in the position of the doormat—if a person brushes against them, they cry, “What a shame!” It is a great honor to do anything for your Master’s children which will be for their good. In the Kingdom of God, the way to go up is to go down—and the way to grow great is to grow little. Look at little Paul—that man short of stature and with many infirmities. Why, he is the biggest of all the Apostles! And what is “great Paul”? Oh, he is only sounding brass and the less we hear of him, the better. Get to be like little Paul, Brother, and your sound shall go out to the very ends of the earth! Whereas if you are ever a big Paul, you will only give out a brazen note which will be heard for a very little way. If the Lord Jesus Christ has made us to be His servants, let us count it our highest honor to be a servant of the least of His servants so that we may bless them and glorify Him!  
But our highest honor is yet to come. It is in that day when Christ shall call His chosen ones to His own right hand to reign with Him. It is when He shall appoint unto them a Kingdom even as His Father appointed it to Him. It is when he who was faithful in a few things shall be made ruler over many things in the Kingdom of the Master forever and forever! I think I see the King coming into His court—it is crowded with cherubim and seraphim and all the shining ones that form His royal retinue! There they stand in all their gorgeous glory and the Master, from the Throne, looks over all their ranks as He accepts their loyal and reverent homage. But He is looking for one poor man who on earth loved Him and who kept the faith under much derision and scorn. At last He spies him out and says, “Make way, My angelic servants! Cherubim and seraphim, stand in line and let him come! This man was with Me in My humiliation, as you could not be. For Me he bore the cross and was despised. Make way and let him come and sit with Me, for they who have been with Me in My humiliation shall be with Me in My glory.”  
Oh, that you and I, dear Friends, may have that honor at the last! And what will we do when we get it? Why, we will cast our crowns at our Savior’s feet and say to Him, “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be all the praise and glory forever!” And in that very deed we shall find the highest honor of all! And we shall then, perhaps, remember this Thursday evening and this text, “He that waits on his master shall be honored.” The Lord bless you all, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**MATTHEW 25:14-30.**

Verse 14. For the kingdom of Heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his servants and delivered unto them his goods. This parable has to do with you who are professors of Christianity. He, “called his servants,” those who, by their own consent, were numbered among his household servitors. “He called his servants and delivered unto them his goods.” Not theirs, but his! And therefore to be used for him. If you are Christ’s servant, your abilities are His, He has lent them to you to be employed for your Lord. “He called his servants and delivered unto them his goods.”

15. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his ability; and straightway took his journey. He is gone. Our Lord has risen and we, His servants, are left behind to trade with His goods for His glory.

16-18. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them another five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained another two. But he that had received one went and dug in the earth and hid his lord’s money. We are grieved to know that there are persons with five talents and others with two talents who do as this man did—but the case is put in this way so as to reach us all. Since most persons have but one talent, they are the most often found, each one, saying, “I have so little ability, I will not do anything. If I had five talents, I might become distinguished. If I had two, I might be very useful. But with only one, I need not attempt anything. I am a private person—a mother, quite obscure, with my little family around me— what can I do?” It is very often a strong temptation from Satan to those who have but one talent, to make them think that they may, with impunity, hide that one. And then, you see, the argument cuts the other way. If it is wrong to hide one talent, it is much more wrong to hide two, and far worse to dig in the earth and bury five!

19. After a long time the lord of those servants returned and reckoned with them. Always remember the reckoning. We have heard of one who went into a house of entertainment and fed most luxuriously. But, when the landlord brought him the bill, he said, “Oh, I never thought of that!” And there are many who spend their whole lives without ever thinking of the reckoning—yet it must come, and for every hour, for every opportunity, for every ability, for every sin and for every omission of duty, they must give account! “The lord of those servants returned and reckoned with them.”

20, 21. And so he that had received five talents came and brought another five talents, saying, Lord, you delivered unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, you good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your lord. I do not doubt that this man had often reckoned with himself— for he that never reckons with himself may well be afraid of being called to reckon with his God—and I expect that he had often grieved to think that he had not turned the five talents into twenty. He must have thought that to gain only five talents more was very little. But he found his master was well content with what he had done. Do you think, Brothers and Sisters, that all of you who have five talents have gained five talents more? You were richly endowed as a youth—have you increased the ability to serve your God? You see the parable speaks not so much of what they had done for other people, as of what they had themselves gained and still had in hand! Have you more Grace? Have you more tact? Have you more adaptation to your Master’s service? Are you conscious that it is so? I should not wonder if you are mourning that you are not more useful and more fit to be used. It is well that you should mourn in that way, but when your Master comes, I trust that He will say, “Well done, you good and faithful servant.”

22, 23. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, you delivered unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I shall make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your lord. That is a beautiful reward—not so much to have a joy of our own as to enter into the joy of our Lord! It is not a servant’s portion that is given to us—it is the Master’s portion shared by His servants. How it ennobles Christian work to feel that it is not simply our work, but work done by the Master through the servant— and the reward shall not so much be our joy as our entrance into our Master’s joy! That is, indeed, giving to us the best of the best in return for our poor service here!

24, 25. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew you that you are an hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered: and I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth: lo, there you have what is yours. “I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth.” See, Friends, how fear may often be the mother of presumption? Confidence in God begets holy fear, but unholy fear begets a doubt of God and leads us to desperate rebellion of unbelief. God save us from such fear!

26, 27. His lord answered and said unto him, You wicked and slothful servant, you knew that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not scattered? You ought therefore to have put my money in the bank, and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury. His lord took him on his own ground and condemned him out of his own mouth.

28, 29. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which has ten talents. For unto everyone that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance. He that has faith shall have more faith. He that has a secret taste for heavenly things shall have a greater love for them. He that has some understanding of the Truth of God shall get more understanding of it. God gives to those that have—it is equally true that He gives to those who confess that they have not.

29. But from him that has not shall be taken away even that which he has. If you need an instance of taking away from a man what he has not—you may have seen it sometimes in the case of a person without any education or knowledge who is quite content to remain in that condition. But, all of a sudden he is introduced into learned society—he hears what educated people have to say, and he exclaims, “What a fool I am!” What he thought he had, though he never had it, suddenly goes from him!

30. And cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. If we give any description of the world to come which is at all terrible, those who reject the Scriptures begin to cry out that we have borrowed it from Dante, or taken it from Milton! But I take leave to say that the most awful and harrowing descriptions of the woes of the lost that ever fell from human lips do not exceed or even equal the language of the loving Christ, Himself! Listen—“Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” He is the true lover of men’s souls who does not deceive them! He that paints the miseries of Hell as though they were but little is seeking to murder men’s souls under the pretense of being their friend! May God give all of you Grace to trust in Jesus for yourselves and then to point others to Him, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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SPIRITUAL APPETITE  
NO. 1227

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 4, 1875, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The full soul loathes the honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.”  
Proverbs 27:7.**

**IT is a great blessing when food and appetite meet together. Some have appetite and no meat, they need our pity. Others have meat but no appetite. They may not, perhaps, win our pity but they certainly require it. We have heard of a gentleman who was accustomed to take an early morning walk and frequently met a poor man hastening to his labor. One morning he said to him, “I have to walk this early each morning to get a stomach for my meat.” “Ah,” said the other, “and I have to trudge to work this early to get meat for my stomach.” Neither of them was quite satisfied with his position—only the happy conjunction of the appetite and the food could secure content.**

**Are we thankful enough when we have both? It has often happened that men have been so luxuriously fed that appetite has departed from them altogether. The Israelites, when they were in the wilderness, became so squeamish that though they were fed with the bread from Heaven and, for once, men did *eat* angels’ food, yet they said, “Our soul loathes this light bread.” And you in the world are in great danger of falling into the same condition, for you do not enjoy the rarest luxuries! You pick and choose as if nothing were good enough for you and, like the old Roman gluttons, you require sea and land, earth and air to be ransacked for your gratification and then crave pungent sauces and strange flavorings before you can eat.**

**The fact is, the old proverb is true, that the best sauce for meat is hunger, and while the confectioner and the cook may labor with a thousand arts to produce a dainty dish, Nature teaches us the way to enjoy our meat, namely, not to eat it till we *need* it—and then to partake of only so much as our bodies require. That hunger gives a relish even to objectionable diet is certain. Our forefathers found it possible to live upon food which we could not touch. Even so late as the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the mass of the poor seldom tasted wheat bread, but fed on rye or barley cakes. And they often had to be content with bread made of beans, peas, tares, oats, lentils and even these had to be frequently mixed with acorns. They had a saying that, “Hunger sets his foot in the horse’s manger,” meaning that food which was only fit for horses was devoured by men in the time of famine.**

**Those delicate people who are forever complaining of this and that, and regretting the, “good old times,” would change their tune if they had a trial of such fare—and could earnestly pray to be projected, again, into the times in which we live. The rules which apply to the bodily appetite hold equally true of the mind. We easily lose our taste for anything of which we have our fill. Many men of the world have gone the round of amusement and now nothing can please them. They have worn out all their playthings and are tired of every game. Poor things, more wearied of their follies than the slave by his servitude!**

**For them laughter and mirth have become ghastly mockeries—men and women singers are no delight—and instruments of music are discordant. Gardens and palaces are dreary—and treasures of art a vexation of spirit. By the road of folly they have reached the very point to which Solomon came with all his wisdom and like he, they cry, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” In a higher order of things the same process can be observed. In the pursuit of knowledge men may come to loathe honeycombs through sheer repletion. Many a literary man has reached such a condition of fastidiousness that the books which he can enjoy are as few as the fingers of his hands. With a toss of the head he passes by volumes with which ordinary readers are charmed. His delicate poetical taste is shocked by the hymns which delight his countrymen and his ears are tortured by the tunes to which they are sung.**

**For my part, I would sooner retain the power of enjoying a simple hymn, sung to a tune which delights the multitude, than find myself proclaimed king of critics. And I would sooner be able to sit down and read a child’s storybook with interest, than rise into the sublime condition of those literary gentlemen who glance over every book with a sharp critical eye—and see nothing meriting their attention. In fact, they never *will* see anything worth reading unless the book is written by themselves or one of their party. “The full soul loathes the honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.”**

**I would not have said so much upon this principle of our nature if it had not happened to enter into religion. It is upon religious fastidiousness that I have to speak this morning. Men, in the things of God, have not always an appetite for the sweetest and most precious Truths of God. The Gospel of Jesus, revealed from Heaven, is full of marrow and fatness. But the condition of men’s minds is such that they cannot perceive its excellence. They regard it as a tasteless thing, at best, while some even treat it as though it were wormwood and gall to them. They feed upon the husks of the world with greedy relish, but turn from the provisions of Mercy with disdain! They are full of the meat from the flesh pots of Egypt—for the Bread of Heaven they have no desire! Nor will they, till the Holy Spirit quickens them into spiritual life, and makes them feel the keen pangs of spiritual hunger.**

**The three points of my discourse will be as follows—first, that *Jesus Christ is, in Himself, sweeter than the honeycomb.* Secondly, *there are those that loathe even Him.* And then, thirdly, blessed be His name, *there are others who appreciate Him*—“To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.”**

I. **Let us begin, then, with the assured truth that JESUS CHRIST IS, HIMSELF, SWEETER THAN THE HONEYCOMB. Whether you believe it, or not, the fact remains, the Incarnate Word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. Whether it is your privilege to revel in the delightful knowledge of His love or not, that love will still be equally precious. That Jesus Christ is sweeter than the honeycomb is clear if we consider who He is and what He gives and does. If you think of it you will see that *it must be so*. Our Lord is the Incarnation of Divine Love.**

**The love of God is sweet and Jesus is that Love made manifest. “God so loved the world”—I pause to ask how much? Where shall we see at a glance the fullness of that Love? Turn your eyes to Jesus, He alone answers the question. “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.” There, bleeding upon Calvary, we see the heart of the Father revealed in the pierced heart of His only-begotten Son! Jesus is the focus of the Love of God. The boundless goodness of the ever-loving God finds its best expression in the Person of the Redeemer—surely, then, He must be sweet beyond comparison!**

**When God takes His Love and culls the choicest flower from it, and hands it down to earth for men to gaze upon it as the token of His favor, we may be sure that its fragrance surpasses conception. God is Love and when that Love is concentrated in one Individual that it may afterwards be diffused through multitudes, there must be an infinite sweetness in that blessed Person. Judge you what I say—must it not be so? Moreover, Jesus Christ is, in Himself the embodiment of boundless Mercy to sinners as well as Love to creatures. God loved men, for He had made them, but He could not bless them, for He must judge them for their offenses.**

**Lo, Jesus Christ has vindicated the Divine Honor, satisfied the Law, and now the Mercy of God can descend freely to men, even to the rebellious and the undeserving! Who would find mercy, let him look where Jesus died upon the tree, and he shall find it blooming freely from the crimsoned ground! Who would behold Mercy in all its plenitude, let him go where Jesus stands with open hands welcoming the vilest of the vile to the feast of love, cleansing their every stain and robing them in garments of salvation! He must be sweet from whom such sweetness flows that He makes the foulest and most offensive of mankind acceptable to God!**

**If His merits turn our Hell to Heaven, our gall of bitterness into joy and peace, it is not possible that even the honeycomb dripping with virgin honey should fitly set Him forth. You bees that wander over fairest flowers, your choicest gatherings can never rival the quintessences of delight which must dwell in One in whom the Mercy of God is concentrated! You poverty-stricken sons of men, Christ must be sweet, for He meets all your needs. Sweet is liberty to the captive and when the Son makes you free, you are free, indeed! Sweet is pardon to the condemned and proclaims full forgiveness and salvation! Sweet is health to the sick and Jesus is the Great Physician of souls!**

**Sweet is light to those who are in darkness and to eyes that are dim, and Jesus is both sun to our darkness and eyes to our blindness! All that men can ever need—all that the most famished souls can pine after—is to be found in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus, and therefore sweet He must be! He is sweet because, whenever He comes into a man’s heart, He breathes into it the sweetness of abounding peace. Oh, the *rest* our souls have known when we have leaned upon His bosom! “The peace of God which passes all understanding” has kept our heart and mind by Jesus Christ! Our soul has drank nectar from His wounds!**

**Nor has it been bare peace, alone, the glassy pools of rest have bubbled up into fountains of joy. In Jesus we have rejoiced and do rejoice and will rejoice all day! No happiness can be more Divine than the bliss of knowing Him and feeding upon Him and being one with Him. All the true peace and joy that are known on earth—I might have said that are known in Heaven among the ransomed throng—all come through Jesus Christ our Lord, whose name is the sum of delights! Those spices must be sweet, indeed, from which the sacred oil of joy distills! That honey must be infinitely sweet of which one single drop fills a whole life with rejoicing!**

**It is clear that our Lord must be sweet because His very name smells of celestial hope to Believers. No sooner do we taste of Jesus, than, like Jonathan in the woods, our eyes are enlightened and we see the invisible! The veil is taken away and we behold a way of access to our Father God and to the joys of His right hand! Once understand that Jesus has borne our sins and carried our sorrows, and we see that the felicities of eternity are prepared for us! His name is the *open sesame* of the gates of Paradise! Learn but to pronounce the name of Jesus from your heart as all your confidence and you have learned a magic word which will scatter troops of opposing foes and will open the two-leaved gates, and cut the bars of iron in sunder if they stand between your soul and Heaven! Since Jesus is all this and vastly more than any human tongue can tell, it is clear upon the very face of it that He must be sweet.**

**But we are not left to the supposition and inference that it must be so, we *know it is so*. Our Lord is as the honeycomb, for He is sweet to God, Himself. The taste of the High and Holy One, who shall venture to judge? What the Lord Himself calls sweet must be sweet, indeed. Now, the very smell of Christ’s Sacrifice, no, I will go further—the very smell of that which was the *type* of Christ in the days of Noah—was so pleasing to God that it is written, “The Lord smelled a sweet savor of rest, and He said, I will no more destroy the earth with a flood.” If the very smell of that which was but the *emblem* of the bleeding Lamb was grateful to Jehovah, how sweet to the Divine Father must the Lord Jesus Himself be in His actual Sacrifice?**

**Why, the very sight of the blood—and, mark you, not the blood of Christ, but only the blood of a lamb slain in *type* of Christ—the very sight of that blood sprinkled on the lintel turned away the destroying angel from Israel of old, for the Lord said, “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” Now, if a mere glimpse of the type of Jesus’ atoning blood is so satisfactory to the heart of God, think what the sight of Jesus must be, for He has been obedient to death, even the death of the Cross! If I had time I might mention the many ways in which our Lord is set forth in Scripture as being sweet to the Father—all the senses are represented as being gratified—the Lord *hears* His voice crying from the ground and answers it with blessing.**

**He *tastes* His Sacrifice as wine which makes glad the heart of God, and He *feels* His touch as the Daysman laying His hands both upon Judge and offender. In every possible way Jesus is most sweet and pleasant to the Divine mind. Hear how from the highest Heaven the Lord declares, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness’ sake. Now, if the heart of Deity, itself, is satisfied and filled to the full with content, there must be an Infinite sweetness in the Person of the Lord Jesus! That honeycomb must be sweet with which the Triune God is satisfied!**

**Moreover, our Lord Jesus is sweet to the angels in Heaven. Did they not watch Him when He was here below with careful eyes? When first they missed Him from the courts above, they flew with eager haste to discover where He was, and when they found that He was come to this poor planet, they made the night bright with their radiance and sweet with their chorales. While He tarried here they watched His footsteps, they ministered to Him in the wilderness, and in the garden, and at other times they waited in their legions, eager to deliver Him if He would but have beckoned them to use their celestial weapons.**

**When they saw Him at last, ready to ascend, I can well believe that the poet’s words are no fiction, but describe a fact—***“They brought His chariot from on high To bear Him toHis Throne;   
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried, ‘The glorious work is done!’”*

**He was “seen of angels,” and was very dear and precious to them. Surely He who attracts all those bright intelligences and causes them to gaze upon Him unceasingly, and pay Him Divine honors must be sweet, indeed. Sweet is Christ, Beloved, for it is His Presence that makes Heaven what it is. You are in a garden and smelling a dainty fragrance. You say to yourself, “Where does this come from?” You traverse the walks and borders to discover the source of the pleasant odor and at last you come upon a rose. Even thus, if you were to walk among those fruitful trees which skirt the river of the Water of Life, you would perceive a peerless perfume of superlative delight, but you would not have to ask yourself, “Where does this fragrance come from?”**

**There is but one rose in the Paradise of God which is capable of scattering such perfume of joy—and that is the “Rose of Sharon,” that famous, “plant of renown,” which has diffused fragrance over both earth and Heaven! Well may He be sweet to us, since when He was broken like the alabaster box of precious ointment, He filled all the chambers of the House of God both above and below with an unrivalled sweetness! If you need proof from nearer home, let me remind you how sweet the Well-Beloved is to His own people. What was it that first attracted us to God? Was it not the sweetness of Christ? What was it that banished all the bitterness of our fears? Was it not the sweetness of His pardoning Love?**

**What is it that holds us so that we cannot leave, which enchains us, seals us, nails us to the Cross so that we can never leave it? Is it not that He is so sweet that we shall never find any to compare with Him? Yes, and therefore we must abide with Him because there is nowhere else to go! Brothers and Sisters, I appeal to you who know Jesus, are you not satisfied? I mean not only satisfied with Him, but satisfied altogether? Does He not fill and overfill your souls? When you enjoy His Presence, what other joy could you imagine?**

**When He embraces you, have you any heart left for other delights? Do you not say, “He is all my salvation, and all my desire.” My cup runs over, my Lord Jesus, when I have communion with You—***“Jesus, to whom I fly,   
Does all my wishes fill!   
What, though the creature steams are dry,   
I have a fountain still.”*

**All the saints will tell you that Christ is most sweet and altogether lovely. And some of them will confess that, sometimes, His sweetness overcomes them, carries them right away and bears them out of themselves! The eagle wings of Jesus’ Love uplift us to the gates of Heaven and this will happen to us even when there is nothing on earth to make us happy, and all without and within is dark. When the poor body is full of pain and every nerve is unstrung by disease, even then, Jesus comes and lays His fingers amid the strings of our poor nature, until charmed by His touch, they pour forth a music which might teach the harps of Heaven His praise!**

**In His Presence our heart is glad beyond all gladness! We are beatified if not glorified. Would God it might be always so! My dear Lord and Master is very sweet, but my lips fail me and I blush at my poor attempts to speak His praises. One thing that proves how sweet He is, is this—He removes all bitterness from the heart which truly receives Him. The quassia cup of sickness is no longer bitter when a drop of His love falls into it. In His society, sick beds grow into thrones in which the invalid does not so much pine as reign! The lonely chamber becomes a royal reception room. The hard bed a couch of down and the curtains are transformed into banners of love!**

**So, too, His love digs out of the garden of life the roots of the regret of care and the wormwood of anxiety. A man may be vexed with a thousand anxieties, but in communion with Christ he will find rest unto his soul. The delectable mixture of fellowship with Jesus effectually drowns the taste of the world’s bitterness. Saints in persecution have found the love of Christ cleanse their mouths from every taste of hatred’s gall. They have been able to bear imprisonment and think it liberty, to regard chains as ornaments, to find the rack a bed of roses and the blazing stake a chariot of fire to bear them to their reward!**

**If a child of God were called in the pursuit of duty to swim through a sea of Hell’s most bitter pains, yet with the sweetness of Christ’s love in his mouth, he would not so much as taste the sea of gall. As to death, we have learned to swallow it up in victory! Surely its bitterness is past. Where else can you find such delicious dainties? Where else such allsubduing sweetness? Jesus is bliss itself! Thus have I shown sufficiently that facts have proven that Jesus is sweet as the honeycomb, but I detain you just a moment to notice that *He is incomparably so***.

Whether I am right or not in speaking thus of honey, I shall be right enough in saying it of Jesus Christ—He is not only sweet, but Sweetness itself! We need not say of Him that He is good, for He is essential Goodness. He is not only loving, but Love. Whatever good thing you may seek in the world, you shall find it thinly spread here and there upon good men, as God deals out these precious things by measure. But the fullness of all good you shall find in Jesus Christ! He is not the sweet odor, but the ointment which gives it forth! He is not the brook, but the fountain from which it springs! He is not the beam of light, but the sun from which it proceeds!

Honey is the conglomeration and compounding of a thousand sweets. The bees visit all sorts of flowers, knowing by a cunning wisdom denied to us, where all sweet things are hidden—they take not only the nectar of the ruddy rose but also of the snow-white lily—and gathering ambrosia from all the beauties of the garden, they thus concoct a luscious sweetness altogether unsurpassable. Even thus my Lord is all excellences compounded and commingled in Divine harmony—a rare confection of all perfections to make one perfection—the meeting of all sweetnesses to make one perfect sweet!

They said of Henry the Eighth that if all the features of a tyrant had been lost, they might have been painted afresh from his life. And surely we may say of Christ that if all the sweetness and light of manhood had been forgotten. If all the love of mothers, the constancy of martyrs, the honesty of confessors and the self-sacrifice of heroes had departed, you would find it all treasured up in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ! Each bee, as he performs his many journeys, selects what he thinks best and brings it to the common store. And I doubt not they have each a dainty tooth so that each one chooses the best he finds. Oh, you preachers of the Gospel, you may each seek out the richest thoughts and words you can, to proclaim my Lord!

Oh, you who are the mighty orators of the Church, you may utter the choicest language of poetry or prose, and so you may bring all sweets together, but you shall never match the altogether peerless sweetness which dwells in the Person and work of Jesus the Well-Beloved! Honey is a healthy sweet, though many sweets are not so. Children have been made sick and even poisoned by berries whose sickly sweetness has decoyed them to their hurt. But as for our Lord, the more you feed on Him the more you may! Christ is health to the soul, yes, strength and life! Eat, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved. Have you found honey? Eat not too much, but have you found Jesus? Eat to the full, and eat on still, if so you can, for you shall never have too much of Him!

II. Secondly—THERE ARE THOSE WHO LOATHE THE SWEETNESS OF OUR LORD. This shows itself variously. Some loathe Him so as to trample on Him, and this I find to be the translation given in the margin, “The full soul tramples on a honeycomb.” God have mercy upon these boastful ones who persecute His saints, revile His name and despise His Gospel! If there are any such here, may Sovereign Mercy change their hearts, or a fearful judgement awaits them! Others show that they loathe Christ because they are always murmuring at Him. If they do not find fault with the Gospel, itself, they rail at its ministers. Nobody can please them.

John comes neither eating nor drinking, and they say he has a devil. The Master comes eating and drinking and they say—behold a Man gluttonous and a wine bibber! One man preaches very solemnly and they call him heavy; another mingles humor with his discourse and they accuse him of frivolity. One minister uses a lofty rhetoric, he is too flowery. Another speaks in simpler style, he is vulgar. This generation, like the generations which have gone before, cannot be satisfied—but it is *Jesus* they are discontented with. O you carping critics of the Gospel, you find fault with the dish, but it is a mere excuse—you do not like the meat! If you hungered after the meat you would not object to the platter on which it is served! But because you love it not you complain of the dish and the carver.

Often this loathing is shown by an utter indifference to the Gospel. The great mass of our fellow citizens will not attend a place of worship at all, or if they do attend it is but seldom. And when they come, they leave their hearts behind them, so that the Word goes in one ear and out the other. The suffering Savior is nothing to them. Heaven and Hell are nothing to them. Whether they shall be lost or saved is nothing to them! Thus they show their loathing. Perhaps some here, present, loathe our Lord at bottom and yet think not so. They attend to His Word, but what is the attention? They care for Jesus, but they care so little that it leads to no practical *result*.

Some of you, after 10 years of hearing the Gospel, are still unconverted! And after 20 years of the enjoyment of Gospel privileges you still have never tasted the honey of the Word of God. If you thought it sweet, you would have tasted of it before now—you loathe it or else you would not let it stand right under your nose untasted for years. You must be full, or you would not allow this honeycomb to lie untouched so long. You have meant to eat of it, you say. Yes, but I never knew a hungry man to sit without eating for six hours at a table! No, he begins eating as soon as Grace has been said, and in your case the Grace has been said a great many times—and yet you sit with the sweets of mercy before you and refuse to eat.

I cannot account for it on any other theory but that there is a secret loathing in your soul. This loathing is manifest by many signs. There is the Bible, a book of infinite sweetness, God’s letter of love to the sons of men! Is it not dreadfully dry reading? A three-volume novel suits a great many far better. That is loathing the honeycomb! There is the Gospel ministry. Sermons are dull affairs, are they not? Now, I will admit that some sermons *are* dreary and empty as a desert, but when Christ is honestly and earnestly preached, how is it you are so weary? Others are fed, why do you complain? The meat is right enough, but you have no appetite for it—for the reason given in the text.

When a man loathes Christ he finds prayer to be bondage and if he carries it on at all, it is a very dull exercise, yielding no enjoyment. As to meditation, that is a thing neglected altogether by the godless many! Sunday, with some persons, is a very weary day—they are glad when it is over. I heard one say the other day he thought Sunday ought to be spent in recreation. Upon which a friend replied that he wished he might find true re-creation, for he needed to be created anew in Christ Jesus—and then he would judge the Sabbath to be the best day of the week!

Alas, these dull Sabbaths and these dreary preachers! And this dull praying and singing. And all this weariness— they are sure signs that you are full souls—and therefore loathe the honeycomb. This loathing comes of a soul’s being full—and souls may be full in a great many ways. Some are full because they have never discovered their natural depravity and nothingness. They have never realized that they are condemned by the Law of God. These full souls who are what they always were—good people from their birth—do not need a Savior and, therefore, they despise Him. Why should the whole value a physician? Is He not intended for the sick?

Alas for you full ones, for your time of hunger will come when there will be no more feasts of love, and then, as Dives could not obtain a drop of water, you, also, will be denied a crumb of consolation! Some people are full with enjoying the world. They have wealth and they are perfectly content with it. Or they have no wealth, but still they are pleased with the groveling pursuits of their class. Their thoughts never rise. They are like the rooster on the dunghill that scratched up a diamond and said, “I would sooner have found a grain of barley.” They are satisfied if they have enough to eat and drink and wear—but they do not think of Divine things. They are full of the world and therefore loathe the honeycomb.

Some are full of confidence in outward religiousness. They were christened when they were babes and they were confirmed—and if that doesn’t save people, what will? A bishop’s hands laid on you! Think of that!! Since then they have taken the sacrament and they have always been told that if you go regularly to your place of worship, and especially if you pay 20 shillings in the pound you will do very well—at least if *you* do not—what will become of your neighbors? These full souls do not appreciate Free Grace and dying Love—salvation by the blood of Christ seems to them to be but idle babble.

Some are full of self-conceit—they know everything—they are great readers and profound philosophers. Their thoughts have dived to the bottom of infinity! They are so nice in their criticisms that they—   
*“Can a hair divide   
Between the west and north-west side!”*

It is not possible to satisfy them. The knowledge of Christ Crucified is foolishness and a stumbling block to them. Others are full of the pride of rank. Yes, they are very glad to hear that the poor people hear the Gospel—and they have no doubt that the plain preaching of the Gospel is very useful to the lower orders—but respectable people who live in the West End and ride in carriages do not require such preaching. They are too respectable to need saving and so their full souls loathe the honeycomb.

But we need not go on any longer talking about *them*, for we shall do them no good as long as they are full. If the angel Gabriel were to preach Christ to them it would be as a sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal. Serve up the meat as well as you may, but never will it be appreciated till the guest has an appetite! May the Lord send them an appetite by the work of His Holy Spirit!

III. And so I close with the third point, which is this—THERE ARE SOME WHO DO APPRECIATE THE SWEETNESS OF CHRIST. I would to God I could find such out this morning. Hungry Souls, we are Brethren if you are hungry after pardon, mercy and Grace. I remember when I was in your condition. What would you give to have Christ? “I would give my eyes,” says one. Give Him your eyes, then, by looking to Him, and you shall have Him! “What I would give,” says one, “to be delivered from my besetting sin! I hunger after holiness.” Soul, you may have deliverance from besetting sins and have it for nothing!

Jesus Christ has come into the world to save His people from their sins! Looking to Him, He will deliver you from that disease which now makes you love sin! And He will give you a taste for holiness and a principle of holiness by the Holy Spirit and you shall, from now on, become a saint unto God! He turns lions into lambs and ravens into doves! Nothing is impossible with Him! You have but to trust your soul with Him and you shall have pardon, peace, holiness, Heaven, God, everything! Those who hunger are those, then, who know the sweetness of Christ. But they must do more than that—being hungry, *they must feed—*though the text does not say so, it is very clear that merely being hungry does not make meat sweet. It is only sweet when you *eat* it.

If meat were placed where we could not reach it, and we were hungry, we should be inclined to think it bitter, after the model of the fox and the grapes in the fable. If there were a Savior, but we could not reach Him, it would make our life still more miserable. Poor Soul, if you need Christ, receive Him! It is all you have to do! The bread is before you, eat it! The fitness which is needed for eating is an *appetite*—you have it—lay to, then, by holy faith. Receive Christ into yourself and He will be sweet, indeed, to you! The text says that the hungry man’s appetite makes even bitter things sweet. Is there anything bitter in Christ?

Yes, there was much in Him that was bitter to Himself, and that is the very sweetest part to us. Those pangs and griefs of His, and unutterable woes, and bloody death, how bitter! The wormwood and the gall were His. But to our believing soul these bitter things are honeycombs! Christ is best loved when we view Him as *crucified* for us. There are other bitters with Christ. We must repent of sin and to carnal minds it is a bitter thing to hate sin and leave it. But to those who hunger after Christ, repentance is one of the daintiest of Divine Graces. Christ requires of His people self-denial and self-sacrifice—unrenewed nature nauseates at the suggestion of these things—but souls eager after Jesus are glad to deny themselves, glad to give of their substance, glad, even, to suffer hardships for His dear sake—even bitter things for Him are sweet.

There are doctrines, also, which are very distasteful to carnal minds. They cannot agree with them—they are angry when they are preached—even as those who left our Lord when He said, “Except you eat My flesh and drink My blood, there is no life in you.” Those who hunger after Christ prize the Doctrines of Grace—only let them know what Jesus teaches and every syllable is, at once, acceptable to their minds. It may be there are ordinances which you shrink from. You have felt Baptism especially to be a cross, but when your soul fully knows the sweetness of Christ, and your mind perceives that it is His ordinance, you feel at once that the bitter thing is sweet to you for His dear sake.

Possibly you may have to suffer some measure of persecution and be despised and nicknamed for Jesus’ sake. Thank God they cannot imprison you and put you to death, but even if they could, if you have an appetite for Christ, you will eat the bitter herbs as well as the Paschal Lamb—and think that they go well together! Christ and His Cross—you will give your love to both and shoulder the Cross right bravely and find it a sweet thing to be despised for the love of Jesus Christ your Lord. Have but an appetite for Christ and the little Prayer Meeting, though there are few poor people at it, will be sweet to you. That poor broken-down preaching, which is the best that the minister is able to give, will become sweet to you because there is a savor of Christ in it.

If you can only get a leaf torn out of the Bible, or half a leaf, it will be precious to you! Even to hear a child sing a hymn about Christ will be pleasant. You remember Dr. Guthrie, when dying, asking his friend to sing him “a bairn’s hymn”? He needed a child’s hymn, then. A simple little ditty about Christ was what the grand old man desired in his departing moments. And when your soul hungers after Jesus Christ, you will love simple things if they speak of Him. You will not be so dainty as some of you are. They must have a comfortable cushion to sit upon. When *you* are hungry you are glad to stand in the aisles.

Full souls need have a very superior preacher. They say of the most successful evangelist, there is nothing in him, he only tells a lot of anecdotes. But when you are hungry you will rejoice that the man preaches Christ and his faults will vanish. I remember my father telling me, when I was a boy, and did not like my breakfast, that he thought it would do me good to be sent to the Union House for a month and see if I did not get an appetite, then. Many Christians need to be sent under the Law a little while—Moses would cure them of squeamishness so that when they came back to Jesus and His Love they would have a zest for the Gospel!

The lesson from all this is— *pray for a good appetite for Christ—*and when you have it, *keep it*. Do not spoil it with the unsatisfying dainties of the world, or by sucking down modern notions and skeptical philosophies—those gingerbreads and unhealthy sweetmeats so much cried up nowadays. Do not waste a good appetite upon anything less sweet than the true honeycomb. When you have got that appetite for Christ, *indulge it*. Do not be afraid, at any time, of having too much of Christ! Some of our Brethren seem alarmed lest they should grow perfect against their wills! Dear Brothers and Sisters, go into that river as far as you please—there is no likelihood of your being drowned. You will never have too much Grace, or peace, or faith, or consecration! Go in for the whole thing! Indulge your appetite to the very full. We cannot say it to our children with honey before them, but we may say it to God’s children with Christ before them— “Eat, yes, eat abundantly.”

*Pray the Lord to give other people appetites* . It is a grand thing to hear of ten and twenty thousand rushing to hear the Gospel! I hope it is because they are hungering for it. When the Lord gives the people the appetite, I am certain He will find them the meat, for it is always true, in God’s family, that whenever He sends a mouth, He always sends meat for it, and if any one of you has a mouth for Christ this morning, come to Him and be filled to the full! While you pray to God to give others an appetite, *try and create it*. How can you create it? Many an appetite has been created in the streets among poor starving wretches by their passing the place where provision is prepared—the very smell of it has made their mouths water.

Tell sinners how happy you are! Tell sinners what Christ has done for you! Tell them how He has pardoned you, how He has renewed your nature. Tell them about your glorious hope, tell them how saints can live and die triumphant in Christ and you will set their mouths a-watering! That is half the battle—when once they have an appetite they are sure to have the meat. May the Lord the Holy Spirit send that appetite to sinners throughout the whole of London! And to Jesus Christ, who satisfies all comers, shall be glory forever. Amen.

*PORTION OF SCRIPTUREREAD BEFORE SERMON—[1 Peter 1](tw://bible.*?id=60.1.0|_AUTODETECT_|).* HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—907, 436, 559. Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.

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THE WANDERING BIRD  
NO. 3453

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 1915.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a  
man that wanders from his place.”  
Proverbs 27:8.**

SOLOMON spoke from observation. He had seen certain persons of a vagrant kind and he perceived that they seldom or never prospered. Moreover, he spoke from Inspiration, as well as from observation, hence the wisdom of the philosopher is, in this case, supported by the austerity of the preacher. We may, therefore, take this Proverb, first, as the dictate of human wisdom gathered by long experience—and then, next, as the testimony of Divine Wisdom, commended to us by Infallible Revelation. The principle it inculcates is alike applicable to the common affairs of life and to the higher pursuits which belong to our spiritual interests.

I. THIS IS THE DICTATE OF WISDOM.  
In the common affairs of life we believe Solomon to be correct in his statement that, “As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place.” The unrest of that man’s mind and the instability of his conduct who is constantly making a change of his position and purpose, foretells no success for any of his adventures. Unless he makes the change very wisely and has abundant reason for it, he will make a change for the worse, as the bird does that leaves her nest. Some make a change of their country and fly from their native shores. This is not an ill thing for men to do, for thereby nations have been formed and deserts have been peopled. When a man finds it impossible to provide bread for an increasing family in this country, one of the wisest things that he can do is to cross the sea and seek profitable employment in another land. But there are some spirits of such a roving caste that they seem never to be satisfied at home. They feel persuaded that if they were under other skies, they would succeed, whereas, as a matter of general fact, a man who cannot prosper in England will not prosper anywhere—and many of those who have gone abroad would be but too glad to get home again! Without taking great counsel from God and weighing the matter, long, it is not good for a man to leave the Christian privileges of this country, let alone other considerations. It is ill, I say, to turn aside from the place where sanctuaries are so numerous and where the Gospel is so clearly proclaimed, to go abroad where there may be some pecuniary advantages, but where there must be much spiritual loss. Let the man take anxious thought before he goes, or else, perhaps, when he finds himself in Australia, he will long to be in New Zealand! And when he does not prosper there he will pant for the United States, and, not getting on there, he will, perhaps, be wanting to came back to Old England—and so he will spend the best of his days in vacillating as to where he shall spend them!  
The same is also true with respect to a change of occupation. Some persons are one thing, today, but you do not know what they will be tomorrow. Evidently they were not cut out for this and, therefore, they think they must have been ordained for that, and as they have not thrived in one line of business, they feel certain that they must have made a little mistake—and that if they could get into another line, they would prosper. Well, when a man is in error about his calling, if it really is not his calling, let him leave it—but let him first be sure that it is not his calling, for otherwise he will sin against the express words of Inspiration. The Apostle Paul says, “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called”—that is to say, the occupation or profession in life you were engaged in when you were converted need not be rashly abandoned! Therein you may enjoy communion with God. But if you go running before the cloud and, with presumptuous self-will, get out of the path that Providence has assigned you, you will be sure to smart for it. It is ours to follow, never to lead. Where we clearly see our way, there let us go—and unless we have that way clearly manifested to us, let us abide still in our nest.  
This also applies to those who want to be always changing their situation and their acquaintance—employers never satisfied with their employees, and employees always discontented with their employers. We know many who say, “There are so many temptations in the place where I am—I will try another.” Well, I do not know, dear Friends, that you are right. The temptations that trouble me I would rather endure than encounter any fresh ones. I may know something about my weakness in the present trial, but I cannot know how I might stagger under another! I would recommend you to be rather leery of changing your trials. To exchange one trial for another is all the relief you will get in this world. All is vanity under the sun! The whole Creation groans together. Amidst sorrow and sighing thus universal, our lot is cast. From the sick man’s bitter experience, as Dr. Watts describes it, we cannot escape— *“We toss from side to side in pain,  
But ‘tis a poor relief we gain  
To shift the place, but not the pain.”*  
You may change your position over and over again, but you will always be exposed to the temptation. Until you get beyond yonder azure sky, you will never be out of gunshot of the devil. Evil spirits molest every rank in life. The poor man is sorely beset with grievous hardships, and the rich man is encompassed with seductive snares. He who toils with his hands may have some cause to complain, but he who toils with his brain will become the victim of a sorer complaint. Should you fly to the utmost verge of the green earth, temptation would still pursue you! Everywhere, while you are in the body, you must keep guard, for temptations and trials are the common portion of all who dwell on this earth! Be not in a hurry, therefore, to fly from one scene of temptation to another. If God ordains that your lot should be altered, be it so. It is yours to accept His allotment either with resignation or with gratitude. But be not hasty or heedless in running from one place to another, lest in yielding to the impulse of a moment, you forfeit the comfort of a lifetime.  
It may be that these remarks are peculiarly applicable to some people here present. I cannot tell. When talking about such homely things, our words have sometimes proved to be like an oracle for the guidance of those who have come up to God’s House to enquire in His Temple. At any rate, dear Friends, when the mind is unhinged, or the feelings chafed, it is not easy to exercise a wise discretion. Wait upon God for guidance as to any change in life you may determine, and if the two things are equal—to remain where you are, or to move elsewhere—choose to stay where you are, for the chances are, speaking according to man’s judgment, in its favor. Reason seems to say that as it is unwise for the bird to wander from her nest, so it is not desirable for you to wander from your place.  
Still keeping to the common use of these words, let us now turn them to another account. This is most certainly true in changing one’s religious service in the cause of God. We have a niche, perhaps, in which God has placed us, and we have had some little honor in filling it, but, by-and-by, another sphere of labor opens up before us and, like children easily charmed with novelty, we think we could be more useful in doing something else and leaving our old work. Let us be very careful in this matter, for, “as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place.” I admired one thing greatly in our deceased friend, Mr. Worcester, who for so long a time kept the gate outside. When I once asked him whether he could not be serviceable to the church as an Elder, he said that if he were elected to it he would decline the office, “Because,” he said, “I can do my work as a gatekeeper, but I do not know what I could do as an Elder.” So he resolved to stick to the work in which he was acknowledged to do good service. I would have each Christian do the same!  
Some Brothers we know have such an itching to get into the pulpit that they are impatient of any other office than the preacher’s. But there are many in the pulpit, now-a-days, who had been better for all concerned if kept out of it. They were excellent people at Prayer Meetings. They were very serviceable, indeed, to give a little address, now and then, at a cottage meeting. They would have been useful deacons, exemplary visitors of the sick and, perhaps, good city missionaries. But they thought within themselves that the pulpit ought to be blessed by their distinguished abilities, and so they crept up the pulpit stairs as little to their own comfort as to the church’s edification! And now, had they but the wisdom and the humility to come down, again, never more to mount them, it would be well! If you are really called to the ministry, then, in God’s name, do not stand back from it! And if a new sphere of labor opens to you, accept it, resting on your God who can make His strength perfect in your weakness. But be not forever panting after the highest seats in the synagogue—do not always want the uppermost place at the feast, lest, when the King comes in, you should have, with shame, to take a lower place! Wait till the King says, “Friend, come up higher.” Never go up higher till you have the King’s friendly admonition that the higher place is yours by a call other than your own choice, remembering that “as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place”—from his place, from his proper place in the Church of God, his proper position in the ranks of the Lord’s hosts!  
Again, I will use it as a proverb very often applicable to ministers. There may be some here to whom this may come as a powerful rebuke. It is a crying evil just now, especially in our own denomination, that ministers are changing their places. The good old ministers used to occupy one charge for 50 years—and the people used to love them and to hold fast to them. They did not think of moving, they never spoke of resigning any more than fathers speak of resigning their fatherhood because their boys and girls are sometimes disobedient! They weathered the storm. They knew that all parts of the sea are rough, so they did not need to get out of one bay into another as soon as a little storm came on. I do not know but that some preachers are better moving—and probably they would be better if they were moved off altogether. I think when a man remains in service at one place for only about two years, he has need to question whether he was called into the ministry at all. God does not generally plant trees in His vineyard that need shifting every two years. God’s trees are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He has planted. They can stand on the bare mountain’s brow and see the ages of mortals swept away into the tomb. And so a God-sent minister may stand many years in one place and see man-made ministers swept away like generations of lichens and mosses, because they have no Divine Life in them.  
I love to see a Christian minister, I must say, standing fast in his place. We are not to get into a great pet because there was a little disagreement at a church meeting, or turn round offended because some deacon will not be quite as pliable as we wish, or because the neighborhood does not seem to increase, or because there are not quite so many conversions as we want. No, Sirs, if God shall move us, let us move—but if He does not move us, let not the devil do it! Do you know what happens when the bird wanders from her nest? Why, there are her own eggs in the nest, and there is no bird which can sit so well on the eggs as the bird that laid them! And so a Christian minister should remember that there are some young converts who are his own spiritual children. They are of his own bringing in, through Divine Graces and, ordinarily speaking, there is no man who can by any means nurture the young converts like the man who was the means of their conversion! It is well for infants to be brought up by their own mother, and it is a good thing for young converts to be fed under their own spiritual parents. I should not like to trust mine to anybody else for any great length of time. There is always a fear, when the parent bird is away, that the eggs will grow cold and addled, so that when she comes back she will find that she has lost all her trouble. And so, when the minister leaves his people and goes away to some other place, there are many of those who did seem to run well who will turn back. This is a sad result—a tale of wasted labor. Besides, the bird knows that, however uncomfortable its nest may be, there is no other nest in the world so comfortable as the one which it has made itself. And the Christian minister must know that there is no other church so comfortable for him as the church which he was the means of forming! “I dwell among my own people,” said the Shunamite. That is my happiness, and my joy, to dwell among my own people, and if any man should say to me, “Is there anything in life that you desire? Would you like me to put a good word in for you to the king, or to the captain of the hosts?” I would answer, No, there is nothing I desire under Heaven but to dwell among my own people! If I may but seek their good, and see the Church of God prosper here, it shall be all that I ask of my God this side of Heaven! Brothers, let us who are in the ministry, then, as far as possible, cling to our churches and to our fields of labor, remembering that “as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place.”  
This is equally true of our hearers. Oh, there are some hearers who are sad, sad vagrants. We can have no objection to our hearers going to listen to other ministers, if they can be edified thereby, for the bird that sits best on the nest must come off, sometimes, especially if there is any food to be had elsewhere. Hear anybody that can profit you! I am sure nothing will make me more glad than to know that you are anywhere as long as your souls are fed. If a Church of England minister preaches the Gospel in your neighborhood better than the Baptist minister does, do not go and hear the Baptist! And if you find either Baptist or Independent treating you to free will instead of Free Grace, do not listen to them, but seek out the Presbyterian and hear him, if you find him more sound in the faith, for, after all, your souls must be fed! That is a matter of necessity. Where you can have all the points of the Truth of God, prefer it, prefer it infinitely! But if you cannot have them all, give your chief care to those which possess the greater importance. Seek first, in this case, those things which make most for your soul’s prosperity. But what I do not like is this—certain people will join a church and then after about six months will join another church, and then another, and then another! They ought to have no moss on them, and I suppose they have none, for they have certainly been rolling stones! And then, if the minister should die, how many there are who are off, directly, for now that the church is in a little difficulty, they will all get out of it. Brave sailors these! They want to get into the boat when the ship is in a little bit of gale, and they leave the Church of God just when their help is most needed. Oh, they will come and join the church when the church prospers—yes, any quantity of them—but I wonder, if the pastor went away, whether we would find them all remaining faithful? Too many in our London churches are a sort of flying camp, always flying from one place to another—a set of GypsyChristians, who have no settled abode and no “local habitation,” and are about as respectable as the Gypsies with whom I have compared them! Now, never let this be said of any of you who love your Lord and who, consequently, love His Church, but, when you are united with His people, say—  
*“Here would I make my settled rest,  
While others go and come.  
No more a stranger, or a guest,  
But like a child at home.”*  
You shall find that, after all, your wandering shall do you but little good, while in permanent adhesion to the Church, and a diligent casting in of your whole efforts into the cause of God, shall, through the Holy Spirit, give your soul prosperity!  
But now I shall take my text in another way and try to use the general principle in another sense.  
II. SOME MEN WANDER FROM THEIR PLACE IN SPIRITUAL THINGS.  
Where is the “place” for a sinner? The place for a sinner is always at the foot of the Cross, looking unto Jesus! Alas, then, the tendency in us all is to be looking for evidences, signs, marks, experiences, Divine Graces and I know not what! Having begun in the Spirit, we

are so foolish and so bewitched that we try to get perfect in the flesh! We know that at the first our only comfort came from simply depending upon the finished work of Jesus, and yet we are so mad that we try to get comfort from that poor flesh of ours, which has already been our encumbrance and will be our plague till it dies! Now the moment that a Christian wanders away from his place—that is, from the simplicity of his faith in Jesus—the moment he departs from that standing upon the solid Rock of what Christ did, and what Christ is, and what Christ has promised—that moment he is like a bird that wanders from her nest! The bird away from her nest has no comfort. The instincts of Nature make her feel, during her incubation, that the nest is her proper place. And when the Christian gets away from the Cross, the newborn instincts within him make him feel that he is out of his proper position. The Cross is the true rest of a Christian! We are like Noah’s dove—there is no rest for the sole of our feet, except in the ark. We may search the world around and fly over the great waste of waters, but there never shall be found rest for us anywhere but at the Cross! I confess I sometimes get into that sorry state of feeling, rather as a Christian professor, or a minister, than as a sinner saved by Grace— but I find that I have to come back to that same place, and to sing the old ditty over again—  
*“Nothing in My hands I bring!  
Simply to Your Cross I cling.  
Naked, come to You for dress,  
Helpless, look to You for Grace.”*  
There is no living comfortably, there is no living with the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit in the heart if we at once wander from the simplicity of our confidence in Christ!  
Further, there are many Believers who also wander out of their place. What, now, is a Believer’s place? A Believer’s place is on the bosom of his Lord, or at the right hand of his Master, or sitting at His feet, with Mary. Now some of us have had times in which we did come very near to the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, some of you never woke in the morning without thinking of Him, and all day long a sense of His Presence was in your heart. How you grudged the world the hours you had to give to business! And when you locked up your heart at night, you always gave Jesus Christ the key. Oh, how sweet ordinances were to you, then, because you could see Christ through them, as through windows of agates and gates of carbuncles! How delightful were Prayer Meetings and similar gatherings, because you saw Jesus there, and talked with Him! But what about your present state? Perhaps, my dear Friend, you have wandered from your place. You are not living near to Christ as you used to do. Hence ordinances have but very little comfort in them—they are dull and tedious. And services which were once as marrow and fatness to you, have now become as dry bones. Your closet, too, is much neglected. Your Bible is not studied as it was. You have lost your first love and, I appeal to you, have you not also lost your first comfort? Are you not like a bird that has wandered from her nest? Believe me, there is no solid joy, no seraphic rapture, no hallowed peace this side of Heaven, except by living close under the shadow of the Cross, and nestling in the wounds of Jesus! Oh, that we should be so foolish! The bird does not forget her nest, but we forget our Lord! We have need to say with the Psalmist, “Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you!” We have need to cry tonight—  
*“Return, oh heavenly Dove, return!  
Sweet messenger of rest,  
I hate the sins that made You mourn  
And drove You from my breast.”*  
We have wandered from our place, you see, for our place is at Jesus’ feet with Mary, or on Jesus’ bosom with John, or at Jesus’ lips with the spouse in the Canticles, saying, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.” But roaming here and there, we are like a bird that has wandered from her nest.  
And does not this wandering imply a lack of watchfulness? Do I not observe the Christian who was so jealous of himself once that he did not try to put one foot before the other for fear he should take a step awry? He would not even talk without saying, “O Lord, open You my lips!” But now he thinks that he is sure to stand—and he forgets to guard himself with jealousy. He thinks, perhaps, that his experience has made him so wise that he will not fall into his former errors, and so he gets a carnal confidence and forgets to stand upon his watchtower day and night and watch against his foes. Do you know what sometimes happens to the bird if it leaves its nest? Why, while the bird is away, the cuckoo comes and drops its egg in, and so the poor bird, when it comes back, has to hatch its enemy! And oftentimes, when we are not watchful and permit the enemy to take an advantage over us, Satan comes in and drops some foul temptation into our nest, which our hearts help to hatch and which will give us trouble all our lives! As sure as ever we wander in the matter of watchfulness, it will be for our hurt. We may sleep, but Satan does not. Never was he detected napping yet. There is slothfulness among Believers, but there is no slothfulness on the part of their adversary! He always watches, going “about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Though you should leave off watchfulness, he never will. Oh, Christian, do not leave your nest, for you do not know what may come of it, what good things may be destroyed, or what bad things may be deposited while your heart is away!  
Some Christians, too, wander in a yet more melancholy manner as to its outward effect, for we see them wander from holiness. Unhappy church that has in it many such inconsistent professors! But, alas, they are too common in the world. They “did for a time run well; what, then, did hinder them that they should not obey the truth?” The root of the matter was scarcely in them, for they brought forth fruit only for a season and, by-and-by, they withered away. Ah, well, if there is a Christian here—a real Christian—who has backslidden and gone into the world, he will never be happy in his sin! A reprobate, after making a profession, may, perhaps, go back and be comfortable, but a Christian never can! Tell me that you are happy in your sin and I tell you at once that you are dead in sin, for he who puts on guilt must cast off shame. You are in your own element—like a fish in the water, you will find it suits your constitution. As a bird could not be happy down in the depths of the sea—it would drown unless it were soon delivered—so the saint of God is wretched in the depths of iniquity—he must speedily perish unless he is brought out. If he falls into sin through infirmity, or is dragged into it through the force of sudden temptation, he yearns to be delivered and groans and cries unto God till, once more, the bones that were broken are made to rejoice! If you wander from holiness, you wander from your place.  
I have known some people who, in order to avoid trouble, have committed a trespass. A Christian man, for instance, has kept his shop open on Sunday to prevent bankruptcy, and a mass of troubles rolled in upon him ten times heavier than those he had sought to avert! We have heard of some who have done violence to their conscience just once. In sheer despondency they shut their eyes and swallowed the bitter pill. It did not take five minutes to do it. Their friends said it was wise. Ill advisers told them it was necessary. They thus attempted to extricate themselves from some trying position. But the consequence was that to their dying day the worm of conscience gnawed their soul! They have made the rod wherewith God has scourged them. Mind what you are doing, then, lest in wandering from holiness, you prove yourself like a bird that wanders from her nest! Oh, how blessed it will be if you and I shall be kept by mighty Grace simply relying upon Christ, constantly communing with Him, watchful against the inroads of temptation and persevering in holiness even to the end! Without this there can be no comfort for us.  
III. THE PERSUASIONS TO MAKE ALL OF US WHO ARE TRUE CHRISTIANS CLING CLOSE TO HIS NEST.  
Consider, dear Friends, the joy which you and I have had when we have been clinging close to Christ. Where else can such sweetness be found as we have found in the love of Jesus? Will a man leave the cool, flowing waters from Lebanon to go and drink of the muddy river of another place? Shall a man turn away from the bubbling fountain to seek out for himself a broken cistern? Oh, let it not be! We who have fed on angels’ food cannot be content with the husks that swine eat! Let us say, with Rutherford, “Ever since I have eaten the wheaten bread of Heaven, my mouth has been out of taste for the brown bread of Earth, which is full of grit and gravel. I can no longer find sweetness in this world’s joys, for I have tasted of celestial joys that are beyond all that earth can give.” Let the joy we have had in Christ compel us to cling to Him!  
Think again of the sorrow we have felt whenever we have wandered. You and I have had backsliding times—let us mournfully confess it. And what wretched times they have always been! What have we ever gained by going away from our Lord, but broken bones and sorrow of heart? As we have been burned, let us dread the fire and, as we have had to smart for our wanderings when the watchmen have plucked off our veil and smitten us, let us henceforth cling close to our Beloved. What reason has He ever given us to be discontented and go away? Has He been unfaithful to us? “Have I been a wilderness unto you?” He asks. In what respect has He grieved us? Has He ever smitten us in His wrath, or treated us harshly for our follies? Never has a friend behaved better to His friend than Christ has behaved to us and, as we can never find a better Savior, let us cling to Him all our days! Or can you think that the outlook is dreary? When we think of the joy that is yet to come, we have a yet stronger motive to cling to the Savior. We may have to walk with Him today when the snow blows in our face, but oh, what will it be to walk with Him in the sunshine? It may be hard work to keep pace with Him. Faint may be our heart and flesh and blood are frail, walking, as we now do, with Him through the mire and dirt, but what will it be to walk in silver slippers upon the golden pavement of the Celestial City? It is not so easy to stand with Him in the pillory, when the multitudes are hooting Him, but oh, how joyous it will be with Him when the angels are rending the heavens with acclamations and all the saints are casting their crowns at His feet! To be with Him in His trouble is not very sweet to our natural feelings, I know, but what will it be to be with Him in His triumph? To be partners in His Cross—from that we may shrink, but to sit with Him upon His Throne—for that we must eagerly long! Well, as we cannot be crown-bearers without being cross-bearers, let us espouse His Cross as we would enjoy His crown. Yet be it known that His Cross drops with myrrh, and that they who carry it will find it so sweetly perfumed that they shall love the very Cross, itself, because Christ has touched it! From this nest let us never wander because of the “rest” which “remains for the people of God.”  
Wander from this nest?—I think we cannot if the love of Christ inflames us—if our love to Christ sustains us. What? Wander from Him who died for us, that we might never die? Who lives for us, that we might always live? What base ingratitude is ours that we do not cling closer to Him! Can we give Him up? Christians, He gave you the light that cheered your darkness—and can you turn away from the brightness of His face? With pitying eyes He saw you when you were lying in your blood, an outcast all forlorn, and He said unto you, “Live,” and can you ever forsake Him? He passed by you, He looked upon you, He spread His skirt over you, He covered your nakedness, He swore unto you, He entered into a Covenant with you and can you now prove treacherous? He redeemed you, He opened His veins that He might pour forth the purple drops of His precious blood as the price for your inestimable ransom—can you turn away from Him? “Despised and rejected of men,” as He was, will you hide your face from Him? And while He is still pleading for you, will you cease to plead for Him? Now that His chariots are making haste to bring Him in the glory of His Second Advent, will you turn away from Him when His Kingdom is so near? Shall the wife leave a husband who cherishes her with utmost tenderness? Shall the child neglect its parents, under whose roof his every need is supplied? Shall the limbs of one’s body abhor the head? Such strange quirks were not half so unnatural as for a Christian to turn vagrant and forsake his Savior! Ah me, unnatural and brutish as it must seem, you and I would do this and more, also, did not Grace prevent! The love which has made us one with Christ must keep us one with Him, or else we shall never hold on our way. Be it, then, your constant prayer, “Hold You me up, and I shall be safe.” Let this be your heart’s cry, “Abide with me,” for unless He abide with us, and make our hearts His nest, we shall never abide with Him, but shall be as a bird that wanders from her nest!  
Perhaps I speak to some poor bird which has wandered from its nest. You are a stranger and you have strayed in here! You recollect a nest in some happy family circle, where prayer was known to be made. You remember the nest in which you were known to nestle—a little village church where you worshipped God with dear kindred. But you have wandered from your nest. You have lost your friends! You have gone into the world—you are a sinner. You are conscious that you scarcely dare to face the home of your childhood. You have gone away from your old haunts, for you are ashamed to continue in them. You have wandered from your nest. And do you mean to wander on? Is yours to be forever the flight of a bird that has no roost? “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests”—will you never have a place to lay your head? Are you condemned, like the unclean spirit, to wander through dry places, seeking rest and finding none? Are you a pilgrim who shall never have a city that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God? Are you like the phantom ship of which the mariners talk, which flits across the sea but never reaches a port? No, Friend, you are not so to account yourself, though the devil has told you that there is no hope! Though he has driven you to desperation and persuaded you that you are given up of God and man—it is not so. It is not so! The Eternal Father, bending from high Heaven, looks down upon you and by these lips talks to you! Little as you were thinking that you would be found out, He says to you, “Return, return, return!” ‘Tis He who makes you say, “I will arise and go unto my Father.” He meets you, Prodigal! He falls about your neck. He gives you the kiss of reconciliation. He cries today to the messengers of mercy, “Take off his rags and bring forth the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and let us eat, drink and be merry, for he that was dead is alive, and he that was lost is found.” The bird has come back and has found her nest! And as the mother bird is happy when that little fledgling which she thought had fallen on the ground, or had been swallowed by the hawk, comes back, and she covers it with her feathers, and bids it nestle under her warm bosom, so is the Eternal Father happy! And as she rejoices, so, no—infinitely more—does the Eternal Father rejoice when the wanderer comes back to Him and finds comfort in His love!  
Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Trust in the Father’s Grace as manifest in the Savior’s wounds, and so you shall find an eternal nest from which you shall never wander till you shall build your nest in Heaven! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LUKE 23:13-28.**

Verses 13-15, And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, You have brought this Man unto me, as one that perverts the people: and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof you accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. They were judges not at all inclined to favor Him, but yet, though His accusers were mad again Him, nothing could be brought before these two judgment seats which would hold water for a single moment. Holy and harmless was Christ and, therefore, His accusers knew not what to say against Him.

16-23. I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast). And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas! (Who for certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison). Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spoke again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify Him! Crucify Him! And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil has He done? I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him, and let Him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. Never did man’s enmity to God become more clear than when God, in human flesh, descending upon an errand of mercy, must, nevertheless, be hunted down by these cruel cries of, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Man would be a Deicide if he could. “The fool has said in his heart, ‘No God.’” To get rid of God—to get rid of God, even in human form, is the enmity of man’s heart! He will have it if he can.

23-26. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will. And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the Cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. Fit type of all Christ’s followers, who must expect to carry Christ’s Cross, and who should be happy and honored in carrying it after Jesus.

27, 28. And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. He had the siege of Jerusalem before His mind and, therefore, in tender pity He bade them save their tears for other sorrows.

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2971 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Pro 28.14

THE RIGHT KIND OF FEAR  
NO. 2971

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 1906.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1876.

**“Happy is the man who fears always.”  
Proverbs 28:14.**

BUT did not John say that “fear has torment”? Then how can he be happy who has fear—and especially he who has it always? Did not John also say that “perfect love casts out fear”? How is it, then, that he is happy in whom love is not made perfect, if it true that the fear which John meant is left in it? Dear Friends, the explanation is that the word, “fear,” is used in different senses—and both Solomon and John are right! Neither is there any conflict between their two statements. There is a fear which perfect love casts out because it has torment. That is the slavish fear which trembles before God as a criminal trembles before the judge— the fear which mistrusts, suspects and has no confidence in God—the fear which, therefore, keeps us away from God, causes us to dread the thought of drawing near to Him and makes us say, like the fool to whom the Psalmist refers, “No God.” Many of you know what this kind of fear is, for you once suffered from it—though I trust you are now delivered from it by faith in Christ Jesus and by the love which the Spirit of God has worked in your hearts.

There is also another sort of fear which springs out of this slavish fear—and which is to be equally shunned, namely a fear which leads to the apprehension that something evil is about to happen. There are many persons who have so little faith in God that they fear that the trials which will sooner or later overtake them, will also overthrow them. They are afraid of a certain form of suffering that threatens them—they fear that they will not have patience enough to bear up under it. They feel sure that their spirit will sink in their sickness. Above all, they are dreadfully afraid to die. They have not yet believed that God will be with them when they pass through the Valley of Death and, because they cannot trust Him, they are all their lifetime subject to bondage! They cannot say that all things work together for good to them. And they often say, as poor old Jacob mistakenly said, “All these things are against me.” And so they go on, fearing this and fearing that, and fearing the other, and their life is spent, to a great extent, in sorrow and sighing. May the Lord graciously deliver any of you who are in that condition!

That is a kind of fear from which the true Believer is free. He knows that whatever happens, God will overrule it for the good of His chosen. “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.” Resignation to the Divine will has made him feel that whatever the Lord wills is right—he does not seek to have his own will, but he is glad to make God’s will his will—and so he is perfectly satisfied with all that comes. God save you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, from all fear of a slavish sort! Above all, no Christian ought to have any fear which would bring dishonor upon the truthfulness, the goodness, the Immutability, or the power of God. To doubt His promise—to suppose that He will not make it good—this is, indeed, a fear which has torment. To doubt God’s faithfulness—to suppose that He can ever forget His children, that His mercy can be withdrawn from them, or that He will be favorable to them no more—this also is wrong. To doubt the perseverance of the saints, when God’s Word has so plainly declared that He will keep their feet and will perfect the work which He has begun in them—indeed, to doubt anything that has the Inspired Scriptures to support it—and to tremble in any way when your trembling arises out of a suspicion that God may change, or cease to be faithful to His promises and faithful to His Son—all that kind of fearing is to be cast far from us!

But, dear Friends, there is another fear that ought to be cultivated— the reverential fear which the holy angels feel when they worship God and behold His Glory—that gracious fear which makes them veil their faces with their wings as they adore the Majesty on high! There is also the loving fear which every true, right-hearted child has towards its father—a fear of grieving so tender a parent—a proper feeling of dread which makes it watch its every footstep, lest, in the slightest degree, it should deviate from the path of absolute obedience. May God graciously grant to us much of this kind of fear!

Then there is a holy fear of ourselves which makes us shun the very thought of self-reliance—which weans us equally from self-righteousness and self-confidence—and which makes us feel that we shall surely fall unless the Lord shall continually hold us up and that we shall certainly die unless He shall sustain our spiritual life. This fear of our ourselves— the fear of sinning against God—is a fear which we ought always to cherish and, concerning which the text says, “Happy is the man who fears always.”

I have taken this topic for a special reason. You know that we have recently had a great deal of preaching of “Believe! Believe! Believe!” and I have very heartily joined in the evangelistic services which have been held. We have also had a great deal of singing about full assurance—and we have had a little chattering about perfection, or something wonderfully like it. As far as I can make it out and as I put all these things together, I cannot help being afraid that there will be a great growth of the mushrooms of presumption! With warm days and damp days, and with everything tending to make vegetation luxurious, we may expect to see an abundant crop of poisonous fungi growing up—noxious agarics, toadstools and I know not what besides! They will come up in a night, but they may not be destroyed in a night. And they will be a great nuisance and possibly worse than that. So I want to speak in such a way that we may all be led to do some sincere heart-searching and to commend to you the cherishing of an anxious fear lest, perhaps, all that glitters should not prove to be gold, and lest much of that which looks like wheat should, at the last, turn out to be tares.

I. My first observation shall be that THERE IS, AFTER ALL, VERY GRAVE CAUSE FOR FEAR. Otherwise, Solomon would not have been inspired to write, “Happy is the man who fears always.”

There is cause for fear, dear Brothers and Sisters who love the Lord, because corruption still remains in us. In the best man or woman here, there is still the old flesh that lusts against the Spirit—that flesh which is in constant enmity to the Spirit and will never be reconciled to it. If that flesh keeps quiet for a time, it is there all the while, just as a lion is still a lion even when he is lying hidden in his den. He only needs some dark hour to come and he will rush forth from his den. So is it with the flesh which still lurks within us. When a man imagines that all his corruptions are gone, that is no proof that he is rid of them, but only that he does not really know his true condition, for, if God were but to lift the veil that covers his eyes and let him see the great deeps of sin that are in his nature, he would soon discover that he has grave cause for fear—and he would be driven to cry out to God, “Oh, keep me, I beseech You, or else I shall commit spiritual suicide! I must and shall become like the vilest of apostates unless Your Sovereign Grace shall hold me on my way.”

There is also cause for fear, my Brothers and Sisters, if you look around at the world in which we live. This vile world has not changed its character—it is no more a friend to Divine Grace than it was in the days of the early Christians. It was a difficult thing to be a Christian in the days of Diocletian and the other persecuting Roman emperors, but I sometimes think that it is an even more difficult thing to be a Christian now! To be a soldier under Hannibal and to fight bravely when crossing the Alps must have been a difficult task, but it was far more trying for the soldiers when they reached sunny Italy and their holiday amusements destroyed the discipline of the army. The Christian camp, at the present time, seems to be pitched in a sunny plain where all the surrounding influences bend to relax the sinews of the warriors—and to take away their strength. It is hard to keep to the narrow way when the broad road runs so near to it that sometimes they seem to be one! The time was when the broad road was so distinct from the narrow one that we could easily discern who was travelling to Heaven and who was going to Hell. But now the devil has engineered the broad road so very close up to the side of the narrow way that there are many people who manage to walk on both of them—they were never so pleased as when they could first take a little turn on the narrow road and then, afterwards, take another turn on the broad one.

Let us never imitate Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, but let us walk only in the narrow way that leads unto life, whatever it may cost us to do so. You must be in a very singular position if you never have any temptations. Indeed, I should not be surprised to learn, if you live where you have no temptations, that you are undergoing a worse trial than temptation, itself, would be! In such a place as that you are very likely to get stagnant. The very pleasantness of the situation may put you off your guard and you will not live so near to God as you would have done if your surroundings had seemed to be more opposed to your growth in Grace. There is cause for fear, then, when all around us there is an enemy behind every bush, a temptation lurking in every joy and a devil hiding himself under every table—when, as old Francis Quarles used to say—

*“The close pursuer’s busy hands do plant  
Snares in your substance; snares attend your need; Snares in your credit, snares in your disgrace; Snares in your high estate, snares in your base. Snares tuck your bed and snares surround your board; Snares watch your thoughts and snares attach your word. Snares in your quiet, snares in your commotion— Snares in your diet, snares in your devotion! Snares lurk in your resolves, snares in your doubt Snares lie within your heart and snares without. Snares are above your head, and snares beneath Snares in your sickness, snares are in your death.”*

Besides that, dear Friends—in addition to having a store of dry tinder within our heart and showers of sparks falling near us—besides having a great heap of gunpowder within our nature and being constantly exposed to the fires that burn all around us—we must remember that there is such a thing as self-deception in the world. This is a great and a common danger. Do you not yourselves know some who have been self-deceived? I have had a wide experience in watching over the souls of others—and many persons have come under my notice who have thought themselves Christians—but I have often wondered how they could think so! I have seen that in their lives which has led me to feel sure—as sure as one man can feel concerning another—that the Grace of God could not be in them! Yet they have not had any doubt or suspicion concerning their Christianity. Now, Brothers and Sisters, do you not know some people like that? Well, then, is it not possible that the judgment which you have formed concerning them is the very same that others have formed concerning you? And perhaps that judgment is true.

There have been great preachers who have been very eloquent men and God has even condescended to use them in His service, yet, afterwards it has been discovered that they were living in gross sin all the while that they were preaching holiness to others. If that has been the case with only one preacher, might it not also be the case with me? Have you never heard of church members who have come regularly to the Communion Table and been very prominent in the work of the church— and apparently leading the way in all good things yet, after all—they were rotten to the core? They had made a mistake altogether—unless they had willfully deceived others instead of themselves—in professing to be Christ’s people at all. Well, then, if some have acted like that, may not you do the same? I do not wish to say anything unpleasant merely for the sake of making you feel uncomfortable, but I want you to remember that my text says, “Happy is the man who fears always.”

Sometimes to examine the foundation on which we are building for eternity, to look into the profession which we have made, to see whether it will stand the wear and tear of daily life and to judge whether it will be likely to endure the test of our dying day—and the still sterner test of the Day of Judgment—is a wise occupation for every one of us. The man who dares not have his ship examined is the man who knows that some of the timbers are rotten! And if you do not like being examined, you are the very men who ought to put yourself through that process without a moment’s delay, obeying the injunctions of the Apostle, “Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Know you not yourselves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?”

There is also great cause for fear, because some Christians have been “saved, yet so as by fire.” Oh, with what difficulty have some of God’s ships entered the eternal harbor! They have lost their masts, the deck has been swept clear of everything, they have been well-near abandoned as derelict! And if it had not been that the eternal Grace of God had ensured the safety of the vessels, they would have drifted away to destruction and gone to the bottom of the sea. And what tugging there has been to get some souls into Heaven! Do you not know some of that sort? I saw one, not long ago. I had highly esteemed him at one time but, from what I learned afterwards, I saw how little cause there was in him for my esteem. He had professed to be a child of God, but he was weeping and wailing and asking whether there was any hope for him. As a contrast to such a sad case, I may say that I have stood by the bedsides of many others and have learned from them lessons that I can never forget—for they have told me something of the joys of Heaven by the very glances of their eyes and the wondrous words which have fallen from their lips—often more full of poetry than poetry itself! They have seemed to be Inspired and to be favored with visions of the hereafter as they have looked through the veil which had become so thin to them.

But I have also seen some such as the one I mentioned just now, who have not lived near to God, who have neglected prayer, who have done but little service for Christ—and when they have come to die, they have been “saved, yet so as by fire.” They have had to come, in their last moments, without any comfort or hope, without any joy in the Lord and cry, “What must we do to be saved?”—just as though they had never known the way of salvation, although they have been professors for years! Instead of having an abundant entrance into Heaven, they have just been saved and no more.

Now, you and I do not want to have such an experience as that and, therefore, let us always fear lest we should get into such a state of heart that this should be our case. Let us fear lest we lose communion with God. Let us fear lest we misuse any Grace which the Holy Spirit has given to us. Let us fear lest we become fruitless and unprofitable. Let us fear lest we lose the light of Jehovah’s Countenance. If we do so fear, we shall understand what Solomon meant when he wrote, “Blessed is the man who fears always.”

II. Now, secondly, I want to prove to you that THE MAN WHO DOES SO FEAR IS A HAPPY MAN. I will show you that by a few contrasts.  
The word, “happy,” in our text may not exactly mean that the man enjoys happiness just now, but that he is really happy. He has the root of true happiness in him and he will have the fruit in due time. Now, here are two men. One of them says, “I am a child of God. I have had a very deep experience. I know all the Doctrines of Grace, blessed be God, and I feel that I am thoroughly confirmed in Christian habits. I may be tempted to sin, but I shall be able to resist the temptation.” Take a good look at that man, so that you will know him when you see him again. With a formal prayer he leaves his bedroom in the morning and he goes forth to his business, perfectly satisfied with himself whatever may happen. Here is another man. He says, “I believe I am a child of God, for I have trusted in Jesus Christ as my Savior and I know that I am safe in His hands. But I dare not trust myself. I feel that unless He shall hold me up all through this day, I may, by my words, or my actions, bring dishonor upon His holy name and I tremble lest I should do so.” Look at him kneeling down there by his bedside and hear how earnestly he pleads with God. His prayer is something like this, “O Lord, I am as helpless as a little child. Hold You me up, or I shall surely fall! I am like a lamb going out among wolves. O Lord, preserve me!” Now, which of the two do you regard as the really happy man? The happiness of the two men may, to a superficial observer, appear to be about equal, but which happiness would you prefer to have? I say—and I think most of you will agree with me—God save me from the so-called happiness which is careless and prayerless— and give me that holy fear which often drives me to my knees and makes me cry to God to keep me!  
Well, now, night has come on and the two men have reached their homes. Neither of them has fallen into any gross sin during the day. They have both been preserved from that evil. One of them retires to his bed after a few sentences of formal prayer, with no life or earnestness in it, and no expression of his gratitude to God. And he soon falls asleep in perfect contentment with himself. The other man looks carefully over all that has happened during the day, for he is afraid lest he may have sinned against God even unconsciously. And he takes notice of things which the other man does not think anything of and he says, “Lord, I fear that I erred there, and that I failed there. Forgive Your child and help me to do better in the future.” Then he says, “I thank You, Lord, that You have kept me, by Your Grace, from being surprised by sudden temptation and You have enabled me to honor Your name, at least in some degree. I give all the glory for this to You and now, my Lord— *“‘Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood, I lay me down to rest,  
In the embraces of my God,  
Or on my Savior’s breast.’”*

Now, which is the happy man of these two? I know which I should like to be—the man who is so fearful and so full of trembling that he wonders that he has not fallen—and who is sometimes almost afraid that he has and who, therefore, walks humbly before his God. Is he not infinitely to be preferred to the other man who thinks it is a matter of course that he shall always stand and who has no qualms of conscience about what he calls little faults? You may rest assured that the seeds of untold misery are already sown in that man’s heart!

Think of these two men under another aspect. Imagine that they are sailors out at sea. One of them is well aware that a certain course is very dangerous. Some captains have been able to take it and have made “a short cut” by doing so, and he decides that he will take that course. He can see that his vessel is bound to go near some very ugly-looking rocks and among a number of sharp ledges where many others have been wrecked. But he is a bold, daredevil sort of fellow—he believes that all will be right and he has no fear. But here is the other captain and he says, “My motto is to keep as far away from danger as I possibly can. I know that in fair weather that passage may be safe, but then I cannot reckon on fair weather. I may be caught in a fog and not know where I am. Or a terrible storm may come on and drive me where I do not wish to go. I shall, therefore, take the longer course which is also the safer course.” Now, in which of these two vessels would you like to sail? And which of the two captains do you esteem to be that happy man? Of course you say the second one! We admire courage, but we do not admire foolhardiness—and the Christian who seeks to steer clear of temptation, who endeavors to be precise and exact in his mode of living so as not to go near to sin, but to avoid it—and keep away from it must be judged to be, in the best sense of the word, a happier man than the one who courts temptation and heedlessly rushes into a position of peril!

Look at the difference between what these two men regard as happiness. The one who was not afraid said, “Why should I fear? Am I not getting to be an old-established Christian? Have I not resisted temptation for such a long while that I need not fear it now? I feel that I may do what young people may not do—it would too dangerous for them, but it will never hurt me.” So he talked, but look at him now! He has become so fond of the drunkard’s cup that he was seen reeling through the streets, or else he has been so enchanted by the lusts of the flesh that he has committed himself fatally. Or it may be that he was strongly tempted to make money very quickly—and quick money-making and honesty never go together except by a very extraordinary system of circumstances! But this man thought it would end all right and that he would make a great haul, so he asked the devil to help him throw the net in just that once—and now he has got into the clutches of the law, and his name—the name of a man who once made a profession of religion—is bracketed with that of other rogues and vagabonds!

But now look at the timid man—the man who said, “I know that I shall never be intoxicated if I never take anything that is intoxicating. I know that I shall not be a thief if I never take anybody’s money but my own. I know that if I never indulge even in indelicate expressions, if I never think of or look at anything that is impure, I shall not be likely to go in that evil way which I utterly abhor.” That is the man who is both safe and happy! “The man who fears always.” Some people call him a milksop and say that he has not spirit enough to do as others do—but just look at him. He can go in and out of the House of God as an honorable Christian, while the other one, of whom I have told you, is a moral wreck and his name is a by-word and a reproach! I can bear my testimony that I have seen high professors so act as to become a stench in our nostrils and, on the other hand, I have seen poor, timid girls who were half afraid they were hypocrites, and poor trembling men who used to come to me for comfort and counsel, lest they should be deceiving themselves. I have seen many of the latter class enter the Port of Glory like ships in full sail coming into the harbor—while those other vessels, with their painted hulls that seemed to tempt a shot from the enemy—have gone to the bottom and they have been lost to us, and lost to themselves!

Now I will suppose that both these men whom I have been describing, have fallen into a certain sin. See what a difference there is between them now! The man who has not any fear says, “Well, yes, there is no doubt that I did wrong, but then”—and he begins telling all about the circumstances under which he says that he was “overtaken.” He tries to make out that he was an innocent victim who was deceived by somebody else. Now listen to “the man who fears always.” “Ah,” he says, “I have sinned.” And he hangs his head in shame and then adds, “I have no excuse to make and you cannot say anything to me that will be half so heavy and so hard as what I say to myself. God will forgive me, I have no doubt, for I have truly repented, but I can never forgive myself.” The first man has dry eyes and a proud, defiant spirit. And it is very likely that, having committed that one great sin, he will go on and commit another— and yet another—and continually get harder and harder in his heart, yet all the while talk about being one of God’s elect who will be saved at the last.

Well now, that man is not a happy man. I pray that none of us may ever experience the wretchedness of having a seared conscience and get into a state of indifference in which we can trifle with sin and yet pretend to be the servants of God. But, oh, if we do fall into sin, may the Lord make us very tender about it! Let this be our prayer—

*“Quick as the apple of an eye,  
O Lord, my conscience make!  
Wake my soul, when sin is near,  
And keep it still awake.”*

Dear Brothers and sisters, may you, by God’s Grace, be preserved from sin! But if sin should come upon you unawares, may your bones be broken by it and may you feel that your very heart is wounded because you have wounded your God! To repent of sin is one of the hallmarks of a Christian, but to have a hardened, untrembling heart is one of the sure marks of the reprobate who is far off from God!

I might thus continue to show you, by a hundred contrasts, that the man who fears always is the really happy man. Suppose that we are fishing and that we have cast our lines into the water. There is one fish that is altogether afraid of our bait and of all our arrangements—and he swims as far as ever he can up or down the stream away from us. But here are some fish that are quite charmed with our worm. They say that they do not mean to swallow the hook, but we do not believe them. They say that they mean to get the worm off without letting the hook catch hold of them. They have very clever ways of sucking worms off hooks and they are going to show what they can do—and soon they are caught. But happy is the fish that fears the bait as well as the hook, and so keeps right away from both of them! When some of us were boys, we used to set traps for the sparrows and other birds in winter time and we would watch to see them go in to eat our crumbs inside the trap. Sometimes there would come a bird that had seen our arrangement before and had been almost caught in it and knew all about it. Well, as soon as ever he looked at it, he made up his mind that he would give our trap a very wide berth, so he flew away as far as he could. But there were some other birds that would come and look at the trap and even perch on it—and presently some of them would get into it. Of course they did not mean to be caught! They thought they knew the way to go just far enough into the trap to get those grains of wheat and then to fly out—but once in, they could not fly out.

And sinners are just as foolish as those sparrows! Of course they do not mean to be caught! They will fly out of the trap all right when they have eaten the wheat! Yes, but I say, happy is the bird that fears always, and that keeps far off the trap—and unhappy is the bird that thinks it can go just so far into the trap, but fully intends to go no further. Oh, how many young men and young women have been ruined because they have gone just so far into sin, meaning to stop there! But they could not stop there—they began to slide and the ice carried them along where they never meant to go. The only safe plan is to keep off the ice altogether. If you do not take the first wrong step, dear Friend, you will not take the second! And if Divine Grace makes you fear and tremble before you begin to go down the hill, you are not likely to be found among those who have fallen to the bottom. Happy is the man, in this sense, who fears always.

III. But I must pass on to notice, in the third place, that THE MAN WHO HAS THIS FEAR IN HIS HEART WILL DO WELL TO HAVE IT THERE CONTINUALLY—“Happy is the man who fears ALWAYS.”

Have this fear concerning your holy things . For instance, when you come up to God’s House to worship, be afraid, as you are coming along, lest you should be only a lip-server and get no blessing. If you are afraid of that happening, it will not happen. And when you are sitting in your pew, say to yourself, “Now, it is possible for me to become a mere formalist in worship and I may be listening to the Word of God with my ears, yet not receiving it into my heart. I am sorely afraid lest it should be so.” Brothers and Sisters, it will not be so if you are afraid that it will be! And when the service is over, say to yourself, “I am afraid that I did not worship God in spirit and in truth as I should have done. I fear that I did not praise Him, or pray to Him with my whole heart as I ought to have done. O Lord, pardon the iniquity of my holy things!”

I do not think any man ever preached as he ought to have preached if he is satisfied with his own efforts. I sometimes feel thankful to God for the feeling of dissatisfaction that possesses me every time I preach. I often feel, as I am going home, that I should like to go back and try to do it so much better—I do not mean better in an oratorical way, but pressing the Truth of God home to men’s hearts more earnestly and more simply. I think that in this sense it is right that we should fear always. Ah, my dear young Brother in the College, you are afraid that you will become cold-hearted, but you never will as long as you cherish such a fear as that! If you are afraid that you will, by-and-by, preach in a perfunctory, official manner, you will not fall into that bad habit if you live in dread of doing so. If you are afraid that you will not set a good example to your people, I believe that you will set them a good example. But if you ever feel, “Oh, I can preach and practice, too—I am all right,” it may happen that God will rebuke your pride and let you see—and perhaps let your enemies see—what a poor fool you are! Blessed is the man who, in his holy things, fears always—the man who is afraid when he is alone on his knees, lest he should not pray rightly—the man who is afraid lest, either in public or in private, he should act the hypocrite before his God!

And happy is the man who has this holy fear in his own house—the man who says, “I am afraid lest I should not act as a Christian father ought to act towards his children, or as a Christian husband should act towards his wife.” Other members of the household may say, “I fear lest I should not be such a wife, or such a child, or such a servant, or such a master as I ought to be.” These are the people who usually are what they should be—those who are afraid that they are not! Those who are the most anxious lest they should fail are generally those who do not fail.

And I would like you also to be anxious in your business, for fear lest you should in any way take advantage of anybody—lest, in the measure, or in the weight, or in the price, or in the invoice, these should be any mistake which would unjustly benefit you. The man who is afraid of anything like that will be an honest tradesman, you may rest assured of that! As for the servant or the workman who is afraid that he will not give a fair day’s work for a fair day’s wage, and the employer who is afraid that he will not give his servant or workman as much as he ought to give him—I can only say that I wish we had many more of that sort of men than we already have, though I know a good many of that sort. If we are afraid of wronging one another and not loving our neighbor as ourselves, that is a healthy kind of fear—and the more we have of it, the more happy we shall be!

And if, perhaps, there should not seem to be in yourself any special cause for this fear just now—though “let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall”—then begin to be afraid for the church of which you are a member. This is a fear which is always resting heavily upon me—the fear lest we should lose our earnestness in prayer—lest we should not care as much as we ought for the souls of men—lest the members of our church should grow worldly—lest we should become cold and indifferent towards our dear Lord and Master. Never lose this wholesome kind of fear concerning this church and your fellow members, or concerning any other church with which you are connected.

Then, have a solemn fear about your own children, lest, possibly, you should not have trained them up as you should have done, or should not have prayed for them as you should have done, or lest your own example should not have been such as they could safely follow. Be afraid for your children, as Job was for his. When they met together to feast, he “offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” The man who is thus afraid that things may be wrong is the man who is most likely to keep everything right. Many a man who becomes a bankrupt is so largely because he does not examine his books. He says that he does not like looking into his books—they are very unpleasant literature to him—and he never sees to the details of his affairs himself. He leaves this to John, and that to Thomas, and the other to one clerk and something else to another. And then one day he wakes up to find that everything has gone to smash! Do not let it be so in your household, or in your temporal affairs, or in your spiritual concerns, but look into everything yourself and watch everything carefully, for, in this way, by fearing always, you will be both safe and happy in the hands of God.

IV. Now, lastly, THERE ARE SOME WHO HAVE, INDEED, VERY GRAVE CAUSE TO FEAR.  
There are some of my Hearers at this service—I am glad that they are here—who, I am afraid, have cause to fear in a far deeper sense than that in which I have used my text. Some of you are not saved—you know you are not. You have never had your sins forgiven, you have never sought and found mercy through the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God’s only-begotten Son. And some of you are very ill—you were only just able to get here tonight. What? So ill as that, yet with no Savior to help you? Sick, well-near unto death, yet without a Savior? Likely to die soon, for you are consumptive, yet you have no Savior? Let me appeal to you, my dear Friend, is this wise? Can you afford to run such a terrible risk? Why, the healthy may die at any moment, but as for you, death is already at your door! So, surely you cannot afford to trifle with eternal things.  
And some of you are getting old, yet you are not saved. Sixty years of age, and not saved? Seventy, eighty, and not saved? What are you doing? A man told me, the other day, that he would not come to hear me again, for, he said, “The last time I came, you called me an old fool.” Why was that? I asked. “Why,” he replied, “you said that an old sinner was an old fool.” So I said to him, “Are you an old sinner, then? Because if you are, you are an old fool!” And he could not deny it, for we are all fools till we are saved by Jesus Christ! A man must be a fool to run the risk of losing his immortal soul! I have heard that a man once went up to the top of the spire of Salisbury Cathedral and stood on his head. What do you think he was? “A fool,” you say. Yes, so he was—yet he only risked his neck— but you are risking your soul’s eternal welfare, risking the loss of Heaven and running a terrible risk of going to Hell forever! O Friend, is this wise? You know it is not and that I am only speaking the truth when I tell you that you are a fool—and one of the worst of fools!  
O Sirs, if you are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are standing over the mouth of Hell, upon a single plank and that plank is rotten! You are hanging over the jaws of Perdition by a single hair and that hair is snapping! I looked down my well, this afternoon, as a man was going down it to do some necessary work, and I said to him, “Oh, do be careful! Pray be very careful!” I felt such dread upon me lest, possibly, the man should fall while he was going down that great depth into which I looked till it made me giddy—and I cannot bear to think of some of you, who are in far greater danger, for you are hanging over the mouth of Hell with only a rotten rope to hold to! Some of you may be in Hell within a week. I cannot guarantee that any one of you will live ten minutes longer. All the physicians in the world would not be able to guarantee to any one individual that he should live even for five minutes! You are always liable to death and in danger of the wrath to come. Therefore, escape for your lives, I entreat you!  
And meanwhile I would put you in fear about this matter, that, through this fear, you may be driven to the only place of safety, even to Jesus Christ, who was lifted up upon the Cross and now is exalted on high a Prince and a Savior! There is life in Him! There is life for you at this moment if you will only trust in Him! There is pardon for you now if you will only believe in Him!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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÷Pro 29.25

TWO ANCIENT PROVERBS  
NO. 3080

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1908.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 29, 1874.

**“The fear of man brings a snare; but whoever puts his trust in the LORD shall be safe.”  
Proverbs 29:25.**

WE have two ancient Proverbs here. Each of them is true as a separate Proverb, but they are equally true when linked together. The independent proposition, that the fear of man brings a snare, is a Truth of God which experience has taught to many. The other proposition, that he that trusts in the Lord shall be safe, has been found most blessedly true by all those who have tested it. Then put the two propositions together—that the fear of man brings a snare, but trust in the Lord is the safe and certain way to avoid that snare—and this also is true.

I. We shall, first of all, consider for a little while the first of the two ancient Proverbs—“The fear of man brings a snare.” That is ONE OF THE GREAT EVILS THAT WE HAVE TO AVOID.

What a common evil the fear of man is—the fear of losing human approbation, the fear of incurring human wrath. There are thousands of men who have no fear of God, who have great fear of man. They break the Laws of God without any fear of the consequences that must ensue, yet they are afraid to break the laws of man because they dread the punishment that might possibly follow. They are not afraid of Hell, yet they are afraid of an earthly prison! They dread not the arm of the Almighty, yet they are afraid of an arm of flesh.

The fear of man has been thought by some persons to be a very good and salutary thing. Instead of bringing a snare, they think that it is the means of preventing much sin among mankind. Now I do not doubt that some are hindered by the fear of man from committing great crimes and open acts of wrong, but the utmost that the fear of man can do is to confer a very doubtful benefit. Try it in your own house among your own children. If your children are kept from wrong-doing only by the fear of you—if they only do that which they are bid to do because they are afraid to do otherwise—you will have a very poor form of obedience. And you will have, at the same time, an abundant crop of deceit springing up, for when your child has done wrong, his fear of punishment will drive him to a lie and perhaps lead him from one lie to another. And lies may become so common with him that, at last, it shall be as natural to him to tell a lie as to speak the truth! And I think every parent must know that all the faults a child can commit, if put into the scale together, are not equal in criminality and in injury to his spiritual constitution as a lie. The power to tell a lie is one of the most hideous powers to which man can attain— and some children are kept in such a state of terror that they naturally learn to do it. It is supposed, too, that servants cannot be managed without being kept in a state of fear. Yet you all know what an eye-server is. If there is no right principle in servants, they are worth nothing. Those who will only work because the eye of the master or mistress is upon them, are of very little value. You only teach them habits of deceit if they live in constant fear of you. This experiment has been tried on a large scale. Laws have been made with severe penalties for their violation, yet men seemed as if they transgressed all the more. In prison, the sternest forms of discipline have been tried, yet the prisoner has come out determined to sin again! There has been no beneficial change produced in him by fear.

I will not deny that the fear of man has its uses, but I must assert again that it is always a very doubtful good which fear brings to the human mind and heart. Love, my Brothers and Sisters, is the grand cure for the evil of human hearts, especially the love that comes from above! That pure and heavenly flame which is kindled only by the Holy Spirit burns up sin. But “fear has torment”—it does little else but plague and vex the soul.

Having said this much about any possible good that may come of fear, I now remark that according to the text, “the fear of man brings a snare.” It has led many men into very great sins.

Look at Pilate. I mention him first because there was a peculiar atrocity about his sin. The pure and holy Jesus is brought before him and, after examining Him, he declares, “I find no fault in this Man.” He sends Him to Herod and the result is that he says to Christ’s accusers, “I have found no fault in this Man touching these things whereof you accuse Him: no, nor has Herod: for I sent you to him.” Pilate’s wife warns him that she has suffered much in a dream because of Christ, and she says, “Have nothing to do with that just Man.” Pilate’s own interviews with Christ impressed his mind and, therefore, he wanted to set the Savior free if he could. But though he was a Roman governor and placed in a high position of power, he was a poor slave to the people! He was vacillating. He knew what was the right course and he wanted to take it, but he feared the consequences. The Jews might appeal to Caesar and say that he had spared the life of one who pretended to be a king—and then he might lose his post. So this poor, timid, contemptible creature takes water and washes his hands—and says that he is innocent of the blood of this just Person—and the next minute gives up the innocent Victim to be nailed on a cross! It was the fear of man that caused Pilate’s name to become infamous in the history of the world and of the Church of God—and it will be infamous to all eternity. The fear of man led him to slay the Savior! Take care that it does not lead you to do something of the same kind.

Long before Pilate’s day, there had been a king of Israel who lost his crown through the fear of man. God had chosen Saul to be head over his people, but when he was commanded by God to smite the Amalekites and to destroy all that they had, he spared King Agag and the best of the sheep and oxen, and all that was good because he “feared the people, and obeyed their voice.” He was head and shoulders taller than his subjects, a man who, at other times acted as a despot and had his own way. Yet at this particular time he feared the people and so did that which God had commanded him not to do and, therefore, his kingdom was torn from him and given to one who was better than he.

“Yes,” you say, “those two were bad men who fell into sin through fear of man.” Yes, but I am sorry to say that I must also mention good men who did the same. Look at Aaron, the priest of the Lord, and companion of his brother, Moses! Aaron, who had spoken with God and was His representative to the people. Yet, when Moses was gone up into the mountain and the people came to Aaron and said, “Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.” Aaron bade them break off their golden earrings and bring them to him—and he, the priest of God, desecrated his sacred hands by making for the people a molten calf before which they might bow in worship! Ah, Aaron! Had you had the courage of your brother, you would not have fallen into that shameful sin!

Turning to the New Testament again, to give an example from it, remember bold Peter and the words which he spoke so enthusiastically to his Lord, “I am ready to go with You, both into prison and to death. Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You.” Yet see him a little later, warming himself in the high priest’s palace and first one of the maidservants, and then others that stood by, said to him, “Surely you are one of them.” And “he began to curse and to swear,” to prove that he was no disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ! Ah, Peter, where is your courage now? Truly, “the fear of man brings a snare,” even to the best of men! God save us from it and make us so brave that we shall never fear any man so as to do a wrong action!

Again, the fear of man brings a snare in this respect, it keeps many persons from conversion. Perhaps there are some such persons now present. Let me see if I can pick them out. You scarcely dare to go to the place where the Gospel is preached in a way in which God blesses it, because if you were to go there, and it were known, it would be a subject of jest in your family and would provoke remarks that you would not like. There are many who dare not go to the house where God pours out the blessing—they are such cowards that they dare not come to listen to those who preach Christ’s Gospel with power. And others who do come and hear it, are afraid to receive the Truth to which they have listened again and again. The thought in such a person’s mind is, “What would Father and Mother say if I were converted? Oh, what a time I would have of it! What would my fellow workmen say? I would have to run the gauntlet of the whole lot if they once knew that I had become a Christian.” Another says, “I don’t know how I would endure the persecution I would receive! My life would become intolerable if I were to become a child of God.” So they never come to Jesus because the fear of man, which brings a snare, keeps them as the hopeless slaves of sin. But, young man, do you mean to be damned just to please somebody else? Do you mean to fling away your immortal soul in order to escape the laughter of fools? Remember that they may laugh you into Hell, but they cannot laugh you out again! Let not the fear of man be the ruin of your soul! If, for the sake of pleasing men, you choose to forfeit some small trifle, it does not much matter, but when it comes to the forfeiting of Christ, the forfeiting of your soul, and the forfeiting of Heaven, I appeal to your own conscience to say if it is worthwhile to be eternally ruined for the sake of pleasing men, whoever they may be! Is it not better that even father, and mother, and brother, and sister, and every friend you have in the world should be against you, and that God should be yours—than that you should have all these as your friends and yet remain at enmity against the Most High?

I have no doubt that this same fear of man keeps a large number of persons who are converted, from making a public avowal of their faith. And so it brings a snare to them. Nicodemus “at the first came to Jesus by night.” And Joseph of Arimathaea was “a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews.” I hope you will not try to shelter behind those two good men, for remember that as soon as Christ was put to death, when His cause was at the very worst, they came out boldly and proved their love of Him! And we do not read that they ever crept back, like snails into their shells. Having acknowledged Christ as their Lord and Master, I have no doubt that they continued to follow Him whatever the consequences may have been. So far as you are concerned, just now is the time to acknowledge Christ—especially now because skepticism and superstition, the two monstrous evils which threaten to devour true religion, are so rampant—and it needs some moral courage to declare yourself upon the side of the simple Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now is the hour for a Christian to play the man for Christ, his Lord and Master! Yet there are many who are keeping in the background because “the fear of man brings a snare” upon them. Where are you, dear Friend? I cannot come round to all those pews, otherwise I would stop, here and there, before some of you whom I know and before others whom I suspect, and whom I joyfully suspect, of loving my Master! I think you do, by the way you look when His name is extolled in your hearing. Yet you have not said so in the way He wishes. I charge you, by the love which you bear to Him, keep not back! Imagine that you see Him now before your eyes and that you hear Him say to you as He hangs upon the Cross, “I bore all this for you, and yet are you ashamed of Me? If you love Me, acknowledge Me in the midst of this wicked and perverse generation. Take up your cross and follow Me, whatever suffering or reproach it may involve.”

The fear of man has brought a snare to some of the greatest Believers who have ever lived. And any child of God, whenever he fears the face of man, loses some of the dignity which appertains to that relationship. What a grand man Abraham was! Whenever I read his life, I look up to him with astonishment and wish I had such faith as would make me resemble him in that respect. He marches across the pages of history with such quiet stately dignity that kings and princes are dwarfed beside his great figure! How nobly did he say to the King of Sodom, “I will not take from you a thread, even to a shoelace, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich.” But oh, how small did he look when he said to Abimelech, concerning his wife, “She is my sister.” She was his sister, in a sense—there was some truth in what he said—but she was more than his sister—so he was uttering a lie for which he was rightly rebuked by the heathen prince!

You have, in David, another instance of how the fear of man can bring the mighty down. How brave he is as he goes out to slay Goliath, and how grandly he behaves when, twice, he spares the life of his sleeping enemy! Yet see him there at Gath, when the servants of Achish frightened him so that he “feigned himself mad in their hands, and scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.” The fear of man had brought down Israel’s future monarch to drivel like a madman!

Equally sad is the case of Elijah, that grandest of men, as I may truly call him. You see him in his grandeur as he cries, “Take the Prophets of Baal! Let not one of them escape.” And as he brings them down to the brook Kishon and slays them there! And then as he goes to the top of Carmel and prays till the rain descends upon the parched land. Yet, after the excitement is over, he is afraid of the woman, Jezebel—and the great Elijah shrinks down into the frightened man who runs away, and cries, “It is enough! Now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers.” So you see that “the fear of man brings a snare” even to the best of men—it drags them down from their high places and hurls them into the dust. Therefore may God preserve us from it!

The fear of man keeps some Believers in very dubious positions. I have known some Believers remain where they knew they were not doing right and where, every day, they were dragging a heavy chain behind them because they had not the moral courage to come straight out for God. If any of you young people who love the Lord want to go the easiest way to Heaven—you know that all ways there are rough, but if you want to go the easiest way—take that which looks the hardest! Namely, be an outand-out, thorough-going Christian! “But that will cost me much,” says one. It will at first, but it will be the more easy for you afterwards. Whereas, if you begin by giving way to the world a little—trimming a little—you will have to give way and trim more and more. A Christian should be like a steamer that goes straight away to the port it is intended to reach. But many professors are like sailing vessels, the motive power that controls them is outside of them, so they have to tack a good deal— and though they may ultimately get to their destination—there is a good deal of strange sailing to the right and to the left, and their voyage takes a very long while. I hope you, dear Friends, will go straight to your mark. “Trust in God, and do the right” and this will, after all, be the very smoothest path that you can follow!

Further, the fear of man hampers the usefulness of a great many. There are Brothers who ought to be preaching, but who are not because they are afraid of men. And some who ought to go and visit the poor, but they say that they cannot—the reason is that they are afraid of men! Why, I have known some who were even afraid to give away a tract—they were as much alarmed as though they had to put their hand into a tiger’s mouth! I have known some who were afraid to speak to their own children about their souls. Is it not strange that they can speak to other people’s children about their souls better than they can to their own? It should not be so! In fact, there is nobody living who any one of us, if he is a Christian, has any right to be afraid of. We shall never do good to people if we are afraid of them. What would have become of the Church of God if the Apostles had been such timid, gentle Christians as some whom I know? They would not have gone out to preach in the streets— and as there were no chapels and churches, then—they would not have preached at all! As soon as Caesar promulgated an edict that they were not to meet on the first day of the week, they would have said, “Perhaps we had better not meet.” When they heard that the crowds shouted in the amphitheatre, “Christians to the lions!” they would have said, “We must not expose ourselves to such a risk—we must think of our wives and families.” And so they would have been cowards, and soon there would have been no Christianity left in the world! Just imagine what would have happened if the Reformers had acted thus. Suppose Martin Luther had said, “I shall do as that old monk advised me when I consulted him. He said, ‘Martin, go back to your cell and live there near to your God, and leave the Church and the world alone.’” If Luther had followed that advice, where would the blessed Reformation have been, and what preaching of the Gospel would there have been at this present moment?

I must not continue much longer upon this part of my subject, but I must say that to a minister of Christ the fear of man is one of the worst of snares. Jonah tried to escape from going to Nineveh because he was afraid of man. The Galatians could not bear the full light of the Gospel and, therefore, certain teachers among them tried to shut off some of its beams. And if a minister of Christ once begins to be afraid of his hearers, his tendency will be to withhold some Doctrine through fear of a wealthy subscriber, or to keep back some rebuke for fear that it should bear too hardly upon an influential person in his congregation. There is one sin which I believe I have never committed—I think that I have never been afraid of any of you and I hope, by the Grace of God, that I never shall be! If I dare not speak the Truth of God upon all points and dare not rebuke sin, what is the good of me to you? Yet I have heard sermons which seemed to me to have been made to the order of the congregation. But honest hearers want honest preaching and if they find that the preachers message comes home to them, they thank God that it is so. They say, “Is it not right that it should be so? If we err, should not the Word of God, which is quick and powerful, search us, try us and find our errors?” And the preacher, if he really preaches the Truth as it is in Jesus, must often deal out rebuke as well as encouragement. May God deliver all His ministers from the fear of man everywhere—and the whole Church of Christ too!

At one time, the fear of man took this form—the geologists had discovered that Moses was mistaken and that God did not know how He had made the world! Many seemed to think that something dreadful had happened and they wondered how those objectors were to be answered. Soon after that, somebody discovered that God was mistaken about having made Adam and Eve, for they gradually developed from oysters or some smaller creatures still! Then again there was a great outcry, “Who is to answer these eminent philosophers?” O, Church of God, is every fool to have any answer at all? Stand fast by the Inspired Word and be not ensnared by the fear of man! We have seen scores of systems of philosophy come and go, and we shall probably see as many more before we die. Our business is to stand fast to the Truth of Revelation and let philosophies die as the frogs of Egypt died in the days of Moses—for die they will, and when fresh hordes come, they also will die, but the eternal Truth of the ever-blessed God will never die—it will live on in its own glorious immortality!

II. Now, in the second place, I want to show you that THE GREAT CURE FOR THIS EVIL IS TRUST IN GOD. “The fear of man brings a snare: but whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe.”

I should have thought that Solomon would have said, “The fear of man brings a snare: but whoever fears the Lord shall be safe.” That would have read very well and it would have been quite true. But it would not have expressed the special Truth of God that Solomon then had in mind. It is not fear, but faith, that is the cure for cowardice. Trust in the Lord and you can then cry, “Whom shall I fear?” for you will feel that you have the strength of the Almighty at your back. Trusting in God, we feel that we are one with God and so we are made strong. That strength breeds courage and enables us boldly to ask, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” That courage leads us to count the cost of doing right and, after counting it, we feel that in God’s strength we can endure that and a thousand times as much if necessary. And therefore we say, “Come what may, we will serve the Lord.” And with the Holy Spirit resting upon us, we march boldly on to victory in His might. So that trust in God, by giving us God’s strength and consequently courage and decision, lifts us up above the fear of man!

But the point of the text may be found in another direction, namely, that trusting in God, we become safe, not merely from fear, but from the consequences of defying fear. “Whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe.” By trusting in the Lord and doing that which is right, he may be a great sufferer, but he shall be safe. He will not be so great a sufferer as he would be if he followed the opposite course. Suppose that his enemies carry their persecution to extremes? They can only kill the body and after that they have no more that they can do. But suppose he were to forfeit his faith? Then his body and soul would be cast into Hell which would be an infinitely greater and eternal loss! Never imagine that you can be a loser by trusting in God. Whatever risk there is in doing so, the risk of not trusting in Him is far greater—and every sensible man will prefer the smaller risk. Besides, how often it happens that if a man trusts in God and acts according to his conscience, he is not a loser at all. Many have been gainers thereby, though that ought not to be an inducement. Many have said, “If we do what we feel is right, we shall lose everything” and yet, when they have dared to run that risk, they have lost nothing at all, for God has helped them in the emergency! But if they should lose by doing the right thing, let this assurance comfort them, “Whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe.” It is much better to be safe than to be wealthy—and infinitely better to be safe for time and for eternity than to have all the comforts of life about you, but to put your soul in jeopardy!

A Christian need never be afraid of anybody. If you are doing right, you have no cause to fear the greatest man who is serving the devil. Look at Bernard Palissy, the Huguenot potter who produced such wonderful works of art. One day the king of France said to him, “Bernard I am afraid I shall be compelled to give you up to the inquisitors to be burned if you will not change your religion.” Bernard’s reply was, “I pity your majesty.” Only think of that—the potter pitied the king! So his majesty asked, “Why do you pity me, Bernard?” “Because,” he answered, “you have said what your majesty and fifty thousand princes cannot make me say, ‘I fear I shall be compelled!’” Why, Sirs, Palissy was the king and the king was not worthy to be the potter! A truly royal dignity dwelt in that potter’s soul. Are any of you young men going to allow anybody to make you say, “I fear I shall be compelled to cease worshipping with the Dissenters?” Or, “I fear I shall be compelled to abstain from attending that little country Baptist Chapel?” Or, “I am afraid it might not be considered proper for me to make an open profession of religion in the town where I live?” If you talk like that, I can only say, “May the Lord have mercy on your miserable little soul and give you enough manhood and common honesty to confess what Christ has done for you!” If you really have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ and have had your sins forgiven, have been made an heir of Heaven and are on your way to a glorious immortality, surely you cannot act the part of a sneak like that! What? Are you who are to dwell among the angels, you for whom there is a mansion in the skies and a robe of righteousness and a crown of Glory—are you going to play the coward like that? Why, if you act thus, you ought to be drummed out of the regiment of the Church militant, so how can you expect to be in the Church triumphant with such a miserable spirit as that? May the Lord help you to put your trust in Him, that you may be saved from all fear of man!

Now to close. The last sentence of the text is true as an independent proposition. “Whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe.” I have not time to speak about this sentence, but I give it to you to put under your tongue as a sweet morsel as you go your way to your homes. It is not, “He that trusts in himself.” It is not, “He that trusts in a priest.” It is not, “He that performs good works and trusts in them,” but, “whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe.” The man who is trusting in the blood and righteousness of Jesus may not always be happy, but he is safe! He may not always be singing, but he is safe! He may not always have the joy of full assurance, but he is safe! He may sometimes be distressed, but he is always safe! He may sometimes question his interest in Christ, but he is always safe!

I was astonished, the other day, to meet with an expression used by Cardinal Bellarmine, who was one of the greatest Jesuit controversialists. He closes a long argument about being saved by works with the following very remarkable sentences, which I will quote as accurately as I can— “Nevertheless, although the way of acceptance with God is by our own works, there is a danger that men may so trust in their own works as to grow proud, which would quite spoil their works and, therefore, upon the whole, it is safest for them to rely upon the blood and merits of Jesus Christ alone.” Well done, Cardinal Bellarmine! “Upon the whole.” I mean to do that as long as I live and oh that everyone who has ever been deluded by the doctrines of the Church of Rome, would listen to the Cardinal’s confession that, upon the whole it is safest to rest upon what Christ has done! Upon the whole it is better to trust in the Savior than to trust in ourselves! Upon the whole it is better to be washed in His blood than to think that we can make ourselves clean! The cardinal did not say all the truth, but I thank him for what he did say, though the truth is better put by Solomon in my text, “Whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe.” He shall be safe if he is sick, if he is rich, if he is poor! He shall be safe when he dies, safe when he rises again, safe at the Day of Judgment, and safe throughout eternity! Oh, then, come all of you and trust in the Lord, for “whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe” forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PROVERBS 27.**

Verse 1. Boast not yourself of tomorrow; for you know not what a day may bring forth. Let us never boast of future days and years, or what we mean to do when we come to any age, or what shall be our position when we grow gray. Let us never boast of anything in the future, for we cannot tell what even a day may bring forth.

2. Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips. For he who praises himself writes himself down a fool in capital letters!

3. A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool’s wrath is heavier than them both. One might endure almost any sort of labor sooner than have to live with one who is perpetually and foolishly angry.

4. Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy? Envy is a snake in the grass! Christians, beware of envy. You will, perhaps, be tempted to have it in your heart when you see another Christian more useful than you are, or when some Christian Brother seems to have more honor than you have. Ah, then cry to God against it! Never let this venomous reptile be spared for a single moment! The best of men will find envy creeping over them at times—it may be envy of the wicked who are rich. We must seek to overcome that at once. And even envy of the best of men, what is it but covetousness and hatred and a breach of two Commandments? God save us from it!

5. Open rebuke is better than secret love. That I should love my fellow man is a good thing, but to have love enough to be able openly to rebuke his faults, is a very high proof of affection—and far better than secret love that is silent when it ought to speak. And yet, how many persons there are who are very angry with you if you give them an open rebuke? And how many there are who are foolish enough to prefer secret love to open rebuke, though they have Solomon’s wisdom to teach them better? Our Lord Jesus Christ has a secret love to His people, yet He never spares them the open rebuke when He knows that it will be good for them.

6. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. Beware of the flattering world, Believer! Beware of the flattering devil and of the deceitfulness of the flesh. When things go smoothly with you, there may be the greatest danger. Whatever you do in times of storm, keep a good lookout when the sea is calm and the sky is clear.

7. The full soul loathes a honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. “The full soul loathes” (even that luscious thing) “a honeycomb.” No true preaching will go down with him who is full of himself, full of his own importance. Unless there shall be many of the flowers of rhetoric in the discourse, he will not listen to sound Doctrine. “But to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” Happy hunger is it when the soul hungers and thirsts after righteousness. Then there are no hyper-critical observations about the minister’s delivery and no carping at words and phrases. It is spiritual food that the soul seeks—and if it can get that, though it may not be to its taste in every respect—there will be a sweetness in it that will make it like a honeycomb.

8, 9. As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so does the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel. The Orientals were known to smear their faces and especially their hair, with ointment and perfume—and those who came near them were pleased with the scent. When you can get a little conversation, especially upon points that help towards godliness, with those of a like frame of mind with you—when you can have sweet communion and fellowship with the people of God— then it is that your hearts are rejoiced as with ointments and perfumes!

10. Your own friend, and your father’s friend, forsake not. Have but few friends, but stick closely to them. Above all, cleave closely to that “Friend that sticks closer than a brother.” If He is your Friend, and your father’s Friend, never forsake HIM. Forsake all the world for Him, but let not all the world induce you to forsake Him.

10. Neither go into your brother’s house in the day of your calamity: for better is a neighbor that is near than a brother far off. It is very sad that it should be so, but sometimes our nearest relatives are the farthest off, and those who ought to help us the most help us least. Many a man has had kindness shown to him by his neighbor who was but a stranger, when he has had little or no kindness from his own relatives. But there is one Brother into whose house we may always go. So near of kin He is to us, and so loving of heart, that He never thinks a hard thought of us but the more we ask of Him, the more delighted He is with us and is only grieved with us because we stint ourselves in our prayers.

11. My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproaches me. A good son is his father’s honor. If any say of suchand-such a man that he is a bad man, yet if his children walk orderly, he can answer the slander without speaking a word. Would a bad man have brought up his children in that way? Would they be walking in the fear of God if he had not walked in that way himself? So the sons of God ought to seek, by their consistency, to keep the name of their Father clear of reproach. The consistency of our conduct should be the best answer to the accusations of the infidel.

12, 13. A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished. Take his garment that is surety for a stranger. He that takes surety is sure, but he that goes surety for another, and especially for a stranger, will smart for it, perhaps to the day of his death.

13, 14. And take a pledge of him for a strange woman. He that blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him. There are some men who always use such sweet words— they are so fond of you that they are up early in the morning to give you their praise—and they continue all day pouring out their flattering unction. Such blessings as these are a curse! And the wise man will loathe these parasitical people who will see no faults, or pretend that they do not see any, but will always be extolling mere trifles as though they were the most sublime virtues. A sensible man is not to be overcome by this flattery!

15. A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. When there is a little leak in the roof and the rain keeps dropping through, it is very uncomfortable. But it is ten times more comfortable than it is to have to dwell with a contentious woman!

16. Whoever hides her hides the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which betrays itself. That is to say, if a man puts sweet ointment on his hand, the smell of it would soon be perceived. So, if a woman is of a contentious, angry, quarrelsome disposition, her contentiousness will be discovered—there is no hiding it.

17. Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend. Hence the usefulness of Christian association and hence, also, the evil of sinful company, for one sinner sharpens another to do mischief, just as one saint encourages another to righteousness.

18, 19. Whoever keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waits on his master shall be honored. As in water, face answers to face, so the heart of man to man. If I look into water, I see the reflection of my own face, not another man’s. And if I look into society, I shall probably see men like-minded with myself. How is it that a drunken man always finds other drunken men? How is it that lascivious men always have a bad opinion of the morality of other people? How is it that hypocrites always think other people hypocrites? Why, because they can see the reflection of their own faces! When a man tells me that there is no love in the Church of God, I know it is because he sees his own face and knows that there is no love in it. You will generally find that men measure other people’s corn with their own bushels. They are sure to mete out to others according to their own measure—and they thus unconsciously betray themselves.

20, 21. Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied. As the refining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise. Many a man who can bear adversity, cannot bear prosperity. The world’s censures seldom do a Christian any harm, but it is the breath of applause that often gives us the scarlet fever of pride.

22. Though you should crush a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him. No troubles, no afflictions can, of themselves, make a fool into a wise man. The sinner remains a sinner, after all Providential chastisements, unless Sovereign Grace interposes.

23. Be you diligent to know the state of your flocks, and look well to your herds. Be not slothful in business and, above all, let the Christian be diligent to know the state of his own heart.

24-27. For riches are not forever: and does the crown endure to every generation? The hay appears, and the tender grass shows itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. The lambs are for your clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. And you shall have goat’s milk enough for your food, for the food of your household, and for the maintenance for your maidens. Those who are diligent, generally prosper, and they who are diligent in spiritual things shall have all that their souls need. They shall be clothed with the robe of righteousness, they shall be well fed and shall be satisfied. May the wisdom of these Proverbs be given to us in daily life, that we may be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But above all, may heavenly wisdom be given to us in all spiritual things, to the praise of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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÷Pro 30.2

A HOMILY FOR HUMBLE FOLKS  
NO. 2140

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY, APRIL 27, 1890, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

INTENDED FOR READING  
ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1890.

**“Surely I am more stupid than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.”  
Proverbs 30:2.**

SOMETIMES it is necessary for a speaker to refer to himself and he may feel it necessary to do so in a way peculiar to the occasion. When Elihu addressed himself to Job and the three wise men, he commended himself to them saying, “I am full of matter, the spirit within me constrains me.” But when Agur instructed his two disciples, Ithiel and Ucal, he spoke in the lowliest terms of himself and declared that he was “more stupid than any man.”

Wisdom is justified of her children. Neither of these men was to blame for his opening words to his hearers. Elihu was a young man talking to elderly men of great note for learning—he saw that they had blundered terribly—he felt convinced that he had the right view of the matter under discussion, but he thought it discreet to introduce himself by modestly stating the reasons why he thought he should be patiently heard. Agur was probably a man of years and honor, and possibly his two young friends looked up to him more than was necessary and therefore his principal endeavor was to wean them from undue confidence in himself. He passed the gravest censure upon himself so that his hearers might not suffer their faith to stand in the wisdom of men.

I can suppose that both Elihu and Agur were equally humble—the one so modest that he felt that he needed to commend himself to gain a hearing—and the other so lowly that he feared the hearing he should win would place his personal influence in too high a place. But did Agur really mean all he said? I cannot doubt it. Forcible expressions are not always to be understood in their strictest sense, yet I have no doubt Agur meant to describe himself as he felt himself to be apart from the Grace of God. Or better and more likely, he felt thus stupid and foolish after he had been enlightened by the Spirit of God.

One mark of a man’s true wisdom is his knowledge of his ignorance. Have you ever noticed how the clean heart always mourns its uncleanness—and the wise man always laments his folly? It needs holiness to detect our own unholiness and it needs wisdom to discover our own folly. When a man talks of his own cleanness, his very lips are foul with pride— and when a man boasts of his wisdom, he proclaims his folly with trumpet sound! Because God had taught Agur much, he felt that he knew but

little.

Especially I think the truth of our text relates to one particular line of things. This man was a naturalist. We have nothing of his save this chapter, but his allusions to natural history all through it are exceedingly abundant. He was an instructed scientist, but he felt that he could not, by searching, find out God, nor fashion an idea of Him from his own thoughts. When he heard of the great discoveries of those who judged themselves to be superior persons, he disowned such wisdom as theirs. Other men with their great understanding might be fishing up pearls of truth from the sea—as for himself he knew nothing but that which he found in God’s Word.

He had none of that boasted understanding which climbed the heavens, bound the winds and swathed the sea and so discovered the sacred name—he was content with Revelation and felt that “every Word of God is pure.” Not in any earthly school learned he the knowledge of the Holy. All that he knew he had been taught by God’s Book. He had in thought climbed to Heaven and come down again—he had listened to the speech of winds, waves and mountains—but he protested that in all this he had not discovered God’s name nor His Son’s name by his own understanding. All his light had come through the Lord’s own Word—and he shrewdly gave this caution to those who thought themselves supremely wise above what is written—“Add you not unto His Words, lest He reprove you and you be found a liar.” Philosophy had failed him and Revelation was his ONLY confidence.

As for himself, he did not claim that degree of perception and profundity which enabled him to think out God, but he went to God Himself and learned from Him, first hand, through His revealed Wisdom. This I take to be his meaning but I shall not use the text in that way this morning. Here was a man, who, whatever he really was, held himself in his own opinion and judgment to be an inferior person—and yet, nevertheless—was a firm believer in his God. He was not only a firm believer, but he was an earnest student of the sacred Oracles. All the more because of his ignorance he pressed on to learn more and more of God.

Nor was this all, he was a willing worker, for he spoke prophetically in the name of the Lord. Nor do we even end here, for from this short writing it is clear that he was a joyful truster in God. Brutish as he judged himself to be, he rose into supreme content at every thought of God. Those four points I am going to handle at this time, as the Lord may help me by His Holy Spirit.

I. The first is this—A SENSE OF INFERIORITY MUST NOT KEEP US BACK FROM FAITH IN GOD. I will suppose that someone here is saying, “Surely I am more stupid than any man and have not the understanding of a man.” Our text brings before us a wise man who said this of himself and yet he had firm faith in God! If we have to say what Agur said, let us also trust as Agur did! If only wise men might put their trust in God, what would become of nine out of 10 of us? I hope there is nobody here so foolish as to say, “I could trust in God if I were a man of mark.” Ah, Sirs! To be a man of mark is no help in the matter of faith!

I hope no one is so silly as to say, “If I were possessed of great riches I could, then, come to Jesus.” “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” Nor may you say, “If I had great gifts I could trust in the Lord Christ.” Talents involve responsibility but they do not help towards salvation. Gifts may even drag a man down—only Divine Grace can lift him up. The gifted man may be so full of pride that he may never submit himself to the free-Grace Gospel of our Lord Jesus.

I shall deal with more sensible objections than these. There are some who seem as if they cannot trust Christ and believe in God because they cannot go with other men in their heights—and there are others, strange to say—who have the same difficulty because they cannot follow others into their depths. I will have a word, first, with those who say, “We cannot hope to be saved because we cannot reach the heights of other men.” You have marked the holy conduct of certain godly men and, placing your own imperfections side by side with their excellences, you have not only been humbled but greatly discouraged. You have concluded that you could be saved if you were like these gracious men, but since you fall so far short of their noble character you must be lost.

You have seen them in sickness and marked their patience and joy— and their acquiescence in the Divine will and you have been greatly humbled, which was well—but you have also fallen into unbelief—which is not well. Since you cannot play the man under fire as these champions do, you fear that you may not hope for eternal life. Moreover, you have listened to their prayers—you have been edified, you have been excited—and you have also been driven to tremble. Seeing Jacob in his wrestling at Jabbok, you have cried, “Would God I could wrestle like that man! But, as I cannot, woe is me!”

You have noticed Daniel go to his chamber and cry unto his God three times a day and then you have remembered your own forgetfulness and wandering thoughts in the matter of prayer—and you have concluded that you could have no hope of pleading at the Throne of Grace. Other aspects of the piety of Believers have also discouraged you. To see how they walk with God; how their speech is perfumed with love to Jesus; how their manner of life is above that of the world—all this has made you fear that you could never enter into their heritage. These gracious men seem so far above you that you cry, “Surely I am more stupid than any man.”

You have noticed, also, their usefulness—how many souls they have brought to Christ. How God has helped them to guide the bewildered and to instruct the ignorant. And then you have felt that it was natural that such men should have confidence towards God—but as for yourself, what is the use of you? You have felt good for nothing in the presence of persons privileged to do so much for God and men. You have been even more cast down when you have heard them talk of their high joys. The other day you met with one who wore Heaven on his face and you said to yourself, “I wish I knew such joy as beams in this man’s countenance.”

You heard your minister describe the deep peace and holy calm which come with full assurance of faith and every word he spoke about his own joy in the Lord was like a dagger in your heart for you felt that you could not speak of such a blissful experience. You were never on the top of Tabor. You never beheld the transfigured Lord. You are afraid to trust God because you cannot compare with other men in their heights.

Carefully notice two or three little points which I will mention. First, remember that you see these good people at their best. You have not seen their seamy side. Perhaps they have not told you of how, at times, their feet were almost gone, their steps had well-near slipped. You see their days and not their nights! I think it is a very sweet trait in your character that you do so. In this you differ from the wicked world. The ungodly always notice the bad points in the saints—they eat up the sins of God’s people as they eat bread—it is nourishment to them. As for you, poor troubled one, you observe only the virtues of Believers and you overlook their shortcomings.

Surely God has worked a change in you! In this there is some ground of hope—the Lord, who has taken away your envy, malice and all uncharitableness—will remove the rest of your sins if you bring them before Him in repentant faith! Remember, also, that you now see men who have faith in God and you see in them the result of that faith. Do not imagine that their Graces existed before their faith. If you have not the result of faith before, you have faith itself—do not be astonished—they had not these excellences before they believed in Jesus!

Some of the brightest of them were once the blackest of sinners. “Such were some of you,” said Paul—“but you are washed.” Can it be a wise thing to say, “I have not those fruits of the Spirit and therefore I will not cultivate the tree of faith from which they grow”? No, rather say, “The Lord, who made these men what they are, can make me what they are. He that could beautify them with righteousness can also hang my neck with the jewels of holiness.” Do you not think it would be very great folly on your part if you should refrain from believing in the Lord Jesus on the ground that you had greater need to seek Him than other men? Because you lack these things which you see in the saints and know that you can only have them of the Lord by faith—is that a reason why you should not go to God in faith? This is a grand argument for going at once!

Should a man plead his poverty as a reason why he should not ask for alms? Is nakedness a reason for refusing to be dressed? Is hunger a motive for rejecting food? Is sickness a motive for shutting out the physician? I argue in the opposite way! Your urgent need is the strongest reason why you should claim of the Lord, by faith, these promises which He has made to needy souls! If you are more stupid than any man, go to the Lord, that He may instruct you! The greater your need, the greater opportunity you have of glorifying God by believing in Him for an all-sufficient supply. If you lack all these lovely and necessary things which you so much admire in others, it is a sad and grievous need—but if you can believe that the Lord of Mercy can and will give you all—you will do great honor to His name.

Is it not written, “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God”? If you were a little sinner and had little needs, God could only be a little merciful and give you a little supply—but the more stupid you are and the less of true understanding you have—the greater opportunity have you of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ by believing in Him for the great things which you evidently need. If you are the greatest fool that ever lived you will give to Christ all the more honor when you believe that He can make you wise unto salvation! God grant that the heights to which other men reach may never keep you back from faith in God but may they, rather, urge you on to believe great things of God!

But, further, I said—and perhaps I surprised you—that the depths of other men have often kept tremblers from a simple faith in God. I know many who say, “I cannot feel as others feel—my heart is hard and insensible and when I listen to what Believers tell me of their sharp distresses, I fear that I cannot be saved—for into these deep places I have never gone.” These depths are of many kinds but the mention of one or two may suffice. Some Believers have been brought to the Lord through fearful conviction of sin—conviction most overwhelming—they seem to have found their way to Heaven round by the brink of Hell.

“Ah!” you say, “I was never thus shaken over the Pit.” Another, after he has been converted, experiences awful conflicts—from day to day he struggles with inbred corruptions and therefore he goes sighing and crying to Heaven. There is, among the best of men, an amount of sorrow which I need not here dwell upon. Plowing, harrowing, breaking up is the lot of the best of soils. Saints go through fire and through water in their spiritual march to the land of bliss. Perhaps some of you escape these agonies and know but little of the grinding process. Will you therefore fear to believe because you think you are more unfeeling than other men? Will you refuse the cup of Life because God has not infused all His bitters into it?

Listen to me, you that are so readily cast down! Some of these depths you never need wish to know, for they would not be to your advantage, but to your loss! The dark side of much that is called “Christian experience” is not the work of the Holy Spirit at all! In many it is occasioned by a natural crabby disposition—some are so hard that God must use iron wedges with them before their hearts will be reached. There are men with such proud spirits that they need to be brought down to feed swine before they will arise and go to their Father! Others are obstinate and wear a brow of brass—and these must be made faint with labor before they will yield.

In many instances the mental distress which attends the work of the Spirit is produced by sickness of body—it is not repentance but indigestion or some other evil agency depressing the spirits. A sluggish liver will produce most of those fearsome forebodings which we are so ready to regard as spiritual emotions! There is such a blending of the physical with the mental that it is hard to name our feelings. All the experience of a Christian man is not Christian experience. The troubled man experiences a good deal not because he is a Christian, but because he is a man—a

sickly man—a man inclined to melancholy. Why will you envy such a person? Do you want to feel his despondency? Do you really desire disease? Do you think you could trust God better if you had a morbid mind and a disordered body?

What nonsense! I do not admire your taste. I think you are very foolish. In multitudes of instances the strange depressions which befall some excellent people are the result of external trouble, of grinding poverty, of frequent bereavements or of excessive labor. These things may greatly intensify the bitterness of spiritual distress. Do you desire affliction? Do you really think that poverty or bankruptcy would help you to believe in God? Give some men a holiday by the sea and their dark thoughts vanish! Were they ever desirable? In desiring what would only grieve you, you remind me of a child that would always cry until its mother said, “What? Do you cry for nothing? You shall have something to cry for before long.” If you covet grief and even dare to threaten the Lord that you will not believe Him unless He vexes you, it may be that He will deal with you according to your desires—and then you will cry in earnest on the other side of your mouth!

Frequently the great darkness through which many true people of God pass is occasioned by Satan. He delights to torment the child of God with blasphemous suggestions or with foul imaginations. Do any of you say, because you are a stranger to this, “We cannot believe”? Why, dear Soul, you must be out of your mind to talk so! Bless God with all your heart that you are a stranger to these horrible temptations. Never be so insane as to wish for this dreadful trial. These temptations may come quite soon enough. Desire them? Never, while reason remains to you! Do you not think, too, that many are more deeply convicted of sin, more seriously tried and more fiercely tempted than others because the Lord has a special design to answer in them?

Even when the terrible searching work within is all real you need not wish for it, for it may not be necessary in your case since God has not the same intention towards you that He has towards the much-tempted one. Much more is needed by way of foundation for a lofty tower than for a humble cottage—and so the grand public life of such a man may need more digging out by inward sorrow than your more private life can possibly require. Our Lord may also be shaping the tried soul for special work. If a man is to be a son of consolation to others, he must be much exercised himself. Barnabas had to taste the wormwood and the gall or he cannot mix the cup of consolation for others.

Remember that all Christians are not and cannot be of the same caliber. We are all soldiers, Brothers and Sisters, but we are not all champions. God calls upon everyone that believes in Christ to fight His battles, but many of us are happy to belong to the rank and file. We cannot all be captains. Only here and there shall we find a David, who, with his sling and his stone shall go forth, a solitary champion, against gigantic Philistines. For David it was necessary that he should fight lions and bears in his youth or he would not have faced the giant. If God gives us less of inward and outward trials than others, He knows best.

We need enough sorrow to drive us from self and carnal confidence— and when that is effected it would be folly to sigh for more. Our wisdom is to leave our experience with the Lord who will appoint us sun or shade as best will suit our growth. Let us envy no man his standing upon Tabor, or Pisgah—and, on the other hand—let us never desire to make excursions with the Lord’s Jonahs and go with them to the bottom of the mountains! Seek not to copy another man’s ups or downs but wait on God and put your trust in Him even though you should seem to yourself to be more foolish than any other living man.

II. Secondly, and very briefly—A SENSE OF INFERIORITY MUST NOT KEEP US FROM LEARNING. Suppose you have to say, “I am more stupid than any man”—you have so much the more need of being taught the things of God. If you have not the understanding of a man, that is so much more cause that you should go to school to the Holy Spirit till the eyes of your understanding shall be enlightened and you shall know the Truth and the Truth of God shall make you free. Vital Truth is simple. A great many things are hard to understand, but that which is essential to salvation is not difficult. To know yourself a sinner and Christ a Savior—is this a deep mystery? To quit your own self and your own trusts—simply to rely upon the Person and work of the Son of God—is this exceedingly difficult to understand? The safest Truth of God is the simplest!

Commonly an invention in machinery grows more simple as it nears perfection—and because God’s way of salvation is perfect—therefore it is simplicity itself! You can know the Gospel for it is not a tough metaphysical problem, but a Revelation which he that runs may read. If you are staggered by the sublimity of heavenly learning, consider that these things are revealed to babes. Our Lord said, “I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes.” Therefore, if you are more than ever conscious of your spiritual babyhood, be none the less assured that the Lord can and will reveal His Truths to you!

Remember, also, that the Holy Spirit is a great Teacher. The best earthly teacher may be able to do very little with such slow scholars as we are. Therefore let us go to our heavenly Teacher, that He may give us of His Spirit with which we may learn the Truths of God. He can teach young men wisdom and give to babes knowledge and discretion. When the Lord teaches, it is wonderful how quickly we learn! We have frequently met with young children, deep-taught in the things of God, because the Holy Spirit has been their Teacher.

Let me comfort you by the remark that a sense of ignorance is a very good beginning for a learner. The doorstep of the Palace of Wisdom is a humble sense of ignorance. When you are empty of all fancied wisdom there is room for God to fill you with heavenly instruction. If you are more stupid than any man, I should hope you are more surely on the way to be made wise from the very foundation—by the teaching of the Spirit of God.

Hang your hope upon that promise—“All your children shall be taught of the Lord.” You are one of those children, though you are a little one, and therefore you are included in the number of those who shall be taught of the Lord.

The Lord will not give up one of the children of Zion as incorrigible. Dunces, whom no other master would tolerate, the gentle Spirit will tenderly instruct! Therefore I say unto you, let not a sense of inferiority keep you from following on to know the Lord.

III. I have been very brief upon that second point and I must be much the same on the third: A SENSE OF INFERIORITY MUST NOT KEEP US BACK FROM SERVING GOD. What if, like Agur, we take the very lowest place? Like he did, let us speak on God’s behalf. Who knows, He may prophesy by us, also? Agur’s simple word is called “the prophecy.” If God shall speak by you, my Friend, your thinking so little of yourself will give a charm to your speech. If God shall use such as you are, He will have all the glory of it, will He not?

When the Lord uses a very clever man there is always the fear that people will ascribe the success to the human instrument. But when the Lord uses the man who admits he is a poor foolish creature, then the honor is not divided, but all men see that this is the finger of God. The Lord loves to use tools which are not rusted with self-conceit. An axe which boasts itself shall not be used upon the thick trees. God can use inferior persons for grand purposes! He has often done so. Go into His armory and see how He has worked by flies and lice, by worms and caterpillars, by frogs and serpents! His greatest victories were won by a hammer and a tent-pin, by an ox-goad, by the jawbone of an ass, by a sling and a stone and such like.

His greatest Prophets at the first tried to excuse themselves on the ground of unfitness. In the armory of the Lord you will find few swords with golden scabbards, but you will find many unlikely weapons. God uses what no one else would look upon. The Lord can get much glory out of you, my poor desponding Friend! Bestir yourself! Though you think yourself quite unworthy, go on in consecration of heart to yield yourself wholly to God and He will not pass you by. Remember, the Lord does not expect of you more than you can do—it is accepted if it is according to what a man has—and not according to what he has not. In building a house there must be the common bricks for the wall as well as the carved stone for the corner. Are you so ambitious that nothing but the chief place will suit you? Shame upon you! Let no man despise anything that may come in to complete the building of the house that God inhabits.

Suppose you feel that you are more stupid than any man, shall I give you a little advice? If you can do but little, make the best of yourself by intensity. In the natural world, that creature is most to be feared which is the most energetic, rather than that which is greatest. You shall find your life more in danger from the slender viper than from the huge ox. That which is the fullest of fire and energy will achieve the most. A small musket ball in full speed will do more execution than a great cannonball which lies still.

Make the best of yourself, also, by perseverance. If you are a little axe and can give only a small chip at a time, keep on striking and even the oak will yield to your blows. If you are only a drop, remember that constant dripping wears away stones. Keep on at holy service and do so all the more because you do so little at any one time. Many littles will make much. Pennies given every day will make pounds. Make up, by spiritual force what you lack in natural ability. If you lack talent, get all the more Divine Grace and you will be no loser. If you love God more, even though you know less of science, you will live a successful, because a holy, life. If you have a greater love for the souls of your hearers than the man who has 10 talents, you may be 10 times more a soul-winner than he.

It is spiritual power, not mental power, which avails in conversion. Agur, a little further on in his one chapter, cheers up the humbler sort of people by his talk about little things. In his 24th verse, he says—“There are four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceedingly wise: the ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer.” You that cannot do very much, take care never to lose an opportunity. Make hay while the sun shines—seize the seasons and turn them to account. If you were a great man and could at one speech sway the minds of thousands, even then you ought not to be idle. But if you can only deal with one at a time, do not let that one escape you! Copy the bees and the ants and use the summer hours right diligently.

Next, read verse twenty-six. You are feeble, but remember, “The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.” Keep to the Rock. Keep to eternal Truths. Keep to the things which cannot be moved. Never run away from the Gospel. There is not much in you, but there is a great deal in Christ—always keep to Him. You cannot say much, but let all you do say savor of Christ. Never quit the Gospel, or you leave the Rock of your shelter. Keep to the Rock and you will do much good and run no risk.

Next, if you are very little, you should, like the locusts, associate with others and go forth in an orderly way to work. Make yourself useful by dropping into rank and in holy companionship doing your part in connection with the rest. One locust is a thing to be laughed at but when they go forth in bands they make nations tremble. One Believer may accomplish little—but in the ranks of the Sunday school the many can do wonders! Suppose you are as little thought of as a spider, yet copy the spider in the two things which Agur mentions. Take hold with your hands. Always be taking hold upon the promise of the great King by the hand of faith. Let your faith come out of your own heart as the spider spins her web out of her own bowels. Be always hanging on to one promise or another and constantly add to your holding.

Have also a holy courage like the spider, who is in king’s palaces. She is not satisfied with being hidden away in a barn or a cottage—she pays a visit to Solomon and makes her abode in his painted halls. If you can go anywhere for Christ, go and spin your web of Gospel from your inmost

soul! Make up your mind that whatever company you are in you will begin to spin about Christ and spin a web in which to catch a soul for your Lord! In this way, though you fear you are more stupid than any man, God will make as much use of you as if you were the wisest of men! I pray you, O feeble one, render to your Lord such service as you can.

IV. Lastly—A SENSE OF INFERIORITY MUST NOT HINDER OUR FAITH IN THE LORD. Suppose you have to say, this morning, very groaningly, “I am more stupid than any man, I have not the understanding of a man.” What then? Are you going to fret and worry about it? Will you, therefore, refuse to believe in your God? I do not see, if it is true to the fullest extent, that there is any reasonable cause for being cast down in reference to the Lord your God!

Would you expect to be saved because you were not stupid? Would you look for Heaven because you had a fine understanding and could place a third of the letters of the alphabet at the end of your name? If everybody said, “What a highly-cultured man this is!” do you think Heaven’s gate would open any the more readily to you? You are on the wrong tack, my Friend, if you think so. Capacities and attainments put plumes into the hat but they do not protect the head from error.

Answer me this. Are not the little things in creation full of joy? Do not the dewdrops sparkle on the hedges? When the summer comes, walk down your garden and see the thousands of gnats. What are they doing? They are dancing up and down in the sunbeams. The very flies are full of delight. Will you be shamed by a gnat or a fly? No! Take to dancing, too, but let it be like that of David when he danced before the Ark of God! Rejoice in the Lord always! God gives small creatures great delight. Why should not you be as happy, after your measure, as the angels are? Little stars twinkle for very brightness.

If you need humbler examples, look at the little birds and hear how they sing. Great birds seldom have the gift of song. You may listen long before you will hear an ostrich or an emu singing. In our own farmyards neither the turkey nor the peacock charm us with their melody. Little birds awake the sun with their harmonies and make the morning sacred with their Psalmody. Tell me, you that feel as if you were less than the least—is there any reason why you should not rejoice in the Lord? Who had most joy out of the Lord Jesus when He was here? Or rather, who expressed their delight most exultingly? It was not great Peter, nor active James, nor holy John—it was the children in the temple—

“**Children of Jerusalem  
Sang the praise of Jesus’ name.”**

They shouted “Hosanna!” “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings He has perfected praise,” if nothing else. The little ones can praise, for they are happy in the sweet simplicity of their faith and in the warmth of their hearts. My dear Friend, do the same. Delight yourself also in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord and express your gladness. “Ah, Sir! I am foolish and ignorant.” Yes, but did you notice in the 73rd Psalm, which we read just now, that I called your attention to the singular language used by Asaph? He says, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You: You have held me by my hand.”

God takes care of the foolish and guards the feeble—let them rest in His love and be glad in His care. Remember that if, by reason of our inferiority, you and I have to take a back seat, the back seats are still in the house. Our littleness does not alter God’s promise! It is the same promise to the small as to the great—to the weak as to the strong. Our deficiency does not alter our God. He is as full of Grace and Truth as ever. He does not increase because we are enlarged—neither is He diminished because we have declined. As a babe in Grace, my God is the same God as those rejoice in who have attained to fullness of stature in Christ Jesus.

What a blessed God we have! Only to think of Him is hope—to know Him is fruition. “Yes, my own God is He,” said David. And he could never have uttered a grander word. “This God is our God forever and ever,” is a sentence which might as fairly have been spoken in Heaven as upon this lower earth. It has a glory tone about it. Come, you little ones, you backward ones, you foolish ones, dwell upon the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit with your hearts’ delight! The triune God is yours—your Father, your Redeemer, your Comforter—a triple blessing is thus secured to you! Let your triple nature of body, soul and spirit rejoice therein!

This makes no difference to the Covenant of Grace. Babes in their baby clothes, if they are heirs, have quite as sure a right to their inheritance as have those who are of full age. One is as legally protected as if he were one-and-twenty. The children cannot yet take full possession by reason of their tender years, but the law defies a rogue to rob even an infant heir of his lawful inheritance! Enjoy, therefore, O you little ones, the infinite wealth of the Covenant and doubt not your right and title in Christ Jesus! However little you may be, this makes no difference to God’s love to you. Ask yourselves, do you love that full-grown son of yours of 25 so much that you have the less love left for your chubby little boy of two or three at home?

Bless his little heart! When he climbs into your knees today and asks whether you have a kiss for him, will you answer, “No, Johnny, I cannot love you, for you are so little that I gave all my love to your older brother because he knows so much more than you do and can be so useful to me”? Oh, no! You love the last one, perhaps, better than any of them— certainly not less! They say that if there is a child in the family who is a little weak, the mother always loves it most. It is so with our God—He is most tender and most gracious to the weakest and least known. Our Shepherd carries the lambs in His bosom and does gently lead those that are with young—why, be not cast down because of your conscious inferiority—but admire the condescending Grace of God.

If you feel that you are more stupid than anybody else, yet believe in God up to the hilt—believe in Him and trust Him with all your heart—and then feel all the more gratitude that He should have loved such a worthless one as you are. Feel all the more content with that free, rich, sovereign Grace which has chosen you and ordained you to eternal life. Glorify God by your very weakness. Glory in your infirmity, because the power of Christ rests upon you. Be all the more trustful in God since you have nothing in yourself to rely upon. Say, “The great ones may run alone, but I am a babe and I must be carried in my Father’s arms. Therefore I will have the greater faith to match my greater need.” Our deep sense of folly and weakness should also keep us humble before the Lord. Where is room for boasting? What have we to glory in? We owe all to Mercy and to Mercy shall be all the praise!

Lastly, be more tender to others who, like yourself, are feeble. It is wonderful how gracious little ones care for other little ones—sympathize with them, pray for them and comfort them. I believe that the saying is strictly true, that “the poor help the poor.” And I know it is so among the spiritually poor. High and mighty ones cannot help downcast saints—only those who have been afflicted can console the afflicted. In the East, among the Bedouins, in a shepherd’s family, the little children, as soon as they can walk, learn to keep the lambs. You see the little boy who can only go slowly can lead the little lambs admirably, for he and they go well together. The big father would have taken long strides and so have tired the little lambs. But his little son can only go at a slow pace and that pace suits the lambs. The weak lambs are pleased with their little shepherd who is a lamb like themselves—he is fond of the lambs and the lambs feel at home with him.

So, dear Friends, if the Lord permits you to be among the little ones, look after the little ones—and whereas some would have to bend their backs too much to look after the lowly—you are on their level and will naturally care for their state. Thus will you find your sphere of usefulness and in it you will earn to yourselves a good degree. Though, like Agur, you feel more stupid than any man, you will so live that nobody would have thought so if you had not told them—and few will believe it when you do tell them! To God alone be glory. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Psalm 73; Proverbs 30:1-9.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—122 (SONG 1), 398, 616.

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THE GOSPEL CORDIAL  
NO. 3236

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1911.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1863.

**“Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that are of heavy heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.  
Proverbs 31:6, 7.**

THESE somewhat singular sentences were spoken by the mother of Lemuel to her son, who was probably Solomon. She had already said to him, “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink and forget the Law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.” But such a king as Solomon must have had an abundant store of wine of all kinds, so his mother urged him to give it to the sick and the sad and the poor who needed it more than he did. The Jews were in the habit of giving a cup of strong drink, usually with some potent drug in it, to stupefy those who were about to be executed. Perhaps that is the meaning of the words, “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish.” We know, too, how persons who have been very weak and ill, on the very borders of the grave, have often been medicinally relieved by wine given to them which they could not possibly purchase for themselves. I believe this is the literal meaning of the text and that if any man should be wicked enough to draw from it the inference that he would be able to forget his misery and poverty by drinking—he would soon find himself woefully mistaken, for if he had one misery before—he would have 10 miseries afterwards! And if he were previously poor, he would be in still greater poverty afterwards. Those who fly to the bottle for consolation might as soon fly to Hell to find a Heaven and, instead of helping them to forget their poverty, drunkenness would only sink them still more deeply in the mire!

I am going to use my text spiritually, for I believe it has a far deeper meaning than that which glistens upon its surface. There are many persons who are doubting and despairing, spiritually “ready to perish.” And there is, in the Word of God, a rich store of comforting Truths which are far more cheering to the spirit than wine can ever be to the body! And we are to give this Gospel Cordial to those who are heavy of heart, that they may drink and forget their misery and remember their doubts and despair no more!

In attempting to obey the precept of the text, I am going to speak upon three topics. First, that there is a most comforting cordial in the Gospel. Secondly, that it is our duty and privilege to give this cordial to all who need it. And, thirdly, that when it is given to such people, it is their duty and privilege to drink and forget their spiritual poverty and misery.

I. So, first, THERE IS MOST COMFORTING CORDIAL IN THE GOSPEL. Dr. Watts truly sings—  
*“Salvation! Oh, the joyful sound!  
‘Tis pleasure to our ears  
A sovereign balm for every wound,  
A cordial for our fears.”*

I will take, first, the case of a true Believer in Jesus who is sorely tried with cares and losses and crosses. I will suppose that you have come in here, tonight, dreading what may happen to you tomorrow. Perhaps your trouble, my Brother, is that your business is failing and that need is staring you in the face. Possibly you, my Sister, are sorrowing over that dear child who lies in her little coffin in the quiet room upstairs at home. Or it may be that you, my Friend, have a sick wife and, day by day you see fresh signs and tokens of the great loss that is surely awaiting you. I cannot mention all the causes of sad heart in the believing members of this great assembly, but my Master has sent me here with His own blessed cordial which is more than sufficient to comfort every sorrowing saint here!

Remember, Beloved, that all that happens to you comes in the course of Divine Providence. Your loving Heavenly Father has foreseen, foreknown and, I venture to say, foreordained it all! The medicine you have to drink is very bitter, but the unerring Physician measured all the ingredients, drop by drop, and then mixed them in the very way in which they would best work for your highest good. Nothing in this world happens by chance. That great God who sits upon the circler of the heavens, to whom all things that He has made are but as the small dust of the balance, who make the clouds His chariot and rides upon the wings of the wind—that same God cares for you with such special care that He has even numbered the very hairs of your head and put your tears in His bottle! You may, therefore, rest assured that even those experiences which are causing you so much sorrow are all in accordance with His eternal counsel and decree! Does not this Divine Cordial make you forget your poverty and remember your misery no more?

Remember, too, that everything that happens to Believers is working for their present and lasting good. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” If you could have chosen your own circumstances and condition in life, you could not have made so wise a choice as God has made for you! The gardener knows where his plants will flourish best. Some of them might wish to grow in the sunshine, although like the fern family, they are better in the shade. Some of them would prefer to be on yonder mossy bank, but the gardener puts them in sandy soil because he knows that it is better suited to the requirements of their nature. You may depend upon it that there never was any earthly father who was so attentive to the needs of his child as your Heavenly Father is to you! When you decide as to the occupation you think is best for your son to follow, you may select the very career that will prove to be his ruin—but when God plans your future, He takes more care in arranging for you than you do in arranging for your boy and, as He sees the end from the beginning—which you cannot see either for yourself or for your child—He chooses for you with Infinite and Unerring Wisdom! Do not wish to have it otherwise, dear Brother or Sister in Christ! Be not only content with such things as you have, but say with David, “The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: You maintain my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage.” So drink this Divine Cordial and forget your poverty and remember your misery no more!

Moreover, beloved Friend, do you not know that the Lord Jesus Christ is with you in all your poverty and misery? Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego never realized the Presence of the Son of God so blessedly until they were cast alive into Nebuchadnezzar’s burning fiery furnace! But His Presence with them, there, was so manifest that even the heathen king exclaimed, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” There is many a child who has no special petting and fondling so long as it stays well—but as soon as it is ill it seems as though all the mother’s love was concentrated upon that particular member of the family—and it is to you who especially need such a cheering message that the Lord says, “As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; and you shall be comforted.” It was to His ancient people that He gave the gracious promise and it was concerning them that it was said, “In all their affliction, He was afflicted, and the angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old.” It is thus that He still tenderly and lovingly deals with His tried and afflicted people! And this thought ought to be like a cordial to make them forget their poverty and misery!

I might keep on all night trying thus to comfort tried saints, but I must content myself by giving them just one more sip of this Divine Cordial and that shall be this—remember how soon all these trials will be over! Be of good courage, weary pilgrim—the heavenly mansion where you are to rest forever is almost in sight! It is so close that you may well sing—

*“My Father’s house on high,  
Home of my soul! How near,  
At times, to faith’s foreseeing eyes,  
Your golden gates appear!”*

How fast the years fly by and our trials and troubles are flying just as fast. Beloved, Paul truly wrote concerning “our light affliction, which is but for a moment,” for after all, our afflictions are only like a troubled dream—a little starting in the sleep of life and then we wake to sleep no more forever. This world is to the Believer, like a country inn by the wayside where there are many constantly coming and going, and there are such disturbing noises that no one can rest. Well, never mind, you are only tarrying there for one short night and then you shall be up and away to your eternal home, to go no more out forever! Will not this Divine Cordial make you forget your poverty and remember your misery no more?

Now I will take the case of a true Believer in Jesus who is suffering from soul-desertion. You, my Friend, are inclined to say with Heman the Ezrahite, “O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before You!...You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps...Lord, why do You cast off my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?” You are even inclined to think that you now can understand that cry of Christ upon the Cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” The Lord seems to turn a deaf ear to your supplications! Prayer, itself, is a heavy burden to you—you have no comforting visions of the Savior’s face—past seasons of holy enjoyment are only remembered by you with regret that you no longer have such happy experiences! Even when you turn to the Word of God, itself, your eyes seems to fix only upon the threats and never notice the many “exceedingly great and precious promises.” And your soul is “ready to perish” in despair! Well, my poor Brother, if there ever was a time when you needed the spiced wine of God’s Covenant faithfulness and the luscious, nutritious nectar of Jesus Christ’s everlasting Love, it is now! I wonder what Arminians do when they are seized with this kind of spiritual condition and shake in terror from head to foot? I know that when I have these attacks—and I do have them very badly sometimes—I turn to those texts that say most about God’s free and Sovereign Grace and I try to get the marrow and fatness out of them to feed my starving soul! Those who, “do business in great waters,” spiritually, find that nothing will serve their turn but God’s eternal decrees, God’s unchanging purposes, God’s neverfailing faithfulness, God’s distinguishing, discriminating Grace! At least that is my own experience and I urge you, my despairing Brother or Sister, to take a deep draft of the same Divine Cordial so that you may forget your spiritual poverty and remember your misery no more! You are not likely to turn the high Doctrines of the Gospel to evil account, so come and feed upon them till your soul is satiated with these dainties of your Lord’s banqueting house. Accept His own gracious invitation, “Eat, O Friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.”

Among the other comforting things that I should say to a Brother or Sister suffering from soul-desertion would be this—Remember, Brothers and Sisters, if you were ever a child of God, you are a child of God now! You pass through many changes, but you have a Savior who is always the same—“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” You have your ups and downs. You change with every phase of the moon. But with the great “Father of Lights” there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” We rightly sing—

*“Unchangeable His will  
Whatever be my frame!  
His loving heart is still  
Eternally the same!  
My soul through many change goes,  
His love no variation knows!”*

He never began a work of Grace in anyone and then left it unfinished! He never adopted a child into His family and then cast him out to perish! The Lord Jesus Christ never first married any soul and then divorced her, for He hates putting away. He will never part with any member of His mystical body, If He could do such an outrageous thing, He would, Himself, be incomplete! So, my despairing Brother, I say to you that if you have ever had the Light and the Love of God in your soul, not only are you still a saved man, but the time will yet come when you will know that it is so! Like Jonah, you will yet come up out of the depths and with him you will ascribe all the glory of your salvation unto the Lord.

I also want to try to comfort some true Believers in Jesus who are afraid they are not really the Lord’s. I am glad that John Bunyan mentioned some of their names in his immortal allegory, for we still have among us swarms of people who answer to his description of Mr. Fearing, Mr. Feeble-Mind, Mr. Despondency and his daughter, Miss MuchAfraid, Mr. Ready-to-Halt and Mr. Little-Faith, though we have only here and there a Mr. Great-Heart, or a Mr. Stand-Fast, or a Mr. Valiant-forTruth. Well, dear Friends, if you are here, tonight, let me remind you that although you are the little ones in God’s family, you are not little in God’s sight! He loves you just as much as He loves the greatest saint who ever lived! When the Lord gave the commandment to Moses concerning the ransom for every soul numbered among the children of Israel, it was expressly stated, “The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel when they give an offering unto the Lord to make an atonement for your souls.” It is the same in the Atonement worked by the Lord Jesus Christ—it cost Him just as much, and no more, to ransom the least of His people or the greatest—and He loves them equally! He may use some of them as His instruments more than He uses others, but He has the same regard for all of them! If He ever makes any difference in His treatment of them, it is the weak ones who have the preference—He carries the lambs in His bosom, but He allows the strong sheep to follow in His tracks.

So be of good cheer, you feeble folk who belong to Christ, and also remember that little saints are just as safe as big saints. If we are with Christ in the vessel of His Church, we are just as safe as all the rest of those on board—and we may rest assured that we shall never perish, for if we could, Christ would perish, too, and that can never be! The greatest saint who ever served his Lord with Apostolic zeal or even Christlike selfsacrifice, has to rely for his salvation on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ—and the feeblest saint has to do the same—and the one is no more saved and safe than is the other. So Mr. Fearing and Miss Much-Afraid, drink that Divine Cordial and be no longer either doubtful or sad!

I think my text also has a special message to the sinner who is heavy of heart and desponding in spirit. To such an one I would present the Gospel Cordial thus. My Friend, remember that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” That word, “sinners,” includes you. And if you ask me, “What must I do to be saved?” I answer as Paul did when that question was put to him, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” So, as you are commanded to believe on Christ, to rely upon Him, to trust to Him to save you, it cannot be presumptuous on your part to do so! Jesus Christ is “mighty to save.” He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. If there is a sinner here who is so bad that I could not describe his case to you, he is not too bad for Christ to save! Then why do you despair, O you who are “ready to perish,” seeing that God has given up His well-beloved Son to die for just such sinners as you are? Your sins are great, I know, and they cry aloud for punishment—but the moment that you repent of them and trust in the blood of Jesus to cleanse you from them—you shall be made perfectly whole! Your sins shall be so completely put away that God says that if they are searched for, they shall not be found! They shall be as absolutely annihilated as if you had never committed them! What more comforting cordial than that can you possibly have set before you? Then drink of it and forget your poverty and remember your misery no more!

II. I can only speak very briefly upon the second point which is that IT IS OUR DUTY AND PRIVILEGE TO GIVE THIS CORDIAL TO ALL WHO NEED IT.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I want you all to obey the injunction of the text by giving this Gospel Cordial to those who are heavy of heart and “ready to perish.” Some of you can do this by talking to them of your own experience. When you meet with doubting and desponding souls, tell them how the Lord delivered you from old Giant Despair’s grim dungeon in Doubting Castle. Remind them of that key called, Promise, which can unlock the doors of the prison where they lie bound in fetters of iron! We are told that Origen, so long as his strength permitted, used to go to the prisons where the Christians were confined during the Decian persecution and afterwards went with them to the stake, comforting them from the Scriptures which he had found to be such a support to his own soul. Imitate him as far as you can, even though Christians are not now persecuted unto death.

Many of you can give away this Gospel Cordial by visiting the sick and the poor. In so vast a Church as this, it is impossible for the pastor or elders to visit all the members, much less visit all who compose our great congregation! So I would urge you to do the visiting, yourselves, as far as you are able. Especially would I invite you who are the most deeply experienced in the things of God to find out the sin and the sorrowing in your own neighborhoods and to comfort them with the comfort wherewith you, yourselves, have been comforted of God. Then, many more of you than are at present doing it, can give away this Gospel Cordial by preaching wherever and whenever you have the opportunity. In such a city as London, where every street corner can furnish a pulpit and every street can supply a congregation, there is no excuse for the man with only one talent if he does not use it for Christ! The good news you have to tell, my Brother, is so sweet that it should be told over and over and over again till every gale shall spread the tidings to—

*“All people that on earth do dwell.”*  
I pray the Lord also to raise up many Brothers and Sisters from our midst to go to “the regions beyond” as missionaries of the Cross and to move you who cannot preach, to give of your substance either for the training of our Brothers in the College, or for the support of those who are called of God to preach and teach the Word in distant lands where Jesus is not known. In that way, you, too, will be helping to give the Gospel Cordial to those who are heavy of heart and “ready to perish.”

III. Now lastly and but briefly, WHEN THIS GOSPEL CORDIAL IS GIVEN TO SUCH PEOPLE, IT IS THEIR DUTY AND PRIVILEGE TO DRINK IT and forget their spiritual poverty and remember their misery no more!

We can bring a horse to the water, but we cannot make him drink it. And we can carry this Gospel Cordial to the sinner, but only the Holy Spirit can sweetly constrain him to take a full, deep drink of it. I have been trying to give this Cordial, again tonight, to those who need it, as indeed I have been doing ever since the Lord first opened my mouth to speak for Him. But what about your part of the business, my dear Hearers? It is my duty and privilege to preach the Gospel, but it is just as much your duty and privilege to believe it when it is preached! “Faith comes by hearing,” but alas, there are many who hear the Word who are like those of whom the Apostle wrote that “the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” To have the healing medicine in your hands and yet not to drink it is to commit spiritual suicide! I beseech you, Sinner, not to add that crowning crime to all your other iniquities! I pray you, this very hour, to accept the proffered blessing. The Water of Life is set before you—drink and live! The Bread of Life is placed within your reach—why should your immortal soul be starved and perish?

Do you fear that you are too black a sinner to be saved? Remember Agur’s words concerning one of the “four things which are little upon the earth,” but which “are exceedingly wise.” He said, “The spider takes hold with her hands and is in kings’ palaces.” It may be that Agur had seen a big black spider in Solomon’s palace and that, as he mused upon it, he said to himself, “That ugly creature is very wise, for there was a great storm coming on and her usual home would have been unsafe, so, looking about for a place of shelter, she spied an open window in the King’s palace and in she went. She had no right there—no one had invited her— but there she was.” Now, poor Sinner, that spider was not as full of venom as you are full of sin! There is a greater storm coming on than that spider dreaded—and the door of God’s Mercy is as surely open as was that window in Solomon’s palace! And you are invited to enter, as that spider never was invited! O Sinner, be at least as wise as a spider and come in to God’s royal palace of salvation! For once you are inside, you shall never be cast out!

Are you still afraid to come to Jesus? Then let me remind you of that poor woman who came and touched the hem of His garment and was instantly cured of her long-standing malady! You remember that she was ceremonially unclean—she had no business to be in a crowd—yet she was so eager to be healed that she worked her way through the throng until she was near enough to Jesus to touch the border of His seamless robe, for she said, “If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole.” She did so and Christ at once honored her faith and gave her the gracious assurance that she might “go in peace”—and keep the cure that she had, as it were, obtained by stealth! O Sinner, will you not be as wise as that poor woman was? You need not attempt to steal the blessing, for you are invited to come and take it openly! Jesus still says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Rest is what you need—rest of mind, rest of heart, rest of conscience—that rest can only come to you by faith, “for we who have believed do enter into rest.” O you poverty-stricken and miserable sinners, believe in Jesus! Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, for so shall you find rest unto your souls! And then shall you also realize that “there remains” another rest— a fuller and yet more blessed one—even that eternal “keeping of Sabbath” which is the blissful portion of all “the people of God!”

There is the Divine Cordial which we are commanded to place within your reach. Drink it and forget your poverty and remember your misery no more. God bless you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOHN 11:1-44.**

Verse 1. Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. To many people it may have seemed an event of no particular importance that “a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany,” but great consequences often depend upon what appear to us to be very minor matters—and we must not despise the least of the Lord’s people, nor think little of anything that concerns them. When a king or an emperor is ill, the news is published in all the papers, but when a friend of the Lord Jesus, a man “named Lazarus of Bethany” was sick, that event was recorded in the Bible because of something very remarkable which was to follow that sickness! Lazarus was a son of God—and Divine Grace makes greater distinctions than earthly rank and worldly honors ever can make!

2, 3. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick). Therefore his sisters sent unto Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.

[See Sermon #1518, Volume 26—BELOVED, YET AFFLICTED—Read/download the entire sermon, free

of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] So you see that those whom Jesus loves may be, themselves, ill, or may have dear ones who are ill. Yes, and the illness may be sent by God as a token and testimony of His affection for them! Men polish gems, but they do not take the trouble to polish common pebbles—and God sends affliction to His own beloved ones for their good and for His Glory.

4. When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death. That was not to be the end of it. God had quite another purpose in view in allowing Lazarus to be sick. “This sickness is not unto death.”

4. But for the Glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Jesus knew that Lazarus would die, but He also knew that his death would only be a kind of interlude—the great design of God was not to take Lazarus Home at that time, but to glorify His Son in the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead!

5. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus. Happy was the family at Bethany of which it could be said that all the members of it were dear to Christ! Is it so with your household, Martha? Or is it only Mary who is thus loved? Has Lazarus been left out? Then pray for your brother as these gracious sisters sent to tell Jesus about Lazarus.

6. When He had heard, therefore, that he was sick, He still abode two days in the same place where He was. We cannot always understand what our Master does. It seemed a strange thing that when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was. Yet there was a good reason for the delay—Christ was waiting in wisdom and in love. I think I see Mary and Martha, day after day wondering where Jesus could be! Perhaps even thinking hard thoughts of Him and saying, “He loved us, and He loved our brother—why did He not come as soon as we sent for Him?”

7-10. Then after that He said to His disciples, Let us go into Judæa again. His disciples said unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone You, and do You go there again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walks in the day, he stumbles not because he sees the light of this world. But if a man walks in the night, he stumbles because there is no light in him. Christ felt that His day was not over and that He could not die before His work was done and, therefore, He did not fear the stones cast by unbelieving foes! So, my Brother, at all risks go on with your God-given work! You will live through your 12 hours and you will not live a moment longer! Be so much a believer in predestination that even if duty calls you to risk your life, you will bravely do it knowing that you are in the hands of God and that your life cannot end until your appointed 12 hours have expired!

11. These things said He: and after that He said unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleeps. “Our friend?” Why, Lazarus was Christ’s friend—yes, but those who are Christ’s friends are our friends, too, if we belong to Christ! I have recently met with a large number of persons from different countries, but the moment we discovered that we loved the same Lord, we seemed to be as intimate as if we had been next-door neighbors for the last 50 years! “Our friend Lazarus sleeps.”

11-14 . But I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleeps, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spoke of his death: but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. Let me remind you, my dear Brothers who preach the Gospel, that you will have to preach very plainly—for you see that even the Apostles could not understand a figure of speech! When Christ said, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps,” they mistook His meaning, so He had to say plainly, “Lazarus is dead.” That is how we must preach the Gospel—not only so that our hearers can understand it, but so that they cannot misunderstand it.

15, 16. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent you may believe. Nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with Him. Thomas always took a dark view of things, so he thought his Master was going to be killed. But he was a brave disciple, for he said to the other disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.” There are still many very timid despondent disciples, but they cling to Christ and, if necessary, they would die for Him as Thomas was willing to die with Him! God bless you, Thomas! There are worse men than you, but not many better!

17. Then when Jesus came, He found that he had already lain in the grave four days. You know that in the East they have to bury the dead almost immediately because of the heat of the climate—so that Lazarus was, not long after he was dead, put away in the family vault.

18. Now Bethany was near unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off. An easy walk of somewhere about two miles.  
19, 20. And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him: but Mary sat still in the house. You will often hear people praising Mary at the expense of Martha, but although Mary is commended for sitting at Christ’s feet, Martha, here, was the first to meet her Lord. The varying characters of different persons come out best at different times. Mary is best at sermon time—she forgets the cups and the platters. But Martha is the more practical in the time of grief. She is active and does not give way as Mary does. She is not so contemplative and not so crushed as Mary is, so she is the first to go to meet her Lord.  
21. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died. There seems to have been just a tinge of reproach in Martha’s words—and Mary said exactly the same words to their dear Master and Friend a little later. And I have often heard Martha and Mary talk in this fashion—“Oh, if we had only had another doctor!” Or, “If our dear friend had not gone to the seaside!” Or, possibly, “If he had gone to the seaside, he might not have died.” Well now, beloved Friends, you have grief enough in having lost your relative or friend without adding to it by these unwise suppositions about what might have happened if you had done something else! Do not fall into that mistake and wound yourselves and grieve your best Friend by unnecessary and useless regrets!

22-24. But I know that even now [See Sermon #2249, Volume 38—EVEN NOW— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.], whatever

You will ask of God, God will give it to You. Jesus said unto her, Your brother shall rise again. Martha said unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the Resurrection at the Last Day. She could not believe the joyful meaning that Christ meant to convey to her when He said, “Your brother shall rise again.”

25. Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection. Note that our Lord did not say, “I am He who raises the dead,” but, “I am the Resurrection.”  
25-27. And the Life: He that believes in Me, though he were dead, [See

Sermon #1799, Volume 30—“THOUGH HE WERE DEAD”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of

charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this? She said unto Him, Yes, Lord: I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. Will not many of you make Martha’s grand confession of faith your own? Believe in Jesus and then you will be able to believe anything and everything that He says!

28. And when she had so said, she went her way and called Mary, her sister, secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calls for you. [See Sermon  
#1198, Volume 20—THE MASTER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Metropolitan Martha’s title for Christ might be rendered, “The Teacher, The Authoritative Teacher,” yet I am glad our translators put it, “The Master.”

29. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came unto Him. The coming of Christ had such an effect upon her that she arose from amid the ashes of her sorrow and went out to meet her dear Lord and Master.

30, 31. Now Jesus was not yet coming into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goes unto the grave to weep there. It is significant that these mourners did not follow Martha when she went to meet Jesus—but they did follow Mary. Sometimes sinners who are not converted by listening to one preacher, are blessed by the testimony of two. One sister may not be able to lead her brother to Christ, yet God may enable two to do it. Jesus sent out His 70 disciples, “two and two,” and the Apostles are usually mentioned in pairs—Simon and Andrew, James and John, Phillip and Bartholomew and so on—and we shall find that two Christians can often accomplish what one alone could not do.

32, 33. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His knees, saying unto Him, Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. His heart was full of sympathy. He felt the grief of these mourners and sorrowed with them.

34, 35. And said, Where have you laid him? They said unto Him, Lord,  
come and see. Jesus wept. [See Sermon #2091, Volume 35—“JESUS WEPT”— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] In the orig

inal, a very blessed and expressive word is used here concerning Christ’s weeping—quite a different word from that used to describe the weeping of Mary and the Jews. It should be a constant comfort to the sorrowing Church of God that “Jesus wept.”

36-39. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him! [See Sermon #3228,  
Volume 56—“OH, HOW HE LOVES”—Read/download the entire sermon, soon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] And some of them said, Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore, again groaning in Himself, came to the grave. It was a cave and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, said unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinks: for he has been dead four days. “Will you expose that corrupt corpse to the air? “Ah, me, what poor foul creatures we are through the Fall! See what we may, any of us, become in a few days, so that even the one who loves us best will have to say of us, “Bury my dead out of my sight.”

40, 41. Jesus said unto her, Said I not unto you, that if you would believe, you should see the Glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard me. That groaning in spirit was Christ’s prayer to His Father, that inward tumult of His soul was His earnest supplication! And now He thanks His Father that He has heard Him! Yet Lazarus was still dead and lying—a mass of corruption—in the grave. Oh, for faith to bless God for the mercies that are on the way to us!

42, 44. And I knew that You hear Me always: but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me. And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth! And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto

them, Loosen him, and let him go. [See Sermons #1052, Volume 18—THE SPHERE OF INSTRUMENTALITY; Sermon #1776, Volume 30—UNBINDING LAZARUS and #2554 Volume 44—THE SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] See what wonders our Lord can work and ask Him to work similar miracles in the spiritual realm—to raise to life those who are dead in trespasses and sins!

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TWO COVERINGS AND TWO CONSEQUENCES  
NO. 3500

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1916. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“He that covers his sins shall not prosper.”  
Proverbs 28:13.  
“You have covered all their sins.”  
Psalm 85:2.

IN THESE two texts we have man’s covering, which is worthless and culpable—and God’s covering, which is profitable, and worthy of all acceptation! No sooner had man disobeyed his Maker’s will in the Garden of Eden than he discovered, to his surprise and dismay, that he was naked—and he set about at once to make himself a covering. It was a poor attempt which our first parents made, and it proved a miserable failure. “They sewed fig leaves together.” After that, God came in, revealed to them yet more fully their nakedness, made them confess their sin, brought their transgression home to them, and then it is written— “The Lord God made them coats of skin.” Probably the coats were made of the skins of animals which had been offered in sacrifice, and, if so, they were a fit type of Him who has provided us with a sin-offering and a robe of perfect righteousness! Every man since the days of Adam has gone through much of the same experience, more or less relying on his own ingenuity to hide his own confusion of face. He has discovered that sin has made him naked and he has set to work to clothe himself. As I shall have to show you, presently, he has never succeeded. But God has been pleased to deal with His own people according to the riches of His Grace—He has covered their shame and put away their sins that they should not be remembered any more.

Let me now direct your attention, first, to man’s covering, and its failure. And then to God’s covering, and its perfection.  
May the Holy Spirit be pleased to give you discernment, that you may see your destitute state in the Presence of God, and understand the merciful relief that God, Himself, has provided in the bounty of His Grace!  
I. MAN’S COVERING.  
There are many ways in which men try to cover their sin. Some do so by denying that they have sinned, or, admitting the fact, they deny the guilt! Or else, candidly acknowledging both the sin and the guilt, they excuse and exonerate themselves on the plea of certain circumstances which rendered it, according to their showing, almost inevitable that they should act as they have done. By pretext and pretence, apology and selfvindication, they acquit themselves of all criminality and put a fine gloss upon every foul delinquency! Excuse-making is the most common trade under Heaven! The slenderest materials are put to the greatest account. A man who has no valid argument in arrest of judgment, no feasible reason why he should not be condemned, will go about and bring a thousand excuses and ten thousand circumstances of extenuation—the whole of them weak and thin as a spider’s web. Someone here may be saying within himself, “It may be I have broken the Law of God, but it was too severe. To keep so perfect a Law was impossible. I have violated it, but then I am a man, endowed with passions that involve propensities and inflamed with desires that need gratification. How could I do otherwise than I have done? Placed in peculiar circumstances, I am borne along with the current. Subject to special temptations, I yield to the fascination, but this is only natural!” So you think. So you essay to exculpate yourself. But, in truth, you are now committing a fresh sin, for you are abasing God, you are inculpating the Almighty! You are impugning the Law of God to vindicate yourself for breaking it! There is no small degree of criminality about such an unrighteous defense. The Law is holy, just and good. You are throwing the onus of your sins upon God! You are trying to make out that, after all, you are not to blame, but the fault lies with Him who gave the commandment. Do you think that this will be tolerated? Shall the prisoner at the bar bring accusations against the Judge who tries him? Or shall he challenge the equity of the statute while he is arraigned for violating it? And as for the circumstances that you plead, what valid excuse can they furnish? Has it come to this—that it was not you, but your necessities, that did the wrong and are answerable for the consequence? Not you, indeed! You are a harmless innocent victim of circumstances! I suppose, instead of being censured, you ought almost to be pitied. What is this, again, but throwing the blame upon the arrangements of Providence and saying to God, “It is the harshness of Your discipline, not the perverseness of my actions, that involves me in sin.” What? I say, is this but a high impertinence, yes, veritable treason against the Majesty of that thrice holy God, before whom even perfect angels veil their faces, while they cry, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts”? I pray you resort not to such a covering as this, because, while it is utterly useless, it adds sin to sin and exposes you to fresh shame!  
In many cases persons violating the Law of God have hoped to cover their transgression by secrecy. They have done the deed in darkness. They hope that no ear of man heard their footfall, or listened to their speech. Possibly they themselves held their tongue and flattered themselves that no observer witnessed their movements or could divulge their action. So was it with Achan. I dare say he took the wedge of gold and the Babylonian garment mid the confusion of the battle and hid it when his comrades seemed too much engaged to notice so trivial an affair. While they were rushing over the fallen walls of Jericho, amidst the debris and the dust, he might be unmolested and then, in the dead of night, while they slept, he turned the sod of his tent, dug into the earth, and buried there his coveted treasure. All looks right to his heart’s content. He has smoothed it down, and spread his carpet over the grave of his lust. Little did he reckon of the Omniscient eyes! Little did he count on the unerring lot that would come home to the tribe of Judah, to the family of the Zarhites, to the house of Zabdir and, at last, to the son of Carmi, so that Achan, himself, would have to stand out confessed as a traitor—a robber of his God! Men little know the ways in which the Almighty can find them out and bring the evidence that convicts out of the devices that were intended to cover their sin!  
Do you not know that Providence is a wonderful detective? There are hounds upon the track of every thief, and murderer, and liar—in fact upon every sinner of every kind! Each sin leaves a trail. The dogs of judgment will be sure to scent it out and find their prey. There is no disentangling yourselves from the meshes of guilt—no possibility of evading the penalty of transgression! Very amazing have been the ways in which persons who have committed crimes have been brought to judgment. A trifle becomes a tell-tale. The method of deceit gives a clue to the manner of discovery. Wretched the men who bury their secrets in their own bosom! Their conscience plays traitor to them. They have often been forced to betray themselves. We have read of men talking in their sleep to their fellows and babbling out in their dreams the crime they had committed years before! God would have the secret disclosed. No eye had seen, neither could other tongue have told, but the man turned king’s evidence against himself—he has thus brought himself to judgment! It has often happened, in some form or other, that conscience has thus been witness against men.  
Do I address anyone who is just now practicing a secret sin? You would not have me point you out for all the world, nor shall I do so. Believe me, however, the sin is known! Dexterous though you have been in the attempt to conceal it, it has been seen. As surely as you live, it has been seen. “By whom?” you ask. Ah, by One who never forgets what He sees, and will be sure to tell of it. He may commission a little bird of the air to whisper it. Certainly He will one day proclaim it by the sound of trumpet to listening worlds! You are watched, Sir—you are known! You have been narrowly observed, young girl—those things you have hidden away will be brought to light—for God is the great discoverer of sin! His eyes have marked you! His Providence will track you! It is vain to think that you can conceal your transgressions. Before high Heaven, disguise is futile! Yes, the darkness hides not—the night shines as the day. I have known persons who have harbored a sin in their breast till it has preyed upon their constitution. They have been like the Spartan boy who had stolen a fox and was ashamed to have it known, so he kept it within his garment till it ate through his flesh, and he fell dead. He allowed the fox to gnaw his heart before he would betray himself! There are those who have got a sin, if not a lie in their right hand, yes, a lie in their heart and it is eating into their very life! They dare not confess it. If they would confess it to their God and make restitution to those whom they have offended, they would soon come to peace, but they vainly hope that they can cover the sin and hide it from the eyes of God and man. He that covers his sin in this fashion shall not prosper.  
Again, full many a time sinners have tried to cover their sin with lies. Indeed, this is the usual habit—to lie—to cloak their guilt by denying it. Was not this the way with Gehazi? When the Prophet said, “Where have you come from, Gehazi?” he said, “Your servant went nowhere.” Then the Prophet told him that the leprosy of Naaman would cleave to him all the days of his life. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira, in lying in order to hide their sin—how quickly was it discovered—and how terrible was the retribution! I am amazed that men and women can lie as they do after reading that story! “Have you sold the land for so much?” asked Peter. And Ananias said, “Yes, for so much.” At that instant he fell down and gave up the ghost! Three hours after, when his wife, Sapphira, said the same, the feet of the young men who had buried her husband were at the door, ready to carry out her corpse and bury her by his side. Oh, Sirs, you must weave a tangled web, indeed, when once you begin to deceive! And when you have woven it, you will have to add lie to lie, and lie to lie, and yet all to no purpose, for you will be surely found out! There is something about a lie that always deludes the man who utters it. Liars have need of good memories. They are sure to leave a little corner uncovered through which the truth escapes. Their story does not hang together. Discrepancies excite suspicions and evasions furnish a clue to discoveries, till the naked truth is unveiled. Then the deeper the plot, the fouler is the shame! But to lie unto the God of Truth, of what use can that be? What advantage is it to you to plead, “not guilty,” when He has witnessed your crime? Those Infallible eyes which never make a mistake are never closed. He knows everything—from Him no secret is hid. Why, therefore, do you imagine that you can deceive your Maker?  
There are some who try to cover their sin by prevarication. With cunning subtlety they strive to evade personal responsibility. Memorable is the instance of David. I will not dwell upon his flagrant crime, but I must remind you of his sorry subterfuge, when he tried to hide the baseness of his lust by conspiring to cause the death of Uriah. There have been those who have schemed deep and long to throw the blame on others, even to the injury of their reputation, to escape the odium of their own malpractices! Who knows but in this congregation there may be someone who affects a high social position, supported by a deep mercantile immorality? Merchants there have been that have swollen before the public as men of wealth, while they were falsifying their accounts, abstracting money, yet making the books tally, rolling in luxury and living in jeopardy. Have they prospered? Were they to be envied? The detection that long haunted them at length overtook them—could they look it in the face? We have heard of their blank despair, their insane suicide—at any rate, a miserable exposure has been their melancholy climax. “Be sure your sin will find you out.” You may run the length of your tether. It is short. The hounds of justice, swift of scent and strong of limb, are on your trail. Rest assured, you will be discovered. Could you escape the due reward in this life, yet certainly your guilt is known in Heaven and you shall be judged and condemned in that Great Day which shall decide your eternal destiny! Seek not, then, to cover up sin with such transparent cobwebs as these!  
Some people flatter themselves that their sin has already been hidden away by the lapse of time. “It was so very long ago,” says one, “I had almost forgotten it—I was a lad at the time.” “Yes,” says another, “I am gray-headed now. It must have been 20 or 30 years ago. Surely you do not think that the sin of my far-off days will be brought out against me? The thing is gone by. Time must have obliterated it.” Not so, my Friend! It may be the lapse of time will only make the discovery the more clear. A boy once went into his father’s orchard and there in his rough play he broke a little tree which his father valued. But, rapidly putting it together again, he managed to conceal the fact, for the disunited parts of the tree took kindly to each other, and the tree stood as before. It so happened that more than 40 years afterwards he went into that garden after a storm had blown across it in the night, and he found that the tree had been split in two, and it had snapped precisely in the place where he had broken it when it was but a sapling. So there may come a crash to your character precisely in that place where you sinned when yet a lad! Ah, how often the transgressions of our youth remain within our bosoms! There lie the eggs of our young sin—and they hatch when men come into riper years. Don’t be so sure that the lapse of time will consign your faults and follies to oblivion. You sowed your wild oats, Sir—you have got to reap them! The time that has intervened has

nly operated to make that evil seed spring up and you are so much the nearer to the harvest. Time does not change the hue of sin in the sight of God. If a man could live a thousand years, the sins of his first year would be as fresh in the memory of the Almighty as those of the last. Eternity itself will never wash out a sin! Flow on, you ages, but the scarlet spot is on the sand. Flow on, still, in mighty streams, but the damning spot is still there. Neither time nor eternity can cleanse it. Only one thing can remove sin! The lapse of time cannot. Let not any of you be so foolish as to hope it will!  
When the trumpet of the Resurrection sounds, there will be a resurrection of characters, as well as of men! The man who has been foully slandered will rejoice in the light that reflects his purity. But the man whose latent vices have been skillfully veneered will be brought to the light, too. His acts and motives will be alike exposed. As he himself looks and sees the resurrection of his crimes, with what horror will he face that Day of Judgment! “Ah, ah,” he says, “Where am I? I had forgotten these! These are the sins of my childhood, the sins of my youth, the sins of my manhood, and the sins of my old age. I thought they were dead and buried, but they start from their tombs! My memory has been quickened. How my brain reels as I think of them all! But there they are, and, like so many wolves around me, they seem all thirsting for my destruction.” Beware, oh, men! You have buried your sins, but they will rise up from their graves and accuse you before God. Time cannot cover them.  
Or do any of you imagine that your tears can blot out transgressions? That is a gross mistake. Could your tears forever flow. Could you be transformed into a Niobe, and do nothing else but weep for years, the whole flood could not wash out a single sin! Some have supposed that there may be efficacy in baptismal water, or in sacramental emblems, or in priestly incantations, or in confession to a priest—one who asks them to disclose their secret wickedness to him—and betrays a morbid avidity to make his breast the sewer into which all kinds of uncleanness should be emptied! Be not deceived! There is nothing in these ordinances of man, or these tricks of Romish priestcraft (I had almost said of witchcraft, the two are so much alike) to excuse the folly of those who are beguiled by them. You need not catch at straws when the rope is thrown out to you. There is pardon to be had! Remission is to be found! Forgiveness can be procured! Turn your back on yonder priests—lend not your ears to them, neither be you the victims of their snares! In the street each day it makes one’s soul sad to see them. Like the Pharisees of old, they wear their long garments to deceive. You cannot mistake them. Their silly conceit publishes their naked shame. Confide not in them for a moment. Christ can forgive you. God can blot out your sin. But they cannot ease your conscience by their penances, or remove your transgressions by their celebrations.  
Thus I have gone through a rough, not very accurate list of the ways by which men hope to cover their sin, but they “shall not prosper.” None of these shall succeed.  
A more joyous task devolves on me now, while I draw your attention to my second text, “You have covered all their sin.”  
II. GOD’S COVERING.  
This fact is affirmed concerning the people of God. All who have trusted in the atoning Sacrifice which was presented by the Lord Jesus Christ upon Calvary may accept this welcome assurance, “God has covered all their sin.” How this has come to pass I will tell you. Before ever God covers a man’s sins He unveils them. Did you ever see your sins unveiled? Did it ever seem as if the Lord put His hand upon you, and said, “Look, look at them”? Have you been led to see your sins as you never saw them before? Have you felt their aggravations fit to drive you to despair? As you have looked at them, has the finger of detection seemed to point out your blackness? Have you discovered in them a depth of guilt, iniquity, and Hell—which never struck your mind before? I recollect a time when that was a spectacle always before the eyes of my conscience. My sin was always before me. If God thus makes you see your sin in the light of His Countenance, depend upon it, He has His purposes of mercy toward you. When you see and confess it, He will blot it out. So soon as God, in Infinite loving kindness, makes the sinner know in truth that he is a sinner, and strips him of the rags of his self-righteousness, He grants him pardon and clothes his nakedness! While he stands shivering before the gaze of the Almighty, condemned, the guilt is purged from his conscience! I do not know of a more terrible position in one’s experience than to stand with an angry God gazing upon you and to know that wherever God’s eyes fall upon you they see nothing but sin—see nothing in you but what He must hate and must abhor! Yet this is the experience through which God puts those to whom He grants forgiveness! He makes them know that He sees how sinful they are and He makes them feel how vile and leprous they are. His Justice withers their pride! His judgment appalls their heart! They are humbled in the very dust, and made to cry out—each man trembling for his own soul—“God be merciful to me, a sinner!”  
Not till this gracious work of conviction is fully worked does the Lord appear with the glorious proclamation that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus shall have his sins covered. That proclamation I have now openly to publish and personally to deliver to you. With your outward ears you may have heard it hundreds of times. It is old, yet always new. Whoever among you, knowing himself to be guilty, will come and put his trust in Jesus Christ, shall have his sins covered. “Can God do that?” Yes, He can. He alone can cover sin! Against Him the sin was committed. It is the offended person who must pardon the offender. No one else can. He is the King. He has the right to pardon. He is the Sovereign Lord and He can blot out sin. Besides that, He can lawfully cover it, for the Lord Jesus Christ (though you know the story, let me tell it again—the song of Redemption always rings out a charming melody), Jesus Christ, the Father’s dear Son, in order that the Justice of God might be vindicated, bare His breast to its dreadful hurt and suffered in our place—what we ought to have suffered as the penalty of our sin! Now the Sacrifice of God covers sin—covers it right over and He more than covers it—He makes it cease to be! Moreover, the Lord Jesus kept the Law of God, and His obedience stands, instead of our obedience! And God accepts Him and His righteousness on our behalf, imputing His merits to our souls! Oh, the virtue of that atoning blood! Oh, the blessedness of that perfect righteousness of the Son of God, by which He covers our sins!  
There are two features of covering I should like to recall to your recollection. The one was the Mercy Seat or propitiatory, over the golden Ark, wherein were the tablets of stone. Those tablets of stone seemed, as it were, to reflect the sins of Israel. As in a mirror they reflected the transgression of God’s people. God was above, as it were, looking down between the cherubic wings. Was He to look down upon the Law of God defied and defiled by Israel? Ah, no—there was put over the top of the ark, as a lid which covered it all, a golden lid called the Mercy Seat—and when the Lord looked down He looked upon that lid which covered sin. Beloved, such is Jesus Christ, the Covering for all our sins! God sees no sin in those who are hidden beneath Jesus Christ!  
There was another covering at the Red Sea. On that joyous day when the Egyptians went down into the midst of the sea pursuing the Israelites, at the motion of Moses’ rod, the waters that stood upright like a wall leapt back into their natural bed and swallowed up the Egyptians! Great was the victory when Miriam sang, “The depths have covered them. There is not one of them left.” It is even so that Jesus Christ’s Atonement has covered up our sins. They are sunk in His sepulcher! They are buried in His tomb! His blood, like the Red Sea, has drowned them. “The depths have covered them. There is not one of them left.” Against the Believer there is not a sin recorded in God’s Book. He that believes in Him is perfectly absolved. “You have covered all their sin.” I shall not have time to dwell upon the sweetness of this fact, but I invite you that believe to consider its preciousness—and I hope you who have not believed will feel your mouth watering after it—to know that every sin one has ever committed, known and unknown, is gone—covered by Christ! To be assured that when Jesus died, He did not die for some of our sins, but for all the sins of His people! Not for their sins up till now, but for all the sins they ever will commit! Well does Kent put it—  
*“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,  
It matters not how black they’re cast  
And O, my Soul, with wonder view  
For sins to come, here’s pardon too!”*  
The Atonement was made before the sin was committed. The Righteousness was presented even before we had lived. “You have covered all their sins.” It seems to me as if the Lamb of God, slain from before the foundation of the world, had in the purpose of God, from the foundation of the world, covered all His people’s sins. Therefore, we are accepted in the Beloved, and dear to the Father’s heart. Oh, what a joy it is to get a hold of something like this Truth of God, especially when the Truth gets a hold of you—when you can feel by the inworked power and witness of the Holy Spirit that your sins are covered—that you dare stand up before a heart-searching God and give thanks that every transgression you ever committed is hid from the view of those piercing eyes through Jesus Christ your Lord!  
Some people think we ought not to talk thus, that it is presumptuous. But really there is more presumption in doubting than there is in believing! For a child to believe his father’s word is never presumption. I like to credit my Father’s Word, “He that believes in Him is not condemned.” Condemned I am not, for I know I do believe in Him. “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”  
Beloved, the covering is as broad as the sin! The covering completely covers, and forever covers, for as God sees today no sin in those who are washed in Jesus’ blood, so will He never see any. You are accepted with an acceptance that nothing can change! Whom once He loves, He never leaves, but loves them to the end. The reason of His love to them does not lie in their merits nor their charms—the cause of love is in Himself. The ground of His acceptance of them is in the Person and work of Christ. Whatever they may be, whatever their condition of heart may be, they are accepted because Christ lived and died. It is not a precarious or a conditional, but an eternal acceptance!  
Would you enjoy the blessedness of this complete covering? Cowering down beneath the tempest of Jehovah’s wrath, which you feel in your conscience, would you obtain this full remission? Behold the gates of the City of Refuge which stand wide open! The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is proclaimed to the thirsty, needy, laboring, weary soul! Not merely open are the gates, but the invitation to enter is given. “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” You are bid to lay hold upon Eternal Life! The way of doing so is simple. No works of yours, no merits, no tears, no preparations are required, but trust— TRUST—that is all! Believe in Jesus! Rely upon Him! Depend upon Him! Depend upon Him! I have heard of Homer’s Iliad being enclosed in a nutshell, so small was it written, but here is the Plain Man’s Guide to Heaven in a nutshell! Here is the essence of the whole Gospel in one short sentence—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Trust Him! Trust Him! That is the meaning of that word, believe. Depend upon Him and as surely as you do it, death, nor Hell, nor sin shall ever separate you from the love of Him whom you have embraced, from the protection of Him in whose power you have taken shelter!  
The Lord lead you to cower beneath His covering wings and grant you to be found in Christ, accepted in the Beloved. So shall your present peace be the foretaste of your eternal happiness! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 55:1-17.**

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, A Psalm of David. It needed the chief musician to sing such a Psalm as this! It is full of sorrow and yet full of confidence in God. It is a Psalm upon the stringed instruments, and it sings not of man, only, but of that Son of Man—that greatest of men, who was also greatest in grief as greatest in faith. Maschil—that is, “instructive,” “full of teaching.” The experience of one child of God is instructive to another, and especially the experience of the great First-Born among many brethren. A Psalm of David—David, that many-sided man who seemed not one, but “all mankind’s epitome.” Who has not found his own experience when he has read the Psalms of David? It is a mirror—this Book of Psalms—which reflects us all. See how he begins.

Verse 1. Give ear to my prayer, O God. All the saints pray. There is no exception to this rule. And in their times of trouble, they pray with greater vehemence than ever. They delight in prayer. But observe how eager they are that God should hear them. It is not praying for praying’s sake— for the use of good words only. “Give ear to my prayer, O God.”

1. And hide not Yourself from my supplication. When a man passes by his fellow in his distress, he is said to hide himself. O God, do not pass me by! When You hear my plaintive voice, do not hurry on and leave me to my woes! Forget not, Beloved, that our Lord Jesus Christ did suffer the hiding of God’s face. You and I may trust that in our hour of prayer we shall not have to do so. “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” But even if we should have to drink of that cup, better lips than ours have tasted its bitterness long ago!

2. Attend unto me, and hear me. That is three times he thus implores God to give him a hearing. It reminds me of that Gethsemane pleading of our Lord when thrice He prayed using the same words. Here David begins—makes his beginning in prayer with a threefold cry to God. “Give ear to me! Hide not Yourself from me! Attend unto my prayer, and hear me.”

2. I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise. Sometimes prayer is scarcely articulate. “I make a noise.” He was very free with God. He spoke out his heart as best his heart would speak—and he seemed to ramble. I believe that some of our sweetly-composed prayers have no prayer in them—and some of our broken petitions are those that reach the heart of God. “Groans that cannot be uttered” are prayers that cannot be refused! There may be most strength in the passion of the soul when there is least order in the expression of the soul. “I mourn in my complaints, and make a noise.”

3. Because of the voice of the enemy. He can speak, and speak clearly, too. Malice is never short of language, “because of the voice of the enemy.”

3. Because of the oppression of the wicked. The best men have often been the most oppressed of men. Men have often spoken worst of those who have deserved the best. David is in that plight—and so was our Lord. He, too, knew the voice of the enemy and the oppression of the wicked.

3. For they cast iniquity upon me. They spatter me with their mire— they slander me. They speak evil of my good.  
3. And in wrath they hate me. It is the old story. The seed of the serpent naturally hates the Seed of the women. Even our Lord had a bruised heel. Know you not that Ishmael persecutes Isaac, the child of the promise? All down history there runs this line—the mark of blood and suffering. It must be so, “for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.”  
4. My heart is sorely pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. I suppose that David may have written this after he had been driven out of Jerusalem by the party under the leadership of his son, Absalom, and Ahithophel. When it is all over, he sings his song of dolor, and yet of confidence before his God. You know that our Lord Jesus Christ could use this language with very great emphasis. “My heart is sorely pained within Me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon Me”—as if midnight came down upon His soul—came down from God. “Are fallen upon me.” Descended, therefore, and those are the heaviest of griefs which seem to come down just when we expected that showers of mercy would come down. Our Savior knew what this meant.

5, 6. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest. If he could not have the wings of an eagle to fight the conflict, he begged for the wings of a dove to fly from it! But what would you and I do if we had wings? Where could we go if we had wings, but, like the dove of Noah, fly to the Lord? But we can get there without wings, Brothers and Sisters! We can get there by faith in Him. It is a vain wish, then, and yet how many have sighed—‘‘Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness, some boundless contiguity of shade where rumor of oppression and deceit might never reach me.” Ah, we sigh for solitude, and when we get solitude—we sigh to get out of it!

7. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah. Why, David had been in the wilderness and then he sighed to get back to the Temple of God! But such foolish creatures are we at our very wisest that we know not what we sigh for! It was good for David that he had not wings, and it is good for you that you cannot run away. God has made you no armor for your back because you must go forward. Long ago He burned our boats. We cannot return. We must go “forward,” now, to the eternal victories in His strength!

8. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest. But he that would fly away from slander must fly very fast. How can we escape it? That cruel tongue, that wicked tongue walks through the earth and smites with its sword the best of God’s people. Now, like a soldier, David prays as his Master would never pray.

9. Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city. That was not a bad prayer, for God heard it. He did divide their tongues. The counsels of the wicked were put to nothing, and so they made a mistake and David escaped through their divisions. I see not how a king driven from his throne and hunted by rebels, can pray differently from this. If he is a warrior and fights at all, he must wish for victory! Yet let me remind you that these verses need not be read in the imperative, neither may they necessarily be understood to be prayers. They can be read as prophecies. “God will destroy and divide the tongues of the wicked.” The divisions of error are the hope of truth. God divides the tongues of those who use their tongues against His Word, and so His Truth conquers.

10. Day and night they go about upon the walls thereof: mischief, also, and sorrow are in the midst of it. Remember, Jerusalem was in the hands of a band of wicked men. Everywhere sin prevailed when David had left it.

11, 12. Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets. For it was not an enemy that reproached me—then I could have borne it. Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him. Here you get to the center of David’s grief. Ahithophel had betrayed him and here you begin to see the portrait of Christ coming out on the canvas. David seems to be painted first, and then there is painted an image of our Lord, which is seen here and there. “It was not an enemy; then I could have borne it.”

13. But it was you. In the original it runs thus, “But you.” The ardor of poetry is upon the Psalmist. He sees him—“you.” And he looks at him with indignation—“you.”

13, 14. A man my equal, my guide, and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the House of God in company. It is Ahithophel! It is Judas Iscariot! It is either—it is both. Oh, what a grief it is to be betrayed by one whom we have trusted, one whom we treated as our equal, one whom we followed as a trusted guide, one to whom we told our secrets and linked our heart. “My acquaintance.” One whose friendship was sanctified by the sanctions of religion. “We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the House of God in company.” Have any of you had to suffer from this serpent’s tongue? Be not surprised. Your Master endured it before you. And now David bursts out in words of prayer, “Let death seize upon them. Let them go down quickly into Hell.”

15. Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quickly into Hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them. And this prayer also was heard, for Ahithophel was hanged with a rope, and Absalom without one—and their followers perished by thousands in the woods of Ephraim—and so God swept away the good man’s slanderers.

16. As for me—What would I do? Plot against their plots and set cunning against their cunning? No, not I.  
16, 17. I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice. He would pray often, but not too often. Where time sets her boundaries, there are we to set up our altars—evening and morning and at noon. It seems natural that our undertakings should be begun, continued, and ended in God—and that each day. Oh, pray much when your enemies plot much! If, morning, noon, and evening, they are seeking your ill, then just as often seek you good from God. How beautifully he puts it. “He shall hear my voice.” He does not pray at a chance. He is certain that his prayers will go up to God. Yes, more than that, he anticipates a blessing! He foresees, no, he sees the blessing!

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

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“A TIME TO LOVE”

NO. 3220

A SERMON PUBLISHED  
ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1910.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“A time to love.”  
Ecclesiastes 3:8.**

IF you will look at our text, dear Friends, you will see that it is very ominously followed by the words, “and a time to hate.” We are changeable creatures and we live in an ever-changing world—and this Chapter gives an accurate summary of how most of our lives are spent! “A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.” Ours is a checkered life. We are not long in any one state and we quickly change from one condition to another—which is sometimes better, but sometimes worse.

I am not going, however, to speak about these earthly variations, but about something that is of a far higher order. And I intend, first, to apply the text to Christ’s love to us, for He had “a time to love.” And then, secondly, to apply it to our love to Him, for we, also, have “a time to love.”

I. First, then, concerning CHRIST’S LOVE TO US, for He had “a time to love.”  
Go back with me in thought, Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, to the council chamber of eternity. God ordained that Adam, the great representative of the human race, would fall in the time of testing and that you and I and all mankind would be ruined by his fall. In His far-seeing vision, He perceived all of us going astray like lost sheep and then arose the necessity for the appointment of a Deliverer to rescue us from going down into the Pit. No angels had been created, then, and even though they would be, not one in all the shining ranks, nor all of them combined, could have saved a single soul! The Savior who would be sufficient to accomplish this colossal task must be Divine. Then was it with Christ “a time to love,” and He came forward and entered into an Everlasting Covenant with His Father on His people’s behalf. Let us never forget that eternal council chamber where Christ undertook to be our Surety and Substitute and, in due time, to die for us, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”  
Now let your thoughts fly onward to that period when the fullness of time for the birth of Christ had come. Will Christ leave His throne, His Father’s house, the company of the holy angels and the spirits of just men made perfect? Yes, that He will, for it is with Him now, once again, “a time to love.” Stripping Himself of all His bright array and laying aside all His Glory, He comes down to Bethlehem’s lowly manger and there I see Him lying in His mother’s arms, just as any other infant might have done, though He was so wondrously unlike any other child that was ever born! Having become Incarnate and having come to live here on earth, it was absolutely necessary that a perfect righteousness should be worked out on behalf of His people. But in such a wicked world as this was then, and still is, this could only be accomplished through shame, reproach, rebuke and slander of the most abominable kind! Does someone ask, “Did He endure all that?” Yes, that He did, for it was with Him, “a time to love.” He could truly say, “Reproach has broken My heart,” yet He willingly bore it for His people’s sake. The tongue of slander assailed Him so that even His miracles were attributed to satanic agency. On the Cross, He was to reach the lowest depth of shame and to be “despised and rejected of men”—yet He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem—well knowing all that would befall Him there.  
His death upon Calvary was, indeed, “a time to love,” for having loved His own, He loved them even unto death! But did the Immortal bow His head to mortality? Did the Eternal hang in agony upon the accursed tree? Yes, that He did, for it was with Him, “a time to love,” and many waters could not quench His love, neither could the floods drown it. Come with me, you who truly love Him, and whose hearts leap with joy as you think of His Glory—come with me and see Him in His shame and suffering! There is your Lord and Master, of whom you have often sung— *“Crown Him, crown Him,  
Crown Him Lord of all”—*  
yet look at Him now! You will not wonder to see Him so emaciated as you remember the agonies through which He has already passed. There was that dreadful night in Gethsemane when His griefs and woes were so terrible that His soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Then there was His betrayal by Judas, the forsaking by all His disciples, the denial by Peter, the mockery of trials before Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod, the scourging and the spitting and all the unknown agonies that He had to endure! Ah, Beloved, we talk very calmly about all this, but what must it have been for Christ to suffer thus? Why, a little pain soon lets us see what cowards we are—a little spittle from slanderous tongues drives us almost to despair! We cannot endure much for our Lord’s sake, but see how much He endured for our sake! Listen to Him as He applies to Himself the prophetic language of David in the 22nd Psalm—“I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint: My heart is likes wax; it is melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd and My tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You have brought Me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed Me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet.” Surely, now it is with Him, “a time to love.” Our sins are piled upon Him in a tremendous load that would crush anyone else—and that makes even Him to cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” This was the love of which Charles Wesley sang—  
*“Stronger His love than death or Hell,  
Its riches are unsearchable—  
The first-born sons of light  
Desire in vain its depths to see!  
They cannot reach the mystery,  
The length, and breadth, and height.”*  
But has Christ ceased to love us now? Oh, no, Beloved, for every day and every moment is with Him, “a time to love.” Do you remember when you knew Him not, or only knew Him to despise Him? You went to the House of Prayer, but you were godless and careless. You heard the preacher inviting his hearers to acknowledge Jesus as their King, but you said, “We will not have this Man to reign over us!” Perhaps you were among those who cursed His name, profaned His Sabbaths and persecuted His people—yet it was with Him, “a time to love,” and His great love was manifested toward you even when you were dead in sins! For Christ to love us when we love Him is gracious on His part, but for Him to love us when we hated Him is most wondrous of all! Strange, indeed, is it that it should have been with Him, “a time to love” when with us it was, “a time to hate.”  
Do you remember, too, my Brothers and Sisters, when you did kneel in secret before the Lord and your broken heart poured itself out in sighs and groans? When you did cry out from the depths of your soul, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” did not the Lord say to you, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you”? And was it not, then, with Him, “a time to love”? And since then you have sinned against Him again and again, yet He has loved you notwithstanding all! You have had many a time when your spirit was cast down within you, yet you have found that it was with your Lord, “a time to love” you. You have been many a time in the furnace of affliction, yet that, also, has been with your Lord, “a time to love” you! When you were despised by your fellows, when you were slandered and maligned, did Jesus forsake you? Has He ever proved false to you? Has His love toward you ever ceased? Has that fountain ever been dried up? No, Beloved, from the first day when He called us, by His Grace, even until now it has always been with Him, “a time to love.” It is so at this moment. You may be slow to embrace Him, but He is not slow to embrace you! You may not be saying, with the Psalmist, “My heart and my flesh cries out for the living God,” but He wants to see your face, He longs to hear your voice, for with Him it is now, as it has always been, “a time to love.”  
You shall also soon fall asleep in Jesus. Your hands shall soon be stretched out motionless and your eyes shall be closed in darkness. But, thank God, your last hour shall be very specially with your dear Lord and Savior, “a time to love” you, and you shall then realize the truth and sweetness of Dr. Watts’ lines—  
*“Jesus can make a dying bed  
Feel soft as downy pillows are,  
While on His breast I lean my head,  
And breathe my life out sweetly there.”*  
Then, in due time, shall come the Resurrection and amidst the splendors of that long-looked for day, the great King, stepping down from His Throne, shall meet His Spouse, His Church, and clothing her with His own Glory, shall take her up to sit with Him upon His Throne and then, indeed, shall it be with Him, “a time to love.” Then, in the millennial age, when—  
*“No strife shall vex Messiah’s reign,  
Or mar those peaceful years  
To plowshares men shall beat their swords, To pruning-hooks their spears”—*  
it shall still be with Christ, “a time to love.” And in Heaven, itself, when depth and Hell shall have been cast into the Lake of Fire and when all the redeemed shall have been gathered home to their Father’s house where there are many mansions, and the Lord’s right hand shall have gotten Him the final victory over all His enemies, it shall still be with Him, “a time to love.”  
II. Now, secondly, we are to apply the text to OUR LOVE TO CHRIST.  
We, also, have often proved that it is with us, “a time to love.” Our Lord’s love to us is the great eternal Fountain from which our love to Him always springs, so let it not be unworthy of the Divine source from which it flows. Wake up all your powers and passions, Beloved, while I try to speak upon this lower, yet truly important theme! If my voice should weary you, let your Beloved’s voice charm you while He speaks right into your hearts.  
When has it been with you, “a time to love”? Go back to the beginning of your Christian life. Do you remember that blessed day when Jesus first met with you? You can never forget the time when your great load of guilt rolled off your shoulders and you were so relieved that you felt you must dance for joy! Ah, that was, indeed, “a time to love.” Young converts, make the best use you can of your earliest consecrated hours—let the love of your espousals be inexpressibly sweet. There will be many other times of love, but none of them will ever have quite the same sweetness as you enjoyed when first you realized that Christ had loved you with an everlasting love and, therefore, with loving kindness had drawn you unto Himself. Oh, what rapturous fellowship my soul had with Him on that never-to-be-forgotten day when—  
*“I looked to Jesus and I found  
In Him my star, my sun”!*  
I could have kissed the blessed hands and feet from which flowed the blood that cleansed me from all my sins! I could have sung, then, from my very soul—  
*“Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads, I’ll follow where He goes!  
‘Hinder me not,’ shall be my cry,  
Though earth and Hell oppose.”*  
That was, indeed, in the deepest and best sense, “a time to love.”  
Since then, it ought always to have been with us, “a time to love” our Lord but, alas, it has not been so, for our hearts have grown cold and lukewarmness has stolen upon us. Yet do we not remember when we had to forsake all for Christ? Some of you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, can recall the time when things came to this pass—that your own parents and brothers and sisters would have nothing to do with you unless you would have nothing to do with Christ. With others of you, it was your business that must fail if you keep true to Christ. In some instances, it was a very dear friend who threatened to part with you forever if you would not part with Christ. But whatever form your trial took, I feel sure that it was with you, “a time to love” your Lord with even greater intensity than before—that is to say, if you ever loved Him at all. I think it is really “a time to love” the Savior when it costs us something to love Him. And I can bear my testimony that there is never a better “time to love” the Savior than when most everybody seems to be against you. I can never forget that night in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall when such a terrible calamity happened while I was preaching to an immense congregation. I was blamed by many as though I had caused the catastrophe. For a time, it seemed as though my brain could not recover from the dreadful shock that it received when I realized what had taken place! My spirit had sunk to the very lowest depths of despair, but one day, as I was walking in the garden to which I had been taken for seclusion and quiet, all of a sudden this passage came to my mind—“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the

Father.” [See Sermon #101, Volume 2—THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] In a moment, the thought

came to me that as long as Christ was exalted, it did not matter what became of me! If my King was crowned. If my Captain gained the victory, it did not matter even if He allowed me to be flung upon the dunghill as worthless and permitted my name to be slandered by every tongue and every pen! Then was my soul quieted and my heart found rest and, it was, indeed, to me, “a time to love” my Lord more than ever as I thought of His present exaltation and His future universal triumph!

Beloved, you have sometimes had a sense of sin that has made you thoroughly wretched. But you have gone again to the—

*“Fountain filled with blood”—*  
and you have received renewed tokens of your Lord’s favor and that has been to you, “a time to love” Him still more ardently! Have you backslidden, and has your loving Lord knocked at the door of your heart until you have let Him in again? Then that has surely been to you, “a time to love” Him most intensely. Have you had—

*“Streams of mercy, never ceasing”?*  
Have you been permitted to prosper in this world? Then, surely, that was “a time to love” your Lord for all His goodness to you. On the other hand, did your riches take to themselves wings and fly away, or were those who were very dear to you, called Home to be with Jesus? Then that, also, was “a time to love” your Lord, for we often love Christ all the more when we lose everyone else and everything else! Rutherford put this thought very sweetly when he was writing to one who had lost first her husband, and then each of her children, one by one. “Your Ladyship must be very dear to the heart of Christ,” he wrote, “or He would not try you as He does. He takes such delight in your love that He would have every atom of it for Himself—so He took your husband first, for He said, ‘I will have the husband’s share of her love.’ Then you poured out your love upon your first-born, his father’s heir, and Jesus took him, for He said, ‘I will have the share of love that she gives to her eldest son.’ So it went on until you had only one of your darlings left, your Benjamin, and He said, ‘I will have Benjamin’s portion,’ so He took him, also, away that He might have all your Ladyship’s love for Himself. And,” added Rutherford, “I often wish that He would think as much of me and try me in some such way as that.” So, Beloved, when trial has come to you, I trust that you, also, have proved it to be “a time to love” your Lord more than you have ever done before!

And when your brethren grow cold and the Church as a whole gets lax, when you have to sorrowfully cry, “How sadly the faithful are failing from among men!” then is it “a time to love” your Lord with all the greater fervency because the love of so many is waxing cold! When the mortal and the human prove how frail and fickle they are, then lay hold the more firmly on Him who is Immortal and Divine—and who will, therefore—never disappoint those who put their trust in Him. And, on the other hand, when you are able to rejoice in real fellowship with your Brothers and Sisters in Christ, then it is also, “a time to love,” so gather up all the love of all the saints into one great bundle, put your own into the middle of it and give it all to Christ Jesus your dear Lord and Savior!

I was thinking, this afternoon, while meditating upon this theme, that this is my “time to love.” I can never tell how long it may please the Lord to spare me to this people. That is no concern of mine, but I am greatly concerned to work with all my might for my gracious Lord and Master while I may. So long as I am your pastor, I feel a holy anxiety to get out of you, for the glory of God, all that you can render to Him of sacred service. I feel that it is the minister’s business not only to be like the vinedresser who cares for the vine in all the various stages of its growth, but he must also be like the treader of grapes who seeks to get every drop of the luscious liquid out of the purple clusters beneath his feet. I long to see the rich wine of your souls’ affections flowing out to your Lord to the very last drop—and it would be a most comforting thing to me, even in dying, if I could say, “I have been helped to make my people’s hearts warm with Jesus’ love, to loosen their tongues to proclaim to others His immense, unsearchable love, to set their hands busily to work for Christ in many ways and to start their feet running to search out the Lord’s stray sheep and bring them back to His fold!” This, then, is my “time to love.”

But Brother and Sister in Christ, is it not also your “time to love”? Think what opportunities you have down here of showing your love to your Lord and Savior! Even in Heaven you will not be able to do what you can do on earth in the way of succoring the needy, helping the feeble, comforting the desponding, reclaiming the backsliding and seeking to point sinners to the crucified Savior! The angels can prostrate themselves adoringly before the Throne of God, but they cannot teach the children in our Ragged schools. Redeemed and glorified spirits can join in the everlasting hallelujahs of the skies, but they can no longer climb up creaking staircases in the haunts of poverty and minister to the sick and dying who lie languishing there. They can still praise their Lord, but they cannot preach Him! They can talk to one another of His love, but they cannot make it known to lost and helpless sinners as you and I can. So let this, Beloved, be our “time to love.”

That Communion Table, where many of us will presently gather to commemorate our Savior’s dying love reminds us that whenever we come to our Lord’s Table, it should be with us “a time to love.” What love is pictured in those emblems of our blessed Master’s broken body and pouredout blood! He knew how prone we would be to forget Him, so He instituted this memorial ordinance on purpose to remind us of Him as often as we should partake of it. The bread and the wine are reminders, not only of Christ’s great love to us, but also of His ardent desire that we should love Him. Can I, my Lord, dare partake of those sacred emblems and yet not love You with my whole heart and soul? If the days of persecution were to come back, how many of us would be willing to go to the stake and be burned alive rather than give up our love to Christ? Yet think of all that He endured for us! He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked out His hair—and He hid not His face from shame and spitting! My gracious Master, You have given Your flesh and Your blood to be the spiritual food of my soul—give me the Grace to consecrate my flesh and blood and all the powers of my body, soul, and spirit to You and to Your blessed service! Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, come with me and fall down before the Lord in loving adoration—

*“Words are but air, and tongues but clay”—*reverent silence seems congenial to such a theme as this—  
*“Love Divine , all loves excelling,  
Joy of Heaven, to earth come down.”*  
Blessed Jesus, how can we adequately praise such love as Yours? Oh, for a heart that could be all on fire and for a body that should be like a smoking sacrifice offered up as a whole burnt-offering to You! Well, if we cannot have this while we are still in this imperfect state, we must look forward to another “time to love” our Lord more fervently than we can ever do here below! But, by-and-by, when we reach the blessed land beyond the river, when we shall sit down at the King’s own table in Glory, when we shall feast upon such dainties as we have never seen or tasted upon earth, then, indeed, will it be “a time to love” to the highest degree that is possible to the glorified spirits above!  
Now I have finished my discourse when I have said how grieved I am that all of you do not experimentally know what I have been talking about. Oh, that you all really knew the love of Christ! Your eyes must be blind, indeed, if you cannot see the beauties of Jesus! Your ears must be deaf if you cannot hear His charming voice! And your hearts as hard as adamant—are you made of such Hell-hardened steel that you will not love my Lord and Master? By those wounds that He endured even for His enemies, by that blood which so freely flowed for those who were then His foes, by those languid eyes so full of pity for sinners, by that loving heart overflowing with compassion for the vilest of the vile, I implore you to tell me—Can you look at Him and not love Him? Can you think of Him as He hung upon Calvary’s Cross and not put your soul’s trust in Him? Come and see if there is any sorrow that is like unto His sorrow—  
*“All you that pass by, to Jesus draw nigh,  
To you is it nothing that Jesus should die?”*Look at Him dying there, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” And if God the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to see Him and give you the Grace to trust Him, you will gladly enough yield to Him the love of your hearts! And if you once really love Him, you will gladly be His servant forever! I cannot comprehend how it is that some of us are so cold towards the Lord Jesus Christ. How is it that we can, even for a moment, tolerate that wicked, that diabolical Laodicean lukewarmness towards Him whose love is like a flaming fire? Come, Holy Spirit, give us coals of juniper! No, give us of Your own Divine sacred fire—  
*“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,  
With all Your quickening powers,  
Come shed abroad a Savior’s love—  
And that shall kindle ours.”*  
Then shall it indeed be with us “a time to love.” God grant that it may be so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **SONG OF SOLOMON 4.**

This is a chapter which is, perhaps, more adapted for private meditation than for rending in public. Nevertheless, as this is a communion season, and I trust that the most of us are partakers of the life of God, I could not resist reading it this evening. It is a love song, the song of the loves of Jesus. As He sets forth the beauties and charms of His Church, may the same beauties and charms be found in everyone of us through the Grace which He imparts to us by His Spirit! May we, as parts of His mystical body, be fair and lovely in His esteem because He has bestowed upon us so much of His own loveliness! Let us walk so carefully with God that there may be nothing to put even a spot upon our garments, or to defile our Grace-given comeliness.

Verse 1. Behold, you are fair, My love; behold, you are fair. “Twice fair, first, through being washed in My blood and next, through being sanctified by My Spirit!”

1. You have doves’ eyes within your locks. Jesus prizes the love of His people which flashes forth from their eyes as they look upon Him. The good works of His people, like the locks of hair which are the beauty and glory of the female form, are the beauty of the Church and of every individual Believer. It is a beautiful thing to have the eyes of faith glistening between the locks of our good works to the praise and glory of God!

1. Your hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead. O my Soul, see that you have many such acceptable works of faith and labors of love!

2. Your teeth—Those parts of our spiritual being with which we feed upon Christ, and masticate and assimilate the Word. “Your teeth”—  
2. Are like a flock of sheep that are evenly shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them. We should seek so to feed upon the Word as to become fruitful by it. If we spiritually feed upon the flesh of Christ, we shall afterwards be the means of bringing forth an abundant harvest of holiness to His praise and honor.  
3. Your lips are like a thread of scarlet. And well they may be, for what is there for the Believer to talk about but the scarlet of the Savior’s blood—that matchless bath in which we are washed whiter than snow? My mouth, be you filled with the praises of the Lord, that my lips may be like a thread of scarlet!  
3. And your speech is comely. There is always a comeliness in that conversation which is full of Christ! So, Beloved, let your conversation always be such as becomes the Gospel of Christ. But that cannot be the case unless there is much of Christ in it.  
3. Your temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within your locks. Those parts of us with which we think upon God’s Word should always be surrounded by good works. Doctrines in the head, without holiness in the life, are of no service. But when the temples are covered with the locks of righteousness, then are they like a piece of a pomegranate, acceptable both to God and men.  
4. Your neck is like the Tower of David built for an armory. And what is this but our faith? Does not the neck join the body to the head—and is not faith that connecting link by which we are united to Christ? Oh, for that faith which is like the Tower of David built for an armory! It is sure to be assaulted—let it, therefore, be firmly founded and fully armed.  
4. Whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. They hung up their bucklers in memory of their triumphs. Read the 11th Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which is a record of the victories of faith. The promises of God are also like these bucklers which are hung up in the armory! Let us be so familiar with them that we shall have them ready for use in every emergency.  
5. Your two breasts are like two young roes that are twins which feed among the lilies. The ordinances of God’s House are very delightful to Christ and to His people, too. And consequently, that part of our spiritual being which seeks to feed others and specially to nourish the young Believer, is very precious in Christ’s esteem. When He has finished the description of His Church, Christ says—  
6. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, I will get Me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense. Our Beloved has gone away from us until the day of His reappearing—until the night of His Church’s anxiety is over and the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings! Jesus has gone from earth, but where is He? He has gone to intercede for us before the Throne of His Father! He has gone to where there are mountains of myrrh. Think, Beloved, of the sweet perfume that always arises from His one great Sacrifice for sins! Well may He compare it to a mountain of myrrh and to a hill of frankincense!  
7. You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you. Drink that truth in, Christian. If ever there was a honeycomb full of virgin honey, it is here. Though in yourself you are defiled, yet in the eyes of Jesus, looked upon as covered with His righteousness, “you are all fair.” No, more—“there is no spot in you.” You are as dear to Him as though you had never sinned! Yes, in His sight you appear without a single fault! He has so cleansed you in His precious blood that “there is no spot in you.”  
8. Come with Me from Lebanon, My spouse, with Me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions’ den, from the mountains of the leopards. My Heart, leave the world! Leave its sweet places—though Lebanon is full of fragrance—leave it! Leave the world’s high places. Though the top of Amana may seem to reach to Heaven, leave even that to have communion with your Lord! “Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.” The best spots in the world are for you, O Spouse of Christ, but lions’ dens and mountains of leopards! You are always in danger while you consort with worldlings, you are always in peril while you are entangled with the world—so get away from Lebanon, from Amana, from Shenir and Hermon—leave everything for your Lord!  
9. You have ravished My heart. I think the Septuagint reads it, “You have unhearted me,” as if Christ’s people had taken away His heart so that it was all theirs, and not His any longer. “You have ravished My heart.”  
9. My sister, My spouse, you have ravished My heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck. The eyes of love and the neck of faith with its chain, hold captive the heart of Christ—  
*“So dear, so very dear to Christ,  
Dearer I cannot be.  
The love wherewith God loves His sons,  
Such is Christ’s love to me!”*  
Oh, what a miracle of mercy it is that Christ, Himself, should be unhearted by such foul and loathsome creatures as we were! Yet He loved us so that He would have us and, having determined to do so, He put a beauty upon us that is really now worthy of His love! I speak advisedly, for the righteousness of Christ and the sanctification of the Spirit have in them something so fair that Christ does not now love that which is unworthy of His love—that righteousness which He has Himself worked in us now rightly claims His affection.  
10. How fair is Your love, My sister, My spouse! [See Sermon #282, Volume 5—

CHRIST’S ESTIMATE OF HIS PEOPLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Hear that, O Spouse of Christ? Your love is often very cold, very feeble and, even at its best, it is not what you would have it to be, nor what it ought to be. Yet Jesus values it highly and says, “How fair is your love, My sister, My spouse!”

10. How much better is your love than wine! Yet He knows what the best wine is like, for He is one day to drink it new with us in His Father’s Kingdom, yet He says that the love of His people is much better than wine, yes, even than that wine.

10. And the smell of your ointments than all spices! You know that He has the smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia upon His garments when He comes out of the ivory palaces, yet He considers that His people’s graces are sweeter than all the spices that ever grew.

11, 12. Your lips, O My spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under your tongue; and the smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon. A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse; a spring

shut up, a fountain sealed. [See Sermons #431, Volume 8—A SECRET AND YET NO SECRET and #1957, Volume 33—THE LORD’S OWN VIEW OF HIS CHURCH AND PEOPLE— Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Oh, that my

heart were like that at this moment! Jesus, shut the gates and shut out the world, and every wandering, wayward, sinful thought! Then shut Yourself in my heart and walk in it as in a garden that is walled around into which no intruders dare enter!

13, 14. Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices. Oh, that this were fully true of us—that all our thoughts, words, and actions, which are like the fruits of the garden, were as full of spices of heavenly fragrance as Jesus here declares that He thinks them to be! Yet, alas, how little we do for Him, though He sets such store by our little that He regards it as much!

15. A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. Such should the whole Church and each individual Believer be. O my Soul, be not only shut up for Christ, but be, when the time comes, opened to do good to all the world! Oh, that I might be like a well of living waters in my speech at all times! And that you, my beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, whenever you are dealing with others, might be a well of living waters to every thirsty soul! Speak of Jesus wherever you go! Talk of Jesus whenever you can! You have been shut up and Christ has been in you—now be opened to give forth to others what He has given you! The Chapter concludes with a delightful prayer. Let us, each one, pray it—

16. Awake, O north wind, and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden,  
and eat His pleasant fruits. [See Sermons #1941, Volume 33—GRACE FOR COMMUNION and #2475, Volume 42—“MY GARDEN”—“HIS GARDEN”—Read/download both sermons, free of

charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The Church here, you see, desires to feel two opposite winds. Though it should be the rough north wind of affliction that blows upon her, if it will but make her spices flow, she will be glad. But if it is the soft south wind of blessed and hallowed fellowship with her Lord, she is equally pleased, for what she longs after is that her Lord may take delight in her.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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THE KNOWN AND THE UNKNOWN

NO. 2462

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, APRIL 26, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 8, 1886.

**“For who knows what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow? Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun?” Ecclesiastes 6:12.**

MAN at his very best is only a man and well might David ask, “What is man?” In part, he is but red earth, as Adam was when he came fresh from his Maker’s hands. Solomon tells us, in the 10th verse of this chapter, “That which has been is named already, and it is known that it is man.” Whoever has lived and however wise and good and great he may have been, he has only been a man. Sum him up, add all together—the beauties of his body, the skill of his mind, even the virtues of his spirit— and what is he, even then, but a man? And man is but vapor which appears for a little while and then vanishes away! He is as thin and airy and unsubstantial as his own breath! He comes and he goes—he is here such a little while that he can scarcely be said to be, for he does but begin to be before he closes his being so far as this world is concerned.

As man is as light as vanity, itself, Solomon urges that it is idle and vain for him to attempt to contend with God. He puts it thus in the 10th verse, “Neither may he contend with Him who is mightier than he.” It is always unwise to contend with one who is mightier than yourself, but when the disparity is so great as between man and God—the creature of an hour and the self-existent Creator, the poor feeble worm called man and the almighty invincible God—you see at once what folly it is, even, to think of battling with Him. He is, indeed, foolish who would contend with his Maker! Shall the potsherd strive to break the rod of iron? Or shall the wax war against the fire? There is no hope for us in such contention, yet how frequently do we—even we who are His children—begin to contend with our God! If He chastens us, if He takes away our comforts, if He permits us to be disappointed in our aspirations, straightway we begin to enquire, “Why is this?” And I have known times when that question has been carried very, very far—when some whom we have esteemed have seemed to pick a quarrel with God and they would not forgive Him. Their dear one was taken away and they called God cruel. If they did not say as much, they thought it. And they have kept the anniversary of that bereavement, year after year, still unforgiving towards their God. That kind of rebellious spirit creates 10 times more pain than the affliction, itself, did! Then the rod falls more heavily than it otherwise would have done and the soul, dashing itself against the pricks, wounds itself against the goad far more than it was originally intended to be wounded!

No, Beloved, we cannot contend with our Maker. Are we wiser than He? Do we understand Providence better than He does? Can we sit in judgment upon Him? Do we dare to think of arraigning the great Judge of All at our bar? Let us only think of Him aright and we shall say, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because You did it.” And, by the Grace of God, we shall get even further than that and be able to say with the Patriarch Job, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord...Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” What we often lack is the spirit of complete submission. If our childhood—I mean the childhood that comes of our regeneration and adoption into God’s family—if that childhood does not teach us this submission, our commonsense ought to teach us. We ought to feel how absurd it is that we, who are but as a fly, should fight with the flame, for we can but burn ourselves by such folly! We cannot possibly carry on successful contention against One so great, so good, so wise as the infinitely glorious God!

I am going to speak to any who are in that contending state of mind and also to others who, perhaps, may get into such a state unless they are warned of the danger to which they may be exposed. The ship that is on the stocks and that has never been out to sea is astonished when it is told that such-and-such a vessel leaks in the day of storm! But when that ship is, itself, launched and gets out in the rough waters, it may come to wonder how the timbers resist the billows and how it is that anything keeps afloat at all. You who are young and inexperienced in the Christian life, and have never done business on great waters, may think yourselves competent to judge and to condemn the older ones for all their deficiencies and failures, but, perhaps, when you get into the same seas, yourselves, you may behave no better than they have done. Therefore, take warning beforehand and learn from Solomon’s words a lesson concerning yourselves, that you may never set yourselves in opposition to the Lord God, or compare yourselves with Him.

I. The first subject of consideration in our text is OUR LIFE WHICH WE KNOW—“Who knows what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow?”

We know something about our present life and what we know about it should humble us in the Presence of God, for, first, it is very short. Observe that Solomon, here, says nothing about the “years” of our life—he only counts it by “days.” He looks at our earthly existence as of so short a duration that if he were to reckon it by years, he could scarcely mention it! But if he only counts it by days, he may use the word, “all”—“all the days of his vain life.” And, my Brothers and Sisters, we only live by the day and scarcely as much as that! We are at least taught by our great Master to pray for daily bread, as if the nourishment was for a daily life which is always to be reckoned by the day. Yet is a day more than you and I can be sure of, for who knows what even a day may bring forth?—

*“The rising morning can’t assure*

***That we shall end the day,  
For death stands ready at the door  
To take our lives away.”***

At the very best, we can only count our lives by days. I know that we are often tempted to reckon that we shall live to a ripe old age, but, suppose we should he spared 70 or 80 years—what a short time the longest life is! Suppose we could live even as long as Methuselah did—which we cannot—yet how soon it would be all over and when we came to the end of it, we should say, with old Jacob, “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.” The fact is, the older a man grows, the shorter his life seems to be. And it was because Jacob was so old and had seen so many days, that he called them few and evil. Children and youths appear to have lived a long while—men seem to have lived only a short time, older men an even shorter period—but the oldest man reckons his days the shortest of all! The calculations about time are very singular, for length seems to turn to shortness! Well, then, since I am such an ephemeral creature, the insect of an hour, an aphid creeping on the bay leaf of existence, how dare I think of contending with You, my God, who Was long before the mountains were brought out and who will Be when mountains are gone forever?

Our life, besides being very short, is singularly uncertain—“All the days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow.” We do not know that we shall even have another day of this life. While we are sitting in the pew, our life may end. We cannot tell that we shall see next Sabbath—another Thursday night may never return to us. Do not let us forget this fact, for if the thought is unpleasant to us, it is because there is something wrong within. The child of God, when he is right with his Father, forgets the uncertainty and remembers that all things are certain in the eternal purpose and decree of God—and that all changes are wisely ordained and, therefore, the uncertainty causes him no distress. Yet should this Truth of God make us live with much caution, care, tenderness, and watchfulness. If I may have to appear before my Maker before the clock strikes the hour of midnight, let me set my house in order. Since I may soon die, and not live. Since I may be even now trembling on the verge of the unseen world, let me be prepared for everything by making my calling and election sure through faith in Christ Jesus, my Lord and Savior!

Yet again, my Brothers and Sisters, our life is not only short and uncertain, but, while we have it, it is singularly unsubstantial. Many things which we gain for ourselves with much care are very unsatisfying. Have you ever heard the rich man confess that it is so? I have heard it often and have marked it well. I have looked over his spacious estate. I have sat in his sumptuous mansion. I have heard from him all about his success in business, yet he has added, and added solemnly (the old man spoke not mere words, but spoke it from his heart as he said it), “But what is it all? It yields me no satisfaction now that I am about to leave it.” Have you ever heard the scholar, who has won many degrees and stood at the head of his profession, declare that the more he knew, the less he felt that he knew? In his acquirement of knowledge there was much vexation of spirit and he could sympathize with Solomon when he said, “much study is a weariness of the flesh.” There is nothing truly substantial apart from God, the Everlasting One, who lives and abides forever! Depend upon it, we shall, in a short time, prove the insubstantiality of our own lives! Worms will be scrambling for our flesh and if we have not Christ as our Savior, devils will be fighting for our soul—and we, unable to help ourselves—shall have passed away from all that we once thought real with a groan because it was so false and so deceptive. “Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity.”

Now, look, my Brothers and Sisters, it ill becomes us, whose lives are so uncertain and whose lives at the best are so unsubstantial, to begin to contend with Him in whose hand our breath is and whose are all our ways! It were far better for us to submit ourselves to Him at once and to learn that in Him we live, move and have our being—and that if we live and move at all—it is all derived life and motion! It were well for us to also give the Lord all this poor life, be it what it may, to be used in His service and to be spent for His Glory. It will give us something comforting and cheering to look back upon, if we have submitted to Him and laid hold upon His way of salvation in Christ Jesus. And if, by His Grace, we have lived in Him, with Him, through Him and to Him, it will be real life— life that is substantial—“the life that is life, indeed.” The shadow, as it really is, will be a substance veiled in a shadowy form. It will have been worthwhile to have lived, for I reckon that angels envy men, after all. They have not our battlefields—they cannot have our victories. It is true that they have not our sins, but they can never know “Free Grace and dying love” as we have known them! It is true that they have not to deplore wanderings such as ours, but neither have they been brought back upon the great Shepherd’s shoulders. Nor has there been music made for them as for sons that were dead but are alive again!

If we play our part as Christians, well, they will think of us as Englishmen of old thought of their fellow-countrymen on a hard fought battlefield—they envied those who were privileged to fight battles that should bring to them such honor—and unfallen spirits might almost envy martyrs who can suffer for Christ, even to death, and men and women who, in their particular way, can contend against iniquity and bear their witness for the Truth and holiness of God and for the precious blood of the Only-Begotten in this sin-stricken world! May God help us to lay our poor life, such as it is, at His dear feet! It is only a flower, but if the flower is once put into His hand, it will not fade. It is a frail vase that is apt enough to break of its own weight, but if it is once presented to Him, He will preserve it and give it a place of honor in His palace above! If our poor life is given up to Christ, He will keep it for His own Kingdom and Glory. He will link it with His own immortality and give to us eternal life like to His own. Can we ever think of contending with Him? No, that can never be! Rather let us come and creep beneath the shadow of His wings. Let us be as little chicks that hide beneath the hen and He shall cover us with His feathers—and under His wings shall we trust. His Truth shall be our shield and buckler! We shall lose our nothingness in His eternal All and we shall become great, blessed, happy, everlasting in our God, through Christ Jesus, His dear Son!

II. Now I lead you on, in the second place, to another consideration, which is in the text—WHAT IS BEST FOR US IS NOT KNOWN TO US. It is ill for us to quarrel with God about His Providence, for Solomon wisely asks, “Who knows what is good for man in this life?” We certainly do not know, as to temporals, what is best for us in this life—neither do we know even in higher matters, in spiritual experience, “what is good for man in this life.”

Suppose we ask the question, “Which is the better for a man in this life—wealth or poverty?”—what will be the answer? Wealth—the eye is dazzled with it! It brings many comforts and luxuries, yet there is a passage of Scripture as true, now, as when the Master first uttered it, “How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God.” Paul wrote to his son, Timothy, “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” Scripture all through represents the acquisition of wealth as involving very solemn responsibilities and loading the soul with burdens. I do not doubt that there are some men who could never have sinned as they have done if they had not been successful in acquiring wealth. They could never have plunged into a damnation so deep as that which is theirs if they had not been able to indulge their lusts without stint. It must be a dreadful thing for a man with an evil heart to feel that he can get anything that his evil heart desires. Who knows, then, that wealth is a good thing? Do any choose poverty? There have been some men who have willingly chosen extreme poverty as a help to Divine Grace, but I gravely question whether it has been a wise choice. There is as much to be said concerning the evils and the disadvantages of poverty as there is to be said on the other side. He that lacks bread, he that has children about him crying with hunger, he that shivers in the cold blast is often tempted to envy—and to many other sins which he might not have committed if he had not been in that state.

It is not for you or for me to be able to balance the answer to this question, “Who knows what is good for man in this life—wealth or poverty?” There was a wise man who said, “Give me neither poverty nor riches,” and he seemed to have hit the golden answer. Yet I believe that there is many a man who has been helped to Heaven by his poverty. At any rate, he has been incapable of committing some sins into which he might have fallen if the means had been in his hand. He could not destroy himself so effectually in certain ways for lack of the power to do it. Brothers and Sisters, it may be that some of you will get to Heaven with many talents or pounds entrusted to you. There are others of you who would not get to Heaven at all that way, so you have not the talents or pounds committed to your charge. “Who knows what is good for man in this life—wealth or poverty?” We do not know, so we must leave the question unanswered.

Now take another question—that of health or sickness—“What is good for man in this life?” It seems, at first, that it must be good for a man to enjoy the best of health and the most sprightly vigor, does it not? We all wish for it and we are allowed to do so. Nobody thinks that sickness and disease can really be, in themselves, a blessing. Yet have I seen some gentle, holy, devout, matured spirits that could not have come from any garden but that which was walled around with disease, grief and woe! I could quote many examples and I have seen full many of them. The engraver’s best art has been spent upon them—the engraving tool has been very sharp and the hammer has smitten them very terribly. They had never been such marvels of the Master’s Grace if it had not been for their sorrows! As for myself, personally, I confess that I owe more to the hammer, the anvil, the fire and the forge, than I do to anything else. I have learned to bless the hand that has smitten me! I dare not invite its blows, but it has never come to me without being full of benedictions. I have seen more stars by night than by day, and I have realized more of my Master’s love and Grace in sorrow than I have ever done in joy. Yet I doubt not that there are other spirits who have been brought nearer to God in their gladsomeness, saints who, for very gratitude to God for their overflowing delights, the mercies of this life and the health of their bodies, have been drawn and bound more closely to their God. I am not going to decide the question—Solomon could not—so I will leave it unanswered. “Who knows what is good for man in this life—health or sickness?”

So is it with regard to publicity or obscurity. There are some persons whose Graces are best seen in public and they minister for the good of others. They have to be thankful that God has placed them in a position where they are seen, for it has led them to watchfulness and carefulness. The vows of God have been upon them and they have been helped in their way to Heaven by the very responsibilities of their public position. But, sometimes, I have wished that I might be a violet that I might shed my perfume in some lowly spot hidden by leaves. I would have liked, sometimes, to take my place in one of those pews and listen to someone else proclaiming the story of redeeming love. There must be a great privilege about going in and out of your humble home unseen and unknown—one would escape the public criticism and the unkind envy of many—and the weights of responsibility that are enough to crush us. Yet I do not doubt that obscurity has its ills as well and that many a man would gladly escape from it. “Who knows what is good for man in this life?”

I used to be constantly told by people that they prayed for me that I might be kept humble. Oftentimes I have thought to myself, “Dear Souls, if you would but pray that I might be kept alive at all, and preserved from despair, I would be much more thankful,” for if God sets a man up as high as the cross of St. Paul’s, he would be safer, there, than if the devil set him in an easy chair. If God takes His Son and sets Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, He is safe there. And if He were to come down and hide Himself, He would not be any safer. No, He would be in greater danger than He would be where His Father placed Him! All depends upon your being where God puts you. Any man is safe if he is where God would have him to be and if he trembles for his own safety and clings to the Strong for strength! But those who think that their position gives them immunity from danger are already in peril from their fancied security! “Who knows what is good for a man in this life—publicity or obscurity?”

So I might go on with many other matters and say that it is very difficult, indeed, impossible, to judge which is better. What, then? I think that we had better be content to remain just as we are and be satisfied and thankful to be where God has placed us in His Providence. Who knows what is good for us? God does and that is better than for us to know!

Then let us enjoy what God has given us. Make the best of your position by enjoying every mercy that God has bestowed upon you—not fretting because He has not given you certain other things, but rejoicing that He has given you what He has bestowed. And use whatever you have to His Glory. Instead of repining that you have not three, four, five, or 10 talents, use the one that you have and put it out to interest for your Lord. Do not sigh for another place, as so many do—they are hoping, wishing and longing to rise in the world—and if they do not get what they hope for, they will be very grieved and greatly depressed. Rise, if you can, but if, with all your efforts, you do not rise, thank God all the same! You do not know what is best for you—that higher place might have been a snare to you, so be thankful to be where you are and sigh not for that position which God has denied you.

Neither dote on the things that you have, for they will all soon pass away. We are travelers and the world is but like an inn—if our room is uncomfortable, we shall be up and away in the morning! We are soldiers on the battlefield—if the field is rough and stony, let us fight the battle and win the victory—then we shall not mind what the soil is on which we stand! Remember that whatever you set your heart upon is probably a bad thing for you—if you make up your mind that you must have a certain thing, you have already made an idol of it—and if the idol should really become yours, it would bring a curse with it! Whatever we sin to gain, whatever we sin to keep must be bad for us. But whatever our heavenly Father sends to us must be right for us to have and we may well be content to let His unerring wisdom supply what is lacking through our ignorance.

I believe that the same question might be asked concerning Christian experience—“Who knows what is good for man in this life?” It must be good to be full of high joys—to rise to the loftiest heights of holiness and blessedness—must it not? Yes, yes, but it may be good to go down into the very deeps, to know the plague of your own heart and to feel the scourging of your Father’s rod. “Who knows what is good for man in this life?” A mixed experience may be better than one uniform level either of height or depth. I have sometimes half envied those Brethren who are evenly the same in temperament, never going up and never going down, but I am not sure whether it is not better to go both up and down. I have had a taste of both experiences and if I could change to the uniform even tenor of my way, I would not dare to make the change! I feel about this matter very much as the old woman did when she had been long sick and one asked her, “Don’t you wish to die?” She answered, “I wish the Lord to do with me as He wills.” “But,” said the friend, “suppose the Lord put it to you whether you would live or whether you would die?” “Then,” she replied, “I would give it back to Him and ask Him to choose for me, for I would not want to have the responsibility of the choice.” Let us try to put ourselves wholly into God’s hands—spirit, soul and body—and to beg Him to do just what He wills with us since we are quite clear that we do not know how to take care of ourselves!

III. Lastly, the text mentions another form of our ignorance and it is this—WHAT SHALL BE AFTER US IS NOT KNOWN TO US. “Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun?”

The question may mean, “Who can tell a man what he will yet go through in this life?” He is now well-to-do. He is prosperous, he is healthy. But who can tell him what is yet to come to him? No one! Therefore let not the rich man glory in the wealth which may take to itself wings and fly away. Let not the man who is honored by his fellows reckon that the applause of men is any more substantial than a vapor. Let not any man glory in what he now possesses, for who can tell what may yet come to him—or be taken from him?

But I think that the text has its main bearing on what will happen after death. We must leave that with the Lord—it is not for us to know what will be done when we are called away from the earth. Many are plotting and planning to settle what shall come to pass after they are gone, yet much of their scheming is in vain. Somebody else will take that house which you have had such trouble to build. Strangers will tramp along those passages and laugh in those rooms—and know nothing about you. Your sons, whom you have brought up with the idea that they shall succeed you, may die before you do. You may have your estates entailed, as men try to do, and the chains of the law may seem to be riveted fast—but accident and the corrosion of time may bring them all to nothing.

“Who can tell a man what shall be after him?” I cannot tell what shall happen when my work is done—what shall happen here, who shall come here, where these people will go, what shall happen to the College, what shall become of the Orphanage—all these questions are proposed to me full often and friends ask, “What is to be done when you are gone?” Well, dear Friends, if you could tell me what will be done, I wish you would not, for I do not want to know! What has that to do with us? Are we not to leave the future as we leave the present—in the hands of God? And will not all be well? The Lord did very well without us before we were born and He will do very well without us after we are dead! I will not say that He will not notice our departure, for He notices everything, but it will be an almost inconsiderable item in the innumerable details of His universal government!

So, with regard to our present service, let us just feel this—“It is not for me to be worried because of what happens to me, or to quarrel with God about it.” God sees the end from the beginning. He takes in the whole run of things and it may be for His Glory that some of us should work on throughout our whole life with very little success because He intends that the “work” should appear to us, but the “glory” to our children. He may mean this age to be a time of sowing and the next age to be a time of reaping! He may mean that this century may be spent in compassing the walls of the Jericho of sin and that, all of a sudden, there will come a day which He has ordained for the tumbling down of every castle and every portion of that vast wall! It is for you and me to know that God sees further than we do and not to begin to measure His work with our ruler! Just leave it all with Him, you who are troubled either about the present or the future.

As for you who have no God with whom you can leave either the present or the future, you have cause to worry and you may well do so, for you have no Helper. You have no God to live with and no God to die with! No God for the Day of Judgment, no God to help you when you are driven from His Presence and from the Glory of His power. You have turned your back on Him—one day He will turn His back on you! You may well be afraid! You may well let care gnaw at your very hearts, for again I remind you that you have no Helper! Oh, that you were wise, that you would seek God in Christ Jesus and be reconciled to Him! May His infinite Grace bring you to this blessed condition!

But it is mainly to His children that I have been speaking. And to you who believe, I hope I need no longer say, “Let us joy in our Father’s love and care, and not want to know what is before us, but be content to believe! Let us not want to judge, but be satisfied to leave all with Him.” Thus, while we live, we shall praise His name, and when we die, we shall still go on praising His name forever and ever! I feel as if I could not help ending my discourse with that verse which I have often quoted before—

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

God bless you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—757, 39, 626.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.  
**PSALM 147.**

Verse 1. Praise you the LORD: for it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely. “It is good,” that is to say, it is a thing that ought to be done, it is a right thing “to sing praises to our God.” “It is good,” that is to say, it is profitable, it is beneficial to our own hearts. Prayer is refreshing, but praise is even more so, for there may be and there often is, in prayer, the element of selfishness—but praise rises to a yet higher level. Prayer and praise, together, make up spiritual respiration—we breathe in the air of Heaven when we pray—and we breathe it out again when we praise. “It is good to sing praises to our God.” What a mercy it is that it is pleasant, too! There are many things that are good that are not pleasant, and many more things that are pleasant that are not good. But here is a holy duty which is also a heavenly pleasure! It is the bliss of Heaven to praise God. Let us anticipate that bliss by praising Him now, “for it is pleasant.” And then there is a third commendation— “and praise is comely.” That is to say, it is beautiful, it is a good thing in its right place, it is according to the natural and spiritual fitness of things that God should be praised. In God’s sight, one of the most beautiful things in the world is a grateful heart—“it is pleasant; and praise is comely.”

2. The LORD does build up Jerusalem. There is something for which to praise Him. When the Jews came back from captivity and found their beautiful city all in ruins, God helped them to build it up, again, so they sang, “The Lord does build up Jerusalem.” We may sing the same sacred song, for the Psalmist does not say, “The Lord has built,” but, “The Lord does build up Jerusalem.” He is going on to build it—the Divine Architect’s plan of salvation is still being carried out! The great Master Builder is still placing stone upon stone in the wondrous courses of His election of Grace—“The Lord does build up Jerusalem.” O Lord, build up this part of the wall!

2. He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. Those that were far away, captives in Babylon, He brought back. God has a long arm which He is casting round His outcast chosen ones, for He means to gather them all to Himself. He has an elect redeemed people and they are scattered throughout the whole world—but even Caiaphas knew enough of the Truth of God to declare that Christ, “should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.”

3. He heals the broken in heart. He does it still, mark you, for the verb is in the present tense—“He heals the broken in heart.” These are two of God’s great occupations—to gather outcasts and to heal broken hearts.”

3. And binds up their wounds. Oh, what a blessed God He is, thus to interest Himself in the sorrows of mankind, to give His infinite mind and heart to this wondrous work of healing the wounds of our lost humanity! You see, it is thus that the Lord builds up Jerusalem. The two verses are the complement of each other. “The Lord does build up Jerusalem”—with what? Outcasts, broken hearts and wounded spirits! Many of the stones that God puts into His great Temple are such as men would exclude. Broken hearts and bruised spirits that look as if they never could have any strength in them, God uses in building up His Church. What a wonderful leap it is from this third verse to the next!

4. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names. There is as much grandeur and glory in His compassion as in His Omniscience! To bind up wounds is as God-like a work as to count the stars. God does both, taking, perhaps, a greater delight in the first than in the second. There is not a star in the Church’s firmament to which God has not given the light! He knows the number of His shining ones and He keeps their light burning—their names are all in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

5, 6. Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite. The LORD lifts up the meek. That is the Lord’s usual way—those that are down, He raises. But—

6. He casts the wicked down to the ground. This is what God is always doing—lifting up and overturning—putting people and things in their right places.

7. Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp to our God. False gods have been served with discordant yells and cries of agony, but our God is to be worshipped with songs of thanksgiving. Think not that He desires you to come before Him with groans and moans—He will hear them if they are sincere—but He would have you raise your hearts to something higher and better.

8. Who covers the Heaven with clouds. Little children do not think that is a matter for gratitude. They are sorry to see the clouds and the rain, but wise men know how filled with blessing are the clouds God sends. It is even so in Providence and Grace.

8. Who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow upon the mountains. For every blade of grass, we ought to thank and praise the Lord! If He is a benefactor who makes two blades of grass grow where only one grew before, what a Benefactor must He be who makes all the blades of grass grow, without whom there would be none at all! Even on the mountains, where it may be that we have no cattle, yet there are wild creatures that must be fed, so the Lord makes the grass grow there, too! We are often selfish and we talk of things being useless if they are of no use to us. Are there no other living things, then, but men? And is God only to care for those animals which most of all rebel against Him? Let us think differently of this matter and bless the Lord for even the grass that grows on the waste places, where only the chamois or the wild gazelle will feed, for they, too, have their purpose to fulfill in God’s sight.

9. He gives the beast his food, and the young ravens which cry. Unclean creatures though they are, God feeds them. We have known people have only one bird in a cage and yet forget to feed it. But God has myriads of birds, millions of beasts and innumerable fishes, yet they are not starved. The commissary of God never fails! My Soul, will He not feed you? If He hears ravens, will He not hear your cry?

10. He delights not in the strength of the horse. He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man. Man boasts of his strength and he looks at his fine horse and glories in its strength. But God has something higher and better than sinew and muscle to boast about.

11. The LORD takes pleasure in them that fear Him. That is His joy. As a man is proud of his horse, or of the muscles which enable him to run swiftly, so God takes delight in those that fear Him—

11. In those that hope in His mercy. These are His jewels. These are His Glory.  
12-14. Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you. He makes peace in your borders. What a blessing this is, not only in a nation, but in a church! If you were ever members of a church where they seemed to quarrel punctually once every month, you would soon be sorry to be a professor of religion at all—but to live in a Church where brotherly love rules—this is a thing for which to praise the name of the Lord. “He makes peace in your borders”—  
14. And fills you with the finest of the wheat. There is generally peace where there is plenty. Dogs fight when there are few bones. And when God’s people are well fed, they do not so often quarrel with one another. If they are fed with the finest of the wheat, there will be peace in their borders.  
15, 16. He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His Word runs very swiftly. He gives snow like wool. Light and fleecy, it covers the plants and protects them from the cold. The snow is a kind of garment to protect them from the frost.  
16. He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes. You must often have been reminded of white ashes as you looked at the hoarfrost in the early morning.  
17. He casts forth His ice like morsels. Hailstones, like little pieces of bread, broken off and scattered abroad,  
17. Who can stand before His cold? In all this, the Lord is really fattening the soil and preparing food for man and beast in the coming spring and summer!  
18. He sends out His word, and melts them. He has only to speak a word and the ice, the snow, the hoarfrost and every sign of winter will disappear—and we shall begin to swelter in the heat of summer!  
18. He causes His wind to blow That is all—  
18. And the waters flow. Ice saws and axes could not set free the frozen rivers but His wind, the very breath from the mouth of God, does it at once!  
19. He shows His Word to Jacob, His statues and His judgments to Israel. And we have come into the place of Jacob and Israel, even we who have believed, for Abraham is the father of Believers and we are his spiritual seed according to the promise. So we have to bless God that He has showed to us His Word, His statutes and His judgments.  
20. He has not dealt so with any nation. There are no other people who know the Lord as God’s people do—and remember, they constitute one nation. We are Englishmen, perhaps, or Americans. That is a skin-deep distinction. But if we are in Christ, we are one family, we are of that one peculiar nation which, all over the world, is distinct from every other nation!  
20. And as for His judgments, they have not known them. If they have been left in the dark, let us do all we can to carry or send the light of the Gospel to them! And as we think of the great things God has done for us, let us join in a joyful Hallelujah, as the Psalm ends—  
20. Praise you the LORD.

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÷Ecc 7.1

THE BELIEVER’S DEATH DAY BETTER THAN HIS BIRTHDAY

NO. 1588

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 3, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one’s birth.”  
Ecclesiastes 7:1.**

IN this part of the world, we can hardly understand how much the Easterns thought of perfumes. When Solomon speaks of “precious ointment,” he speaks of a luxury highly appreciated by those who heard him. Orientals delighted to anoint themselves with fragrant oil and to pour upon their heads salves full of perfume. We do not—at any rate, not to the same lavish extent. But among the luxuries of eastern life was that of delighting the nostrils with sweet smells. The figure is easy to understand as it is here used to set forth the excellence of a good name. A man who is perfumed and who has put upon his head precious ointment is sweet and pleasant to himself. It gives him joy and so does a good name afford pleasure to its possessor. Besides that, the perfumed person was agreeable to other people—those who were round about him were refreshed by the fragrance—and so a noble character is agreeable to all who come near it.

In some cases the use of a sacred ointment, or anointing oil, signified that the man was himself pleasant even to God—the priests went not into the Holy Place except they had been anointed with a certain appointed compound of sweet-smelling perfumes—and so precious ointment became the type of the anointing of the Spirit of God and of that acceptableness which comes to men through Jesus Christ who is a sweet savor unto the Lord God. And so you see that precious ointment, or sweet perfumed oil, was very precious to the Jew, first, because of the pleasure it gave to him and the healthy influence which he believed it exerted upon himself. Next, because it made him pleasurable to others and, next, because in its highest sacred sense it prepared him to come before God. You can see why, “precious ointment,” was so much held in esteem.

But Solomon says that a good name is better than that. I do not think he merely meant a good reputation—and yet it would be true if he referred only to an honorable character among his neighbors, for it is a good thing for a man to stand high in the esteem of his fellow men and he ought never to lose their respect except for one cause, namely, for the sake of standing in higher esteem before God. The faithful follower of Jesus must be content to part with name and fame if, through obedience to Christ, he is spoken of evilly—yes, in such a case he may rejoice and be exceedingly glad when they say all manner of evil against him falsely for Christ’s’ name’s sake! Yet even then it is a sharp sorrow to have lost one’s good name among men, though for Christ’s sake it should be borne right cheerfully.

Every good man would be glad if it were possible to have the good word of all his fellow men, for this is the groundwork of social peace and would be, in itself, good and pleasant were it not that sin destroys it and turns it into a “woe” when all men speak well of us. I believe that the text has a deeper meaning than this, for a man truly has a good name if he deserves to be held in high esteem, though he may, for Christ’s sake, be in disrepute. His name is good, whatever men may say about it. His name is, indeed, all the better in the sight of God because he has been slandered and reproached for the sake of the Truth of God. His name shall shine out like the stars of Heaven when Christ comes—even the name of the man of whom the world was not worthy. It is, after all, a small matter to be judged of man’s judgment—our record is on high. A good character may be understood here and, assuredly, that is better than the rarest luxury of kings.

Consider it spiritually and, dear Brothers and Sisters, what is a good name? A good name is a name that is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life and that is better than the sweetest of all ointments! Oh, that I may find my name recorded in some corner of the page among the sinners saved by Grace! The very thought of that has a savor in it which no earthly delicacy can rival! Oh, how blessed to be among the chosen of God, the redeemed of Christ Jesus, beloved of the Father from before the foundation of the world! “A good name.” Why, that must be a name written upon the breastplate of the great High Priest! If you could have gone up to the high priest of old you would have read there, “Reuben,” “Simeon,” “Levi,” “Judah,” “Dan,” “Gad,” “Naphtali” and the like—and they were all good names when once they were engraved there.

But what a blessed place to have your name inscribed—not upon a jewel that shall hang on the breast of a man, but upon the very heart of Jesus Christ your Lord! If you could see your name written on the palms of His hands, you would say, “It is a good name that is written there. Blessed be the Lord that ever I had that name, insignificant as it is. Though it is a name that has been ridiculed. Though it is a name that has been bandied about and kicked like a football through the world, yet it is a blessed name, for it is written on the palms of Jesus’ hands.” It is so if we are the Lord’s own people and are walking the walk of faith. Jesus says, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.” That is a good name which is recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life and engraved upon the breastplate of the Savior. Do you not think so?

Connected with this, I may say that a name that is written among the living in Zion is a good name. Oh, there is nothing like it! Some men are very anxious to get their names upon the roll of this club or of that, or of some wonderful secret society—or to get their names into the peerage. It is thought to be a wonderful thing to be a nobleman, though it is better, far, to be a noble man. But the best list of names on earth seems to me to be the list of the people of God. I should count it a higher honor to be inscribed on the Church book of a humble company of baptized Believers meeting in a barn than to wear a name imported by the Conqueror and written in the roll of Battle Abbey! The pedigree of saintship confers honor such as angels recognize—all else they think little of. Are you one of God’s believing people? Have you taken up your cross, resolved to follow Jesus?

Do you, as a servant and as a soldier, bear His name as your Master and Captain? Then you have a good name and there is a sweetness about it better than the perfume of precious ointment. If, dear Brothers and Sisters, you go on, after having your names inscribed in the Church of God, to get a beloved name among God’s people through Divine Grace, it will be better than precious ointment! It will be better than all the expensive luxuries which wealth could purchase to have a name esteemed for lowly piety or sacred courage! How sweet, for instance, to be like that woman who brought our Lord precious ointment. He paid her back with a good name, immortalizing her in the Gospels, for He said, “Wherever this Gospel is preached, there shall be also this, what this woman has done, be told for a memorial of her.”

A humble woman like Dorcas may make garments for the poor and this shall be better than precious ointment! A simple trader like Lydia may entertain the servants of God—constraining them to come into her house— and this shall be better than precious ointment! And a lowly man may so live as to adorn the Gospel of God his Savior—may so speak as to bring one and another to the Savior’s feet—and this shall be better than a blaze of courtly honor! “A good name”—that is a name for humility, a name for love and affection, a name for generosity, a name for zeal, a name for warm-heartedness, a name for prayerfulness, a name among the people of God for being a wholehearted, sincere man—a name for being one who is ready to help you in time of trouble, a name like that of Barnabas, the Son of Consolation!

A good name of this sort should be our ambition to win and to wear. A good name that shall arise out of our exhibiting a compound of many precious virtues shall be better than an ointment formed of the rarest spices, however pleasant it may be. You may be in the Church and yet you may not have a good name as a member of it. I mean as to your own personal character as a Christian, for some professors are in the pot of ointment, but I wish we could pick them out, for they are flies and they spoil everything! There are such in this Church—oh that they had gone elsewhere! If only they would have flown into a pot of the world’s honey, or something of that kind! For them to get into the Church’s ointment is a great pity. May God grant that you and I may never be dead flies in the pot of ointment.

Some get a name in the Church for quarrelling and fault-finding. “Oh,” people say, “if anybody can pick a hole in the sermon, I know who it is.” You need only have half-a-dozen words with this crab apple critic and you surely and speedily lose what enjoyment you have had during the service. Alas, that many Christian women have not a good name, for they are addicted to gossiping. A word to the wise on this matter will, I hope, be enough. I will not, at this time, dive deeply into any of your faults, whatever they may be, but will cover them all over with this truth—A good reputation, well earned among your Christian Brethren is better than precious ointment. It is of persons who have this good character and are known by the sweet savor of their lives, that the latter part of the text is spoken—“The day of death is better than the day of one’s birth.”

You must have a good name—you must be written among the living in Zion, written on the heart of Christ, written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, or else the text is not true of you and, alas, though the day of your birth was a bad day, the day of your death will be a thousand times worse—for when you die, my Hearer, remember what will happen to you unless you have that good name! You will be driven from the Presence of God and from the Glory of His power—and begin to feel the terrors of His vengeance! And then, when the Day of Judgment comes, God will prove that He is able to destroy both body and soul in Hell, for there must you dwell in everlasting punishment, prepared for the devil and His angels, so that the day of your death will be a day of darkness and not of light—and it will be better for you that you had never been born.

But now, if you are one of God’s people, trusting in Him, look forward to the day of your death as being better than the day of your birth! It is possible that you may never die, since the Lord Jesus may suddenly come a second time. But if this should not occur in our day, we shall, in due course, fulfill our service and fall asleep. At this hour, before yet the sand in the glass shall all run down, the long-expected Lord may suddenly appear in His Glory! Therefore let us stand ready, as men that wait for their Lord, with our loins girt and our lamps burning. But if He does not come for the next hundred years—and He may not, for our Lord has not committed to us a knowledge of the times and seasons—then we shall die. And in that case it is no small consolation that “the day of death is better than the day of one’s birth.”

I. First, then, OUR DEATH DAY IS BETTER THAN OUR BIRTHDAY— and it is so for this, among other reasons—“Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.” When we are born we begin life, but what will that life be? Friends say, “Welcome, little stranger.” Ah, but what kind of reception will the stranger get when he is no longer a newcomer? Very likely he is not long in the world before he begins to feel the poverty of his parents and, perhaps, the misery of an unholy home. A troop of infantile diseases are waiting around him and the little candle that is newly lit is in great danger of being blown out! Infancy is a very dangerous passage for a tiny boat unfitted to bear rough buffetings.

Those first few years are full of rocks and quicksand and many scarcely begin life before they end it. He who is newly born and is ordained to endure through a long life is like a warrior who puts on his harness for battle—and is not he in a better case who takes it off because he has won the victory? Ask any soldier which he likes better—the first shot in the battle or the sound which means, “Cease firing, for the victory is won!”? The soldier does not deliberate a moment! There is no room for question! Since the day of a Believer’s death is his time of triumph and of victory, it is better than the day of the first shot—the day of one’s birth.

When we were born we set out on our journey, but when we die, we end our weary march in the Father’s house above. Surely it is better to have come to the end of the tiresome pilgrimage than to have commenced it. We wave the handkerchief and bid good-bye to those who start upon a long voyage and it is only right that they should be made as cheerful as they can be. But, surely, it is a better day when, at last, they reach their port, all danger over, and come to their desired haven. So, then, it is better to die than to begin to live, if we are, indeed, the Lord’s people. Better is the day of death than our birthday because about the birthday there hangs uncertainty.

I cannot tell you, good woman, what is to become of the little child who is pressed to your bosom this evening. God bless it and make it a comfort to you and an honor to His Church! But it is all matter of hope as yet. Children are certain cares, they say, and uncertain blessings. I hardly like the phrase. They are blessings anyway—but there is certainly this about them—we cannot tell what will become of them when they grow up and come under the influence of evil. You look upon a youth as he grows up and you feel, “I cannot quite see what you will be. You may be led astray by temptation, or by Divine Grace you may cleanse your way. You may be useful and honorable, or you may be dissolute and degraded.”

Everything is uncertain about the child on his birthday, but everything is certain about the saint on his death day. I heard, this morning, of a dear friend who had fallen asleep. When I wrote to his wife I said, “Concerning him we speak with certainty. You sorrow not as those that are without hope. A long life of walking with God proved that he was one of God’s people and we know that for such there remains joy without temptation, without sorrow, without end, forever and ever.” Oh, then, as much as certainty is better than uncertainty, the day of the saint’s death is better than the day of his birth!

So, too, in things which are certain, the saint’s death day is preferable to the beginning of life, for we know that when the child is born he is born to sorrow. Whatever else is uncertain about him, we are quite sure that those little eyes will weep; that those little limbs will know weariness and pain and that his little heart will be distracted, sooner or later, by many griefs. We know this, for “man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.” No man has ever been able to find a perfectly smooth road through this mortal life. Trials must and will befall and your little one who is born today is born to an inheritance of grief, like his father, like his mother, who prophesied it as it were by her own pangs.

But look, now, at the saint when he dies. It is absolutely certain that he has done with sorrow, done with pain. We know that they shall die no more—“they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Now, surely, the day in which we are certain that sorrow is over must be better than the day in which we are certain that sorrow is on the road! For this reason we set up the headstone of the grave above the tablet which records the birth. Yes, and this holds good about subsequent birthdays.

It is thoughtfully and cheerfully wise to mark each birthday. It should be a holy day in every Christian’s case—a day of grateful thanksgiving that we have come so far upon the road of life. It is a very blessed thing to sit down on the milestone and say, “Well, now, I have come 20 miles or 30, 40, 50, 60, 70 miles of my journey. I shall never tread those miles over again. So many troubles are past—so many waves have risen that will never wash over me a second time! So many tossing to and fro I have endured and I shall never feel them any more.” Every man should say at the end of a sickness, “Thank God that is gone. I shall not suffer a repetition of that same sickness. I shall not feel those pains over again. I shall not groan through those same weary nights for a second time.” For every pang that shoots through your bones you should say, “That bone will not ache that pain over again, at any rate.” Be joyful that you are so far on your journey!

There remains that other portion of the journey—long leagues of pilgrimage may lie beyond. There are still battles to fight, mountains to climb, dark nights in which one sighs for light. There is still temptation; still sin. Yes, but when we get to the day of one’s death, then the whole journey lies behind! It is all over then! On your coming to die there is nothing left to do but die. All else is done. The battle is fought and the victory is won forever! Oh, is not that better than even the best birthday that we have ever had—good as they have been—and cause for thanksgiving as each one certainly has been? I think, then, I need not dwell longer on this point. “The day of death is better than the day of one’s birth.”

II. Now I will give the same thoughts in another form. The day of death is BETTER TO THE BELIEVER THAN ALL HIS HAPPY DAYS. What were his happy days? I shall take him as a man and I will pick out some days that are often thought to be happy. There is the day of a man’s coming of age when he feels that he is a man—especially if he has an estate to come into. That is a day of great festivity. You have seen pictures of, “Coming of age in the olden times,” when the joy of the young squire seemed to spread itself over all the tenants and all the farm laborers—everybody rejoiced!

Ah, that is all very well, but when Believers die they do, in a far higher sense, come of age and enter upon their heavenly estates! Here, you know, in this life we are very much as children who are under governors and tutors and we differ little from servants. We still have to be chastened, kept under rule and denied much which is nevertheless ours. We have many good things kept from us because we are not yet able to appreciate them. “Now we know in part.” It is only in a small measure that we come into possession, enjoying only the earnest of the inheritance. Yes, but—

*“Then shall I see, and hear, and know  
All I desired or wished below!  
And every power find sweet employ  
In that eternal world of joy.”*

Then shall I pluck the grapes from those vines that I have read of as enriching the valleys of Eshcol! Then shall I lie down and drink full drafts of the river of God which is fall of water! Then shall I know even as I am known and see no more through a glass darkly, but face to face!

Speak of heirs, of heirs coming into their estates! Why, our day of death shall be such a day as that! What a jubilee day it will be! If we were really in our senses, the thought of fearing death would be ridiculous! No young man is afraid of coming to be twenty-one. No! He says, “Fly away, fly away, days and nights. I shall be glad to get out of my nonage, out of my infancy and to come into my full manhood and into possession of everything.” So might we say, “Fly away, years! Come, gray hairs! Fly away, years, and bring me into possession of things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard which God has prepared for them that love Him.”

Another very happy day with a man is the day of his marriage—who does not rejoice, then? What cold heart is there which does not beat with joy on that day? But on the day of death we shall enter more fully into the joy of our Lord and into that blessed marriage union which is established between Him and ourselves. Then we shall enter into the guest chamber where the supper is to be spread and we shall wait a while with joy, the Bridegroom being with us, till the word shall be given and the trumpet note shall ring out—and then we shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, not to look at His guests, but to be ourselves part and parcel of that blessed bride, the Lamb’s wife, in whom Christ finds all His heart’s content.

Oh, yes, we may long for our departure because it is to the saint, a marriage day in which he shall be “with Christ,” which is far better and, as the bride longs for the wedding, so may the heart that is full of faith long for the time when we shall be forever with the Lord! There are days with men in business that are happy days because they are days of gain. They get some sudden windfall. They prosper in business, or, perhaps, there are long months of prosperity in which all goes well with them and God is giving them the desires of their heart. But, oh, Beloved, there is no gain like the gain of our departure to the Father! The greatest of all gains is that which we shall know when we pass out of the world of trouble into the land of triumph. “To die is gain.”

As for prosperity, what worldly prosperity can be compared with the eternal years in which we shall dwell in infinite felicity above? To die is to enter upon days of peace, rest, joy, satisfaction and, therefore, the day of our death is better than our happiest days! There are days of honor, Brethren, when a man is promoted in office, or receives applause from his fellow men. But what a day of honor that will be for you and me if we are carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom! Our honorable escort will manifest how highly the Lord thinks of us. Oh, the honors that will be heaped upon the saints when they shall be recognized in Glory as Brothers and Sisters of Christ, heirs of God, joint heirs with the Redeemer!

Days of health are happy days, too. But what health can equal the perfect wholeness of a spirit in whom the good Physician has displayed His utmost skill? Days of recovery from sickness are happy days, but, oh, to be totally recovered—to go where the inhabitant shall no more say, “I am sick.” When Jehovah Rophi shall restore our whole spirit to perfection, then will a new gladness take possession of us. We enjoy very happy days of social friendship when hearts warm with hallowed communion—when one can sit awhile with a friend or rest in the midst of one’s family. Yes, but no day of social enjoyment will match the day of death! Some of us expect to meet troops of blessed ones that have gone Home long ago, whom we shall never forget. We have priceless friends over yonder and the bliss of reunion will be sweet.

Some of you old people have more friends in Heaven than you have on earth! You may forget all sorrow as to those you will leave in the joy of meeting those with whom you will be united again! What family greetings there will be! Mother has gone; father has gone; uncles and aunts that were in the Lord and brothers and sisters, too, are all gone before—and all these are waiting for us and we shall soon be in full fellowship with them! Best of all, He has gone before whom our hearts love and who is more to us than brother, sister and mother! Oh, the bliss of meeting with our risen Lord! Oh, the joy of meeting in Him all that are truly our own kin! The saints will meet around the Throne of God, an unbroken family—not one of God’s children will be absent!

We shall have no brothers or sisters who will not be there. “Oh,” you say, “I am afraid that we have some who are still unconverted and who will not be there.” They will not be your brothers and sisters, then. Ties of merely natural kinship will come to an end—only spiritual relationship will last and survive. We shall have none to mourn over! Our kindred will all be in Glory. Those that were truly related to us in the bonds of everlasting life shall all be there. One might wish for it to come soon, for the joy of being forever with the people of God, sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven!

III. In the third place, going a step farther, the day of a Believer’s death is BETTER THAN HIS HOLY DAYS ON EARTH. I think that the best holy day I ever spent, (yes, I think I must put it as high as that), was the day of my conversion. There was a novelty and freshness about that first day which made it like the day in which a man first sees the light after having been long blind. My conversion day—shall I ever forget it?—When my heart began to beat with spiritual life and the lungs of my soul began to heave with prayer! And the hands of my soul were stretched out to grasp my Lord and the eyes of my soul beheld His beauty! Yes—that was a very blessed sight—but what will it be to see Him face to face? What will the first five minutes in Heaven be?

Surely those dawning moments will be forever remembered and spoken of by holy beings as they commune with one another concerning their delights! Oh, for a celestial visitor to tell us of his experience in the first five minutes in Heaven! No, I think he had better not because we might be frightened by him and he would talk a language that we could not understand! He would say things which it were not lawful for a man to utter! Brother from the Glory Land, you may go back—it were better that we did not hear your story of the better country. We will think of it and begin expecting it. It will certainly be better to see the Lord in death than when we first of all saw Him here below. Since then we have known many blessed days—our Sabbaths, for instance. We can never give up the Lord’s Day.

Precious and dear unto my soul are those sweet rests of love—days that God has hedged about to make them His own that they may be ours. A young man said to me yesterday, when he came to join the Church, “I often wish that all the week was made up of Sundays.” I thought, “Yes, and so do I,” only I could not always be preaching. I would want to come down and take a turn at hearing, although it is always precious to talk about God’s Word. Oh, our blessed Sabbaths! Well, there is this about the day of one’s death—we shall then enter upon an eternal Sabbath. We shall go—

*“Where congregations never break up,*

*And Sabbaths have no end.”*  
And the Glory Sabbaths will be real Sabbaths, never disturbed or distracted. They will be blessed Sabbaths, shut out from sinners and from that filthy conversation which often vexes us even on the Sabbath. “There remains a rest for the people of God.”—

*“To that our laboring souls aspire  
With ardent pangs of strong desire.”*  
Our communion days have been very holy days. It has been very sweet

to sit at the Lord’s Table and have fellowship with Jesus in the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine. But sweeter far will it be to commune with Him in the Paradise above—and that we shall do on the day of our death! I might go on mentioning all our holy days, one after another, but whichever you should select as the season of your highest joy on earth, I should say of the best of them, “Yes, but the day of one’s death, as ushering us into a higher and holier state, is better than any of those days.” Those days have been good, I am not going to depreciate them, but to bless the Lord for every one of them. When we say that a second thing is, “better,” it is supposed that the first thing has some goodness about it. Yes, and our holy days on earth have been good—fit rehearsals of the jubilee beyond the river!

When you and I enter Heaven, it will not be going from bad to good, but from good to better! The change will be remarkable, but it will not be so great a change as thoughtless persons would imagine. First, there will be no change of nature. The same nature which God gave us when we were regenerated—the spiritual nature—is that which will enjoy the heavenly state. We shall not carry with us our depraved nature—we do not want to do so, I am sure. Mr. Ready-to-Halt, in Bunyan’s, “Pilgrim,” performed His journey on crutches. But when he died he threw them away! He did not need to carry his crutches into the land of perfection—and we shall carry no sinful infirmities with us into Paradise, nor, indeed, any infirmities at all!

As to Mr. Feeblemind, he gave orders that his feeble mind should be buried in a dunghill—he did not want to import a trembling heart into the skies! But all that is good about us, all that is really ourselves as we have been begotten again in Christ Jesus—all will go to Heaven, without loss of any portion. I shall be the same man there that I am here—and I have not the slightest doubt that you will know me. At any rate, you will be bigger fools in Heaven than you are here if you do not! Did I hear someone reply, “We shall not know you in the disembodied state, for here we only recognize you by your outward appearance”? I answer, Many of you know me in another manner than after the flesh—you not only know me by my looks, but you know my spirit.

If I could get out of my body and I could not use a voice, but yet could influence your spirits by my spirit, you would know my spirit! You know what spirit I am of. I will not try to describe myself, but you know me. I know you do! Nobody is exactly like me in some traits of character—each one stands alone. Nobody is exactly like you, dear Friend, so that there will be peculiar points by which to distinguish man from man. We shall certainly know each other. Yes, and we shall be the same persons—and when our bodies rise, they will be the same bodies. “Every seed its own body”—changed and perfected, but still preserving its identity!

On earth we have had good days because we have had a good nature given us by the Holy Spirit—and we shall possess the same nature above—only more fully grown and purged from all that hinders it. We shall follow the same employments above as we have followed here. “Oh dear,” says one, “I hope not! I do not want to work hard, there, as I have had to do here.” No, perhaps not, but I mean the employments of our spirits will be similar to what they have been while we have been in the world. What are the employments of our spirits here? Why, one of the sweetest of them is to sing the Lord’s praises. We shall spend eternity in adoring the Most High. To draw near to God in communion—that is one of our most blessed employments. We shall do it there and take our fill of it.

Nor is this all, for we shall serve God in Glory. I do not know what God will want us to do in Heaven, I have never been there to see. But I am sure that He will make use of us. Does He not say, “They shall see His face and His servants shall serve Him”? Oh, yes, He has something for me to do up there and for you, too. You active-spirited ones, you shall find an intense delight in continuing to do the same things as to spirit as you do here, namely adoring and magnifying and spreading abroad the saving name of Jesus in whatever place you may be. We shall certainly possess the same enjoyments of our richest enjoyments as saints are found in fellowship with Christ and with one another—and we shall have these above. We shall live upon Christ! We shall rejoice in God, there, as we do here!

And there is one thing I like to think of—we shall have the same company. I was visiting a poor old woman who was near to death and she said to me, “One thing makes me feel quite safe about where I am going. I believe that I shall go to my own company and for the last 60 years I have never had any company but the Lord’s people. And if a stranger has come in here and begun to talk about worldly things in a carnal way, I have wished him gone. I said to myself, ‘The Lord won’t take me away from my own people. Surely He will let me go where they go and if I go where those people go, that I love, I know that I shall be happy.’”

So, dying Believer, you will not change company—only the company will be all improved and you will be improved as much as any of them! It will be the same company and this makes it look so much like going home. The day of our death has nothing so very strange and mysterious about it as to make us fear it. You and I ought to live like people, who, when they hear a knock at the door, do not go into fits at the startling sound. Some people are terribly alarmed at a knock or a ring because they have not paid their rent and they are afraid that somebody is after them for money. You and I have paid our debts, or rather, they have been all paid for us. The Lord Jesus Christ has set us free—and when death comes and knocks at our door—all that we shall have to do will be to answer the summons and go with God’s messenger at once.

Our friends will say, “He is gone.” And if we have lived so that we have had a good name, that is better than precious ointment! They will know where we have gone and if they lament on that account they will be very foolish, for they ought rather to say, “Thank God that our friend has entered into his joy and rest!” There was a dear mother, a woman of great faith, who loved her daughter very much, but she loved her Lord more. And when her dear daughter was dying, she kissed her and said to her, “My dear girl, you will be in Heaven within a few hours and I congratulate you. The thought of your joy fills me with joy concerning you and I cannot weep. I congratulate you and wish I was going with you.” Let us think of death after that holy manner.

IV. I have not time to finish my sermon. At least, I have time to finish it, but not to continue it as long as I would like. I was going to say, in the fourth place, that the day of a saint’s death is BETTER THAN THE WHOLE OF HIS DAYS PUT TOGETHER because his days here are days of dying. The moment we begin to live we commence to die—

*“Every beating pulse we count*

*Leaves but the number less.”*  
Death is the end of dying! On the day of the Believer’s death, dying is forever done with! The saints who are with God shall never die again. Life is wrestling, struggling—but death is the end of conflict—it is rest victory. Life is full of sinning. Blessed be God, death is the end of that—no transgression or iniquity shall follow us into Heaven. Life is longing, sighing, crying, pining, desiring. Heaven is enjoying, possessing, delighting one’s self in God. This life is failure, disappointment, regret. Such emotions are all over when the day of death comes, for Glory dawns upon us with its satisfaction and intense contentment!

The day of our death will be the day of our cure! There are some diseases which, in all probability, some of us never quite get rid of till the last Physician comes and He will settle the matter. One gentle touch of His hand and we shall be cured forever! All infirmities, as well as sicknesses, will vanish in our last hours. Blind Sister, you will have your eyes. You that have lost your hearing shall listen to the songs of angels and enter into the most refined of their harmonies. You who must limp to your graves shall dance, by-and-by. You shall have no more infirmities. Death will also be the cure of old age. No doctor can help you about that—but this Doctor will end all. You shall renew your youth like the eagle’s. You shall be girt about with power when your body rises from the grave and, till then, your soul shall enjoy all the freshness and juvenility of youth! You shall be at your prime in Glory! Our death day will be the loss of all losses. Life is made up of losses, but death loses losses. Life is fall of crosses, but death is the cross that brings crosses to an end. Death is the last enemy and turns out to be the death of every enemy.

Dear Friends, put all your days together—they shall not equal that last day which shall be to you the beginning of days of another sort! The day of our death is the beginning of our best days! Sometimes even that part of a dying day which is spent on earth is the best that the dying Believer has ever lived. I have seen Believers die and if anything can convince a man of the reality of religion, of the truth of the Scriptures and of the power of the Spirit, it is the death of saints! I have seen many persons who seemed to be as much dying of their joy as of their disease, they were so happy! Their eyes, their face, their whole bearing were those of persons in whom the utmost pain was forgotten in an excess of joy, while weakness was swallowed up in the delights of the Heaven which was dawning upon them.

I believe that angels come and meet certain departing ones—that they come trooping outside the gate—and that dying ones frequently see that which is supernatural. I am not dreaming! I believe that they actually see what eyes have not seen and that there comes upon them a Light which is neither of the sun, nor of the moon. At any rate, they speak words of wondrous import! Dying children have spoken words which certainly they never learned, for none have ever heard the like before! And other departing ones have uttered words of rapture and ecstasy and almost delirium of bliss, for Christ has come to them and they have seen the King in His beauty even in the border land before they have crossed the river and entered into Canaan!

“Is this what it is to die?” asked one. “Well, then,” he said, “it is worth while to live even to enjoy the bliss of dying!” The holy calm of some and the transport of others prove that better is the day of death in their case than the day of birth, or all their days on earth! And then that later part of the day which is spent among the angels! They breakfast with Christ on earth, but they sup with Him in Heaven. Oh, that eventide of the day! Then to think that it shall be without end—forever happy, forever triumphant and forever more and more so—for, “from glory unto glory” makes us look for progress even there!

We shall rise from seeing Christ to seeing Him yet more and to discovering more and more beauties in Him! We shall ascend from one perfection to another perfection—from fullness up to our capacity to an enlarged capacity and an equal fullness! From Glory unto Glory—from sunlight to Godlight—from Godlight to the light of God yet more received and enjoyed. There! I cannot go farther. Good night, “till the day breaks and the shadows flee away” and then you and I will know, in ten minutes, more than all the bench of bishops could tell us in a year! You will know more in half a second than I could tell you if I were to keep you here the whole night!

Only mind you, do not miss the way, one of you! Mind you do not miss the way! Turn to the right, by the Cross, and go straight on. God lead you by His Holy Spirit! Amen.

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THE HOUSE OF MOURNING AND THE HOUSE OF FEASTING

NO. 3108

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1908.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 3, 1854.

[This Sermon was delivered on the Lord’s-day following the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Olney, and in the midst of the cholera time, when Mr. Spurgeon’s life was so graciously preserved under the singular circumstances described by him in Volume 1of his Autobiography (Passmore & Alabaster). The four volumes of the “Standard life of C. H. Spurgeon” can now be obtained for a guinea through all booksellers and colporteurs, or direct from the publishers, Paternoster Buildings, London.]

*“It is better to go to the house of mourning,  
than to go to the house of feasting.”  
Ecclesiastes 7:2.*

THE maxim that happiness lies between two extremes is, I believe, the dictate of prudence and has the sanction of God’s Word. The ancients always spoke of this as being the most happy state of life. Somewhere between the two extremes of ecstatic joy and doleful melancholy lies the thing we call, “happiness.” Ancient poets used to sing of the via media, or the middle way. We know that Agur, an Inspired writer, prayed to God that He would give him “neither poverty nor riches,” that he might walk in the middle way of life. And as the medium with regard to wealth is to be preferred, so I believe the middle way is to be chosen with regard to happiness. In the green plains between two high hills is the place where happiness generally resides. The man who is not often lifted up with joy, nor often depressed in spirit through grief—who walks through the world in a calm and quiet atmosphere, bearing about with him a holy complacency, a calm serenity and an almost uniformity—that man is a happy man! He who journeys along without mounting up as an eagle, or without diving down into the depths of the sea—he who keeps along the even tenor of his way to his death is entitled to the name of a happy man.

But, my Friends, I think it falls to the lot of very few of us to always stay there. I know it does not fall to my portion to always walk between the two extremes. I cannot always sing in the vale, like Bunyan’s shepherd boy—I wish I could live there, but I cannot. There is a high mountain on that side of the valley, and another on this side—and I have to climb the steep sides of both those mountains. On the brow of the hill on that side there stands a fantastic structure, very much like those fairy palaces which we fabricate in our dreams by the aid of the architect of fancy. And this is called “the house of feasting.” On the other side of the valley of mediocrity stands a gloomy castle overhung with damp weeds and moss. It looks like one of those desolate places where superstition has fabled that old giant used to live—it is called “the house of mourning.” We have, most of us, to go alternately to each of these houses. Sometimes we are rejoicing in “the house of feasting.” At other times we are weeping in the castle of mourning, hanging down our heads like bulrushes and crying, “Alas, alas!”

Standing thus, in the middle of the plain, as I profess to do this morning, I am about to speak to you of both those places—of that fantastic structure there and of the gloomy castle here. And though bright-eyed cheerfulness would prompt me to say that “it is better to go to the house of feasting than to go to the house of mourning,” with the Word of Inspiration before me I trust to be able to show that “the Preacher” spoke the Truth of God when he said, “It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting.”

In order that I may set this Truth of God in as clear a light as possible, I shall first invite you to go with me to “the house of feasting.” Then to “the house of mourning.” And after that we will examine two or three verses which succeed the text and look at the wise man’s reasons for preferring “the house of mourning” to “the house of feasting.”

I. First, WE WILL GO TO “THE HOUSE OF FEASTING,” and I am sure that I shall have abundance of company if I invite you to go there!  
You never need go alone to a feast. Simply blow the trumpet of announcement. Simply tell the people we are going to “the house of feasting” and they are all ready to go there! There is a joyous spark in every man’s breast which at once ignites his soul and he says, “If you are about to go to a feast, I will go with you! If there is joy in any cup, let me drink of it!” I am going to “the house of feasting” and I shall take you to it in three steps. We shall go to the house of sinful feasting, first of all. Then to the house of innocent feasting and, after that, we will go to the house of spiritual feasting. I trust that we shall find something good in some of those houses, but we shall find nothing as good as in “the house of mourning.”  
We are going, first of all, to the house of sinful feasting. No, we are not going inside, but we will look at the outside of the house and hear a little of its history. I would have none of you cross the threshold of that place! But we are going together up the side of the hill to that “house of feasting.” What a crowd I have around me and I seem to be half ashamed of myself! There is the low drunkard and here comes the vile profligate— and they are going to the same house. “Where are you going, Drunkard?” I ask. “I am going to the house of feasting,” he says. “And you, bloated one, where are you going?” “I am going to the house of feasting.” I begin to be ashamed of my company. I fear that whatever the house may be, the people going there are not very choice spirits, and I hardly like to proceed further. I begin to think that the gloomy “house of mourning” is better than “the house of feasting” after all, considering the company that frequent it. I fear that I must turn back at once—I cannot enter there, for I love good company. I would rather go to “the house of mourning” with the children of God! I would rather be chained in a dungeon, wrist to wrist with a Christian, than I would live forever with the wicked in the sunshine of happiness! The company I meet makes me suspect that it is true that “the house of mourning” is better than “the house of feasting.”  
Now I have got to the gate of this palace. I have climbed the hill and stand there, but before I enter, I want to know something of the history of those who have gone there. I will not go in until I know whether there is any hope of my returning. The house is comely and good outside, but I want to know whether it is all that it seems. I want to know if there is that happiness there which it professes to have—and I ask them to bring me out the records of the house. They bring me out the roll wherein is kept a record of the persons who have gone there. I turn it over and I resolve that I will never go into the house, for the list of persons who have gone there is a catalog of woe!  
I will just tell of you one or two cases of persons who went to this house of feasting. Or rather, let me tell it to you in another way by reminding you that most of the awful catastrophes that have ever happened in this world have happened to men when they have been in

“the house of feasting.” [A reference to the first page of this Sermon will show that it was preached when Mr. Spurgeon was only just 20 years of age. Readers may be interested in a list of later Sermons by him upon some of the incidents here mentioned. They are as follows—NOAH—See Sermon #823, Volume 14—NOAH’S FLOOD. SAMSON—See Sermon #224, Volume 4—SAMSON CONQUERED and #1939, Volume 33—SHAVED AND SHORN, BUT NOT BEYOND HOPE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is a fact which I will prove

in a moment or two, that the most terrible calamities that have ever come upon man, or on the world, have happened in the house of mirth. Where was the world when Noah entered into the ark? Where was it when God rent the clouds and opened the windows of Heaven and sent down waterfalls from the skies? Is it not written, “They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark”? What were the Israelites doing when the plague came and smote them, so that their carcasses fell in the wilderness? Is it not written, “While the flesh was yet between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague”? Where were Job’s sons and daughters when the great wind came from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house? They “were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house.” Where was Samson when he lost his strength? He was in the house of sinful pleasure, lying asleep with his head in Delilah’s lap. What had Nabal been doing when “his heart died within him and he became as a stone”? Inspiration says that he had been feasting—“he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal’s heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk.” Who slew Amnon? Did not Absalom’s servants slay him at a feast? Turn to the melancholy catastrophes that you find recorded in Holy Writ and you will find that almost every one of them happened at a feast!

So, throughout the whole history of nations, I might tell you instance after instance in which a feast has been a real funeral, for the most terrible calamity has followed. There is, however, one instance which I must not pass by without describing it more fully than those at which I have briefly hinted. There was a feast, once, such as I think was scarcely ever seen before or since. Ten thousand lamps lit up the gorgeous palace! The king sat on his lofty throne and around him were his wives and concubines, and the princes and lords of his realm. They ate, they drank—the bowls were filled to the brim and emptied again and again! And merrily the hours danced on—wild was the Bacchanalian shout, and loud the lascivious song. They drank yet more deeply and invoked curses upon the God of Jacob. The king sent for the gold and silver vessels from the Temple at Jerusalem and they poured into them their unhallowed liquors. They drank and drank again, and the merry shout rang through the hall!! The violin and harp were there, and all sorts of music sounded loud and long. But listen! Listen! Listen! This is the last feast that Babylon shall ever see! Even now her enemies are at her gates. They come! They come! O Belshazzar, read the writing on the wall! “You are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting. [See Sermon #257, Volume 5—

THE SCALES OF JUDGMENT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.” O Belshazzar, stop your feasting! Look, the shaft of God! The death-shaft is whizzing through the air! It has pierced his heart—he falls dead—and with him great Babylon falls! That feast was a feast of death! It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of such “feasting” as that! Here is a melancholy proof of the assertion I made, that most of the terrible calamities that have ever happened to men have happened in “the house of feasting.”

Here is another house. I have read your record, O mistress of the house! I say, Woman, I have read your record and it is enough for me—I need not cross your threshold! I do not want to see your magnificent temple. I never wish to sit in your splendid halls. Rather would I sleep nightly in my shroud and sit on my coffin—and have my gravestone in the wall of my study and live in a vault forever—than I would enter that “house of feasting.” O God, may I be kept from sinful mirth! May I be kept from the house of sinful feasting! May I never be tempted to cross that threshold! O young men who are enchanted by its gaiety, charmed by its music, stay away, stay away, for every plank in the floor is rotten, every stone that is there is dug from the quarries of Hell! And if you enter into that woman’s mansion, you shall find that her house is the way to Hell, going down to the chambers of death! “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting”—the house of sinful feasting.

But, my Friends, there is a “house of feasting” to which every Christian may go. You heard my prayer, just now, that I might never cross the threshold of the house of sinful feasting. But there is a “house of feasting” to which I would invite all Christians. Christianity never was intended to make men miserable. On the contrary, it has a tendency to make them happy. There are feasts in which Christians may indulge! There are times of feasting when Christians may eat and drink and may make their soul merry within them. Rejoice, O Christian, that you are not shut out from all banquets! Though yonder door is marked with a plague spot, there is another where you may go—start not back, for Christ Himself went there. One of the first houses that we know that Jesus entered was “the house of feasting.” He was at “a marriage in Cana of Galilee,” and there He turned the water into wine, [See Sermons #225 and

#226, Volume 5—SATAN’S BANQUET and THE FEAST OF THE LORD and #1556, Volume 26—THE WATERPOTS AT CANA—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] so there are feasts to which Christians may go. There are bowls out of which they may drink. There are meats of which they may eat. There are places where they may rejoice! Christians are not bound to give up pleasures that are innocent, but pleasures that are sinful! There are pleasures they may enjoy, there are feasts where the drugged cup of the drunkard is never found, where the song of lust is never heard, where the obscene word is never uttered—I have seen such feasts, feasts of which God, Himself, approves—feasts where every heart was full of love and every soul was full of joy! We were mirthful, we were happy and yet we sinned neither in our hearts nor with our lips.

Let me notice one or two feasts that are not sinful, but in which we may indulge. There is the family feast. Ah, the family meeting is a pleasant thing when, once in the year, the father, who has his sons far away in business, invites them all to come to his house. There is a happy family, whether it is great or small! They meet around him and the old man blesses God that he is spared to see his children. Oh, what hallowed mirth that is, when each is there and sees his brothers and sisters all around! Perhaps there may be grandchildren, but that only increases the joy. Such feasts I have seen and I trust I may live to see many, when I can meet my brothers and sisters and can sit with them, and my father and mother, and feel that scattered as we have been, there is yet a home where we can all come and meet together and be happy! Such feasts as these are allowable.

Again, there is the feast of brotherly kindness. Such a feast as Joseph made for his brothers in Egypt. I wish there were more brotherly kindness in some families. It is hard when brother hates brother, when families are severed from each other. Born of the same mother, how can you quarrel? Having had the same father’s instructions, having been rocked in the same cradle, having played under the same roof, and run in the same garden, how can you differ now? Oh, it would be better if there were more brotherly love and such feasts as Joseph made, which are allowable, when we can meet together and pour our hearts into each other’s and talk of Jesus!

Then again, there are feasts of hospitality—and such feasts are not only allowable but commendable—such as Abraham made when he saw three men standing by his tent door. He had a calf killed, cakes prepared and spread a banquet for them to eat and, thereby, “entertained angels unawares.” Feasts such as we find Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary, made when Jesus came to their house at Bethany—such feasts of hospitality are good things! They must not come too often. They must not be misused, but it is well to entertain the children of God! It is well to receive the wayfarer. This Christians ought to do more than they do now—and so be “given to hospitality.”

There are, again, feasts of charity, such as Matthew made when he invited a great number of publicans and sinners [See Sermon #2889, Volume 50—  
CHRIST RECEIVING SINNERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] to meet Jesus at his house. And I am sure that where my Master went, I never need be ashamed to go! I have gone into some persons’ houses, before I came to London, that I should have felt ashamed to enter if they had not invited me on a Sabbath. I have stepped in there for the purpose of giving them religious advice. Some have said, “What? Going into that house?” Yes, and quite right, too! “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.” I have gone after “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” and I have won their hearts because I went there. I have talked to them of their sins but, had I stayed away, there would have been something of this spirit, “Stand by, for I am holier than you! I cannot enter your house because you chanced, on such-and-such a day, to sin.” But when I go and talk to a man and lay my hand on his shoulder and ask him questions, he does not mind telling out his state of mind when I am under his own roof—and when I am gone, he says, “That man is not ashamed to speak to his fellows, after all, though he is a preacher.” Make feasts of charity, sometimes, and invite the poor to them. I will tell you the best dinner party that you can have. If you have “the poor and the maimed, and the halt and the blind,” sitting around your table, you do more honor to your dining room than you would by having a company of princes and nobles!

But, Beloved, good as “the house of mourning” is, excellent as its shades may be, mark well that Solomon does not say that, “the house of mourning” is morally better than “the house of feasting,” or that there is more virtue in weeping than in rejoicing! Yet he does say that “it is better to go to the house of mourning”—it is better to sit by the side of the widow, it is better to take the fatherless child on your knee, it is better to sit down and weep with those that weep than it is to go to the pavilion of happiness and rejoice with those that rejoice. With such hearts as ours, it is better. Were we perfect, it would be equally good, but since we are inclined to evil, it is better that we should “go to the house of mourning.” God has made man upright, but the hand of sin has pushed us from the perpendicular and we stand like the leaning tower of Pisa, inclined to the earth and threatening to fall! It is right, then, that, as we are inclined to sin, we should likewise be made to bend to sorrow.

Now, Beloved, we must very hastily make a third visit “to the house of feasting.” And it will be better than either of the other two—better than the first because it is not sinful—better than the second because it is more spiritual. Have I not often gone to the spiritual “house of feasting,” and there feasted on the dainties of eternal love? Have I not soared, as on the wings of eagles, far beyond the clouds, beyond that glowing firmament where the stars are glittering, beyond that house where the sun strips himself of his garments and like a giant, starts upon his race? Have I not looked into Heaven, itself, and gone near the very Throne of God in ecstasy of joy, mounting up beyond all the troubles and trials of this mortal life? Yes, and so have you, Beloved! Sometimes when God has given you the spirit of rejoicing, you have “rejoiced with unspeakable joy and full of glory.” The spouse said of her Beloved, “He brought me to the banqueting house and His banner over me was love.” Have not you also been to that banqueting house? Have you not tasted the delicious food and other delicacies which God alone prepares? Have you not had a share of the choice things that are stored up for the saints of God and tasted the “wines on the lees well refined”? Yes, doubtless you have—and you have said, just as Peter did, “Master, it is good for us to be here.” Look at that passage of Scripture, (Luke 9:33), for it is added, directly afterwards, “not knowing what he said.” And you and I have said, “O God, it is good to be here! It is sweet to dwell upon the top of the Delectable Mountains! It is blessed to sit in such places of security!” And we have said, “Lord, let not this joy be merely for a week, but for a year! Yes, let me have years of the sunshine of Your Countenance—no, more— let me have an eternity of it!” Yet, like Peter, you know not what we say.

Yet, Beloved, it really does seem a strange thing that I should have to say, “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting,” for I am sure that I do not like “the house of mourning” half as well as this “house of feasting.” I would sooner meditate on the name of Jesus and drink drops of honey from this well of sweetest nectar! I would sooner live on Calvary’s summit, or sit forever on the top of Tabor, or dwell on Pisgah and see the—

*“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood.”*I would rather live forever in ecstasy of delight and see the river Jordan rolling there and, far beyond, the Everlasting City with its pearly gates and its shining golden streets! But, Beloved, it must not be. We would rather have it so, but it is better for us “to go to the house of mourning” than it is to live forever in, or even “to go to the house of feasting.”

II. Now, we are to leave “the house of feasting” and “GO TO THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.”  
There it is—a gloomy place up a steep rock covered with moss—and we MUST go there. The great fisher, Destiny, stands there and, with hook in each man’s flesh, he drags us on where he pleases. There is an iron chain that links us all together and binds us in the bonds of everlasting destiny—and go we must where that chain drags us! We cannot resist and we must “go to the house of mourning.” Therefore, O child of mirth, lay aside your merriment and come with me into the valley of tears and wait a little while in “the house of mourning.”  
Some of you, my dear Friends, have been in “the house of mourning” this week. And I have been called to go with you. You have been there, personally, because of the loss of your friends. You have been into the deep caverns of “the house of mourning.” How often have the mourners gone about the streets and we have seen the solemn funeral march through our crowded thoroughfares! So often have I seen it that it begins to be a common thing—so often have I seen it, during the last month or so, that it seems almost an old thing and it looks as if earth were going to wrack and ruin—and all the bonds of society were about to be dissolved. I say that some of you may be suffering the loss of your friends and may be saying, “No others have suffered as we have.” Say not so—there have been others who have been quite as sorely bereaved as you have been. The path of sorrow has been well trodden. Princes have been there. Nobles have been there—earls and dukes have jostled in the crowd with the poor man who had nothing to lose but his one child and his yet unburied wife! Death has touched, with his impartial hands, the palace of the prince and the cottage of the peasant. Say not, therefore, that God has dealt harshly with you. The gravel and the wormwood may be in your mouth, but others, as well as you, have had to eat those gravel stones and to drink that wormwood. You are not alone. Alas, far from it!  
Many of us have gone “to the house of mourning” simply as visitors to console others. And I can say from the deepest recesses of my soul, that I think I have sorrowed, at certain periods this week, almost as much as if I had been myself the real mourner when at different hours I have been with the dying. Only last Friday, just before the clock struck twelve at midnight, I was in a cottage, by the bedside of a dying woman. And often have I gone direct from one deathbed to another. It is not a pleasant thing, but it is my duty and I find a reward in it. Let me say, do not fear “to go to the house of mourning” as visitors—go and comfort those who are distressed. Why should we tremble? Go, everyone of you! There is an imperative duty on every member of this Church to visit the sick. We do not do that as much as we ought to do. You must all help me in this matter. I met a man in the street only yesterday who complained that I had not been to see his wife, but he excused me, for he said he knew that, single-handed, I could not visit everybody. You must go and help the mourning and give them comfort in every way that you can!  
Now, we are going, for a minute or two this morning, “to the house of mourning.” Let me, first of all, before we enter that house, do as I did with “the house of feasting”—let me ask for the record roll and see whether it is true that this house is better than the other. Where is the roll? Bring it out, sad maiden, you who are clad in black, with weeping eyes and arching eyebrows. There is the list. There are some names there of those who have not been much profited by adversity. I see the name of

Ahaz, [See Sermon #2993, Volume 52—“THAT KING AHAZ”—Read/download the entire sermon, free

of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] and I read, “In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord.” I see another name there, the name of Jonah, who said to the Lord, “I do well to be angry, even unto death,” because his gourd had been taken away. I see the name of Israel, to whom God said, “Why should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more.” And there is Ephraim, of whom the Lord said, “Ephraim

is joined to idols: let him alone.” [See Sermon #1140, Volume 19—LET HIM ALONE— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There are

names of others in that catalog who have not profited by bereavement. I see some such here this morning. O ungodly men and women, God has spoken not only once, but twice! No, more—He has taken out His rod— He has bruised you, yet you have not kissed the hand that has smitten you. He will say next, “Angel of Justice, you have used My rod upon that incorrigible wretch, but he yields not! Now draw your sword and cut down the rebel! He who spurns My rod shall feel My sword.” What do you think of yourselves? Have any of you laughed at God’s rod? Are any of you as hardened as you were before you were afflicted? Are you still resolved to go on in your wicked ways and to persevere in your transgressions? If so, assuredly the sword of the Lord “is sharpened and also furbished,” and it shall cut through soul and body to your everlasting destruction unless you repent!

How I rejoice to see, on the other hand, that there are some who have been profited in this “house of mourning.” There is the name of David, who said, “Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Your Word.” Further down there stands the name of Manasseh, of whom we read, “When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.” I find many names of others who have been benefited by going “to the house of mourning.” There is the name of Job, to whom the Lord gave twice as much as he had before. That is a good list. And when I look at it, I think that it is better to go to this house than to “the house of feasting.”

Before I leave that matter entirely, I must make one brief remark, and that is that there is a “house of mourning” to which I would have you go every day. Oh, it is indeed a place of woe! It is indeed a place of agony! It is indeed a place of suffering! That spot is called Gethsemane. This is a place of mourning to which I would have you often go. It is the Garden of

Gethsemane, [See Sermon #693, Volume 12—THE GARDEN OF THE SOUL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] where the mighty Jesus,

the Son of God, bent His knees in agony and wrestled with His Father. He said to His disciples, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death.” And “His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”—

*“Gethsemane, the olive press!*

*And why so called let Christians guess.”*  
Gethsemane, with its gloomy olive shades and its dark brook—truly, the King Himself has gone over the Brook Kedron—O Gethsemane, your bitter herbs are sweet to me! I could dwell in your gloom forever—

*“You are Heaven on earth to me,*

*Lonesome, dark Gethsemane.”*  
I have been there and I still love to visit that sacred spot. I never feel so holy, so really happy, as when I sit in that “house of mourning” and see my Savior wrestling for my sins. It is better to go to Gethsemane, “the house of mourning,” than to any place of feasting in the world!

III. Now, dear Friends, time will only permit me just to mention THE ARGUMENTS OF THE WISE MAN HERE I find that I have a very large subject, and I might preach a much longer sermon, but I never like to detain you beyond the usual time.

Let us read what Solomon says. “It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting.” First, “for that is the end of all men.” Secondly, “the living will lay it to his heart.” Thirdly, “by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.” And fourthly, “the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning.”

“It is better to go to the house of mourning” then, first of all, because that is the end to which we must come. We must die. There is no discharge in this war. The decree is determined in Heaven, it is written like the laws of the Medes and Persians so that it cannot be altered—that each must go to the house of mourning—and must die. “It is greatly wise for us to talk with our last hours.” We have heard of a man who had a skeleton in his bedroom—he was a wise man if he used it wisely. We know that the Egyptians, at every feast, had a skeleton at the end of the table—and they were wise men if they thought rightly of it. It is great wisdom to make Death our everyday companion. The horses that they use in war are, at first, very much afraid of the smoke and the noise, but I am told that they take those horses into the barrack-yards, first, and fire into their faces with powder until they are so used to it that they will easily go into the battle. So we ought often to accustom our souls to the thought of death, to make death a familiar thing, to talk with it every day. How can we do it better than by going to “the house of mourning” where our friends lie dead?—

*“Our dying friends come over us like a cloud, To dampen our brainless ardors and abate That glare of life, which often blinds the wise. Our dying friends are pioneers to smooth Our rugged pass to death—to break those bars Of terror and abhorrence nature throws  
‘Cross our obstructed way—and thus to make Welcome as safe yon port from every storm.”*

So says Young, and he says well. It is well to think of our lost friends and to “go to the house of mourning.”

Again, the wise man says, “It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.” If you go to the “house of feasting,” there is nothing there to lay to heart. It is all froth—it is lighter than vanity—it is a bubble. Touch it and it vanishes. But in “the house of mourning,” there is something solemn which will bear to be touched and still endure. In the darkness there seems to be something more solid than in sunshine. I feel that when I “go to the house of mourning,” I get something to bring away and lay to my heart. If I “go to the house of feasting,” it does not touch my heart. I wear the festal garb—I put on those things that are seemly on such occasions and there it ends—I have learned nothing to lay to heart.

Yet again, the wise man says, “By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.” It is positively a good thing for us to be sad. When the springs that bind heart to earth are cut, then we can soar. We are chained to earth, but there is a water in these eyes, which, like aquafortis, can eat away the iron and set us free. The heart is made better by sorrow because it is made more free from earth. It is made better by sorrow, again, because it becomes more sensitive, more impressed with the lessons of God’s Word. We can shut our ears to the voice of God in mirth, but in “the house of mourning” we can hear every whisper. It is better to hear of Him in this “house of mourning.” The noise of the song drowns the still small voice of God, but in “the house of mourning” you can hear every footfall, even the voice of time, the ticking of the clock which says, “Now, now, now!”

Now to conclude, Solomon says, “The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning.” There are some places we ought to go just as many people go to Church and Chapel. They go to Chapel and leave their hearts at their shop. If you have done so this morning, you had better send for your hearts before you go home, my Friends. But there are some places, I say, to which we ought to go without our hearts, and we ought to do so whenever we go to “the house of feasting.” Perhaps, in some sense, we may have our hearts there, but we had better not have them there, or they are sure to get somewhat contaminated. But when we “go to the house of mourning,” we may take our hearts there because we are sure to bring them back. When we “go to the house of feasting,” we are inclined to say, “Stay here, my heart. This is a pleasant place.” But when we “go to the house of mourning,” we say, “We will not leave our hearts in that gloomy place.” When I get to “the house of mourning,” I can speak out—but in “the house of feasting,” I hold my tongue as with a bridle. In “the house of mourning” I can speak with a bereaved Brother and Sister. I can talk freely with them. I can talk my heart out there, I can speak my soul out there and need not hold it in. I can speak my Master’s dear name and tell of the wonders of His Grace and enlarge upon His wondrous preciousness.

Finally, take this Truth of God home. You had better “go to the house of mourning” than to any place of feasting. Better to be clad in the drapery of woe and sit in the weeds of sorrow. Better to be girt with sackcloth and cover your head with ashes than to be feasting and dancing, or even enjoying the rightful and lawful pleasures of this world. “It is better to go to the house of mourning.” God has said it, so let not unbelief deny what God positively declares. Unto all of you who know not how soon any one of you may be there, I speak in the name of the Lord and I say, “Go to the house of mourning.” In a little while, Death may be again in our midst, as he has often been of late. Even now he is flapping his dark wings around this gallery and looking in each pew to see who is there. He is floating across the pews and saying, “Where is the man or woman I am to have?” If God points Death to the man, the man surely dies. In any event, you may be called “to go to the house of mourning” very soon in some way or other—but say, when you get there, “It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting.” If you get an invitation to a wedding and an invitation to a funeral, lay the funeral note on the top! Do not disdain to go there, O child of God, for the Holy Spirit will so reveal Jesus by the bedside of the mourner that it will be to you a Bethel! O Sinner, ungodly and impenitent, neither “the house of mourning” nor “the house of feasting” can benefit you by itself! It is the power of the Holy Spirit, alone, that can give you life! It is Jesus alone who can make you a forgiven sinner! May this discourse be blessed to your souls and to the Triune God be Glory! Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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AN OBSERVATION OF THE PREACHER

NO. 3072

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 25, 1864.

**“Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.” Ecclesiastes 7:8.**

SOME translators read this passage, “Better is the end of a speech than the beginning thereof.” And I doubt not that many of my hearers quite concur in that opinion. You endeavor to be patient when we begin, but as soon as we utter the word, “finally,” your eyes begin to glisten, for the tedious exercise, you think, will soon be over! And if it is so to the hearers, I grant you it is sometimes so to the speaker! A speaker sometimes finds it difficult to begin, more difficult to continue to edification, not difficult to come to a close, but often exceedingly pleasant to do so. Well, doubtless many a young preacher can remember when he first tried to speak—how much better he felt the end of the speech to be than the beginning! Like the young acrobat, walking upon a rope on high who tremblingly launches forth and timidly puts one foot after the other until he reaches the end of his dangerous task, he was relieved to sit down! Far better was the end of the speech than the beginning thereof.

I do not think that is a correct version, or a proper translation, but it is a great truth, for if a man should speak what is mischievous, it is a good thing when he has done. It is better that he should have done with it than that he should be continuing in his idle and dangerous talk. And if a man speaks well and is a good ambassador—and has good tidings to deliver—it is better that he should have delivered them and fulfilled his mission. Now you have advanced one stage. You have received a truth on which your souls can feed. And it is better to have received it, than not to have received it—and hence the end is better than the beginning.

I think we must take the text as it stands with a grain or two of salt. It is relatively rather than absolutely true. “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.” That is true, or we would not find it in Scripture. But the application of its truth is particular, not universal. There are some things which are worse in their ending than in their beginning. It is true, I believe, of all things which proceed according to God’s order, when God begins them and God ends them, or when they are begun by God’s direction, conducted in God’s fear and ended in God’s Presence. In such cases I say the end is better than the beginning—but the text must not be taken to be absolutely and indiscriminately true in all cases. With a grain or two of salt, however, I think it is a maxim worthy of Solomon.

“Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.” Some pictures in nature will illustrate this. We compare the beginning and the end. The sower goes forth on a damp and drizzling morning with his handful of precious seed which he is loath to spare. And as he scatters it, the rough wind blows into his face and the frost bites his cheek and, literally, it may be said that he “sows in tears.” The beginning, therefore, is by no means pleasant. Then comes the harvest home, with the songs and dances of smiling damsels and joyous swains, when the produce of the fields is safely housed—that is the end thereof. I think that everyone can see that the harvest is better than the seedtime! Or a man starts forth upon a long journey. He takes a staff in his hand. He prepares himself to climb yonder crags. The storm will come on, but he must press through it. There will be brooks swollen with the rains, but he must pass through them all. Summoning courage to his aid, he surmounts every obstacle. He comes in all flushed with the healthy exercise. He has climbed yonder crags, he has passed through the brooks, he has braved the storm and now he comes to the blazing fire to sit down and rest himself, for the journey is over. “Better,” says the traveler, “is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof. Toil came but now toil is sweetened, for I look back upon it and can take my rest.” Or see the good ship as the dock gates are opened and she is drawn out into the river. Flags are flying and everyone cheers those who are about to make a venturesome voyage to the East Indies. See her, however, coming back up the river, well loaded, going into dock—and ask the captain, who remembers the rough weather as he passed the Cape, and the storm just as he came off the Peninsula—and he will tell you that he likes coming up the river much better than going down! Coming home with his ship well freighted, after a prosperous voyage, he says, with thanks to God, “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.”

One more picture. An army of soldiers goes forth to war. Can you look upon them with pleasure? I know that you crowd the streets and shout as they march down your thoroughfares and, truly, it is a thrilling sight to see the stalwart heroes as they go forth to fight their country’s battles. But when you think of the number of those brave men who may lie dead on the battleground, and how few may ever return, I am sure, to say the least, it is not a pleasant sight. But when those brave men who have escaped the storm and crash of battle return to their native land and again pass through the streets, they feel, if the spectators do not, that better is the end of war than the beginning thereof! Someone once said he thought there was never a good war and never a bad peace. And I believe to a very great extent he was right. Peace is of itself an inestimable blessing, and war in itself, whether just or unjust, is a most terrific scourge. So whether you see the sower in the field, or the traveler starting on his journey, or the voyager launching upon the deep, or the warrior going forth to the fight—you are ready to think that, “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.” I have given you these four pictures because I shall want to use them as I turn from natural things to more spiritual things.

I. Let me use this general principle tonight, in the first place, TO SOOTHE YOUR REGRETS.

This year has all but gone. 1864, then, must soon be numbered with the things that were. Perhaps someone says, “Would to God that I had this year to live over again! I have missed many opportunities of doing good or, when I have availed myself of them, I have not served my God as I could have desired. I have another year less in which to serve the Church, the world and my God. I have spent another of my talents and have so much fewer to put out to usury for my Lord and Master.” Now, do not regret, dear Friend, that the year has passed. It should rather be to you, if you are a believer in Christ, a subject for congratulation! Would you wish to have the year over again, when in sober silence you meditate upon the subject? You have had some sorrows this year. You are like the sailor I spoke of just now—you have passed through some storms. Weather-beaten mariner, would you like to have the storms of this year over again? Do you remember that dreadful night when the ship was driven so fearfully by the tempest, or the time when you were cast upon the rocks—and would you like to endure the same again? I see you shake your head and say, “No! Thank God we weathered that storm, but we don’t want it again.” And, Christians, as you think of the losses, crosses, sufferings and bereavements which you have had during this year, can you feel any regrets that it is gone? Must not each one of you say, “I thank God that stormy voyage is over and I have not those tempests to endure”?

How many snares have you escaped during the past year? In looking back, must you not observe that your feet have sometimes almost gone and your steps have well-near slipped? There have been times when sin had almost tripped you up, when the world had almost taken you in its trap and when the devil had all but wounded you in a mortal part. You are like a sailor who remembers the rocks by which he has sailed and the quicksands from which he has escaped. Would you wish to run such risks again? Do you wish, sailor, to go again over the bar at such a low tide, or to be drifted so unpleasantly near that rock as almost to grate against it? “No,” he says, “having escaped those dangers, I am thankful that they are over and have no wish to have them over again.” And are you not grateful, Christian, that another year of temptation has gone forever and that the arrows that Satan has shot at you this year, he can shoot at you no more? Those sword-cuts we received which threatened to be mortal, we shall never have to dread again! They are gone and when I say they are gone, it is implied that their mischief and their power to hurt are gone forever.

But there is another side to this matter. What a multitude of mercies you have enjoyed this year! How good God has been to us!— **“When all Your mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys—  
Transported with the**view,  
**I’m lost In wonder, love and praise.”**

Those of us who have traveled in Switzerland, or in other countries where the views are glorious to look upon, would not wish that we had never seen them. On the contrary, we are glad that our eyes have feasted on those sunny prospects. And you, too, Christian, cannot regret that you have seen God’s mercies, but you will thank God that it has been your privilege to have enjoyed such favors. There is another reason, then, why you should not regret that the year has passed. I address myself to some who are growing gray. I know there is a tendency in your minds to regret that so many years have gone, but, my dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, if you should do so, I think you would be guilty of a folly unworthy of a Believer with such a long experience! Take John Bunyan’s picture of the Christian’s progress. He describes Christian as starting on his pilgrimage to the Celestial City with a burden on his back that pressed him down, wringing his hands for fear and running because he is afraid that he will be destroyed in the City of Destruction. He has not gone a day’s journey before he is up to his neck in the Slough of Despond and floundering in the mire! This is the beginning of the pilgrimage, but look at the end—he has come to the river, he dips his foot into it and though it is chill and cold, it does not stop him. When he gets midway in the river, how does Bunyan picture him? The angels beckon him from the other side—those very angels whose voices he had heard ringing clear and sweet across the stream when he wandered in the groves of Beulah and sat among the spices there. And now he reaches the bank on the other side and, leaving his sins, his doubts, his infirmities and his mortality behind, his disembodied spirit goes up to the celestial land and angel attendants conduct him to the pearly gates of the golden-paved city! Oh, infinitely better is the end of a spiritual life than the beginning! Contrast the Slough of Despond with the Celestial City and human intellect cannot fail to see how much better, how infinitely better, the end is than the beginning!

Take this picture as a further illustration of the same point—Moses at the beginning of his spiritual career is seen killing an Egyptian and burying him in the sand—just like a young Christian, full of zeal, but having little prudence. There is the beginning of his public career. And now I think I see the old man of 120 years, firm of step, with an eye as clear and piercing as an eagle’s, standing up to address the people whom he has carried, as nursing mother, in his arms! And, having done this, leaving Joshua, his familiar servant, and all others behind, he began to climb to the top of Pisgah. He has mounted to its loftiest crag and, leaning over, he begins to take a full view of the Promised Land. He sees the palm trees of Jerusalem and Zion, and his eyes linger on Bethlehem—he catches glimpses of the blue sea afar off, and the goodly land of Lebanon. And as he looks, one scene melts into the other and he sees the face of God, for God, Himself, has come down and his spirit is taken away with a kiss. As to his body, it is buried where no man knows—but as to his soul, it is with God forever! Truly, in the case of Moses, better was the end than the beginning, and such shall be the spiritual end of every man of God who with the simplicity and faith of Moses, can put his trust in God. I think this is sufficient to soothe all your regret! Instead of being sorry that these years have passed, thank God for them and be glad.

II. I shall now use this general principle to endeavor to STOP YOUR FOREBODINGS.

It may be that many of you are in darkness—darkness which may be felt. You find it very difficult to accept the truth that God is a God of Love and One who cares for you. You are, however, only at the beginning—the beginning of the ways of Providence. Your poor faith is ready to be staggered by the sufferings you endure and unbelief prophesies ten thousand things to fill your soul with doubts and alarms—but the end of all this shall be better than the beginning! Many Christians have more trials in the earlier part of their spiritual life than they will ever have afterwards. “It, is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.” You must not consider, because the sun is just now behind a cloud, that it will always be there. It was a little child who said when there was an eclipse, “Father, the sun is put out.” It was only a child who said that— no man thought so. Let your riper experience correct the childishness of your unbelief. God only hides His face to show it more clearly, by-and-by. The end shall be better than the beginning. Have you not often seen a day which, early in the morning, was heavy with fog and rain? As it came on, we waited patiently and anxiously, for we wished for fine weather— but those incessant drops of rain still fell. We looked to the wind quarter and to the rain quarter, we looked with hope and then with fear, but the drops fell unceasingly and there seemed to be no chance of intermission. And yet, before noon had come we had seen the sun shining brightly and we have heard the birds singing more sweetly—and it has been fair weather after rain. Take that morning as a prophecy to your poor, doubting, troubled soul of what your path in life will yet be. You shall yet see that the end is better than the beginning.

Take one picture as an illustration and then I will leave this point. Poor Joseph has been slandered by his mistress. His character is under serious imputation. He is put into the round house by Potiphar—he is a prisoner and must have prisoner’s fare. And yet I think that Joseph had never sat upon the throne of Egypt if he had not been put into the dungeon. You must “stoop to conquer” and, like gold, you must be put in the burning coals that you may be refined. But you shall soon come out and, like that gold, when you shall glitter with purity you shall know that “better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.”

III. And now let us use this simple statement of the text TO ENCOURAGE OUR FAITH.  
The way of sense is to get everything now—the way of faith is to get everything in God’s time. The worldly man lives on the present—the Christian lives on the future. It will always greatly strengthen faith if we, according to God’s Word, look not so much at present appearances as at the issue of our lives which is to make amends for all the toils and disappointments we experience at the commencement of our career. So surely as God has called you to be a partaker of the Kingdom, you must renounce the pleasures of this present world. Look at your Lord and Master. Look at His beginning. “He was despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Remember Gethsemane’s blood and sweat, and Gabbatha’s terrible flagellation, and Golgotha’s mount of doom? This is the beginning. Would you see the end?— *“The head that once was crowned with thorns, Is crowned with Glory now.”*  
The mighty Victor drags death and Hell at His triumphant chariot wheels! He mounts His Father’s Throne and amidst the acclamations of men and angels, He sits down forever and all His enemies shall be made His footstool! This is the end, or rather, this is the beginning of the end, for the splendors of the millennium, the Second Advent, and the eternal honors which shall be cast at Jesus’ feet, these are the end. How much better is the glorious end than the sorrowful beginning! “As He Is, so are we, also, in this world.” You must take the manger, or you shall never take the throne! You must have the Cross, or you shall never wear the crown! You must be despised and rejected, or you shall never be accepted and crowned! You must wade through the mire, or you shall never walk the golden pavement! Cheer up, then, poor Christian! Let this Truth of God be a stay to your soul just now, “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.”  
I will give you two illustrations and then leave this point. You see that creeping worm, how contemptible is its appearance! You wish to sweep it away—that is the beginning of the thing. You see that insect with gorgeous wings playing in the sunbeams, sipping at the flower bells and full of happiness and life—that is the end thereof. That worm, that caterpillar, that maggot, if you will, is you! And you are to be content with that until you are wrapped up in the chrysalis of death. But you cannot tell what you shall be after death. All that we know is that when Christ shall appear, “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” Be content to be like He, a worm, a caterpillar in the beginning that, like He, you may be satisfied when you wake up in His present likeness!  
Again, you see that rough-looking diamond—it is put upon the wheel of the lapidary. With much care he begins to turn it and to cut it on all sides It loses much—much that seemed to itself costly. Do you see it now? The king is to be crowned, the diadem is put upon the monarch’s head with the trumpet’s joyful sound. There is a glittering ray which flows from that diadem and it comes from that very diamond which was cut just now by the lapidary. You, Christian, may venture to compare yourself to such a diamond, for you are one of God’s jewels. And this is the time of the cutting process. You must endure it. Be of good courage and murmur not. Let faith and patience do their perfect work. In the day when the crown shall be set upon the head of “the King eternal, immortal, invisible,” one ray of glory shall stream from you, for you shall be His! “You shall be Mine,” says the Lord, “in the day when I make up My jewels.”  
IV. Have patience with me, in the next place, while I use my text TO SUGGEST ACTION.  
It is very clear that we cannot have an ending if we have not a beginning. However bright our end might be, we can never know it experimentally unless we begin. The text therefore, suggests the question to each one of us, “Have I begun? Has God begun with me?” The beginning may be dark and gloomy, but you can never have a bright ending without it. I know the beginning will involve the sacrifice of many pleasures and the giving up of friends—“pleasures” and “friends” socalled, but you cannot have an ending with the saints of God in Heaven unless you have a beginning with the poor and afflicted of His family on earth! I wonder whether there are some with whom God will begin now. It will be a blessed thing if He should begin with you, but it will be a far more blessed thing for you when He comes to the end. It. will be so blessed, if you should, tonight, be led by the Holy Spirit to direct your eyes with faith to Christ that the very angels before the House of God shall have a merrier Christmas because of your conversion! [See Sermon

#2791, Volume 48—A HIGH DAY IN HEAVEN —Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Can I be mistaken in that notion? Did not our Lord Jesus Christ say, concerning the shepherd who had found his sheep which was lost. “When he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors,” (who are they but the angels who are the friends and neighbors of Christ in Heaven?) “saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.” In Heaven they sing more and with a more joyful song when sinners turn from the error of their ways. I wonder whether tonight will be a time for “beginning” with some of you? Oh, if the Spirit of God is now teaching you your sinnership, if you feel that you are lost and ruined, I have to remind you that on the Cross of Calvary, there hung a bleeding Savior and that—

*“There is life for a look at the Crucified One”—*and the moment you glance at Him by faith, the good beginning comes to you! But, oh, it were vain for fancy to attempt to describe the ending when the angel convoy shall bear your ransomed spirit upward to be beatified forever and to be full of eternal life and joy in the Presence of Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior. May God begin thus with some of you tonight!

V. And now to close—THE TEXT SUGGESTS A MOST SOLEMN ENQUIRY and the enquiry for each one of us is this—If my life were to come to an end tonight, would my end be better than my beginning? I said when I began that my text must have some salt with it—and here I must use the salt. There are some things that are best in the beginning and worst at the end. There is, yonder, the sinner’s feast. Bring in the dishes. Fill the goblets with sparkling wine—drink deep and sing right merrily. The lute and the harp are there and the feasters stand up and shout and sing. But what is that I see? As the night wears away and the morning light streams in through the windows, “who has woe? Who has redness of the eyes?” Truly, the end of such feasts is worse than the beginning! And in that ward of foul disease where they seem to sweep together the rank refuse of what once was beauty, exceedingly fair to look upon, truly we learn the lesson that in some cases the end is worse than the beginning. Beware, you that go to the house of strange women, lest you find that the end thereof is infinitely worse than the beginning! Stop your feet before they enter there, lest you go like a bullock to the slaughter, or a fool to the stocks. And if that one walk is so notoriously worse in the end than it is in the beginning, such, likewise, is every walk of sin. See the greedy man as he accumulates money! Look at the beginning of it—he puts out his money to interest and makes out his bonds. He takes security for debts and calls houses and streets after his name. And then see the end of it. The old man is haggard and wan. He cannot count his wealth, yet he fears he will die in the workhouse. And when he thinks, in those intervals when his senses come back and he realizes his own self, it is always with the shuddering thought, “I must part with you, my treasures. I must part with you all and go back to my mother earth as naked as I came into it.” So that, you see, there are times when the ending of a thing is a great deal worse than the beginning.

Someone will doubtless say, “I am not like these men. I am neither debauched nor avaricious.” Well, I will take you at the best. Here is your beginning—you are a respectable attendant at a place of worship—you go because others go, not because your heart is right with God. This is your beginning. I will suppose that for the next 20 or 30 years you will be spared to go on as you do now, professing religion as far as outward attendance upon the means of Grace will make a profession, but having no heart in the matter. Shall I show you your end? Be hushed and silent, tread softly, for I must show you the deathbed of such an one as yourself! Let us gaze upon him gently. Let us not disturb him. A clammy sweat is on his brow and he wakes up and cries, “O God, it is hard to die!” He says to his friends, “Did you send for my minister?...“Yes, he is coming.” The minister comes and the poor fellow says to him, “Sir, I fear that I am dying.” “Have you any hope?” “I cannot say that I have any. I shall have to stand before my God—oh, pray for me!” The prayer is offered for him with sincere earnestness and the way of salvation is for the ten thousandth time put before him. But before he has grasped the rope, I see him sink. Shall I picture the scene further? I may put my finger upon those eyelids, for they will never see anything here again. But where is the man and where are the man’s true eyes? Christ said of the rich man, “In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.”

And it is so with this man. But why did he not lift up his eyes before? Because he got so accustomed to hear the Gospel that his soul went to sleep under it! He cannot sleep now—“being in torments.” There is no sleep in Hell. Oh, what a blessing sleep would be if it could enter the habitation of the damned! Alas, if any of you should lift up your eyes there, what a sight you will behold! Here, if you drop off to sleep and wake up in the Tabernacle, you see the faces of attentive listeners hearing words of mercy—there, when first you lift up your eyes, you will gaze into visages more marred with pain than any you have ever seen before! And if you ask them the cause of their awful grief and why agony, as with a red-hot plowshare, has made such deep furrows in their cheeks, they will tell you that you need not ask them, for you will soon learn the reason yourself! I cannot picture it. Let the Savior’s own Words tell you the terrible Truth of God—“The rich man cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.” There is a frightful meaning in those words! May you never have to spell it out by the red light of Jehovah’s wrath!—

*“You sinners, seek His Grace,  
Whose wrath you cannot bear!  
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,  
And find salvation there!”*

Before this last Sabbath of the year closes, I pray that the Lord may come down in mercy and visit those who have not yet received Christ, that of them it may be truly said, “Better is the end of this year than the beginning thereof.” God grant it for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**PSALM 116.**

We have read this Psalm many times and have often felt it to be a photograph of our own spiritual experience, but we will, on this occasion, read it from one special point of view. Please notice that this Psalm is exceedingly full of the letter, “I.” Cast your eye down the page and you will be struck with the number of times in which the first person singular appears. Well, then, let us read the Psalm with this view, and each of us for himself or herself say, “I,” as the Psalmist did if the Holy Spirit shall enable us to do so.

Verse 1. I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my supplications. If this double declaration is true, it turns the reading of the Psalm into a devout spiritual exercise for each one of us who can rightly adopt the Psalmist’s language. But can each one of us truthfully say, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You”? If I can honestly say, “I love the Lord,” then I can give the reason for the love that is in me. It is because He has loved me with an everlasting love and because He has manifested that love, among many other ways, in hearing “my voice and my supplications.”

2 *.*Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live. “Whatever others may do or may not do, I will call upon Him as long as I live, and I have a good reason for doing so, ‘Because He has inclined His ear unto me.’ He has stooped from His Throne in Heaven to listen to my feeble voice. He has bowed Himself in His majesty to listen to the appeal of my misery. I was brought down very low in my sorrow, but the Lord brought His ear down as low as my lips— ‘He has inclined His ear unto me’ and because He has done that, therefore my heart is inclined unto Him and I will call upon Him as long as I live.”

3. The sorrows of death compassed me. “They formed a ring around me from which I could see no way of escape. I was like a wounded stag that is surrounded by fierce dogs.”

3. And the pains of Hell got hold upon me. “The dogs of Hell had fixed their cruel teeth in my throat so that it seemed impossible for me to escape from them.”

3 *.*I found trouble and sorrow. “When I searched for something better, I only found still more trouble and sorrow. I had enough of them without finding any more, but the more I looked for anything else, the more trouble and sorrow I found.” This is a very graphic description of the state of heart in which some of us have been more than once. We have seen no way of escaping from it and we have been in great distress because we could not discover any way of alleviating our grief.

4 *.*Then I called upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech You, deliver my soul. Do you remember, dear Friend, when you prayed such a prayer as that—short, sharp, sincere, pointed, personal, out of the depths of your soul? Then let your recollection of that prayer have so gracious an influence upon your heart that in the remembrance of the past mercy, when the Lord heard and answered your supplication, you may find a well of present gratitude!

5. Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful. Listen to that blessed little sentence, those of you who are full of sin, and who are therefore afraid that God will cast you away forever! “Our God is merciful.”

6. The Lord preserves the simple: I was brought low and He helped me. There is here, first, a general Doctrine and then, there is a particular proof and application of it. It is true, in a general sense, that the Lord preserves the simple-hearted ones who have learned to trust in Him. But, in particular, you or I, if saved by His Grace, can say with the Psalmist, “I was brought low and He helped me.” There is a little book of medicine [See

Sermon #240, Volume 5—PRAYER ANSWERED, LOVE NOURISHED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] which Mr. John Wesley

brought out and he put to some of the recipes, the word “Proved.” He had evidently tried the medicine and proved it to be efficacious in his own case. In a similar fashion, we can often put in the margin of our Bibles, concerning the Word of the Lord, “Proved.” We have tried it and proved it—and therefore we also can personally say, “The Lord preserves the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me.”

7 *.*Return unto your rest, O my soul, for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you. Cannot we also, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, speak well of our God tonight? If any of us have been wandering at all from His Presence and so have lost the conscious sense of His love, let us come back to Him at once! We cannot be happy anywhere else. God has spoiled you and me, Beloved, for the world, so we must be happy in Him, for we can never be satisfied anywhere else. Only in our God can our joy be full. Come back then, my Soul, come back to your Lord! “Return unto your rest, O my soul; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” He is your true Noah. You can find no real rest anywhere else—therefore return unto Him even as the dove flew back to the ark with weary wings after wandering over the wild waste of waters.

8. For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. “I have had a trinity of deliverances—my soul saved from eternal ruin, my eyes delivered from the greatest grief of all and my life saved from sinful stumbling! ‘You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.’” This testimony is far in advance of that given in Psalm 56:13 where David says, “You have delivered my soul from death: will not You deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?”

9 *.*I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living. “I will not walk before some great man so as to seek to please him. I will not walk before my fellow Believers so as to be merely looking for their approbation. But, ‘I will walk before the Lord.’” This is the best way of living, so let it be yours and mine, Beloved. Let each of us say, “I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.”

10. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted. I call your attention again to the repeated use of the word, “I.” Three times in this one verse we have that little personal pronoun. And I want you, each one, to take this whole Psalm to yourself so far as it is suited to your case, to make an appeal of it while we are reading it. “I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted.”

11, 12. I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me? I expect that we have all of us said in our haste some things that we had better not have said. They may have been true, yet for all that, it was a pity that we uttered them. Yet I am glad that the Psalmist, although he said, “All men are liars,” did not dwell upon that unpleasant truth, but speedily turned from unreliable man to his ever-reliable God. “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” If all men are liars, if all earthly comforts fail us, if all human dependences disappoint us—our God will not do so. Let us leave the broken cisterns without even grumbling at them, or having bitter feelings concerning them. And let us turn to God and let this be the question put by each one of us, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” [See Sermon #2758, Volume 47—

“RETURN UNTO YOUR REST”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] I suggest, dear Friends, that we, each of us, personally put this question to ourselves, “What shall I render unto the Lord? What can I do for Jesus? What can I give to God? What is there, at this particular time, that I can devise for the Glory of God in order to manifest my love to Him?” Perhaps in this house, tonight, there may be the conception—perhaps the birth—of some high and noble enterprise for God. If this question shall be pressed home upon some ardent spirit here, there may be the first thoughts, in this House of Prayer, of some far-reaching ministry which shall be a means of blessing to many lands through all the ages that are yet to come. God grant that it may be so! What shall I, a young man just beginning life, render unto the Lord? What shall I, a man in the full strength of his manhood, render unto the Lord? What shall I—a man far advanced in years, mature and ripe for Heaven, and soon to be taken there—render unto the Lord? Whoever I am, let me make haste to answer the question, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” [See Sermon #910, Volume 16—

OVERWHELMING OBLIGATIONS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

13, 14. I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people. There never was a better time than the present—and there never was better place than this for some holy resolve concerning consecrated service for the Master!

15. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints. They are themselves at all times so precious to the Lord that everything about them is very dear in His esteem—and they are never more precious than

in their deaths. [See Sermon #1036, Volume 18—PRECIOUS DEATHS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] We constantly have some

of the very choicest of the Lord’s saints going Home to their Father. And when the Lord takes any of them Home to Himself, it becomes those of us who are left to try to do all the more for our God. Let some of us be baptized for the dead, let us press forward to fill the gaps in the ranks of the armies of God and do all that lies in our power to win the victory for His righteous cause!

16. O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds. Still read this Psalm very personally—you especially who have had godly mothers. Say, “I am a born slave—born of one who was your slave, for I delight to use even such a hard name as that. I am God’s servant, born of one of God’s servants—‘the son of Your handmaid.’” I like to remember that it was so in my own case and I can truthfully say to the Lord, “I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid.” “You have loosed my bonds,” by making me to feel the bonds of your Grace. There is no liberty like complete subjection to God. The greatest freedom of thought is to think only God’s thoughts—and the highest freedom of living is to live according to the rule of holiness in the ways of the Most High.

17-19. I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people. In the courts of the LORD’S house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise you the LORD. And we do and will praise Him at this time and forever and ever.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. END OF VOLUME 53. Sermon #200 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

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THE WICKED MAN’S LIFE, FUNERAL AND EPITAPH

NO. 200

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 13, 1858, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity.”  
Ecclesiastes 8:10.**

IT is quite certain that there are immense benefits attending our present mode of burial outside the city. It was high time that the dead should be removed from the midst of the living—that we should not worship in the midst of corpses and sit in the Lord’s house on the Sabbath, breathing the noxious odor of decaying bodies. But when we have said this, we must remember that there are some advantages which we have lost by the removal of the dead, and more especially by the wholesale mode of burial which now seems very likely to become general.

We are not so often met by the array of dead in the midst of our crowded cities. We sometimes see the sable hearse bearing the relics of men to their last homes, but the funeral ceremonies are now mostly confined to those sweet sleeping places beyond our walks, where rest the bodies of those who are very dear to us. Now I believe the sight of a funeral is a very healthful thing for the soul. Whatever harm may come to the body by walking through the vault and the catacomb—the soul can there find much food for contemplation—and much excitement for thought.

In the great villages, where some of us were wont to dwell, we remember how when the funeral came now and then, the tolling of the bell preached to all the villagers a better sermon than they had heard in the Church for many a day. And we remember how as children, we used to cluster around the grave and look at that which was not so frequent an occurrence in the midst of a rare and sparse population. And we remember the solemn thoughts which used to arise even in our young hearts when we heard the words uttered, “Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” The solemn falling of the few grains of ashes upon the coffin lid was the sowing of good seed in our hearts.

And afterwards, when we have in our childish play climbed over those nettle-bound graves and seated ourselves upon those moss-grown tombstones, we have had many a lesson preached to us by the dull cold tongue of death—more eloquent than anything we have heard from the lip of living man and more likely to abide with us for many years. But now we see little of death. We have fulfilled Abraham’s wish beyond what he desired— we “bury the dead out of our sight.” It is rarely that we see them and a stranger passing through our streets might say, “Do these live always?

For I see no funerals among the millions of this city, I see no signs of death.”

We shall this morning want you, first of all, to walk with a living man. It is said of him that he did “come and go from the place of the holy.” Next, I shall want you to attend his funeral. And then, in conclusion I shall ask you to assist in writing his epitaph—“and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this also is vanity.”

I. In the first place, HERE IS SOME GOOD COMPANY FOR YOU. Some with whom you may walk to the House of God, for it is said of them that they did come and go from the place of the holy. By this I think we may understand the place where the righteous meet to worship God. God’s House may be called “the place of the holy.” Still, if we confine ourselves strictly to the Hebrew, and to the connection, it appears that by the “place of the holy” is intended the judgment-seat—the place where the magistrate dispenses justice. And alas, there are some wicked who come and go even to the place of judgment, to judge their fellow sinners. And we may with equal propriety consider it in a third sense to represent the pulpit which should be “the place of the holy.” But we have seen the wicked come and go even from the pulpit, though God had never commanded them to declare His statutes.

In the first place we will take this as representing the House of God. What a sight it is to see the great crowds coming up to the sanctuary of the Lord. I am sure, as we saw the multitudes coming up to the House of God, there must have been a peculiar thrill of joy pass through our hearts. It reminds us of the ancient gathering in Zion’s temple when there the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, to worship at the sanctuary of God. Oh, it is a noble sight when with joy and gladness we see the young and the old, the gray-headed and the children, all of them pressing forward in one eager throng to worship the Lord of Hosts and listen to the voice of His sacred oracle. But your pleasure must have a great deal of alloy if you stop for a moment and dissect the congregation.

Pull the goodly mass in sunder—in a heap it sparkles like gold. Pull aside the threads, and alas, you will see that there are some not made of the precious metal, for, “we have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy.” Gathered in this throng this morning we have here men and women who almost profane the spot in which they are found. Last night’s revelry has left its impression upon their countenances. We have others who will, before this day is closed, be cursing God in the house of Satan. There are many to be found here who have during this week been spending their time in lying, cheating, and swindling in the midst of their business.

I doubt not there are some here who have taken every advantage that was possible of their fellow men—and if they have not come within the clutches of the law it certainly has not been their fault. We have, too, I doubt not, in such a multitude—yea, I may speak with confidence—we have people here who have, during the past week and at other times defiled themselves with sins that we will not mention, for it were a shame for us to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. Little do we know when we look here from this pulpit—it looks like one great field of flowers, fair to look upon—how many a root of deadly henbane and noxious nightshade grows here. And though you all look fair and goodly, yet, “I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy.”

Shall we just take the wicked man’s arm and walk with him to the House of God? When he begins to go, if he is one who has neglected going in his childhood, which perhaps is not extremely likely—when he begins to go even in his childhood, or whenever you choose to mention—you will notice that he is not often affected by the sound of the ministry. He goes up to the Chapel with flippancy and mirth. He goes to it as he would to a theater or any other place of amusement, as a means of passing away his Sabbath and killing time.

Merrily he trips in there—but I have seen the wicked man, when he went away look far differently from what he did when he entered. His plumes had been trailed in the dust. As he walks home there is no more flippancy and lightness, for he says, “Surely the Lord God has been in that place and I have been compelled to tremble. I went to scoff but I am obliged, in coming away, to confess that there is a power in religion and the services of God’s House are not all dullness after all.” Perhaps you have hoped good of this man. But, alas, he forgot it all and cast away all his impressions. And he came again the next Sunday and that time he felt again. Again the arrow of the Lord seemed to stick fast in his heart. But, alas, it was like the rushing of water. There was a mark for a moment, but his heart was soon healed, he felt not the blow. And as for persuading him to salvation, he was like the deaf adder, “charm we never so wisely,” he would not regard us so as to turn from his ways.

And I have seen him come and go till years have rolled over his head— and he has still filled his seat and the minister is still preaching—but in his case preaching in vain. Still are the tears of mercy flowing for him. Still are the thunders of justice launched against him. But he abides just as he was. In him there is no change except this—that now he grows hard and callous. You do not now hear him say that he trembles under the Word—not he. He is like a horse that has been in the battle—he fears not the noise of the drum nor the rolling of the smoke and cares not for the din of the cannon. He comes up, he hears a faithful warning and he says, “What of it? This is for the wicked.”

He hears an affectionate invitation and he says, “Go your way, when I have a more convenient season I will send for you.” And so he comes and goes up to the House of God and back again. Like the door upon its hinges he turns into the sanctuary today, and out of it tomorrow. “He comes and goes from the place of the holy.” It may be, however, he goes even further. Almost persuaded to be a Christian by some sermon from a Paul, he trembles at his feet. He thinks he really repents. He unites himself with the Christian Church—he makes a profession of religion—but, alas, his heart has never been changed.

The sow is washed, but it is the sow still. The dog has been driven from its vomit, but its doggish nature is there the same. The Ethiopian is clothed in a white garment, but he has not changed his skin. The leopard has been covered all over, but he has not washed his spots away. He is the same as ever he was. He goes to the baptismal pool a black sinner and he comes out of it the same. He goes to the Table of the Lord a deceiver. He eats the bread and drinks the wine and he returns the same. Sacrament after Sacrament passes away. The Holy Eucharist is broken in his presence, he receives it—but he comes and he goes—for he receives it not in the love of it. He is a stranger to vital godliness. As a wicked man “he comes and he goes from the place of the holy.”

But is it not a marvelous thing that men should be able to do this? I have sometimes heard a preacher so earnestly put the matter of salvation before men, that I have said, “Surely they must see this.” I have heard him plead as though he pleaded for his own life and I have said, “Surely they must feel this.” And I have turned round and I have seen the handkerchief used to brush away the tear. And I have said, “Good must follow this.” You have brought your own friends under the sound of the Word and you have prayed the whole sermon through that the arrow may reach the white and penetrate the center of the mark. And you said to yourself, “What an appropriate discourse.” Still you kept on praying and you were pleased to see that there was some emotion. You said “Oh, it will touch his heart at last.”

But is it not strange that, though wooed by love Divine, man will not melt. Though thundered at by Sinai’s own terrific thunderbolts they will not tremble. Yes, though Christ Himself, Incarnate in the flesh, should preach again, yet would they not regard Him, and perhaps would treat Him today as their parent did but yesterday, when they dragged Him out of the city and would have cast Him headlong from the summit of the mount on which the city was built. I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy till his conscience was seared as with a hot iron. I have seen him come and go from the place of the holy till he had become harder than the nether millstone—till he was past feeling—given up “to work all manner of uncleanness with greediness.”

But now we are going to change our journey. Instead of going to the House of God we will go another way. I have seen the wicked go to the place of the holy, that is to the judgment bench. We have had glaring instances even in the criminal calendar of men who have been seen sitting on a judgment bench one day and in a short time they have been standing at the dock themselves. I have wondered what must be the peculiar feelings of a man who officiates as a judge, knowing that he who judges has been a law-breaker himself. A wicked man, a greedy, lustful, drunken man—you know such are to be discovered among petty magistrates.

We have known these sit and condemn the drunkard, when, had the world known how they went to bed the night before, they would have said of them, “you that judges another does the same things yourself.” There have been instances known of men who have condemned a poor wretch for shooting a rabbit or stealing a few pheasants’ eggs, or some enormous crime like that—and they themselves have been robbing the coffers of the bank, embezzling funds to an immense extent—and cheating everybody. How singular they must feel. One would think it must be a very strange emotion that passes over a man when he executes the law upon one which he knows ought to be executed upon himself.

And yet, I have seen the wicked come and go from the holy place, until he came to think that his sins were no sins—that the poor must be severely upbraided for their iniquities—that what he called the lower classes must be kept in check, not thinking that there are none so low as those who condemn others while they do the same things themselves. Speaking about checks and barriers, when neither check nor barrier were of any use to himself—talking of curbing others and of judging righteous judgment—when had righteous judgment been carried out to the letter, he would himself have been the prisoner and not have been honored with a commission from government. Ah, is it not a sight that we may well look at, when we see justice perverted and the law turned upside down by men who “come and go from the place of the holy”?

But the third case is worse still. “I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy”—that is, the pulpit. If there is a place under high Heaven more holy than another, it is the pulpit where the Gospel is preached. This is the battlefield of Christendom. Here must the great battle be fought between Christ’s Church and the invading hosts of a wicked world. This is the last vestige of anything sacred that is left to us. We have no altars now. Christ is our altar—but we have a pulpit still left, a place which, when a man enters, he might well put off his shoes from his feet— for the place whereon he stands is holy.

Consecrated by a Savior’s presence, established by the clearness and the force of an Apostle’s eloquence, maintained and upheld by the faithfulness and fervor of a succession of Evangelists who, like stars, have marked the era in which they lived and stamped it with their names—the pulpit is handed down to those of us who occupy it now with a prestige of everything that is great and holy.

Yet I have seen the wicked come and go from it. Alas, if there is a sinner that is hardened, it is the man that sins and occupies his pulpit. We have heard of such a man living in the commission of the foulest sins and at length has been discovered. And yet such is the filthiness of mankind, that when he began to preach to the people again, they clustered round the beast for the mere sake of hearing what he would say to them. We have known cases, too, where men, when convicted to their own forehead, have unblushingly persevered in proclaiming a Gospel which their lives denied.

And perhaps these are the hardest of all sinners to deal with! But if the garment is once defiled, away with all thoughts of the pulpit then. He must be clean who ministers at the altar. Every saint must be holy, but he, holiest of all, who seeks to serve his God. Yet, we must mourn to say it, the Church of God every now and then has had a sun that was black instead of white—and a moon that was as a clot of blood, instead of being

full of fairness and beauty.

Happy the Church when God gives her holy ministers. But unhappy the Church where wicked men preside. I know ministers to this day, however, who know more about fishing rods than they do about chapters in the Bible—more about fox-hounds than about hunting after men’s souls. They understand a great deal more of the spring and the net than they do of the net for catching souls, or earnest exhortations for men to flee from the wrath to come. We know such even now—still uproarious at a farmer’s dinner, still the very loudest to give the toast and clash the glass—still mightiest among the mighty, of the reckless, the wild and the dissolute. Pity on the Church that still allows it! Happy the day when all such persons shall be purged from the pulpit. Then shall it stand forth “clear as the sun, fair as the moon and terrible as an army with banners.” “I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy.”

II. And now WE ARE GOING TO HIS FUNERAL. I shall want you to attend it. You need not be particular about having on a hat band, or being arrayed in garments of mourning. It does not signify for the wretch we are going to bury. There is no need for any very great outward signs of mourning, for he will be forgotten even in the city where he has done this— therefore we need not particularly mourn for him. Let us first go to the funeral and look at the outward ceremony. We will suppose one or two cases.

There is a man who has come and gone from the place of the holy. He has made a very blazing profession. He has been a county magistrate. Now, do you see what a stir is made about his poor bones? There is the hearse covered with plumes, and there follows a long string of carriages. The country people stare to see such a long train of carriages coming to follow one poor worm to its resting place. What pomp! What grandeur! See how the place of worship is hung with black. There seems to be intense mourning made over this man. Will you just think of it for a minute—and who are they mourning for?

A hypocrite! Whom is all this pomp for? For one who was a wicked man, a man who made a pretension of religion, a man who judged others and who ought to have been condemned himself. All this pomp for putrid clay. And what is it more or better than that? When such a man dies, ought he not to be buried with the burial of an ass? Let him be drawn and dragged from the gates of the city. What has he to do with pomp? At the head of the mournful cavalcade is Beelzebub, leading the procession. And looking back with twinkling eye and leer of malicious joy, says, “Here is fine pomp to conduct a soul to Hell with!” Ah, plumes and hearse for the man who is being conducted to his last abode in Tophet! A string of carriages to do honor to the man whom God has cursed in life and cursed in death—for the hope of the hypocrite is evermore an accursed one.

And a bell is ringing and the clergyman is reading the funeral service and is burying the man “in sure and certain hope.” Oh, what a laugh rings up from somewhere a little lower down than the grave! “In sure and certain hope,” says Satan, “Ha! Ha! Your sure and certain hope is folly, indeed. Trust to a bubble and hope to fly to the stars—trust to the wild winds, that they shall conduct you safely to Heaven—but trust to such a hope as that and you are a madman indeed.”

Oh, if we judged rightly, when a hypocrite died, we should do him no honor. If men could but see a little deeper than the skin and read the thoughts of the heart, they would not patronize this great, black lie and lead a long string of carriages through the streets. They would say, “No, the man was good for nothing. He was the outward skin without the life. He professed to be what he was not, he lived the scornful life of a deceiver. Let him have the burial of Jeconiah. Let him not have a funeral at all. Let him be cast away as loathsome carrion, for that is all he is.”

Ah, when a godly man dies, you may make lamentation over him, you may well carry him with solemn pomp unto his grave, for there is an odor in his bones, there is a sweet savor about him that even God delights in, for “precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” But the gilded hypocrite, the varnished deceiver, the well-accoutered wolf in sheep’s’ clothing—away with pomp for him! Why should men bewail him? They do not do it—why should they pretend to do so, then and give the outward semblance of a grief, where they feel none?

But possibly I may have seen the wicked man buried in a more quiet way. He is taken quietly to his tomb with as little pomp as possible and he is with all decency and solemnity interred in the grave. And now listen to the minister. If he is a man of God, when he buries such a man as he ought to be buried, you do not hear a solitary word about the character of the deceased. You hear nothing at all about any hopes of everlasting life. He is put into his grave. The minister well remembers how he did “come and go from the place of the holy,” he recollects full well how he used to sit in the gallery and listen to his discourse. And there is one who weeps. And the minister stands there and weeps too, to think how all his labor has been lost. One of his hearers has been destroyed—and that without hope.

But note how cautiously he speaks, even to the wife. He would give her all the hope he could, poor widow as she is, and he speaks very gentle. She says, “I hope my husband is in Heaven.” He holds his tongue. He is very silent. If he is of a sympathetic nature he will be quiet. And when he speaks about the deceased in his next Sunday’s sermon, if he mentions him at all he refers to him as a doubtful case, he uses him rather as a beacon than as an example. He bids other men beware how they presume to waste their opportunities and let the golden hours of their Sabbath-Day roll by disregarded. “I have seen the wicked buried who have come and gone from the place of the holy.”

As for the pompous funeral, that was ludicrous. A man might almost laugh to see the folly of honoring the man who deserved to be dishonored. But as for the still and silent and truthful funeral, how sad it is! But Brethren, after all, we ought to judge ourselves very much in the light of our funerals. That is the way we judge other things. Look at your fields tomorrow. There is the flaunting poppy and there by the hedgerows are

many flowers that lift their heads to the sun. Judging them by their leaf you might prefer them to the sober colored wheat. But wait until the funeral. Then the poppy shall be gathered and the weeds shall be bound up in a bundle to be burned—gathered into a heap in the field to be consumed, to be made into manure for the soil.

But see the funeral of the wheat. What a magnificent funeral has the sheaf of wheat. “Harvest home” is shouted as it is carried to the garner, for it is a precious thing. Even so let each of us so live, as considering that we must die. Oh, I would desire to live that when I leave this mortal state, men may say, “There is one gone who sought to make the world better. However rough his efforts might have been, he was an honest man. He sought to serve God and there lies he that feared not the face of man.” I would have every Christian seek to win such a funeral as this—a funeral like Stephen’s—“And devout men carried him to his sepulcher and made great lamentation over him.” I remember the funeral of one pastor—I attended it. Many ministers of the Gospel walked behind the coffin to attend their Brother and pay honor to him. And then came a ton of the Church, everyone of whom wept as if they had lost a father. And I remember the solemn sermon that was preached in the Chapel all hung with black, when all of us wept because a great man had fallen that day in Israel. We felt that a prince had been taken from us and we all said, like Elijah’s servant, “My father, my father, the horses of Israel and the chariots thereof.”

But I have seen the wicked buried that have come and gone from the place of the holy and I saw nothing of this sort. I saw a flickering kind of sorrow, like the dying of a wick that is almost consumed. I saw that those who paid a decent respect to the corpse did it for the widow’s sake, and for the sake of them that were left behind. But if they could have dealt with the corpse as their nature seemed to dictate, they ought to have dealt with the man when living, they would have said, “Let him be buried at the dead of night. Let him have some unhallowed corner in the Churchyard where the nettle long has grown.

“Let the frog croak over his tomb. Let the owl make her resting place over his sepulcher and let her hoot all night long, for hooted he well deserves to be. Let no laurel and no cypress grow upon his grave, and let no rose twine itself as a sweet bower around the place where he sleeps. Let no cowslip and no lily of the valley deck the grass that covers him. There let him lie. Let not the green sward grow, but let the place be accursed where sleeps the hypocrite—for he deserves it—and even so let it be.” “I have seen the wicked buried who have come and gone from the place of the holy.”

But there is a sad thing yet to come. We must look a little deeper than the mere ceremonial of the burial and we shall see that there is a great deal more in some people’s coffins besides their corpses. When old Robert Flockart was buried a few weeks ago in Edinburgh, he was buried, as I think a Christian minister should be. His old Bible and hymn book were placed upon the top of the coffin. Had he been a soldier, I suppose he would have had his sword put there. But he had been a Christian soldier and so they buried with him his Bible and hymn book as his trophies.

It was well that such a trophy should be on that coffin. But there is a great deal, as I have said, inside some people’s coffins. If we had eyes to see invisible things and we could break the lid of the hypocrite’s coffin, we should see a great deal there. There lie all his hopes. The wicked man may come and go from the place of the holy, but he has no hope of being saved. He thought, because he had attended the place of the holy regularly, therefore he was safe for another world. There lie his hopes and they are to be buried with him. Of all the frightful things that a man can look upon, the face of a dead hope is the most horrible.

A dead child is a pang indeed to a mother’s heart. A dead wife or a dead husband, to the heart of the bereaved must be sorrowful indeed. But a coffin full of dead hopes—did you ever see such a load of misery carried to the grave as that? Wrapped in the same shroud, there lie all his dead pretensions. When he was here he made a pretension of being respectable. There lies his respect, he shall be a hissing and a reproach forever. He made a pretension of being sanctified, but the mask is off now and he stands in all his native blackness. He made pretensions about being God’s elect, but his election is discovered now to be a rejection. He thought himself to be clothed in the Savior’s righteousness, but he finds that he justified himself—Christ had never given him His imputed righteousness. The tongue that prattled once so pleasantly concerning godliness is now silent.

That hypocritical eye that once flashed with the pretended fire of joy—it is all now dark, dark. That brain that thought of inventions to deceive— the worm shall feed on it. And that heart of his that once throbbed beneath ribs that were scarcely thick enough to hide the transparency of his hypocrisy shall now be devoured by demons. There are dead pretensions inside that rotting skeleton, and dead hopes, too. But there is one thing that sleeps with him in his coffin that he had set his heart upon. He had set his heart upon being known after he was gone. He thought surely after he had departed this life, he would be handed down to posterity and be remembered.

Now read the text—“And they were forgotten in the city where they had so done.” There is his hope of fame. Every man likes to live a little longer than his life—Englishmen especially—for there is scarcely to be found a rock in all England up which even a goat might scarcely climb where there may not be discovered the initials of the names of men, who never had any other mode of attaining to fame—and therefore thought they would inscribe their names there. Go where you will, you find men attempting to be known. And this is the reason why many people write in newspapers, else they never would be known.

A hundred little inventions we all of us have for keeping our names going after we are dead. But with the wicked man it is all in vain. He shall be forgotten. He has done nothing to make anybody remember him. Ask the poor; “Do you remember So-and-So?” “Hard master, Sir, very. He always cut us down to the last sixpence. And we do not wish to remember him.” Their children won’t hear his name. They will forget him entirely.

Ask the Church, “Do you remember So-and-So? He was a member.” “Well,” says one, “I remember him certainly, his name was on the books, but we never had his heart. He used to come and go, but I never could talk with him.

“There was nothing spiritual in him. There was a great deal of sounding bell—metal and brass—but no gold. I never could discover that he had the ‘root of the matter in him.’ No one thinks of him and he will soon be forgotten.” The Chapel grows old, there comes up another congregation and somehow or other they talk about the odd deacons that used to be there— who were good and holy men. They talk about the old lady that used to be so eminently useful in visiting the sick, about the young man who rose out of that Church, who was so useful in the cause of God. But you never hear mention made of his name. He is quite forgotten. When he died his name was struck out of the books, he was reported as being dead and all remembrance of him died with him. I have often noticed how soon wicked things die when the man dies who originated them.

Look at Voltaire’s philosophy. With all the noise it made in his time— where is it now? There is just a little of it lingering, but it seems to have gone. And there was Tom Paine—who did his best to write his name in letters of damnation. One would think he might have been remembered. But who cares for him now? Except among a few, here and there, his name has passed away. And all the names of error, and heresy, and schism— where do they go? You hear about St. Austin to this day, but you never hear about the heretics he attacked.

Everybody knows about Athanasius and how he stood up for the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we have almost forgotten the life of Arius and scarcely ever think of those men who aided and abetted him in his folly. Bad men die out quickly, for the world feels it is a good thing to be rid of them. They are not worth remembering. But the death of a good man—the man who was sincerely a Christian—how different is that! And when you see the body of a saint, if he has served God with all his might, how sweet it is to look upon him—ah and to look upon his coffin, too, or upon his tomb in later years!

Go into Bunhill fields and stand by the memorial of John Bunyan and you will say, “Ah, there lies the head that contained the brain which thought out that wondrous dream of the Pilgrim’s Progress from the City of Destruction to the Better Land. There lies the finger that wrote those wondrous lines which depict the story of him who came at last to the land Beulah, and waded through the flood, and entered into the Celestial City. And there are the eyelids which he once spoke of, when he said, “If I lie in prison until the moss grows on my eyelids, I will never make a promise to withhold from preaching.”

And there is that bold eye that penetrated the judge, when he said, “If you will let me out of prison today, I will preach again tomorrow, by the help of God.” And there lies that loving hand that was ever ready to receive into communion all them that loved the Lord Jesus Christ. I love the hand that wrote the book, “Water Baptism no Bar to Christian Communion.” I love him for that sake alone—and if he had written nothing else but that, I would say—“John Bunyan, be honored forever.” And there lies the foot that carried him up Snow Hill to go and make peace between a father and a son, in that cold day, which cost him his life. Peace to his ashes.

Wait, O John Bunyan, till your Master sends His angel to blow the trumpet and methinks, when the archangel sounds it, He will almost think of you, and this shall be a part of His joy, that honest John Bunyan, the greatest of all Englishmen, shall rise from his tomb at the blowing of that great trump. You cannot say so of the wicked. What is a wicked man’s body but a rotten piece of noisomeness? Put it away and thank God there are worms to eat such a thing up. And thank Him still more that there is a worm called Time, to eat up the evil influence and the accursed memory which such a man leaves behind him. All this have I seen and applied my heart unto every work that is done.

III. We are to WRITE HIS EPITAPH and his epitaph is contained in these short words—“this also is vanity.” And now in a few words I will endeavor to show that it is vanity for a man to come and go from the House of God and yet have no true religion. If I made up my mind to hate God, to sin against Him and to be lost at last, I would do it thoroughly, out and out. If I had determined to be damned and had calculated the chances, and made up my mind that it would be better to be cast away forever, I know there is one thing I would not do, I would not go to the House of God. Why, if I made up my mind to be lost, what is the good of going there to be teared about it?

If the preacher is faithful he will prick my conscience and wake me up. If I am determined and have made up my mind to be lost, let me go to Hell as easily as I can—what need is there that my conscience should be pricked and this great stone laid in my way to keep me from going there? Besides, I hold that for a man who has no love for the House of God, regularly to attend because he thinks it is respectable, is just one of the most pitiful kinds of drudgery that can be met with. If I did not love the House of God, I would not go there.

If it were not a delight to me to be found in the sanctuary of God, singing of His praise and hearing of His Word, I would stop. To be seen going to Chapel twice on the Sabbath, sitting as God’s people sit, rising when they rise and singing about what you do not feel—hearing that which pricks your conscience and listening to the reading of promises that do not belong to you—hearing about Heaven, that is not yours, being frightened with Hell, which is to be yours forever—why, the man is just a born fool that goes to the House of God, unless he has got an interest in it.

We may commend him for going. It is a respectable thing, perhaps, and right that it should be so—but I submit it is an intolerable drudgery to go always to the House of God, if you have made up your mind to be lost. Now, on this man’s tomb must be written at last—“there was a man who would not serve God, but who had not courage enough to stand out against God. There is a man so silly that he pretended to be religious

and so wicked that he was a hypocrite to his pretensions.”

Why, although you must deplore a wicked man’s wickedness as a fearful crime, yet there is some kind of respect to be paid to the man who is downright honest in it. But not an atom of respect to the man who wants to be a cant and a hypocrite. He wishes, if he can, just to save his neck at last—just as he thinks to do enough to let him get off free when he comes to lay dying—enough to keep his conscience quiet, enough to look respectable. Enough, as he thinks, when he dies will give him a little chance of entering Heaven, though it is, as it were, neck or nothing. Ah, poor thing! Well may we write over him, “This also is vanity!” But, Sir, you will be more laughed at for your pretensions than if you had made none. Having professed to be religious, and having pretended to carry it out—you shall have more scorn than if you had came out in your right colors and have said—“Who is the Lord, that I should fear Him? Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice?”

And now, are there any here who are so wicked as to choose eternal wrath? Have I any here so besotted as to choose destruction? Yes, yes, many. For if today, my Hearer, you are choosing sin. If you are choosing self-righteousness. If you are choosing pride, or lust, or the pleasures of this world, remember, you are choosing damnation, for the two things go together. Sin is the guilt and Hell is the bread beneath it. If you choose sin, you have virtually chosen perdition. Think of this, I beseech you—

*“O Lord! Do You the sinner turn!  
Now rouse him from his senseless state.  
O let him not Your counsel spurn,  
Nor rue his fatal choice too late.”*

May the Lord lead you to Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life! And when you are buried, may you be buried with the righteous—and may your last end be like his!

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**FIVE FEARS**

NO. 148

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 18, 1857, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“Yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him.”  
Ecclesiastes 8:12.**

I HAVE heard it sometimes said by wicked men, when they would arraign the justice of the Most High, that it is unjust that God should condemn men for the use of the powers which He Himself has given them. This most subtle evil has often grieved the hearts of those who are weak and ignorant and have not seen its untruthfulness—for to speak plainly of it, it is a gross lie. God does not condemn men for the use of the powers He has given them. He condemns them for the misuse of those powers. Not for employing them but for employing them as they ought not to employ them. Not for thinking, not for speaking, not for doing but for thinking, speaking and doing, contrary to His Law.

God damns no man for the use of the powers which He has given him— let that be again repeated. But He does condemn them for the abuse of those powers and for their impudence in daring to turn those powers, which He has given them for His honor, against His service and against His Throne. Now, my Friends, there is no power which God has given us which may not be employed for God. I believe that David uttered a great Truth, as well as a great exhortation to himself, when he said, “Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”

There is nothing in man that God has not put there which may not be employed in God’s service. Some may ask me whether anger can be brought in. I answer, yes. A good man may serve God by being angry against sin. And to be angry against sin is a high and holy thing. You may ask me, perhaps, whether ridicule can be employed. I answer, yes. I believe we may even rightly employ it in the preaching of God’s Word. I know this, I always intend to use it. And if by a laugh I can make men see the folly of an error better than in any other way, they shall laugh and laugh here, too. For ridicule is to be used in God’s service.

And every power that God has implanted in man—I will make no exception—may be used for God’s service and for God’s honor. What man has gotten for himself by the Fall cannot be employed to serve God with—we cannot bring before God Adam’s robbery to be a sacrifice to the Almighty. Nor can our own carnal and sinful passions honor the Most High. But there are natural powers which God has conferred and none of these are in themselves sinful. I would have them, therefore, employed for the Master. Yes, even those powers with which it seems impossible to worship,

such as the powers of assimilation, eating and drinking, may be brought to honor God. For what says the Apostle?—“Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Jesus Christ.”

Now you will notice that fear may be yoked into the service of God. True fear, not fearing but believing, saves the soul. Not doubt but confidence is the strength and the deliverance of the Christian. Still, fear, as being one of those powers which God has given us, is not in itself sinful. Fear may be used for the most sinful purposes—at the same time it may be so ennobled by grace and so used for the service of God that it may become the very most grand part of man. In fact Scripture has honored fear, for the whole of piety is comprehended in these words, “Fear God.” “The fear of the Lord.” “Them that fear Him.”

These phrases are employed to express true piety and the men who possess it. Fear, I have said, may ruin the soul, alas, it has ruined multitudes. O Fear, you are the rock upon which many a ship has been wrecked. Many a soul has suffered spiritual destruction through you but then it has been not the fear of God but the fear of man. Many have rushed against the thick bosses of the Almighty’s shield and defied God in order to escape the wrath of feeble man. Many, through fear of worldly loss, have brought great guilt into their consciences. Some through fear of ridicule and laughter have not had the boldness to follow the right and so have gone astray and been ruined.

Yes and where fear does not work utter destruction it is capable of doing much damage to the spirit. Fear has paralyzed the arm of the most gigantic Christian, stopped him in his race and impeded him in his labors. Faith can do anything—but fear, sinful fear—can do nothing at all but even prevent faith from performing its labors. Fear has made the Christian sorrow, both by night and day. A cankering fear lest his wants should not be provided for and his necessities supplied has driven the Christian to unworthy thoughts. And distrustful, doubting fear has made him dishonor God and prevented his sucking the honey out of the promises.

Fear has kept many a child of God from doing his duty, from making a bold profession. Fear has brought bondage into his spirit. FEAR misused, you are the Christian’s greatest curse and you are the sinner’s ruin. You are a sly serpent, creeping among the thorns of sin and when you are allowed to twist yourself around manhood, you do crush it in your folds and poison it with your venom. Nothing can be worse than this sinful fear. It has slaughtered its myriads and sent thousands to Hell. But yet it may seem a paradox—fear, when rightly employed, is the very brightest state of Christianity and is used to express all piety, comprehended in one emotion. “The fear of God” is the constant description which the Scripture gives of true religion.

And now, Beloved, I shall want you this morning to have some little patience with me while I try to go after certain fearing souls whose fear is of the right kind, even a fear which renders salvation but who through it are now suffering some degree of torment and are wishing to be delivered from it. An old Puritan says, “Jesus Christ would shake hands with a man that had the palsy.” I must try and do the same this morning. Some of you have the palsy of fear. I want to come after you and say unto you, “Fear not.” I want to bid you to be of good cheer, because God would comfort you. There are five different kinds of fear that persons are laboring under which I would now endeavor to address.

I. There is, first, THE FEAR CAUSED BY AN AWAKENING CONSCIENCE. This is the lowest grade of godly fear. From here all true piety takes its rise. By nature the sinner does not dread the wrath of God. He thinks sin a little thing. He looks upon its pleasures and forgets its penalty. He dares the Almighty to the war and lifts his puny arm against the Eternal. No sooner, however, is he awakened by God’s Spirit than fear takes possession of his heart. The arrows of the Almighty drink up his spirit, the thunders of the Law roll in his ears. He feels his life to be uncertain and his body frail. He dreads death because he knows that death would be to him the prelude of destruction.

He dreads life, for life itself is intolerable when the wrath of God is poured out into his soul. Many of you who are now before me have passed through that dreadful ordeal of suffering under a sense of the wrath of God. We, my Brethren, shall never forget, to our dying day, that hour of desperate grief when first we discovered our lost estate. By the preaching of the Word, by the reading of the Scriptures, by prayer, or by some Providence, we were led to look within. We discovered the evil of our hearts and we heard how terribly God would punish the transgressor.

Do you not remember how we started from our beds in the morning, having slept uneasily and bowed our knees in prayer and prayed until the hot sweat ran down our brow? But did we not rise without a hope that we had been heard? Do you not recollect how, in our business, we were sometimes so absent in mind that those who were round about us thought that we must have been bereaved of our wits? Do you not well recollect how the best dainties of our meals seemed to have the bitterness of wormwood in them and the sweetest draughts were mingled with gall? How all day long we sorrowed and went to our bed at night with another prayer, still as full of agony and still as hopeless?

And by night we could not sleep but dreamed of the wrath to come, saw dreams more horrible than we had dreamed before. Each night and day the wrath of God seemed to increase and our pangs and agonies became more terrible! Oh, we shall never forget it—those of us who have passed through the same will never let that era be forgotten, for the time of its beginning was the time of our conversion and the time of its end was the time of our salvation. Have I any here who are in this same state this morning? I am coming after you and in coming after you I proclaim the

words of my text, “Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him.”

Sinner, it shall be well with you if you are now made to fear the wrath of God on account of your sin! If God the Spirit has poured forth the vials of Almighty wrath into your soul so that you are cast down and sore vexed think not you shall be destroyed. It shall be well with you. Let me comfort you now, while you are suffering these things. Remember that what you suffer is that which all God’s people have had to suffer in a measure. Many poor hearts come to me when I am sitting to see the anxious ones and at other times and they tell me they are in such deep distress. They think surely never anyone felt as they feel. And when I begin to unfold to them the experience of all saints and tell them how it is a well-trod path which almost every traveler to Heaven has had to tread, they stand astonished and think it cannot be so.

I tell you, Sinner, that your deepest woes have been felt by someone even more keenly than you feel them now. You say, “I sink in deep mire where there is no standing.” Why, Man, there have been some that have sunk far deeper than you have sunk! You are up to your ankles. I have known some to have been up to the loins and there have been some that have been covered over their very heads so that they could say, “All Your waves and your billows have gone over me.” Your distresses are very painful but they are not singular—others have had to endure the same. Be comforted, it is not a desert island—others have been there, too. And if they have passed through this and won the crown, you shall pass through it, by God’s grace and inherit yet the glory of the Believer on the breast of Christ.

But I will tell you something else to comfort you. I will put this question to you—Would you wish to go back and become what you once were? Your sins are now so painful that you can scarce eat, or drink, or sleep. There was a time when your sins never haunted you, when you could drink and play with Satan and with sin as merrily as anyone. Come, would you like to be as you were then? “No,” I hear you say, “no, my Master, my God, grieve me more, if it so pleases You but do not let me be hardened any more.” Ask the poor stricken conscience, in the first agonies and throes of his grief, whether he would like to be a hardened sinner.

“No,” he says. And when he hears the blasphemer swear against God, the tear is in his eye. He says, “Lord, I thank You for my miseries, if they deliver me from hardness of heart. I can extol You for my agonies, if they save me from such dire presumption, such rebellion against You.” Well, then, be of good cheer. Your condition, you see, is not the worst of all. There is a worse state yet. Oh, if you have come so far, hope in the name of Christ you shall come further yet! But the great consolation is this— Jesus Christ died for you. If God the Holy Spirit has shown you that you are dead in sin and if He has revealed to you the desperate character of your iniquity and broken you in pieces with penitence on account of your guilt—hear me, I speak not now haphazardly, I speak with God’s authority—Jesus Christ died for you!

Yes, for you, vilest of the vile. I am no general redemptionist, I believe Jesus Christ died for only as many as will be saved—He died only for His elect. I do not believe He died in vain for any man alive. I have always believed that Christ was punished instead of men. Now, if He were punished in the place of all men, I could see no justice in God punishing men again after having punished Christ for them. I hold and believe—and I think on Scriptural authority—that Jesus Christ died for all those who believe or will believe. And He was punished in the place of all those who feel their need of a Savior and lay hold on Him.

The rest reject Him, despise Him, sin against God and are punished for their sins. But those who are redeemed, having been blood-bought, shall not be lost. Christ’s blood is too precious to have been shed for men who are damned. It is too awful a thing to think of the Savior standing in a sinner’s place and then that sinner after all having to bear his own iniquities. I can never indulge a thought which appears to be so unrighteous to God and so unsafe to men. All that the Savior bought He shall have, all that His Heavenly Father has given Him, He says, shall come unto Him.

Now here is something solid for you, poor Soul. I ask again, do you know and feel yourself to be lost and ruined? Then the Savior bought you and will have you. Then He was punished for you and you never will be punished again. Then He hung upon the Cross for you that you might not perish. For you there is no Hell. So far as you are concerned the eternal lake is quenched. The dungeons of Hell are broken open, their bars are cut in sunder. You are free—no damnation can ever seize you—no devils can ever drag you to the pit. You are redeemed and you are saved.

“What?” you say, “I am redeemed? Why, Sir, I am full of sin.” It is the very reason why you are redeemed. “But I feel myself to be the guiltiest of all the human race.” Yes, and that is just the evidence that Christ died for you. He says Himself, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” If you have got abundance of good works and think you can go to Heaven by them, you will perish. But if you know your guilt and confess it—it is not my affirmation but the affirmation of the Scriptures— “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom,” says the Apostle, “I am chief.”

Lay hold on that, poor Soul—and then I repeat to you the text, “Yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him.” It shall be well with you yet, and black with sin though you are, you shall one day sing among the blood-washed ones in Glory everlasting. That is the first stage of fearing God. We shall now proceed to another.

II. There are many who have believed and are truly converted, yet have a fear which I may call THE FEAR OF ANXIETY. They are afraid that they are not converted. They are converted, there is no doubt of it. Sometimes

they know they are so themselves but, for the most part, they are afraid. There are some people in the world who have a preponderance of fear in their characters. It seems as if their mind, from its peculiar constitution, had a greater aptitude for the state of fear than for any other state. Why, even in temporal matters they are always fearing. And, when these poor souls get converted they are always afraid that they are not so.

First they will tell you they are afraid they never repented enough. The work in their hearts, they say, was not deep. It was just superficial plowing and never entered into their souls. Then they are quite sure they never came to Christ aright, they think they came the wrong way. How that can be no one knows, for they could not come at all except the Father drew them. And the Father did not draw them the wrong way! Still they hold that they did not come aright. Then if that idea is knocked on the head, they say they do not believe aright. But when that is got rid of, they say if they were converted they would not be the subject of so much sin.

They say they can trust Christ but they are afraid they do not trust Him aright. And they always, do, what you may, come back to the old condition. They are always afraid. And now, what shall I say to these good souls? Why, I will say this, “Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him.” Not only those who believe but those who fear, have got a promise. I would to God that they had more faith. I would that they could lay hold on the Savior and had more assurance and even attain unto a perfect confidence. But if they cannot shall I utter a word that would hurt them?

God forbid! “Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him.” There are some of these poor creatures who are the holiest and most Heavenly-minded people in all the world. I have seen men who, with poor, desponding spirits, have exhibited the most lovely graces. There has not been the blushing healthful beauty of the rose. But the lily has its beauties, sickly though it seems and these, though they are faint and weak, have eminently the graces of humility and meekness, of patience and endurance and they practice more of meditation, more of self examination, more of repentance, more of prayer than any race of Christians alive.

God forbid that I should vex their spirits—there are some of God’s best children who always grow in the shade of fear and can scarcely attain to say so much as, “I know whom I have believed.” Darkness suits them best, their eyes are weak and much sunlight seems to blind them, they love the shadows. And though they thought they could sing, “I know my Savior, I love Him and He loves me,” they go back again and begin to groan in themselves, “Do I love the Lord? Indeed, if it is so, why am I thus?”

I am now about to utter a great paradox—I believe that some of these poor fearing people have got the greatest faith of anybody in the world. I have sometimes thought that great tear, that great anxiety must have great faith with it to keep the soul alive at all. See that man drowning there—there is another in the water, too, I see. He in the distance thinks he can swim—a plank is thrown to him. He believes himself to be in no danger of sinking. He clutches the plank very leisurely and does not seem to grasp it firmly. But this poor creature here, he knows he cannot swim, he feels that he must soon sink. Now put the means of escape near him, how desperately he clutches it! How he seems as if he would drive his fingers through the plank!

He clutches it for life or death, that is his all, for he must perish if he is not saved by that plank. Now in this case, he that fears the most believes the most. And I do think it is so sometimes with poor desponding spirits. They have the greatest fear of Hell and the greatest fear of themselves and the greatest dread that they are not right. Oh, what a faith they must have, when they are enabled to throw themselves on Christ and when they can but whisper to themselves, “I think that He is mine”—“Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him.”

But I want to comfort these poor souls a little more. I do not think a minister does well in killing the lambs. For where would be the sheep next year if he should do so? But at the same time it is his business to make the lambs grow into sheep if he can. And you who are fearing, I would not say a word to hurt you but I would say a word to comfort you if I could. I would remind you that you are not fit to judge yourself. You have been just now examining yourself and you came to the conclusion that you really are not a child of God. Now, you will not be offended with me but I would not give one single farthing for your opinion of yourself.

Why, I tell you, you have not any judgment. It is not long ago you were a base, presumptuous sinner and then you thought yourself all right. I did not believe you then. Well, then you began to reform yourself. You practiced many good works and thought surely you were mending your pace to Heaven then. Then I knew you were wrong. Now you are becoming a true Believer in Christ but you are very fearful and you say you are not safe. I know you are. You are not fit to judge. I should not like to see you elevated to the bench! You would scarcely know how to deal with other men, for you do not know how to deal with yourself.

And who is he that can deal with himself? We sometimes think ourselves proud and we are never more humble than when we feel that we are proud. At other times we think ourselves to be wonderfully humble and we are never more proud than then. We sometimes say within ourselves, “Now I think I am overcoming my corruptions.” That is just the time when they are about to attack us most severely. At another time we are crying, “Surely I shall be cut off,” that is just the period when sin is being routed, because we are hating it the most and crying out the most against it. We are not qualified to judge ourselves—our poor scales are so out of order that they will never tell the truth.

Now, then, just give up your own judgment, except thus far. Can you say that you “are a poor sinner and nothing at all and that Jesus Christ is your All-in-All?” Then be comforted. You have no right to be anxious. You have no reason to be so. You could not say that if you had not been converted. You must have been quickened by grace or else you would not be anxious at all. And you must have faith or else you would not be able even to lay hold of Christ so much as to know your own nothingness and His all-sufficiency. Poor soul, be comforted.

But shall I tell you one thing? Do you know the greatest of God’s people are often in the same condition as you are now? “No, no,” says the fearful soul, “I do not believe that, I believe that when persons are converted they never have any fear.” And they look at the minister and they say, “Oh but if I could be but like that minister. I know he never has doubts and fears. Oh, if I could be like old deacon So-and-So—such a holy man—how he prays! Oh, if I could feel like Mr. So-and-So, who calls to visit me and talks to me so sweetly. They never doubt.”

Ah, that is because you do not know. Those whom you think to be the strongest and are so in public, have their times of the greatest weakness when they can scarcely know their own names in spiritual things. If one may speak for the rest, those of us who enjoy the greatest portions of assurance have times when we would give all the world to know ourselves to be possessors of grace. When we would be ready to sacrifice our lives if we might but have the shadow of a hope that we were in the love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, little one, if the giants go there, what wonder if the dwarfs must? What if God’s favorite and chosen ones—what if His valiant men, the bodyguard of Christ, those men whose swords are on their thighs and who stand up for the Truth and are its champions—what if they sometimes are weak—what wonder then, if you should be weak?

What if the heirs of salvation and the soldiers of the Cross sometimes feel their knees feeble and their hands hang down and their hearts faint? What wonder, then, if you, who are less than the least of all saints should sometimes be in trouble, too? Oh, be of good cheer! Fear will never kill anybody. “Doubts and fears,” said an old preacher, “are like the toothache—nothing more painful but never fatal.” Fear will often grieve us but it will never kill us. It may distress us much but it will never burn the soul. Fears even do good at times. Let me not however, praise them too much. I heard a preacher say, the other day, that fear was a good housekeeper.

I said, “So I have heard but I do not believe it. She never will keep a cupboard full. She is a good doorkeeper. She can keep beggars and thieves away. She is a good housedog to guard us and protect us in the night and warn us of dangers, lest we fall into them.” The fear of anxiety then, is a good fear. Take this promise—“Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him.”

III. And now, my Brethren, in the next place there is A FEAR WHICH WORKS CAUTION. When we get a little further advanced in the Christian life, our present state is not so much a matter of anxiety as our future state. We believe that we shall never totally fall from grace. We hold it as a cardinal doctrine of our religion that by no means will God ever leave His people or suffer them to perish. But we often think within ourselves, “I am afraid lest I should bring dishonor on the cause of Christ. I am afraid lest, in some moment of temptation, I shall be left to go astray. I am afraid lest I should lose that hallowed peace and that delightful joy which it has been my privilege to enjoy and shall yet go back into the world. God grant I may not prove to be a hypocrite, after all!”

Now, I have hundreds of persons just now in this place who are feeling like this and I will tell you one ill effect of this fear. These persons say, “I dare not join the Church, because I am afraid I shall fall.” A friend mentions to them that they hold it to be their duty, if they have believed, to make a profession of their faith in Baptism. They say, “Well, I believe it to be my duty to partake of the two institutions of our Savior. I ought to be buried with Him in Baptism unto death. I ought also, I know, to hold fellowship with Him in the Lord’s Supper but I dare not join the Church. For suppose I should bring dishonor upon the cause, suppose I should disgrace the Church, what a sad thing it would be!”

That fear is good in itself. But do you think that you would not bring disgrace on Christ’s cause as it is? You are always at the place of worship. You are never away. You were always looked upon as being one of the Church, though you have not made a profession. Now, if you were to sin, would it not dishonor the Church even now? You know your relatives and friends esteem you to be a Christian. You would scarce dishonor the Church more if you were actually to join it. For you really are united with it. If you would be consistent, you must never go to the Chapel any more. Just stay away. Give up your seat—turn right down irreligious and then you cannot dishonor the Church. Do one or the other but never think you will be saving Christ’s Church by dishonoring God, as you really are doing now.

And then I will ask you this question, Where do you think a man is safest—in the paths of obedience, or in the paths of disobedience? Now you know you are disobedient. You are quite sure of that. Do you think you are safer where your wayward will leads you, or where God’s Spirit points the way? And remember this, if you cannot trust God to keep you standing, you must have a poor faith, indeed. If you cannot just risk that and be united with the Church and hope that Christ will keep you, then I fear you will have some terrible fall. If you do not join the Church, you will bring far more disgrace upon it by being outside it than you would have done if you had been united with it and had been kept.

Ah, Friends, I believe that union with the Christian Church is often a means under God of preserving men from sin. For then they think there is a bond upon them and a sacred claim and many of them are more careful what they do. And I trust there would be the same check upon you.

But now, I daresay that the poor creature who has been uttering this thinks I am about to condemn her. And the poor man who has been talking so thinks I would cut him off and say he is no child of God. God forbid! My text belongs to him. You are afraid you will fall into sin—“Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him.” If you should tell me you were not afraid of falling, I would not have you in the Church for the world. You would be no Christian. All Christians, when they are in a right state, are afraid of falling into sin. Holy fear is the proper condition of a child of God. Even the most confident will not go into presumption.

He that knows his love to the Savior and his Savior’s love to him, is yet afraid lest he should dishonor Him. If there is a man who has an assurance of such a kind, as to put fear out of the question, so that he is never afraid of sinning, I will tell him he has a Satanic assurance, an assurance which came from Satan and not from God. The more assured we are of our own conversion the more careful we should be lest we offend God and the more fearful lest by word or look, or deed, we should grieve God’s Holy Spirit. I love your fear and love you, too, for it. You are my Brother and Sister in Jesus if you can truly say that you fear lest you should sin. Seek then, my Friends, to grow in this fear of caution, obtain more and more of it. And while you do not distrust the Savior, learn to distrust yourself more and more every day.

IV. I shall not detain you many more minutes. I have only to notice in the next place the fear which I may call THE FEAR OF JEALOUSY. Strong love will usually promote jealousy. “Love is as strong as death.” Then comes the next, “Jealousy is cruel as the grave.” We cannot love strongly without feeling some jealousy—I mean not jealousy against the object of our love. For, “perfect love casts out fear”—but jealousy against ourselves. “Oh what jealousy,” says the Apostle, addressing the Corinthians, “what revenge,” did grace work in you when you were first converted. The true Believer, when he gets his Savior in full possession and in blissful communion is so jealous lest any rival should intrude in his heart.

He is afraid lest his dearest friend should get more of his heart than the Savior has. He is afraid of his wealth. He trembles at his health, at his fame—at everything that is dear to him—lest it should engross his heart. Oh, how often does he pray, “My Lord, let me not be of a divided spirit. Cast down each idol—self-will, self-righteousness.” And I tell you the more he loves, the more he will fear lest he should provoke his Savior by bringing a rival into his heart and setting up an Antichrist in his spirit—so that fear just goes in proportion to love. And the bright love is congenial and must walk side by side with the deepest jealousy and the most profound fear. Seek, my Brethren, to know the meaning of communion and you must know, then, the meaning of fear. For fear and communion must, to a great degree, go together.

V. And now I will conclude by just mentioning that fear which is felt WHEN WE HAVE HAD DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS. Did you ever, in the silence of the night, look up and view the stars, feeding, like sheep, on the azure pastures of the sky? Have you ever thought of those great worlds, far, far away, divided from us by almost illimitable leagues of space? Did you ever, while musing on the starry Heavens, lose yourself in thoughts of God?

And have you ever felt, at such a time, that you could say with Jacob, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God and the very gate of Heaven.” Have you ever seen the craggy hills lift their summits to the skies? Have you ever marked the tempests sailing over them and seen the thundercloud burst upon the mountain and heard the Heavens shake beneath the tramp of the Most High and seen the skies all glaring red with fire, when God has sent His thunderbolts abroad? And have you not trembled that God was there and in other and happier seasons have you not in your chamber been so wrapped in devotion, have you not so manifestly known the presence of God that you were filled with trembling?

Fear took hold upon you and made all your bones shake—not because you dreaded God—but because you then saw some of His greatness. It is said of Moses that when he saw the burning bush he feared to look upon God. God is so great a Being that the rightly constituted mind must always fear when it approaches into His presence. The Eastern subject, when he came before his king, regarded him as a being so infinitely superior to himself, that even in the vestibule he began to shake. And as he neared the Throne he began to totter and his cheek was blanched with fear.

Like Esther, he would faint when he came before the king, so glorious was his majesty. And if it is so with earthly monarchs, how fearful must it be to come into the presence of the King of kings and to feel one’s self near Him! Why, I believe that even in Heaven we shall have this kind of fear! Certainly the angels have it. They dare not look on God. They veil their faces with their wings and while they cry aloud, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, yet they dare not view Him. The very sight of Him might destroy them and they tremble at His presence.

Now this kind of fear, if you have ever felt it, if it has been produced in your heart by contemplation of God, is a high and hallowed thing and to you this promise is addressed—“Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him.”

And now, may I go round again this morning—I cannot do it personally, yet by my voice—to the poor trembling soul who is overcome with sin? Poor Man, where are you? Has the devil got hold of you and have your sins covered you up so that you can not see the face of the sun and behold the light of mercy? Listen to me! You may never hope till you have

left off hoping in yourself. You have never any right to believe, till you have nothing to believe in yourself. Until you have lost all, you have no right to take anything. But now, if you have lost all your own good works and righteousness, if you feel that there is no reason why you should be saved—that is the very reason why you should be. My Master bids me tell the naked to come to His Heavenly wardrobe and take His royal garments for their clothing.

He bids me tell the hungry to hasten away to His Heavenly granaries and feed upon the old corn of the kingdom to their very full. He bids me tell the thirsty that the River of Life is broad and deep and flows freely to all those who thirst after it. Now, Sinner, if you are sick of sin and grieved at heart where you stand, follow me in spirit in these words—“O Lord, I know my guilt and I confess my misery. If You damn me to all eternity, You will be just. But, O Lord, have mercy upon me, according to Your promise, which You have made in Christ Jesus, unto those who confess their faults.”

If that came from your heart, go out of that door and sing all the way home—for you are a pardoned sinner! You shall never see death—the second death, the death of the soul. Go home to your chamber! Let your heart burst itself in tears of thankfulness. Go and there prostrate yourself and bless God that He has enabled you to see that only Jesus can do a helpless sinner good. And then, “go your way. Eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart. Let your head lack no oil and your face no ointment. For God has accepted you. And you have a right to be happy. Live cheerfully and joyfully all the days of your life, hereafter and forever.” Amen.

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THE WORD OF A KING

NO. 1697

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON.**  
AT THE OPENING OF A NEW BAPTIST CHAPEL, TRINITY ROAD, UPPER TOOTING.

**“Where the word of a king is, there is power.”  
Ecclesiastes 8:4.**

KINGS in Solomon’s day had a vast amount of power, for their word was absolute. They did according to their own will and none could check them, for, as Solomon said, “the king’s wrath is as the roaring of a lion: whoever provokes him to anger sins against his own soul.” When such a monarch happened to be wise and good, it was a great blessing to the people, for, “a king that sits in the throne of judgment scatters away all evil with his eyes.” But if he was of a hard, tyrannical nature, his subjects were mere slaves and groaned beneath a yoke of iron. We do not sufficiently give thanks for the blessings of a constitutional government, but if we were, for a season, put beneath the power of a grinding despotism, we should set more store by those liberties for which we have to thank our Puritan ancestors. Mercies are seldom appreciated till they are taken away. May we not prove ungrateful under free institutions, for if so, we shall be more brutish than any men.

There is, however, blessed be the Lord, one King whose power we do not wish, in any degree, to limit or circumscribe. God does as He wills among the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world—none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What are you doing? In this we greatly rejoice! The personal rule of one individual would be the best form of government if that individual were perfectly good, infinitely wise and abundant in power. And the reason why an autocrat turns into a despot is that there is no man who is perfectly good, unselfish, or wise! God has no fault or failing and, therefore, it is a joy that He does according to His will. He never wills anything that is not strictly just—in the exercise of absolute sovereignty He is neither unjust nor unmerciful—it is not possible for Him to err and, therefore, it is a great subject for joy that “the Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty. The Lord sits upon the floods; yes, the Lord sits King forever and ever; let Israel rejoice, and let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. “Say among the heathen that the Lord reigns: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: He shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the seas roar, and the fullness thereof.”

Now, because God is the absolute Monarch, His Word has power about it and of that Word of power I am going to speak at this time. May the Holy Spirit help us to think of the power of God’s Word for four purposes! First, to excite our awe. Secondly, to ensure our obedience. Thirdly, to inspire our confidence. And, fourthly, to direct our efforts.

I. First, we would see the power of the Word of the Lord in order TO EXCITE OUR AWE OF HIM. What are we poor creatures of a day? What is there in us as we appear in God’s sight? Do we not pass away as the flower of the field? As for our word, what is it? We sometimes talk exceedingly proudly and we say, “shall,” and, “will,” as if we could do anything— when, after all, our word is but breath, a vapor, a mere sound in the air! Man proposes, but God disposes. Man resolves, but God dissolves. That which man expects, God rejects, for the Word of the Lord stands forever— but man passes away and is not.

Think of the day before all days when there was no day but the Ancient of Days and when God dwelt all alone. Then He willed in His mind that there should be a world created. “He spoke, and it was done: He commanded, and it stood fast.” “By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the hosts of them by the breath of His mouth.” What a word is that which created all things! And remember that this same word can destroy all things, for, “the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” If He were but to speak, all things that are would melt away as a moment’s foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is lost forever! “You turn man to destruction; and say, Return, you children of men”—and at that irresistible word, man’s spirit returns to God who gave it and his body disintegrates into dust!

When the Lord created, He used no hand of cherubim or seraphim—all that we read in the sublimely simple record of Genesis is, “God said, let there be,” and there was. His word accomplished all and when He wills to destroy either one man or a million, His word is able to work His will. What a mighty word was that which in one night cut off the host of Sennacherib and slew the first-born of Egypt! The Word of the Lord commanded the floods and they drowned a guilty world—and that same word rained fire from Heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah! Even so, in the Last Day, when the word shall go forth from Him, He shall shake not only the earth, but also Heaven—and at His word of power both Heaven and earth shall flee away!

Great God, we do adore You, for You are both Creator and Destroyer by Your Word! Think how God’s Word both makes alive and kills. He promised Abraham that he should have a seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. It seemed impossible that there should come from him a son that should be the founder of a race—his body was dead and Sarah was old—yet God, in due time, made them to laugh, for Isaac was born into the house! The Lord sets the solitary in families. “He makes the barren woman to keep house and to be a joyful mother of children.” It is the Lord who makes alive and, equally is it the Lord who kills. It only needs God to will it and the pestilence lays men low in heaps, like the grass of the meadow when the mower’s scythe has passed over it. The Lord has but to call for pestilence or war and myriads of men are laid low.

If He wills to chasten by famine, He calls for devouring insects and they invade the land. And this Joel attributes to the word of Jehovah, when He says, “And the Lord shall utter His voice before His army; for His camp is very great: for He is strong that executes His word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?” Oh, how we ought to worship You, You dread Supreme, upon whose Word life and death are made to hang! I might in another division of this part of my subject remind you of the power which attends both His promises and His threats. God has never promised without performing, in due time, to the last jot and tittle. Has He said, and shall He not do it? Has He commanded, and shall it not come to pass? The gifts and calling of God are without repentance—He turns not from His Covenant engagements and swerves not from the performance of His Word.

Those that have resisted Him have found His threats to be true, also— let Pharaoh confess how the plagues followed fast upon the Word of the Lord till even his stout heart was melted within him! Men have gone on, for a while, resisting God, and in their pride they have laughed Him to scorn, but, by-and-by, He has spoken to them in His wrath and vexed them in His hot displeasure. Who can stand against this terrible God, whose word overthrows the mighty, and casts the proud beneath His feet? There is power in God’s Word to foretell, so that, when He tells what is to be in the future, we know that it shall come to pass. “Seek you out of the Book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate.” Thus says the Lord, “I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.”

In the Word of the Lord there is also power to predestinate as well as to foretell, so that what He decrees is fixed and certain. “There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.” The Lord has said it, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.” Let this be your joy, today, that whatever is promised of the latter day and of the Glory that is to be revealed, is sure to come to pass, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. It seems impossible that the heathen should ever be the Lord’s, or that the uttermost parts of the earth should be Christ’s possession, but it will be, for the King has said it, and, “Where the word of a king is, there is power.”

We fear that the time will never arrive when peace shall reign through all the world—and when men shall hang the helmet in the hall and study war no more—but the vision of faith shall yet become a fact, for, “Where the word of a king is, there is power.” He spoke of old of Edom and Moab, Philistia and Ammon, Nineveh and Babylon, Greece and Rome. And whatever He has spoken has been fulfilled! Not one word of the prophecies of Daniel and Ezekiel has failed of its accomplishment! And we may be sure that not one glorious vision of the seer of Patmos will remain a dream. Let us worship the great Ordainer, Benefactor and Ruler, whose every word is the word of a King, in which there is power—

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

II. Secondly, we would think of the power of God’s Word in order TO ENSURE OUR OBEDIENCE TO IT. Whenever God gives a word of command, it comes to us clothed with authority, and its power over our minds should be immediate and unquestioned. I hope that, in laying the foundation of the spiritual building that is to be erected in connection with this place, you will take care to do it according to the directions of the Divine statute-book. One is our Master, even Christ, and we have to do our Master’s will, not our own. Some Christian people do not view the authority of God’s Word as paramount, but consult human leaders or their preferences. This is to begin with the word of man—a weak and sandy foundation! I beseech you do not so.

To Christians the Word of God is the only rule of faith and practice. Our doctrine is of authority because it is God’s Word, and for no other reason. Our ordinances are valid because instituted by God’s Word—they are idle ceremonies if they are not so commanded. All the rites, rules and regulations of man are of no value. The book of human decrees is not to be regarded in the Church of Christ. You may put in the front of it, “printed by authority,” but to the Church of Christ it has no authority! You may adopt a creed as the standard of any particular Church, but that gives it no authority to bind the conscience! It may be authorized by princes, bishops and holy men, but where it differs from the Word of the Lord, or adds thereto, it is, to the children of God, as a puff of wind! The sole authority in the Church is Christ, Himself—He is the Head of His Church and His Word is the only authority by which we are ruled—for, “where the word of a king is, there is power,” but all are usurpers who act as lords in the Church, where Jesus, alone, is Master and Lord.

Christians should more diligently search the Word of God to find out what the will of the Lord is on all matters affecting their everyday life. A loyal subject of the great King wants to know what the King would have him do. When he knows it, it is not for him to question or to cavil, but to obey. Brothers and Sisters, let us obey, in all things, the King’s Word, and give to His Holy Word the honor that it justly claims, for, “where the word of a king is, there is power.” Every precept that He gives, He intends us to keep. He does not ordain it that we may question it. He commands, that we may obey. Let me refer you to what Solomon says in the second verse of this chapter, “I counsel you to keep the king’s commandments.” This is admirable counsel for every Christian—if the commandments were of men, even the wisest of men, we might break them and, perhaps, do right in breaking them. But if they are of the King who gives the command, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the King in Zion, then the advice of the Preacher is wise and weighty—“I counsel you to keep the king’s commandments.”

Perhaps some of you would ask me, this afternoon, “What is the best course for me to pursue in certain difficult cases?” “I counsel you to keep the King’s Commandments.” “But I am a young man just beginning life and may get into trouble if I am rigidly scrupulous in doing that which is right.” “I counsel you to keep the King’s Commandments.” “But at this present time I may lose my job if I keep all His statutes. Could I not wink rather hard and forget one of the Commandments for a little while?” “I counsel you to keep the King’s Commandments.” If He is a King, then it is a solemn hazard to your soul if you come short of the least of His Commandments! Remember that one treason makes a traitor! One leak sinks a ship. One fly spoils the whole box of ointment. He that bought us with His blood deserves to be obeyed in all things, with all our heart, mind, soul and strength!

Such a King as we have ought never to hear us ask the reason why He commands, but we should be like the brave men of Balaclava, of whom the poet said—

*“Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs but to dare and die.”*

Solomon goes on to say, “Be not hasty to go out of his sight.” There is such power in God’s Word that I would have you also obey this precept and seek to remain in His Presence. Some of His people seek to get away from their Lord instead of keeping close to Him. So little do they delight in communion with their God that they seem to say, “Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your Presence?” Did it never happen to you as it did to Jonah, when he felt he had to go to Tarshish, though the Lord told him to go to Nineveh? He did not want such a large field of labor, such an anxious and unrewarding post of duty—he would rather go to a village station, or to a seaside place. For a time he believed that Providence helped him, for he found a ship going to Tarshish.

There are many devil’s providences which make sin easy and obedience difficult. The precept, not the Providence, is the rule of duty! The providence which gave Judas the opportunity to sell his Master did not excuse that son of perdition! “So he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the Presence of the Lord.” Alas, poor Jonah! To be thus eager to run counter to the Word of a King! I remember how I felt when first in London—I could not endure the horrible wilderness of bricks by which I was surrounded! I sighed for the green fields and the fresh air—and I longed to get back to my country charge. But this kind of self-indulgence will not do! “Where the word of a king is, there is power,” and wherever the King sends you, you must go, and go without questioning.

If He should send you to preach at the gates of Hell, go and preach there! “Be not hasty to go out of His sight,” for if you get out of the sight of the King—if you no longer wait in His blessed Presence, depend upon it— like Jonah, you will fall into trial, tempest, sinking and terror! There may be no whale to swallow you and cast you up, again—they are not so plentiful, now, as they were then—and you may not be delivered so easily as Jonah! Keep in the Lord’s Presence and favor, no matter where you may have to go in order to do so. Walk in communion with Christ in whatever path He may point out to you. Never mind how rough it is! Do not imagine it is the wrong road because it is so rough—rather reckon it to be right because it is rough, for seldom do smoothness and rightness go together. Oh, to abide in Christ the Word, and to have His Word abiding in us!

Solomon then says, “Stand not in an evil thing.” There is such power in the Word of God that He can readily destroy you, or heavily chastise you. Therefore, be quick to amend and, “stand not in an evil thing.” Repent, obey, submit, confess, seek pardon at once! He who is a courtier in a king’s court, if he offends against his sovereign, or does anything disgraceful, apologizes and trusts that he will not so offend any more and oh, you child of God, if at any time you shall offend against your gracious Sovereign and He frowns on you, humble yourself, for His stroke is heavy! “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.” Have a tender mouth— let God guide you with His eyes—let a word be enough for you!

I wish we all had great tenderness of conscience. We should tremble at God’s Word and humble ourselves in the dust before Him, praying to be cleansed by His Grace. If a person wished to practice deeds of infamy, he would not do it in the Queen’s audience room, especially if her eyes were fixed upon him! And so sin should be impossible to a Believer who lives in the Presence of the King, in whose Word there is power! Will you offend Him to His face and slight Him in His own courts? No! Yield yourself to His mercy and let your holy life prove that His Word has power over your heart and conscience.

III. And now, thirdly, TO INSPIRE OUR CONFIDENCE, let us think that “where the word of a king is, there is power.” If there is a heart here that is seeking mercy, if you can go before God with such a promise as this in your mouth, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon”—that Word of His is not a mere sound—there is the power of the Truth of God in it! If you do what He, there, bids you do, you shall find that He can and will abundantly pardon! Whatever sins you have committed, though they are too many to count, and too awful to mention, if you will come and trust yourself with Jesus Christ, God’s Word is that you shall be saved—and saved you shall be! “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” Come and plead these words, now, you who feel your sinfulness, and you shall prove, in your joyful experience, that they are the power of God unto salvation!

Even the very worst may come and plead the promises! And they shall obtain immediate pardon and full forgiveness—and their soul shall know it because of the sweet peace that comes from forgiven sin! Do you tell me that you cannot conquer your evil passions and corrupt desires? Here is a promise from the Word of the Lord, “From all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you” (Ezek. 36:25). Now come and plead these precious promises! There is power in them—they are the Words of a King, and if you plead them at the Mercy Seat, you shall become a new creature in Christ Jesus! Old things shall pass away! All things shall become new!

When you get a promise from God, treat it as undoubted truth and rely upon it as you do upon the promise of your father or your friend. There are men around you whose promises you never can believe—when they promise to pay you, you dare not regard it as an asset in business, for you are too sadly aware that you have a little bundle of their I O U’s, already, and you have had a view of their dishonored bills and checks endorsed with “insufficient funds.” But God’s Word is not like that of false and fickle mortals. No charge of falsehood or failure can be brought against the God of Truth! He has never broken His Word, yet, and He never will! Then, dear Souls, if you need forgiveness of sin and renewal of heart, get the promise to that effect and believe it with all your soul! And as sure as it is the Word of a King you shall be washed in the blood and in the water which flowed from the wounded side of the crucified Christ.

And you Christian people, are there any of you who are struggling, at this time, with a remaining corruption which you cannot conquer? Come and lay hold of the promise that you shall overcome and plead it before the Mercy Seat! If you do but get any promise of God suited to your case, make quick use of it, for there is power in it! It is the Word of a King! Mr. Durham, the writer of ancient and precious comments upon Solomon’s Song and the Revelation, when dying, was somewhat distressed in mind and said to a friend who was standing by his bedside, “Out of all the Scriptures there is not one text that yields me comfort, save only one, and that is one that I have often held out to perishing sinners, little thinking I should have to cling to it myself—‘him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.’ Brother So-and-So, do you think that this is strong enough to bear my weight now?” “Yes,” his friend replied, “and to bear the weight of ten thousand times ten thousand if they rest upon it.”

What was said of that text is true of every other Word of God! The promise of the Lord will bear the weight of sin and justice, life and death, judgment and Hell. Lean your whole weight on the Word of God and you shall find it to be like Mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abides forever! For my own part, I have no shadow of a hope but in the Word of the Lord—His Spirit has delivered me from all reliance upon duties, or feelings, or experiences. The Word of the Lord is the life of my soul. In the words of King Jesus there is power to save you, to renew you, to pardon you, to preserve you, to sanctify you and to perfect you! If you have hold on the promises, they will hold you for time and eternity, too.

Then, are there any of you in great trouble? I cannot know all your cases, but if any one of you has a trial which you could not tell, or a trouble which, if you did tell it, nobody could help you out of—go and spread it before the Lord. Remember His Word, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” Go and tell Him that He has thus spoken and that He has therein pledged Himself to deliver you out of all afflictions—and be sure of this, He will be as good as His Word! Do you expect to die soon? Are you somewhat distressed because sickness is undermining your constitution? Be not afraid, for His Spirit teaches you to sing, “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.” Go and tell the Lord of His own Word and you will look forward to death without fear, singing—

*“Knowing as I am known,  
How shall I love that word,  
And oft repeat before the throne,  
‘Forever with the Lord!’  
That Resurrection word,  
That shout of victory,  
Once more, ‘Forever with the Lord!’  
Amen—so let it be!”*

Brothers and Sisters, one more point is gained concerning the fear of death when we remember that it is the voice of a King which will recall our bodies from the grave and, “where the word of a king is, there is power.” Do we ask mournfully as we survey the graveyard, “Can these dry bones live?” We are not slow to answer with assurance of faith! He that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, will also bring forth from their sepulchers all His sheep! “If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you.” We do not doubt this when we remember that with the trumpet of the archangel shall also be heard the voice of God, which voice shall speak the Omnipotent Word—

*“Break from His throne, illustrious morn! Attend, O earth, His sovereign Word!  
Restore the saint, a glorious form  
He must ascend to meet his Lord.”*

IV. Fourthly, I am coming to my last point, on which I shall crave a little time—and here I intend to address myself to all people of God who are associated in Church fellowship, striving to do the Lord’s service and to you who will be so associated here. My text is to be used TO DIRECT YOUR EFFORTS. You need power—not the power of money, or mind, or influence, or numbers—but “power from on high.” All other power may be desirable, but this power is indispensable. Spiritual work can only be done by spiritual power. I counsel you, in order to get spiritual power in all that you do, to keep the King’s Commandments, for “where the word of a king is, there is power.” Lay not a stone of your spiritual Church without His overseeing! Do all things according as He has ordained! Regard Him as the wise Master Builder and be, all of you, under the command of His Word.

The day comes when much that has been built shall be destroyed, for the fire will try every man’s work of what sort it is. It is very easy to heap up a Church with wood, hay and stubble, which the fire will soon destroy. And it is very difficult work to build one up with gold, silver and precious stones, for these are rare materials and must be diligently sought for, laboriously prepared and carefully guarded. The materials that will stand the fire of temptation, trial, death and the like, are not to be brought together by any word but the Word of the Lord—and these, alone, are worth having. I had sooner have half-a-dozen Christian people, truly spiritual and obedient to the Word of the Lord in all things, than I would have halfa-dozen thousands of nominal Christians who neither care about the Word of God nor the King. If you need power, keep the King’s Commandments! Keep close to them in all things and make it the Law of your house and the slogan of your flag.

Wherein you go beyond the Word of God, you go beyond the power. And wherein you stop short of the Word of God, you also stop short of the power. In the King’s Word there is power and you will have power as long as you keep to it—and real power is nowhere else to be found. Let us take care that we do not look elsewhere for power, for that will be leaving the Fountain of Living Waters to hew out for ourselves broken cisterns which hold no water. I fear that some Christian people have been looking in many other directions for the power which can only be found in the Word of the King. At one time we were told that power lay in an educated ministry. People said, “We must have a minister who knows Greek and Latin! You cannot save souls unless you are familiar with the heathen classics.” This superstition has suffered many a blow from the manifest successes of those whose only language is the grand old Saxon!

Then the cry was, “Well, really, we do not need these men of education—we need fluent speakers, men who can tell a great many anecdotes and stories—these are men of power.” I hope we shall outgrow this delusion, also. The Lord works by either of these classes of men, or by others who have not the qualifications of either of them, or by another sort of men, or 50 sorts of men, so long as they keep to the Word of the King, in which there is power! There is power in the Gospel if it is preached by a man utterly without education—unlearned men have done great things by the power of the Word of God! The polished doctor of divinity has been equally useful when he has kept to his Master’s Word. But if either of these has forgotten to make Christ’s Word first and last, the preaching has been, alike, powerless, whether uttered by the illiterate or the profound.

Others have thought it necessary, in order to have power among the masses, (that is the cant phrase), that there should be fine music. An organ is, nowadays, thought to be the power of God—and a choir is a fine substitute for the Holy Spirit! They have tried that kind of thing in America, where solos and quartets enable singing men and singing women to divide their services between the church and the theater! Some churches have paid more attention to the choir than to the preaching. I do not believe in it! If God had meant people to be converted in that way, He would have sent them a command to attend the music halls and operas, for there they will get far better music than we can hope to give them.

If there are charms in music to change the souls of men from sin to holiness and if the preaching of the Gospel will not do it—let us have done with Peter and Paul, with Chalmers and with Chrysostom—and let us exalt Mozart and Handel into their places! And let the great singers of the day take the places of the pleaders for the Lord. Even this would not content the maniacs of this age, for with the music room they crave the flippancy of the theater. Combine with philosophy the sweet flowers of oratory and those of Covent Garden, adding thereto the man-millinery and gewgaws of Rome—and then you can exclaim with the idolaters of old— “These are your gods, O Israel.” Men are now looking for omnipotence in toys! But we do not believe it. We come back to this, “Where the word of a king is, there is power,” and while we are prepared to admit that all and everything that has to do with us can be the vehicle of spiritual power if God so wills, we are more than ever convinced that God has spiritual power to give by His word, alone!

We must keep to the King’s word if we desire to have this spiritual power for the Lord’s work. Whatever you find in Scripture to be the command of the Lord, follow it, though it leads you into a course that is difficult for the flesh to bear—I mean a path of singular spirituality and nonconformity to the world. Remember that, after all, the Truth of God may be with the half-dozen and not with the million. Christ’s power may be with the handful as it was at Pentecost, when the power came down upon the despised disciples—and not upon the chief priests and scribes— though they had the sway in religious matters! If we want to win souls for Christ we must use the Word of God to do it! Other forms of good work languish unless the Gospel is joined with them.

Set about reforming, civilizing and elevating the people, and you will lose your time unless you evangelize them. The total abstinence movement is good and I would that all would aid it, but it effects little unless the Gospel furnishes the motive and the force. It will win its way in proportion as it is carried on in subordination to the Gospel and is viewed as a means to reach a still higher end! The rod works no wonder till Moses grasps it and moral teaching has small force till Jesus operates by it. Those who doubt the power of the Gospel and leave it for other forms of hopeful good, leave strength for weakness, Omnipotence for insufficiency. More and more I am persuaded that it is where the Word of a King is that there is power, and all the rest is feebleness until that Word has infused might into it.

Everyone must buy his own experience, but mine goes to prove to me that the direct and downright preaching of the Gospel is the most profitable work which I ever engage in—it brings more Glory to God and good to men than all lecturing and addressing upon moral subjects. I should always, if I were a farmer, like to sow that seed which would bring me the best return for my labor. Preaching the Gospel is the most paying thing in the world—it is remunerative in the very highest sense. May your minister stick to the Gospel, the old-fashioned Gospel, and preach nothing else but Jesus Christ and Him Crucified! If people will not hear that, do not let them hear anything at all! It is better to be silent than to preach anything else. Paul said, and I will say the same, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him Crucified.”

Then again, if you need power, you must use this Word in pleading. If your work here is to be a success, there must be much praying. Everything in God’s house is to be done with prayer. Give me a praying people and I shall have a powerful people. The Word of the King is that which gives power to our prayers. I have been requested to preach in certain places and I have replied that I could not go. In a little time I have received a letter to remind me that two years before I promised to go. This altered the case—I had no choice. I must go, whether I could or not, for my word was pledged to it. So if you can go to the Lord with His pledged Word and say, “Lord, You have said it. You must do it,” He will be true to His Word to you, for there is power in the Word of a King! There is power in accepting that Word, in getting it into you, or receiving it. You will never keep the Truth of God till you have received this Word of a King into your spiritual being and absorbed it into your spiritual nature. Oh, that you might, every one of you, eat the Word of God, live on it and make it your daily food!

And then, there is power in the practicing of it. Where there is life through the King’s Word, it will be a strong life. The sinner’s life is a feeble life, but an obedient life—an earnest Christian life—a life of strength. Even those who hate it and abhor it, cannot help feeling that there is a strange influence about it which they cannot explain, and they must respect it. You will see its power in this place! I know you will see it, for you are resolved, in God’s strength, that it shall be so. You will see its power to fill the place. There is nothing so attractive as the Gospel of Christ! If you were to give a man the Tabernacle at Newington, and say to him, “There, you may lecture on geology, astronomy, or anything you like, twice on the Sunday, and every night in the week as well, if you please, and see if you can keep up a full congregation,” he would fail!

The people would not come for any length of time and, yet, without any great oratory, we preach the Gospel again and again, and the people come—they cannot help it! They hear nothing new—it is always the same thing over and over again, and yet it is never monotonous! There is always a glorious freshness about the Gospel. That one silver bell of the Gospel has more melody in it than can be drawn from all the bells in all the steeples in the world! There is more sweetness in that one name, Jesus, than in all the harps of angels, let alone the music of men! When Jesus Christ’s Deity is denied in any chapel, it soon becomes a howling wilderness. If Christ, the Son of God, is gone, all is gone! A certain minister preached Universalism, or the doctrine that everybody would be saved in the end, and after a time his chapel became empty. His neighbor, who preached that those who did not believe would be lost forever, had his house full.

One day the Universalist met his neighbor, and asked him, “How is it that the people come to you when you preach that unbelievers will be sent to Hell, and they do not come to me, though I tell them that in the end they will all be in Heaven?” The other replied, “They suspect that what I tell them is true and that what you tell them is false.” Where gentlemen of this order have been preaching, people have sense enough to come to the conclusion that if what they say is false it is not wise to hear them! And if what they say is true there is no need to hear them. Certain gentlemen are proving to the world that there is no need of themselves, for if men are not lost, what need is there of a preacher to tell them how they can be saved? He that cries peace and safety, if he is a watchman, might as well hold his tongue. If the watchman woke you up in the middle of the night crying out, “All’s well! A fine starlight night!” you would be very much inclined to exclaim, “Why on earth do you go about disturbing people when there is nothing the matter? Go home and get to bed with you!”

And thus these smooth-speaking gentlemen are finding out that they are not needed and people are ready to say of them, “Let them go home to bed and there let them abide.” But on the other hand, if you preach Jesus Christ, and even the terrible things of His Word, there will be a full house, for conscience bids men hear. When you preach the Gospel, souls will be saved! To secure that end, you must stick to the Gospel, for that is the one means ordained by God for the conversion of sinners. The other day a Gospel minister spoke to a woman who had attended certain revival services, in which there was much shouting of, “Come to Jesus,” but nothing about Jesus. She said, “I heard you preach this afternoon, and if what you preached is true, then I am a lost woman, and I have been converted 10 times, already.” Ah me! What is the use of such poor work as this?

We must teach the King’s Word if our work is to be blessed to the salvation of souls. We must plow with the Law and let the people know what sin means and what repentance means—then we may hopefully sow them with the Gospel. Some time ago we were told that there was no need of repentance and that repentance only meant a change of mind. But what tremendous change of mind true repentance means! Never speak lightly of repentance. Then, too, the preaching of the Truth of God—the whole Truth of God—will bring a power of union among you, so that you who love the Lord will be heartily united. When Christian people quarrel, it is generally because they do not get sufficient spiritual food. Dogs fight when there are no bones and Church members fall out when there is no spiritual food. We must give them plenty of Gospel, for the Gospel has the power of sweetening the temper and making us put up with one another!

Preach the King’s Word, for it will give you power in private prayer, power in the Sunday school, power in the Prayer Meeting, power in everything that you do because you will live upon the King’s own Word and His Word is meat to the soul! The Prophet said, “Your Words were found, and I did eat them; and Your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” If you try this meat, you will all find it is nourishing to you, also. The Lord bless you and grant that it may be so. Amen.

END OF VOLUME 28.  
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THE SPUR

NO. 1119

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

**“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go.”  
Ecclesiastes 9:10.**

I FIND that these words, and those which precede them, have been considered by some to be a sarcastic address to those persons of an epicurean spirit who consider this world to be everything and will not believe that there is a world to come. They are bidden to eat the fat and drink the sweet, and enjoy life while they can—and if they have anything that they wish to do, to get it done as quickly as they can—because there is no work nor device in the grave. If this is the meaning, we must regard it as spoken to them from their own standpoint and so it is tantamount to their favorite maxim, “let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

It is possible that the royal preacher intended our text to be a sardonic sarcasm, but I do not think so. I think the common interpretation is the true one and that would make it run parallel with the saying of our Lord, “Work while it is called day, for the night comes wherein no man can work.” It is an address to men, commending to them promptness, determination and practical earnestness. Inasmuch as they have but one life here on earth, they should give diligence to accomplish all the right purposes which they have formed for this world. Because once dead they cannot return, nor in the grave can they carry out any of their resolves, they should do quickly what they mean to do. May God give us Grace to make a right use of this exhortation.

First, we shall give this passage an evangelical voice to the unconverted. Secondly, we shall find in it a stimulating voice to the people of God.

I. First, we shall give it AN EVANGELICAL VOICE TO THE UNCONVERTED and it will be necessary for us to say that there is nothing for the unconverted man to do, by way of work or device with his hand in order to his being saved. And, therefore, we do not address him and say to him, “Do what your hand finds to do, in order that you may be saved by it.” That would be false doctrine and would tend to put the anxious seeker upon the wrong track. The Gospel regards the unconverted man as dead in trespasses and sins and it tells him that, first of all, he must be quickened by a new life—he must be born-again, in fact—or else he is not capable of those actions which would be acceptable with God.

Neither if he were capable of them would the performance of them be the way of salvation, for we are expressly told that our salvation is not of works. Salvation from sin, and justification before God, come to us in

connection with the work of the Holy Spirit within us leading us to faith in Jesus. And so salvation is entirely and alone of the Grace of God. Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are the evidences of saving Grace, and are at once the gifts of God and the works of the renewed mind. Looking at this present moment upon faith, repentance, prayer and the seeking of the Lord as being our works when God’s Grace has worked them in us, we would say to every unconverted person, “It is high time that you should begin to think about the solemn interests of your soul, for you will soon pass from the place of saving knowledge and heavenly wisdom into the shades of forgetfulness.”

Repentance is not a feeling which you may have, or may not have, and yet be equally saved. You must repent of your sins or there can be no forgiveness for you. Faith in Jesus Christ is not an optional thing, so that a man may perhaps fare well at last, whether he believes or not. “He that believes not shall be damned” is the emphatic declaration of Christ Himself, not an invention of His disciples, but our Lord’s own declaration. You must have faith or you cannot be saved. And you must be men of prayer, for without prayer no man shall be saved. The sinner’s first evidence of salvation is—“Behold he prays!” If there is no prayer, there is no Grace. These things are indispensably essential.

Note well, also, that it is essential that they be done with all our might. The text says, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” Nobody ever truly repented who repented in a half-hearted way. We cannot repent in our sleep and so go to Heaven dreaming. Eve was taken out of Adam when he was asleep, but our sins will not be removed in a like manner. Neither does any man believe in Jesus without thought upon the matter—faith does not grow spontaneously and without our own consent, like nettles in the sluggard’s garden. Faith is not the fruit of a swoon—it requires the exercise of the faculties. It is a simple thing, but it is an earnest thing, a hearty thing. “If you believe with all your heart,” said Philip to the eunuch, “you may be baptized.” It is with the heart that man believes, and that sort of believing which does not exercise the heart will never save the soul.

A prayer, too—a prayer accepted in Heaven, is not a dull, cold thing. It is not a saying of prayers, a using of certain holy words, just as wizards of old were accustomed to mutter their enchantments. Oh, no! It is the yearning of the spirit after God, the passionate longing of the creature to get to the Creator and to be reconciled to Him. “The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” And without a holy violence we shall not gain entrance at the gates of mercy. Prayer is no child’s play, but requires all our might. In order to eternal life there must be faith, there must be repentance, there must be prayer—and these must all be real, deep, fervent—or else they are not such as God gives and they are not true evidences of salvation.  
Moreover, the text urges us to immediate action because death is coming. Now I feel quite sure that the bulk of the unconverted part of my congregation is made up of persons who have fully resolved one day to repent. If I were now sent as a commissioner from Satan and were wickedly to ask you to make a contract with the powers of darkness that you never would repent, that you never would believe in Jesus and that you never would pray, you would start back from so dreadful a compact! You would feel as if a most profane bargain were proposed to you. You would suspect the presence of Mephistopheles or some other form of the arch-deceiver. And yet your actions practically come to the same thing. For how many years have you lived without attending to your souls?

“Oh, but we mean to!” Yes, and you meant to 20 years ago. “Oh, but we really do mean it, now!” Yes, and you were quite as earnest when you were but children in Sunday school. Since then you have had different times of awakening and you have resolved and re-resolved—but you remain the same. Will it always be so? If so, why do you start back from promising to let it be so? If you think it right to continue as unbelievers, what is right today will be right tomorrow and what has been convenient today will be as convenient tomorrow! And though you say, “Go your way for this time: when I have a more convenient season I will send for you,” it will come to pass with you as with Felix—the convenient season will never come and you will remain unsaved. And yet you are dying men and women!

As I look you in the face, I read, “Mortality!” written across your brows. There is not a body here but what, unless the Lord shall come, will lie in the cold grave and turn to dust! And there is not a soul here but what shall pass into the disembodied state and by-and-by, after the Resurrection, shall stand before the Judgment Seat of God! Yet all this while you are trifling about your best interests—not about your purses, nor about your property—but about your souls! About yourselves, your truest selves! Sirs, is this wise? You are not short of wit in other things—how are you, then, so short of it in this? If you must play at hazard, let it be with something cheaper than your souls! If there must be risks, go risk your houses and risk your health—but risk not your souls and their everlasting interests!

The voice of Wisdom says today—you must repent! You must believe! You must seek God in prayer! Therefore, since death is near you, do it, do it with all your might and do it now, for before long you will be where these things never can be done! In a very short time every unconverted person here will be in the land where there are no Sabbaths. You can waste them now—they hang heavy on some men’s hands—but you will not be galled with Sabbaths there, or worried with calls to go up to the House of God and think about your souls. We who are preachers of the Gospel are very troublesome to you and often make your consciences uneasy— soon you will no longer be troubled with us.

There will be none to cry to you to have mercy on yourselves. There will none whose loving importunity shall be a weariness to you. None will annoy you with their expostulations, or burden you with invitations. You

will be in the land where there are no Sabbaths and no preachers. And there will be no Bibles there. You will not say there, as you did this afternoon, “It is dry reading—that Bible.” You will not be tired of hearing promises there. No promise and no Gospel will ever salute your ears in that dark realm of despair! And there will be no Mercy Seat there. You do not pray now, though God will hear you—but in a future state prayer will be altogether out of season. God hears not the ungodly when once they are cast away from His Presence.

They may call, but He has said, “I will not answer. They refused Me, and therefore I will mock at their calamity, I will laugh when their fear comes.” I pray you remember that there will be no Jesus there, no Fountain filled with blood in which to wash away crimson stains. There will be no Redeemer to cover a naked soul with His righteousness, no Savior to say, “Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you.” There will be no Spirit of God there to plead with your conscience and to be resisted. There will be no Grace of God there to show you your sins and to show you the atoning Sacrifice. I pray you, have a little patience with us who preach to you, for our time is short and you will soon be rid of us. Have a little patience with your Bible—it will soon enough be out of your way! Have a little patience with your poor Christian mother who tries to bring you to the Savior—she will be far from you soon!

We, who now trouble you by desiring to do you good, will soon be out of your way. Ah, poor Souls! Poor Souls! Soon you will be out of God’s way, and out of Christ’s way, and out of Mercy’s way—banished from the Savior’s Presence—and that because the kingdom of God came near to you, but you put it away from you, for you would have none of the Lord’s reproofs. You turned, every one to his own way, and rejected the counsels of God against yourselves. Beloved Hearers, may none of you stand in that plight! While I breathe the prayer that it may not be so, may I ask you to pray for yourselves that it will not be so? Will you let me whisper in your ear, as though I stood close by each one of you now, and I will softly and lovingly say—Repent, and believe in Jesus, now, with all your might. God help you, “for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave where you go.”

II. But now I have another task, and that is to set forth my text as A STIMULATING VOICE TO GOD’S OWN PEOPLE. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, our text reminds you that you have a work to do. You have not the work to do of saving yourselves. That is done—the dear Redeemer has finished it. “It is finished,” says the Savior, and that is joy for you. But now you have another work to do because you are saved. Man was not created to be idle. He was not elected to be idle. He was not redeemed to be idle. He was not quickened to be idle and he is not sanctified by God’s Grace to be idle.

Every Christian, while resting in Christ’s work for justification is, himself, a worker, ordained to bring forth fruit unto God’s Glory. Have we been bought with he blood of Jesus and can we be idlers in our Redeemer’s vineyard? The love of Jesus to us must provoke love in our heart to Jesus and that love must show itself by deeds of service for His name. I am sure we feel that. Do you not feel, Brothers and Sisters, as members of the Christian Church, that you have each a work to do? You love the Church and you would not like to be idle members of it. As soldiers in one great army you eagerly desire to promote the prosperity of the host—as members of the body of Christ you wish to perform your office to your Head and your fellow members. I know you do.

The vows of Christ are on you and the vows of the Church of God are on you, too. Moreover, I know that my dear Brethren have a love for the Truth of the Gospel. Does it not grieve you when you hear false doctrines and when you see the idols set up again—the idols which your fathers abhorred, set up in the national temples of God? Your heart is provoked to jealousy—I know it is—and you feel, each one of you, that you have the Truth of God committed to your charge and that you are bound to bear testimony to it. This you wish to do most completely. In addition, you feel that you should seek the souls of others. Here is a great city of three millions and more of people, perishing for lack of knowledge—and if you are God’s people you would, if it were possible, snatch them from the flames and deliver them from the wrath to come.

Do you not feel that each one of you, according to his position, has a work appointed him? I know I have mine. There are times without number in which I have wished that I could become the pastor of some little country Church with two or three hundred hearers, over whose souls I could watch with incessant care, about whose circumstances I could fully inform myself and with whom I could plead individually. Here are so many, so very, very many! You are counted by thousands. What can I do with you? My soul is burdened with the weight of the work to which the Lord has called me! Yet I know it is my work and it must be done.

You are parents, some of you. Do you not feel that you are called to bring up your children in the fear of God? Are you doing it? Few Christians in these days feel as they ought to—that as parents they are bound to instruct their children in the things of God. You are masters—do you care for your servants? Have you no desire to see your households ordered aright? Oh, I trust you are not such heathen men and publicans that you care not for your own households! You live in neighborhoods where you are brought into contact with your fellow men of all sorts. Do you not know that you are put there as lights in dark places—as handfuls of salt in the midst of putrefaction?

Have you never felt that you are debtors? Do you not feel it your duty to battle against error? Isn’t it your duty to coming generations to stand steadfast to the Truth of God today, which if it falls today, may not rise again for many a century? Have you felt that your obligations extend as far as your influence extends and that if you are not serving God with your influence you are doing harm with it? If you are a Christian you are like an oil lamp, which, if it does not yield light, gives forth a foul smell as

its wick smokes. You are doing mischief if you are not doing good. You set an example of idleness and indifference to the things of God to sinners which will make them say, “There is nothing in religion! Why should we make any stir about it, when even these who profess to enjoy it do not live as if they were in earnest, and care not whether our souls are lost or saved?”

Each woman here as well as each man, if converted, should feel, “I have a work to do for God.” If you are converted as a child, sing your hosannas to the King. And if you are born to God in your declining years, still bring forth fruit in old age. Even if you are confined to the bed of weakness there is a something to be done by you before you enter Heaven and the voice of the text says, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” That is a most weighty point and none may question it. All Believers have a work to do.

The second thing is this—Our text indicates the wisest course to follow. It is—Do it, do it at once, do not talk about it, do not regret that you have not done it and sit down and fret because you have done so little in the past. It is little use crying over the spilt milk of your past life. If you have not done what you should, up, Man, and do what you can! “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it.” Many prefer to find fault with the way in which other people do their work. Yes, and if you look round the Tabernacle, you will see a great many imperfections in the preacher, in the deacons, in the elders and in the members—and possibly none of the workers among us do their work exactly as your superior wisdom would dictate.

There are persons here who have done a great deal of good, but you have a notion that you could tell them how to do it in a better fashion though you do nothing yourself! Oh, Sir, have done with it! Go, Sir, and do your own work and I will do mine in my own way. I do not suppose you will do my work better than I do it if you try, and I do not suppose I can do yours better than you can do it, if I take your place. “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it.” Our text exhorts us to do our work now. Do not talk about doing it tomorrow, do it at once! The impetus of the text carries the thought as far as that, seeing that death may come tonight—do it now, even now. What wonders would have been done if tomorrows were todays!

What great achievements have passed through that young man’s imagination! He has often pictured how useful he will be. His daydream has been so very vivid that he has mistaken the will for the deed and complacently reviewed his fine resolutions as if they had already been carried out! He has felt himself to be somebody on the strength of what he was going to do. What draughts men make upon the future and how hopefully they reckon upon meeting them when the time comes. Like insolvent traders they maintain their present position by discounting bills which they will never honor and live as if they were rich—when all their wealth is represented by the wretched forgeries of their own false promises!

Oh, Sirs, do not promise to do anything tomorrow—leave off promising and come to real actions! Never mind what you wild do next year! What will you do now? “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it,” and do it at once and on the spot. If I knew that my hearers had resolved to be very diligent next week or next month, I should conclude that my sermon was wasted upon them. The fact is, if the sermon quickens, a man feels uneasy and begins to put his fingers into his pocket and his thoughts into his heart, and he says, “What can I do before I sleep tonight? I do not feel comfortable in idleness. Is there not some poor person I could visit? Is not there some poor sinner who is going the wrong road whom I might, perhaps, lead aright?” An inward impulse makes the man feel as though he walked on hot coals till he has done something for the Lord. Do not quench these impulses, if the thing is good, do it—do it now!

But Solomon says, “Do it with all your might.” There are several ways of doing the same action. One man will do a thing and he has done it. Another has performed the same action, but has practically done nothing. What a difference there is in preaching! Words may be uttered in a lukewarm manner and produce no result, while by another preacher nothing better shall be said, but it shall be said earnestly and the effect will be marvelous. One hates to see a workman finnicking with a hammer, touching the nails as though he loved them too well to hurt them, but one likes to see a workman driving his nails home, working as though he meant it.

The masters of assemblies should remember this. If a thing is worth doing, let it be done well. If it is not worth doing, let it alone. Every man who preaches should aim at preaching his best sermon every time he mounts the pulpit. Every Sunday school teacher ought to teach his best. Every Evangelist in the street ought to preach up to his highest level, if it is only to a dozen. Jesus Christ ought never to have our second best—never! Our best is all too poor for Him. Let us never put Him off with our inferior fruits. Do it—“do it with all your might.” And, once more, do it all, for the text says, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it.” That is to say, do it all.

Do not pick it over and say, “All these things I could do for Christ, but I shall only do a part of them. Here is a duty which I could perform with my gloves on, like a gentleman. I could do this without trouble, labor, or expense and earn a good deal of credit by it. This is the kind of thing I will do.” Do you think God will accept such obedience as that? Man, do it, if it stains you from head to foot with mire, if it brings contempt upon you and the universal hiss of all your fellows. Whatever—whatever God appoints you to do, do it right straight through. Servants, like beggars, must not be choosers, but what their masters appoint, they must do. And with such a Master, who never can appoint us a dishonorable task, it is a shame that we should think any service too hard. “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it,” and do it at once.

The meat of the text lies in the next thought, namely, that there is an argument to every earnest Christian for intense zeal in the fact of the certain approach of death—“for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go.” Unless the Lord shall come, we

shall all die and that quickly. Life at the longest is very short. When I consider how many claims there are upon a Christian and how much a loving heart desires to do—and then think how short is the space of time into which we must need crowd all—I am depressed in spirit, but sternly resolute to condense much work into a small space. The heathen said, “Work is long, and life is short.” But I will venture to alter the sentence and say, “The service of God is long and life is short”—far too short for us to perform all our desires.

What, then, is the argument from the shortness of life but just this— work for God with all your might! If you have so little time, waste none of it. If there is so small a space entrusted to you, suffer no wastes and byends, but fill up the narrow space with precious things—gold, silver and precious stones—holy works done in earnest for Jesus Christ! The work girl sat in her little room and her fingers flew as she passed the needle rapidly—because she had but that tiny bit of candle and feared her task might prove longer than her light. May we not also fear that our work for Jesus may prove greater than the time in which we may perform it? At any rate, we cannot afford to throw away a moment.

Remember solemnly that life may end in a single moment. How suddenly death comes across our path! It came almost into my house this morning, for I was scarcely risen from my bed before I was told that a little child belonging to my coachman had died in an instant, though she had seemed to be in perfect health the moment before. The thought came to me with power, “It might have been the master instead of the servant’s child.” I know no more reason why it should have been the little one than myself. Sudden death has, perhaps, come as near to you lately. It is not a very unusual thing to see death in the street in such a city as this, or to hear of it in the common talk of the day.

My Friend, would you like to die at this moment? “No,” you say, “I have many things I would wish to finish.” Finish them, Brothers and Sisters, finish them at once! Set your house in order, for you must die, and not live. “I should like to have prayed with my children more earnestly than I have ever done.” Go home and do it, for you may never have another opportunity! “I should like to have my Sunday school class around me once more before I die, to tell them about the Savior more earnestly than I did this afternoon.” Dear Brother, dear Sister, take advantage of your next opportunity in the class—teach as though you might never teach again!

Say to yourself, “What is there I have left undone? I will do it immediately. What is there that is half done that needs finishing? I must finish it at once. What is there that I have done so badly, that if I went to Heaven I might almost wish to come back to set it right? Let me finish it now. What is there that I should like to amend? Let me make amends now.” I have read of Dr. Chalmers that one evening he stayed with a company of friends at a gentleman’s house and they spent the evening, as we are, too, much in the habit of doing, very pleasantly, but not very profitably, talking upon general subjects, not at all to be forbidden, but at the same time not much to be commended. There was among the number a Highland chief, who had attracted Dr. Chalmers’ notice, and he had talked with him, but nothing was said about the things of God.

In the middle of the night a bitter cry was heard in the hospitable habitation and there was a rush to the bedroom, where it was found that the Highland chief was in the agonies of death. Dr. Chalmers expressed (and he was not a man whom we could blame for laxity in that direction) his bitter regret that he had allowed that last evening of the man’s life to pass over without having spoken to him concerning the things of God. The regret was most proper, but it had been better if it had never been necessary. Such a regret may have occurred to ourselves—do not let it occur again. If you do not die, the person whom you are concerned about may die—therefore, “whatever your hand finds to do, do it”—for death may come on a sudden.

Remember solemnly that while we have been speaking in this Tabernacle we have been spending a part of our allotted time. Every time the clock ticks our time grows less and less, and less. I have a great love for oldfashioned hour-glasses because they make you see the time go, as the sands run. I remember in Milan Cathedral seeing the sun travel along the ecliptic line on the floor of the cathedral and I realized time’s ceaseless motion. Every minute our life-candles are shorter! Every pulse makes the number of pulses less. Quick, then, man! Quick! Quick! Quick! Death is behind you. Can you not hear his footfall? He pursues you as the hound its prey. Quick! Quick with your work and your service, for soon may his skeleton hand be laid upon your shoulder to palsy your hand of skill and silence your tongue of eloquence forever.

And let us remember that when we die there is no return to the field of labor. I have known persons (and this is talking about a very commonplace thing, but it may be a very useful thing). I have known husbands who meant to make their wills in a proper way and to provide for their wives as they should do, but they have died and the will has been unmade, and the future life of the wife has been full of a sorrow which might have been avoided by the proper use of the pen. Do not leave anything undone which ought to be done! Leave nothing undone which may be for the good of others, for you cannot come back to do it. Anything you have to do for the glory of God, get it done at once, for you will not be able to return.

I fancy, for a moment, how I should preach to you if I should die tonight, and should be allowed to come back to preach to you once more. I know how you would listen! It would be a very strange sermon, but you would catch every word, I am sure. I know how I should preach. I should say, “Blessed be God for letting me come back to have one more trial with my unconverted hearers, for perhaps they may yet be led to Jesus.” I do not think I would have anything to say to you who are converted, that morning, if I had that opportunity. I should leave the 99 and go after the sheep that is gone astray. I should preach to the lost one and salt my

words with tears and burn my lips with flaming love. Yet that is exactly how we ought to preach always!

Now put it to yourselves. If you had to die and were permitted to come back to speak once more to your children, to your neighbors, to your Sunday school class, or to anyone else committed to your care, how would you address them? Do it just that way now—with the same ardor, zeal, and tenderness. Do you say you cannot? That is very likely. Ask God to help you. His Grace waits to aid you—it is what you need and what you must have in order to succeed. Seek it, seek it at His hands who gives liberally and upbraids not. In such fashion must every one of us go about the work allotted to us, because there is no work nor device in the grave to which we are journeying.

Our text has a peculiar bearing upon some persons. May I be happy enough to catch their ears. There are persons here present, perhaps, who have a very heavy charge upon them and to them the text speaks. I am one of that company. With the heavy charge of this Church, the College and the Orphanage, and I know not what besides, I hear a voice saying to me, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” It would ill become me to loiter—above all men I must labor. Some of you have wealth. Permit the text to speak to you also—“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might,” for you can not take your money with you, neither can you serve God with it when you are gone, “for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go.”

Some of you possess much influence, for you are large employers. And I know some—I need not go into details—whom God has placed in peculiar positions where they lead and guide the minds of others. I charge you by the living God, do not let the blood of any man’s soul be on your hands! Go with holy diligence before Him who will weigh you in the scales before long, lest it be said of you, “You are weighed in the balances and found wanting.” By the blood that bought you, I beseech you, if the Lord has trusted you with 10 talents, put them out to interest, lest a tenfold judgment come upon you!

I know not how to speak as I should, but I feel I am speaking most of all to myself here. I charge you, O my Heart, be faithful to your trust! It were better for me that I had never been born than that I preach to these people carelessly, or keep back any part of my Master’s Truth! Better to have been a devil than a preacher playing fast and loose with God’s Word and by such means working the ruin of the souls of men. To other preachers I say what I have said to myself, and to each one of you whom God has put in solemn charge—see to it that what He gives you to do, you do with all your might.

Next, I speak to those of you who are advanced in years. If you have up to now done much for Christ, be thankful for it. But if you have not—if you have loitered—oh, my dear Brothers and Sisters, may I, who am, as it were, but a youth compared with you, may I take an old man by the hand and say—Dear Brother, there can be for you here, in the order of nature, but a short time to serve God. Do immediately, with all your might, what you can. Let your last days, if they have not the vigor of your youth, at any rate have a yet more eager desire for God’s Glory. It would seem a strange thing for a man to get nearer to Heaven and to be less heavenly minded, to be more ripe for Glory as to his age, and to be less mature in Grace. O that you may live while you live and bear a good testimony during life’s eventide!

Do I speak to those who have been lately converted and are past middle age? At what a rate, my dear Brothers and Sisters, ought you to live! Remember, Martin Luther was converted in middle life, but he did a great work before he died and many a distinguished servant of God has begun late, but has worked well and made a good day’s work of it before his sun went down. There is no reason why you should not copy the example. God can do much by you, though your time is short. Then I also address myself to those of delicate constitutions who may be here. Some of you must often be reminded of death by the trembling you feel in your own bodies. I do not exhort you to do anything that would injure your constitutions by imprudence, for God does not require us to be suicides. But whatever service it is in your power to do, do it, so that there may not be mingled with the sorrow of your future sickness any reflection upon yourself because when you had the power to serve God you did not use it.

I would also speak to those who have been the subjects of high impulses and noble thoughts. There are choice spirits in the world, into whose ears the Holy Spirit whispers grand designs such as He does not reveal to all men. Here and there He finds a soul that He makes congenial to Himself and then He inspires it with great wishes, deep longings and grand designs for glorifying God. Do not quench them, Brothers and Sisters! Do not starve them by holding them back, but as death is coming, do what is in you, and do it with all your might! No man knows what God means to do through his agency, for oftentimes the very feeblest have conceived the greatest purposes. John Pounds and his ragged-school—who was John Pounds? A poor cobbler. Robert Raikes, with his Sunday school—who was Robert Raikes? Nobody in particular, but nevertheless Sunday schools have come to something.

You may have a sublime conception in your soul. Do not strangle it— nurse the Heaven-born thought for God—and the first opportunity you can find, carry out the idea to its practical issues and throw your might into it. I think there must be some young Christian here who loves his Master and who means to do something for Him before he dies. Brother, what you do, do quickly. Do I not address some young man of a noble spirit who feels, “I could be wealthy, I could gain a position in my profession, I could become famous and get honor for myself, but from this hour I will lay all down at the foot of the Cross and lay myself out for the good of souls and the glory of God”? Give me your hand, my Brother, for you and I are of one mind in this. But I charge you go and do it! Do not dream, but work! Do not listen to the sirens which would enchant you by their

music and draw you from the rough sea of duty. Launch forth in God’s name, yield yourself up to the winds of Heaven and they will bear you straight on in the course of devoted service. The Lord help you to do with all your might what you find to do.

And, lastly, there is a peculiar voice in the text to those who will die in the next few days—those here present, I say, who will die within the next few days. “Well,” you say, “and who are they?” “Ah,” say I, “that I cannot tell you.” It may be the speaker and it may be you into whose eyes the speaker’s eyes are gazing now. Here are within this house tonight not less, I suppose, than 6,000 persons. And, according to the averages of human life, a certain number of us will, in all probability, be in another world within a very short space of time—say, within a year. Yes, and to some one of us the angel may be sent tonight! Now, to that man or to that woman the voice of the text is very strong—“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” You have only three days to live. You have only a week to live. You have only a fortnight to live. You have only three weeks to live. Finish, then, your labor for your Lord.

“Ah,” you say, “if I were that man, I should be very busy the next three weeks and very earnest in prayer.” As you do not know but what you may be that man, go act in such a manner! Set your house in order, draw near to God. Seek to glorify His name. Live in the bosom of Christ and whether you die or not, it will make no difference to you, for you to live will be Christ, and to die will be gain—and so you will be satisfied whichever way it may be! O Brothers and Sisters, we have not, most of us, begun to live yet! I feel very often like the chicken in the shell, which has chipped its shell a little and begun to see that there is a great world outside.

We have not as yet begun to serve God as He ought to be served. The divinely born manhood within us, the Divine life which God infuses, is it not sadly clogged and hampered? May God set us free and raise us up to the highest standard of a consecrated life and His shall be the praise for evermore. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ecclesiastes 9.  
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A HOME MISSION SERMON

NO. 259

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 26, 1859, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might. For there is no work, nor device,  
nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in**

**the grave, where you go.”  
Ecclesiastes 9:10.**

IF God had willed it we might each one of us have entered Heaven at the moment of our conversion. It was not absolutely necessary for our preparation for immortality that we should tarry here. It is possible for a man to be taken to Heaven and to be found meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, though he has but believed in Christ a solitary moment. The thief upon the Cross had no long time for the process of sanctification. For thus spoke the Savior, “Verily I say unto you this day shall you be with Me in Paradise.” It is true that in our case sanctification is a long and continued process and we shall not be perfected—the being of sin shall not be cast out—till we lay aside our bodies and enter within the veil.

But nevertheless, it is quite certain that if God had so willed it, He might have sanctified us in a moment. He might have changed us from imperfection to perfection, He might have cut out the very roots of sin and have destroyed the very being of corruption and have taken us to Heaven instantly, if so He had willed it. Notwithstanding that, we are here and why are we here? Would God keep His children out of Paradise a single moment longer than was necessary? Does God delight to tantalize His people by keeping them in a wilderness when they might be in Canaan? Will he shut them up in prison when He might give them instant liberty, unless there are some overwhelming reasons for His delay in giving them the fullness of their life and bliss?

Why are they here? Why is the army of the living God still on the battlefield? One charge might give them the victory. Why are God’s ships still at sea? One breath of His wind might waft them to the haven. Why are His children still wandering here and there through a maze, when a solitary word from His lips would bring them into the center of their hopes in Heaven? The answer is, They are here that they may glorify God and that they may bring others to know His love. We are not here in vain, dear Brethren. We are here on earth like sowers scattering good seed. Like plowmen plowing up the fallow ground. We are here as heralds, telling to sinners around—

*“What a dear Savior we have found,”*  
and heralding the coming of our Master. We are here as the salt to preserve a world which otherwise would become putrid and destroyed. We are here as the very pillars of this world’s happiness—for when God shall take away His saints, the universal moral fabric “shall tumble to its fall.” And great shall be the crash, when the righteous shall be removed and the foundations shall be shaken.

Taking it therefore for granted that the people of God are here to do something to bless their fellow men, our text comes in very pertinently as the rule of our life. May God help us to practice it by giving us much of His powerful Spirit. “Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.” This is what you are here for. You are here for a certain purpose. That purpose will soon be ended and whether it is accomplished or unaccomplished, there shall never be a second opportunity for attempting it, “for there is no work, nor device nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, where you go.” So far as this world is concerned, the grave is the end of our doing. So far as this time and state are concerned, the grave shall be the burial of our wisdom, our knowledge and our devices.

Now, I shall, this morning, first, endeavor to explain the preacher’s exhortation. And then endeavor to enforce it by evangelical arguments.  
I. First, I shall explain THE PREACHER’S EXHORTATION. I shall do so by dividing it into three parts What shall I do?—“Whatsoever your hand finds.” How shall I do it?—“Do it with your might.”—And then, why shall I do it?—“For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, where you go.  
1. First, then, are there not some here who are saying, I hope I love Christ—I desire to serve Him, for I have been saved by His work upon the Cross—what then can I do? “The answer is—“whatsoever your hand finds to do.” Here we will observe, first, that this refers us to the works that are near at hand. You are not called upon today, the most of you, to do works which your eye sees far away in Hindustan or China. The most of you are called especially to do the work which is near at hand. People are always desiring to be doing something miles off. If they could but be somewhere else, what wonders they would accomplish! Many a young man thinks if he could stand up under a banyan tree and discourse to the black faces in India, how eloquent he might be.  
My dear Fellow, why don’t you try the streets of London first, and see whether you are eloquent there? Many a lady imagines that if she could move in a high circle she would no doubt become another Lady Huntingdon and do wonders. But why cannot you do wonders in the circle in which God has placed you? He does not call you to do that which is leagues away and which is beyond your power. It is that which your hand finds to do. I am persuaded that our home duties—the duties which come near to us in our own streets, in our own lanes and alleys—are the duties in which we ought most of us mainly to glorify Christ. Why will you be stretching out your hands to that which you cannot reach? Do that which is near—which is at your hand.  
People sometimes come to their minister and say, “What shall I do for Christ?” In nine cases out of ten it is evidence of a lazy, idle spirit, when men ask what they shall do. For if they were really in earnest—wanting to do something—they would find themselves placed in the midst of such a press of work, that the question would not be, “What can I do?” but, “Which out of all these shall I do first? For here is enough to fill an angel’s hands and occupy more than all a mortal’s time.” Very often I find men ambitious to serve God in an orbit in which they will never move. Many say, “I wish I could become a preacher.” Yes, but you are not called to be a preacher, it may be. Serve God in that which your hand finds present. Serve Him in your immediate situation, where you now are. Can you not distribute tracts? “Oh yes,” you say, “but I was thinking of doing something else.” Yes, but God put you there to do that. Could you not teach an infant class in the Sunday School? “I was thinking of being the superintendent of the Sunday School.” Were you, indeed? But your hand has not found out how to get there. Do what your hand has found—it has found an infant class to teach. Could you not endeavor to instruct your family and teach your servants in the way of God—God helping? “Oh yes,” says one, “but I was thinking about organizing a Dorcas Society, or a Ladies’ Visiting or Tract-Distributing Society.” Yes, but your hand has not found that out yet. Just do that first which is nearest to you.  
Begin at home. When Jerusalem was built, every man built before his own house. Do you the same. There is a wise provision by our rulers, that every man should cleanse the street in front of his own house. Why will you, who live here in Southwark walk all the way to Islington to cleanse the street in front of somebody else’s door? Stop and attend to your own work, and if everybody will do that which comes immediately under his own eyes and is found out by his own hand—then how much may be accomplished. Depend upon it, there is more wisdom in that than some of us dream. “Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it.” Do not be prowling about for work, but do it where it is when your hand finds it.  
Again—“whatsoever your hand finds to do,” refers to works that are possible. There are many things which our heart finds to do that we never shall do. It is well it is in our heart, God accepts the will for the deed. But if we would be eminently useful, we must not be content with forming schemes in our heart and talking of them with our lips. We must get plans that are tangible, schemes that we can really manage, ideas that we can really carry out. And so we shall fulfill the exhortation of Solomon, “Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it.”  
I will give you an illustration. Not many months ago in a certain magazine, which I will not mention, there was a supplement given upon China. In the supplement the Churches represented by that magazine were exhorted to raise enough money to send a hundred missionaries to China. There was a vary earnest appeal made to the Churches—a glorious blast of trumpets as if something very great was coming. The mountain was in labor and labor it did. Now, I have been told that the secretary of the Chinese mission called upon the editor of the aforesaid magazine and said, “I see you have a proposal to send a hundred missionaries to China. Will you strike the two zeroes off and find money enough to send one?” It is said that they who aim at the moon will shoot higher than those who shoot at a bush. It may be correct, they may shoot higher, but I do not think they are so likely to hit their mark. Shooting high is not the thing— it is hitting what you shoot at now. If they had said, “We will do our utmost to send one missionary to China,” they might have effected it. But they were talking about a hundred and they have not succeeded, nor are they likely to do.  
The exhortation of our preacher would come home to such people. They have got it in their hearts to do it. They say when they grow big enough they mean to accomplish great things. “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain.” Now, instead of meddling with that great mountain, suppose you try your faith upon a fig tree first. And, then, if you moved that first, you might have confidence to move a mountain. John Bunyan was a very wise man when he thought once he would try to work miracles. Instead of ordering the sun and moon to go back several degrees, as he rode along he thought he would tell the puddles in the road to become dry. It was a miracle that would not interfere with anybody and therefore a very proper one to begin with. But in the beginning the thought came into his mind, “Pray first.” And when he prayed he could not find any promise that he could dry up the puddles and so he determined to leave them alone. I hope those men who come with some splendid vision in their heads would only try to do what they can and no more.  
When they become giants, let them do a giant’s work, but as long as they are dwarfs, let them do a dwarf’s work. Remember, the exhortation of the great man is to do not great things, but to do the things that your hand finds to do—present things, possible things. Do not be scheming and speculating about what you would do if your old aunt were to leave you twenty thousand pounds, or what you would do if you were to become prime minister and so forth. Do what you can, in your workshop or shed, or with a needle in your hand. And if ever you have a scepter—which is not likely—but you use your needle well, you would be the most likely person to use your scepter well, also.  
There is another word of exhortation which seems to strike me as being very necessary when addressing God’s people, it is this—“Whatsoever your hand finds to do.” Suppose, now, the duty which lies against our door to be a very disagreeable one. A sad thing that any duty should be disagreeable to the man who has been saved by Christ, but so it is. There are some duties which, while we are nothing but poor flesh and blood, will always be less agreeable than certain others. Yet, mark you, though the duties seem to you to be degrading and disagreeable, contrary to your taste, yet the exhortation has it, “Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.” Whether it is the visitation of the poorest of the poor or the teaching of the most ignorant—whether the hewing of wood or the drawing of water—the very lowest work in the Lord’s House—if your hand finds it, do it.  
You will remark in many Christians and possibly if you are wise you will remark in yourself, how we all have a preference to do those duties which we regard as being honorable, as coming strictly within the range of our own office—those which probably will be rewarded with the praise of men. If there is any duty that shall ever be heard of till the Day of Judgment, if there is any work that never shall be seen until the blaze of the last day shall manifest it to a blind world—then we generally avoid such a duty and seek another. Oh, if we did but understand the true majesty of humility and how great a thing it is for a Christian to do little things—to bow himself and to stoop—we should rather envy the meanest of the flock than the greatest and each of us try to wash the saint’s feet and perform the most menial service for the Master.  
Often, I think, when you and I are standing back from some humbling duty, if Christ Jesus should come by that way and do it, how we would blush. Let me give you Christ’s own picture. There was a poor wounded Samaritan who was left half dead. There was a priest coming to Jerusalem. He was busy with his sermon, looking over his notes and thinking of what he should have to say to the people when he addressed them. Well, there was a poor fellow on the other side of the road, wounded. It was no business of his—he was a preacher. If he went to interfere with that poor man’s wounds, he was quite sure it would be such a ghastly sight that he would not be able to preach half so well, so he passed by. Well, then there came a Levite, a good respectable deacon in the sanctuary. “Well,” he says, “I must make haste and catch the minister, or else I shall not be in time to read the hymns.” It was no business of his to go and see after the poor man who was wounded.  
At last the Master Himself came that way and He, the Head of the Church, the Prince of Preachers, the Great Deacon, the Great Servant of servants, He did not disdain to bind up the broken heart and to heal the poor man’s wounds. There is a story told in the old American war, that once upon a time George Washington, the commander-in-chief, was going around among his soldiers. They were hard at work, lifting a heavy piece of timber at some fortification There stood the corporal of the regiment calling out to his men, “Heave there, heave ahoy!” and giving them all kinds of directions. As large as possible the good corporal was. So Washington, alighting from his horse, said to him, “What is the good of your calling out to those men—why don’t you help them yourself and do part of the work.” The corporal drew himself up and said, “Perhaps you are not aware to whom you are speaking, Sir. I am a corporal.” “I beg your pardon,” said Washington, “you are a corporal, are you? I am sorry I should have insulted you.” So he took off his own coat and waistcoat and set to work to help the men build the fortification When he had done he said, “Mr. Corporal, I am sorry I insulted you, but when you have any more fortifications to get up and your men won’t help you, send for George Washington, the commander-in-chief ,and I will come and help them.” The corporal slunk away perfectly ashamed of himself. And so Christ Jesus might say to us, “Oh, you don’t like teaching the poor. It is beneath your dignity. Then let your Commander-in-Chief do it. He can teach the poor, He can wash the feet of the saints, He can visit the sick and afflicted—He came from Heaven to do this and He will set the example for you.” Surely we should each be ashamed of ourselves and declare from this time forward whatever it is, be it great or little, if it comes to our hand and if God will but give us help and give us grace, we will do it with all our might. I have thus explained what we are to do.  
2. And, now, How are we to do it? “Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.” First, “do it.” That is do it promptly. Do not fritter away your lives in setting down what you intend to do tomorrow as being a recompense for the idleness of today. No man ever served God by doing things tomorrow. If we have honored Christ and are blessed, it is by the things which we do today. For after all, the ticking of the clock said today! Today! Today! We have no other time in which to live. The past is gone. The future has not come. We have, we never shall have, anything but the present. This is our all. Let us do what our hand finds to do. Young Christian, are you just converted? Do not wait until your experience has ripened into maturity before you attempt to serve God. Determine now to bring forth fruit. This very day, if it is the first day of your conversion, bring forth fruits meet for repentance—even now. And you who are now in middle age, say not, “I will begin to serve Christ when my hair shall be frosty with age.” No. Now do it—do it—“do it with your might.” Oh that God would keep us to this—that we would always do our day’s work in our day and serve Him now.  
I have heard of a certain Divine who was a preacher at Newgate. He preached a sermon divided into two parts—the first was to the saint, the second was to the sinner. When he had finished the first part, to the saint, in the morning, he said he would preach to the sinner the next Sunday morning and then finish his sermon. There was a poor man who was hanged on the Monday and who therefore never heard that part of the discourse which was best adapted to his case. How often may we be found in the like light. We may be saying, “I will do him good, by-and-by.” But he may be dead then and our opportunity will be gone, or, what is just as likely, we may be dead, also. And then all our opportunities will be passed and it will be totally out of our power to do anything. Do it! Do it! Do it! This is what the Church of Christ wants to have proclaimed as with the sound of a trumpet in all her ranks, “Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it.” Put it not off one hour. Do it! Procrastinate not a day. “Procrastination is the thief of time.” Let him not steal your time. Do it, at once. Serve your God now. For now is all the time you can reckon on.  
Then, the next words, “Do it with your might.” Whatever you do for Christ, throw your whole soul into it. Christ wants none to serve Him with their fingers—He must have their hands, their arms, their hearts. We must not give Christ a little slurred labor, which is done as a matter of course now and then. But when we serve Him, we must do it with all our hearts and soul and strength and might. Among the old Roman pagans, they were accustomed to slay the beasts and cut them open, in order to discover future events. If ever they cut open a bullock and could not find the heart, it was always considered by the people to be an ill omen. And depend upon it, if you cut your works open and cannot find your hearts in them, it is an ill omen for your works—they are good for nothing—and their object shall never be accomplished.  
The worst part of the Christian Church at this time is that it seems as if many of our ministers and their Churches had lost their hearts. Step into your Churches and Chapels—everything is orderly and precise—but where is the life, where is the power? I confess that I would rather address a congregation of ignorant men who are alive and enthusiastic, than a congregation of the most learned and orderly who are dead and blank— upon whose ears all the preaching in the world falls as but a dull monotony. About three weeks ago I was addressing a Methodist congregation. They leaped on their feet, now and then, and cried, “Hallelujah, Glory be to God!” My whole soul was stirred within me and I felt that I could preach, and preach again and never grow weary while these people drank in the Word with real life. I am persuaded that real good

was done and that they did not forget what was said.  
But, then, our people take things so orderly. They come and take their seats so quietly, until it often seems that one might preach to a set of statues or wooden blocks, with just as much hope of effect as to preach to them. We want life, we want heart—heart in the ministry, heart in the deacons, heart in all the offices of the Church—and until we have this we cannot expect the Master’s blessing. You are going to teach in the Sunday-School this afternoon, are you? How are you going to teach? “I am going to do as I have often done.” Stand back! If you are going to serve Christ, stand back till you have got your heart with you and take with you all your strength and all your might and say as David did, “Bless the Lord and serve the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me.” Serve the Master and spend yourself in your strength. I would rather have no sermon than a dull sermon—no teaching than sleepy teaching—no prayers than lifeless prayers. A cold religion is tasteless. Let us have a hot religion that will burn its way into the heart. This is the religion that will make its way in the world and make itself respected, even though some pretend to despise it—  
*“Whatsoever your hand finds to do,  
do it with your might.”*  
But where is the might of a Christian? Let us not forget that. The might of a Christian is not in himself, for he is perfect weakness. His might lies in the Lord of Hosts. It will be well for us if all we attempt to do is done in God’s strength, or else it will not be done with might—it will be feebly and badly done. Whenever we attempt to serve a loaf in the winning of souls, let us first begin with prayer. Let us seek His help. Let us go on with prayer mixed with faith. And when we have concluded the work, let us commend it again to God with renewed faith and fresh prayer. What we do thus will be well done and will not fail in its effect. But what we do merely with creature strength, with the mere influence of carnal zeal, will come to nothing at all. “Whatsoever your hand finds to do,” do it with that real might which God has promised them that ask it, with that real wisdom which He gives liberally—which He bestows on all who seek it meekly and reverently at His feet. God help us, then, to carry out this exhortation, “Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.”  
3. And, now, the third part of the exhortation was, Why? We are to do it with all our might. Death is near and when death comes there will be an end to all our serving God on earth, an end to our preaching, an end to our praying, an end to our doing anything for God’s glory among the perishing souls of men. If we all lived in the light of our funerals how well should we live! Some of the old Romish monks always read their Bibles with a candle stuck in a skull. The light from a death’s head may be an awful one, but it is a very profitable one. There is no way of living like that.  
There is an old monkish legend told of a great painter who had begun a painting, but did not finish it. And as the legend went, he prayed that he might come back on earth that he might finish that painting. There is a picture, now extant, representing him after he had come back to finish his picture. There is a solemnity about that man’s look as he paints away with all his might, for he had but little time allowed him and a ghastliness, as if he knew that he must soon go back, again and wanted his labor to be finished. If you were quite sure of the time of your death, if you knew you had but a week or two to live, with what haste would you go round and bid farewell to all your friends! With what haste would you begin to set all matters right on earth, supposing matters are all right for eternity. But, Christian men, like other men, forget that they are mortal and even we who profess to see into the future and declaring that we are looking for a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God— even we seem to think that we shall live here forever!  
It is well that God puts a thorn into our nest, or else, often His own birds of Paradise would build their nests here and never mount higher. Let us pause a moment and think that in a short time we must die. The hour is not to be staved off. When yon winged arrow shall have ended its hasty journey and found its target in this heart, then all is over. I may preach to you today and exhort you to flee from the wrath to come. But when this tongue is sealed in silence, I can no more warn you. If I have been unfaithful and have not discharged my Master’s message and faithfully told it, I cannot come back and tell it over again.  
Mother, you can pray for your children, now. But when death shall have sealed your eyes in darkness, there can be no more prayers lifted up forever. You can teach them now in God’s Word and labor that they may be brought to know their mother’s God, but it shall be all over, then. You may now, O Sunday-School teacher, instruct those children and, God blessing you, you may be their spiritual father and bring them to Christ. But it shall one day be whispered in your class, “teacher is dead.” And there is the end of your labor. Your children may come to your grave and sit down there and weep, but from the clay-cold sod no voice of warning can come up. There, your warning and your love is lost, alike unknowing and unknown.  
And you, the servant of Christ, with great stores of wealth, you have this day money with which God’s cause might be greatly helped. You have talent, too, which might fit you well to stand in the midst of the Church and serve it. You are going the way of all flesh. Grey hairs are scattered here and there. You know that your end is approaching. When once death shall have come, you cannot devise liberal things. Your brain cannot form new devices for the spread of your Master’s kingdom, neither can your heart, then, bend and weep over sinners perishing, or your tongue address them with earnest exhortation. Think, dear Friends, that all we can do for our fellows we must do now. For the cerement shall soon enwrap us, the hands must soon hang down and the eyes be shut and the tongue be still. While we live let us live. There are not two lives accorded us on earth. If we build not now, the fabric can never be built. If now we spin not, the garment will never be woven. Work while you live and live while you work—and God grant to each of us that we may discharge in this life all the desires of our hearts in magnifying God and bringing sinners to the Cross.  
II. Now, having thus explained and opened the exhortation, I shall pray that God’s Holy Spirit may be solemnly with me while very briefly and very vehemently I endeavor to STIR UP ALL PROFESSORS OF RELIGION HERE PRESENT TO DO WHATSOEVER THEIR HANDS FIND TO DO, TO DO IT NOW, AND WITH ALL THEIR MIGHT. If Christ Jesus should leave the upper world and come into the midst of this hall this morning, what answer could you give if after showing you His wounded hands and feet and His rent side, He should put this question, “I have done all this for you. What have you done for Me?” Let me put that question for Him and in His behalf. You have known His love, some of you, forty years, some of you thirty, twenty, ten, three, one. He has done all this for you—has bled away His precious life—has died in agonies most exquisite upon the Cross. What have you done for Him? Turn over your diary now. Can you remember the contributions you have given out of your wealth and what do they amount to? Add them up.  
Think of what you have done for Him, how much of your time you have spent in His service. Add that up. Turn over another leaf and then observe how much time you have spent in praying for the progress of His kingdom. What have you done there? Add that up. I will do so for myself and I can say without a boast I have labored to serve God and have been in labors more abundant. But when I come to add all up and set what I have done side by side with what I owe to Christ, it is less than nothing and vanity. I pour contempt upon it all, it is but dust of vanity. And though from this day forward I should preach every hour in the day—though I could spend myself and be spent. Though night should know no rest and day should never cease from toil—and year should succeed to year till this hair was hoary and this frame exhausted. When I come to render up my account He might say, “Well done,” but I should not feel it was so, but should rather say, “I am still an unprofitable servant. I have not done that which it was even my bare duty to do—much less have I done all to show the love I owe.”  
Now think what you have done, dear Brothers and Sisters, and surely your account must fall short equally with mine. But as for some of you, you have done positively nothing. You have joined the Church and have been baptized and that is about all. You have sometimes doled out a little from your abundance to the cause of Christ, but oh, how little when you think He gave His all for you! Others there are of you who out of your little have given much, out of your weakness have been strong, in your poverty you have never been poor towards Christ’s cause. You shall not lack your reward at last, but even you will come with the rest of us and say, “Lord help us to love the poor and by Your amazing love to us constrain us to devote ourselves wholly, unreservedly to You.”  
Another argument let me give you, why you should serve Christ with all your might now. You believe, my dear Hearers, that if men die unconverted their doom is fearful beyond all expression. You and I are compelled to believe from the testimony of the Spirit, that the punishment of those who die impenitent is beyond all that words can describe. They sink into a pit that is bottomless, into a fire that never can be quenched, where they are eaten by a worm that dies not. You know, and sometimes your hair has almost stood on end with the thought that the wrath to come is more than the soul can conceive. And is it possible, can it be possible with this belief in your mind that many of your fellow creatures are going posthaste to this awful, this fearful Hell and that you are idle and doing nothing? May God forgive you if such is your unfeeling state of heart—that you can contemplate a fellow creature perishing in the fires of Hell and yet permit your hand to hang down in listless idleness.  
O children of the living God, I beseech you by the fires of Hell, by the agony that knows of no abatement, by the thirst that is not to be mitigated by a drop of water, by the eternity which knows no end. I beseech you by the wrath to come, earnestly strive to be the means in God’s hand of awakening poor souls and bringing them to the mercy of Christ! Be earnest. If you do not believe this Bible, I care not what you are—earnest or dull. But if you do believe it, act as you believe. If you think men are perishing—if the Lord’s right hand is dashing in pieces His enemy—then I beseech you be strengthened by the same right hand to endeavor to bring those enemies to Christ that they may be reconciled by the blood of the Cross.  
And now, last of all, let me appeal to you in this way. Possibly, in my explanation, I have led you to form in your heart some great scheme of what you would do. Let me knock that all to pieces, because that is not my text. It is not a great scheme, but it is, “whatsoever your hand finds to do,” that I want you to do. My dear Friends, many of you are parents of children. It is quite certain, whatever else may be your duty, that your duty as parents is first. As their parents you owe them a duty. You have responsibilities towards them and it is your duty to bring them up in the fear and nurture of God. May I earnestly beg and beseech you, not to neglect this. For remember, you will soon be gone and will not this be a thorn in your dying pillow, if, when your children stand around your bed to bid farewell to their dying father, or their dying mother, they shall have to say to you, “You are going from us, but we shall not miss you. We shall miss you as far as temporal things are concerned, but when you are dead we shall be as well off in spiritual things as we were before, for you neglected us.”  
They will not say so but do you suppose they will not think so, if such is the truth? Children are always quick, and if they say it not they would feel it. Will it not be far better, if God so blesses you, that when you lay sick and dying, there shall be a daughter wiping the hot sweat from your brow and saying, “Fear not, mother, though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, God is with you and you need fear no evil”? Will it not be a satisfaction to you, father, when you die, if glancing at the foot of the bed, you can say to your son, “Farewell, my son. I bless God that I leave you in this world to carry on the work which I have begun, for you are walking in your father’s steps.” I know of no greater joy than for some aged Patriarch and I know of one—God bless him, he is preaching the Word, I doubt not this morning—to be able to look to sons and daughters converted to Christ and then to look to another generation and see grandchildren converted to Christ. It must be a noble thing to die and leave behind three generations and many of these already able to call the Redeemer blessed.  
O neglect not your present work, I beseech you, or otherwise you shall lose the present blessing. And by neglecting this present duty which concerns your own household, you shall incur a household curse and make your deathbed uneasy, so that you shall toss there with those eyes looking on you and silently charging you with having neglected their souls. Sunday-School teachers, I give you the same exhortation. I pray God that when you die it may not be said in your schools, “Well, we do not miss soand-so at all. She was not a teacher we could desire, she filled up a gap and that is all we can say.” I hope it may be said of you, my Brothers and Sisters, in the holy work of Sunday-School teaching, “They are gone to their grave and there is a vacancy made which will not soon be filled.” But still your children shall gather round your coffin and say, “God be blessed that we ever had such a teacher!” And though they are not converted, yet shall their little eyes weep when they think, “Teacher will never weep over us again. Teacher will never pray for us any more, teacher will never tell us of Christ again.” And that very thought may be more powerful in their minds than all you ever said to them and may, perhaps, effect the work which was not accomplished when your soul left your body.  
And now I charge myself most solemnly in this conclusion, to be more earnest than ever in preaching the Word to you—to preach it in season and out of season. To preach it with all my might, for I shall soon be gone. Life lasts not long, and when we have all departed, may others not think that we went before our work was fully accomplished. Once when George Whitfield was very sick and ill he was laid down by his friends by the fireside and he lay there as if he were dying. Presently he opened his eyes and a poor old Negro woman, who had watched over him when others had given him up, spoke to him and said, “Massa George Whitfield are you still alive?” He looked and said, “Yes, I am. But I was in hopes I should have been in Heaven.” Then the old woman made this pretty speech. “Ah, Massa George,” she said, “you went to the very gates of Heaven and Christ said, ‘Go back, Massa George. There are many poor Negroes down on the earth that I mean to have saved. Go back and tell them I love them and mind you, do not come back any more till you bring them all with you.’ ” So Whitfield recovered strength and even found, as the old women said, a desire not to go Home till he could take these poor Negroes with him.  
So may it be with us. May we live till we shall bring many souls home with us to Glory and then may it be said—  
*“Servant of Christ, well done,  
Rest from your loved employ.  
The battle’s fought, the victory’s won,  
Enter your rest with joy.”*  
“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, for he that believes and is baptized shall be saved and he that believes not shall be damned.”

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BLACK CLOUDS AND BRIGHT BLESSINGS

NO. 3215

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1910.  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth.” Ecclesiastes 11:3.

IT was raining very heavily this afternoon at four o’clock when I was thinking over this text. The sharp crack of the thunder and the quick flash of the lightning seemed to be constant where I sat. When I came here, I found that you had not had a drop of rain—the weather was just as hot and feverish as ever. This seemed to me an example and an illustration of the Sovereignty of God’s dispensations. It is still true in the spiritual as well as the natural economy, that one place is rained upon and another is not rained upon. In one part of the Church, God’s Grace descends in a flood, while another part remains as dry and arid as the wilderness, itself. Even under the same ministrations, one Christian’s soul may be refreshed till it becomes like a watered garden while another may remain parched as the desert. God has the key of the rain and it is for us to ask Him to give us of the dew and the rain of His Holy Spirit. Let us walk humbly before Him lest He should say of us, as He did of His Jewish vineyard of old, “I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.” We may stand up and look to the Most High and learn our dependence upon Him for spiritual blessings, just as the farmer, knowing his dependence for his harvest upon God, watches the sky and the clouds—for without the rain what can he do?

But now, to come to the text itself, I propose a meditation upon three of its practical uses. First, as suggesting a comfort for the timid. Secondly, as giving an argument with the doubting. And thirdly, as furnishing a lesson to the Christian.

I. First, I think we may fairly use the text as A COMFORT FOR THE TIMID.  
The clouds are black, they lower, they shut out the sunlight, they obscure the landscape. The timid one looks up and says, “Alas, how black they are and how they gather, fold on fold! What a dark, gloomy day!” What makes them black? It is because they are full of rain and, therefore, light cannot pierce them. And if they are full, what then? Why, then it will rain and the hot earth will be refreshed! And every little plant and every tiny leaf and rootlet of that plant will suck up moisture and begin to laugh for joy. Out of the black sky comes the bright daisy and the garden is painted with many colors—and the only palette that is used is, after all, that black one—for the sky does it by its rain.  
Now, Christian, you too, are of a timid disposition and every now and then, your circumstances are not as you would like to arrange them. Losses come very closely, one upon another. Friend after friend forsakes you. Sickness treads upon the heel of sickness. All things seem to be against you, as against Jacob of old. The clouds are very black, but may they not be black for the very same reason as the clouds above you— because they are full? And is it not very possible that it will be with you as it has been with all God’s saints, according to the hymn we sang just now—  
*“You fearful saints, fresh courage take.  
The clouds you so much dread  
Are big [yes, black] with mercy, and shall break In blessings on your head”?*  
If the clouds were not black, you might not expect rain! If your afflictions were not grievous, they would not be profitable. If your adversities did not really pain and trouble you, they would not be blessed to you. We have heard some people say, “If this trouble had come in such-and-such a shape, we would not have minded it.” But God meant you to mind it, for it was in your minding it that it was blessed to you! “The blueness of a wound,” says Solomon, “cleanses away evil.” When the stroke causes black and blue wounds, when the spirit is really thoroughly wounded, then the blessing comes! It is not merely said in the Scriptures that there is a necessity for affliction. That is a great Truth of God, but it is added that there is a necessity that the affliction should lower our spirits. Listen to the words—“Now for a season, if necessary, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” The necessity is not merely for the temptation, but that you be in heaviness through the temptation—not for the iron, only, but for the iron entering into your soul. If the child liked the rod, it would be no chastisement—and if the Christian loved his affliction while he was in it—and it seemed joyous to him, then it would be no affliction! But it is the very sharpness of it, the vinegar and gall, that is the medicine that produces the good effect. The blackness of the cloud proves its fullness—and its fullness brings the shower.  
I suppose we know this experimentally. As a Church, we can look back upon mercies which God has given us in a very extraordinary manner. God intended that this house should be full of hearers every Sabbath for years. It is a very remarkable circumstance and one that always astonishes me more, perhaps, than it does any of you, when I see the aisles and every place crowded Sabbath after Sabbath. But how much of the success, with which God has crowned our ministry, has been due to the most afflicting Providence that ever befell a Christian minister or a Christian Church? Was it not, dear Friends—to allude to that sad event which is still upon the minds of some of us, and will be till we die—when the cry was raised and death came into the midst of our solemn assembly? Was it not due to that, to a very great extent, that the preacher became known and that so he has had an opportunity of speaking to many more souls than otherwise would have listened to him concerning the unsearchable riches of Christ?  
You will have found it so, I think, in your own private estate. A big wave has washed you on to a safe rock. A black lifeboat has taken you out of a gay and bright, but leaky vessel, and brought you to your desired haven. You have been unburdened. If you have lost your riches, you have been better without them then with them. Your losses have, in the end, come to be practical gains. The good ship has gone across the waters more swiftly when some of that which was but needless ballast has been heaved overboard! I am sure I can allude to your spiritual sorrows— certainly I can to my own—as being most soul-enriching. It is when one labors under a deep sense of sin—when, perhaps, one’s hope is jostled to and fro like a reed shaken by the wind—when the spirit sinks and the soul is brought very low—it is then that we learn to study the promises, find out their value, prove their faithfulness and to know and understand more than ever of the Grace and goodness of a Covenant-keeping God! “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept your word.” This is only another way of putting the same Truth of God. The clouds were full of rain, but they emptied themselves upon the man who needed Grace from on high!  
Now, Brothers and Sisters, what has been true in the past, depend upon it, is true in the present. I do not know—how can I tell?—what is your particular trouble, but I do believe that He who appointed it, He who measured it, He who has set its bounds and will bring you to the end of it, has a gracious design in it all! Do not think that God deals roughly with His children and gives them needless pain. It grieves Him to grieve you! “He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” It is easy to have a faith that acts backwards, but a faith that will act forwards—a faith for the present and for the future is the true faith—and the faith that you need now. Has God helped you out of one trouble after another and is it to be supposed that He will leave you in this? In six troubles He will deliver you—yes, in seven there shall no evil touch you. The particular water in which you now are struggling is intended and included in the promise, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.” It is, I must confess, sometimes difficult to bring the promise down to the particular case, for unbelief fights hard against it, but remember, unless the promise is applied to the particular case, it is like the liniment which is not applied to the wound, or like the medicine that is not received by the patient. The medicine not received may be very potent, but the man cannot know its value—and the promise of God may be very sweet and precious, but it cannot comfort you unless it is applied! Do ask, then, for Grace that you may believe while you are still under the cloud, black as it looks, that it will empty itself in blessed rain upon you.  
So will it be, on the largest possible scale, in the whole Church of Christ. There are many clouds surrounding the Church of God just now. And I must confess that with all the religious activity there is abroad, there is very much to cause us great sorrow. The friends of evangelical opinions are few compared with the advocates of Broad Churchism and Romanism. The strength seems to be, meanwhile, on the wrong side—and the devil has stirred up a fierce tempest by reason of which some are alarmed. But we must not yield to fear. The Master knows that it is right for His soldiers to be sometimes rebuffed at Ai, though they have won Jericho, that afterwards they may search and find out the accursed thing and stone the Achan who has brought upon them defeat. He will yet be with us and the time shall come when we shall see that every cloud that was full of rain has emptied itself upon the earth!  
II. Our second point is AN ARGUMENT WITH THE DOUBTING AND THE DESPONDING.  
It is a law of Nature that a full thing begins to empty itself. When the cloud gets full, it no longer has the power of retaining its fluid contents, so it pours them down upon the earth. When the river gets swollen, does it not rush with greater impetuosity towards the deep? And the ocean, itself, is continually emptying itself into the ocean that is above the firmament—that same ocean above the firmament emptying itself again— according to the text, upon the earth. As there is a circulation in the body and every pumping of blood into the heart is accompanied by another pumping of it out again, so is there a circulation in this great world—everything revolving and the whole machine kept in order, not by hoarding, but by spending—not by retaining, but by consecutively getting and giving.  
Well now, dear Friends, you may gather that when the cloud is full, it is going to rain—and I want you to draw an argument from this. Our gracious God never makes a store of any good thing but He intends to give it to us. Just think for a moment of God, our gracious Father. He is Love. His name is Love. His Nature is Love. “God is Love.” He is all goodness. He is a bottomless, shoreless sea, brimful of goodness! He is full of pardoning goodness to forgive sin. He is full of accepting favor to receive poor prodigals to His bosom. He is full of faithful goodness to watch over His dear children—full of bounteous goodness to bestow upon them all that they need. Now, if there is such a plenitude of goodness in the Father, it must be for some objective—not for Himself. Why should it be in Himself? It must be there for His creatures. Is it not written that He delights in mercy? We know that He makes the sun to shine upon the evil as well as upon the good. Then I, even though I am evil, will hope that this store of goodness in the heart of the Everlasting Father is intended, some of it, at any rate, to be poured out upon me, poor unworthy me! “If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth,” and if God is full of goodness, it is that He may spend that goodness upon the sons of men! But from where do those bright and sparkling drops come, flashing like diamonds in the sunlight, turning to many colors and forming the wondrous iris? From where do you come, from where do you come, O you bright and Heaven-born drops of matchless rain, all pure and free from every stain—from where do you come? “We are come down to the black, hard, dusty earth. We are going to fall upon the desert or upon the sea. We descend on herds that ask not for us. We descend upon the soil that is chapped and needs us, but has not a tongue to ask for us, nor a heart to feel its need. We come down from our element in Heaven to tabernacle among men and to do them good.” And so is it with the goodness of our blessed Father! If it is in Him, it is there for those on the earth who need it—for those who do not even feel their need and whose need is, therefore, all the deeper! Those who cannot feel their need and who, therefore, have a need that is the deepest of all needs. O blessed goodness that delights to spend itself upon the unworthiest of men!  
Ah, troubled, doubting soul, think again and let me ask you, this time, to think a little upon Jesus Christ the Son of the Father. Beloved, it is a part of our belief that “it pleased the Father whom in Him should all fullness dwell.” We believe that in His atoning Sacrifice there is a fullness of satisfaction made to Divine Justice, that there is a fullness of cleansing power in His precious blood, that there is a fullness of righteousness in His holy life, a fullness of vivifying power in His Resurrection, a fullness of prevalence in His plea, and a fullness of representation in His standing before the Eternal Throne to take possession of Heaven for us! No one here, I think, looks upon Christ as a well without water, or as a cloud without rain. Now, dear Heart, if you believe Christ to be a cloud that is full of rain, for what reason is He full? Why, that He may empty Himself upon the earth! There was no need that He should be a Man full of sympathy except to sympathize with mourning men and women! There was no need that He should bleed except that He might bleed for you! There was no necessity that He should die except that the power of His death might deliver you from death! There was no need whatever that He should be a Servant except that His obedience might justify many! The fullness of His essential Godhead may be supposed to be there for Himself, but the fullness of His mediatorial Character is a mere waste unless it is there for you!  
A man, looking at the coal mines of England, naturally considers that God made that coal with the intention of supplying the world’s inhabitants with fuel and that He stored it, as it were, in those dark cellars underground for this favored nation, that the wheels of its commerce might be set in motion. Well, now, if I go to those everlasting mines of Divine Faithfulness and of atoning efficacy which are laid up in Jesus Christ, I must conceive that there is a supply laid up for those who will require it—and so there is! Doubt it not—there is cleansing for the guilty, there is healing for the sick, there is life for the dead! If Jesus is full of power to save, He will save you. If you cry to Him, He will empty Himself upon you!  
To proceed yet further, I would ask the doubter to look at the infinite fullness of power which is treasured up in the Holy Spirit. It is a part of our conviction that there is no heart so hard that the Holy Spirit cannot soften it, no soul so dead that He cannot quicken it and no man so desperately set on mischief that his will cannot be subdued by the effectual power of the Holy Spirit working in him. We believe the Holy Spirit to be no mere influence, no inferior or secondary power of moral suasion, but to be absolutely Divine —a Divine Being exerting irresistible force upon the mental powers of man

Well, now, if there is this might, surely, when He appears in the Character of a Comforter and a Quickener, His might is there to be exerted. Is your heart hard? He will empty His softening influence upon it. Is it dead? His quickening power shall there find a congenial sphere in which to work. Are you dark? Then there is room for His light. Are you sick? Then there is a platform for His healing energy. “If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth,” and if the Spirit of the living God is full of might and energy, it is that He may manifest it in all those poor, needy souls who desire to feel its power!  
What a wondrous book this Bible of ours is! When you have read the Bible through a score of times, you may have only walked over the surface, then, or plowed, at most, the upper soil. If you take one passage and dig deep for the treasure that couches beneath, you will find it inexhaustible! This Book has in it a matchless fullness. It were as possible to measure space, or to grasp the infinite in the hollow of your hands, as to take the entire compass of Holy Scripture. “It is high, I cannot attain unto it.” It is broad, I cannot reach its boundary. And especially is there a fullness of comfort in the promises of God’s Word. Our hymn writer put it, I think, very properly—  
*“What more can He say than to you He has said, You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”*Now, why is there this fullness in the Bible? “If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth.” If the Scriptures are full of comfort, they are intended to be enjoyed, to be believed, to be fed upon by you! There is nothing to spare in this Book. There is not too little, but rest assured that there is nothing too much. He that goes out in the morning after this manna, though he gathers his omer full, he shall have nothing over. And if he gathers little, yet still he shall have no need. There is enough for all and all its fullness is meant to be used!  
I cannot apply that thought. I have not time to beat it out more, but I hope God means it for some of you. You do not trust God, some of you, as you ought to do. You measure His corn with your own bushel. You know that you would fail your fellow men and think that He will fail you. You know your own weakness and infirmity—and you imagine that He will faint or be weary. Moreover, you know that you could not do a very generous thing for some who have been ungrateful and unkind to you— and you think He cannot either. Remember that passage, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” You think about saving—God only thinks about giving. You take a delight in getting—He takes a delight in bestowing. Go to Him! Go to Him! You would not need anybody to be long praying you to accept a gift, so do not think that God needs much beseeching in order to give, for it is as easy for Him to give as it is for you to accept! And as accepting seems congenial to our nature, so does bestowing seem congenial to His! Go to Him and He will empty out His Grace upon you!  
III. Now, thirdly, the text furnishes A LESSON TO CHRISTIANS.  
“If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth.” The drift of the passage is, of course, to be gathered from the context— and it was intended by Solomon to teach us liberality. He says, “Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for you know not what evil shall be upon the earth. If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth.” By which he means to say, “If your pocket is full, empty it out upon the poor and needy. If God has endowed you with much of this world’s substance, look out for cases of necessity and consider it is as much the object of your existence to bestow help upon the needy as it is the design in the creation of a cloud that it should empty itself upon the earth.”  
Do the clouds ever lose by emptying themselves? No doubt when the cloud has emptied itself, it is renewed and still goes on its course. At any rate, however it may be with the cloud, if it is dissipated when the rain descends, it is not so with the Christian. God has a way of giving by cartloads to those who give away by shovelfuls. If we give at the back door, and I do not think we ought to give at any other door—He will be pretty sure to give to us in greater abundance at the window and at the front door likewise. Says Bunyan—  
*“There was a man and some did count him mad, The more he gave away, the more he had!”*Thank God for men of that sort! “There is that withholds more than is meet, but it tends to poverty” and, on the other hand, that sentence which has in it the nature of a proverb and a prophecy is often verified— “the liberal soul shall be made fat.” I need not say much upon this to my own congregation, with whom I am acquainted. Most of you, I believe, do empty yourselves upon the earth in proportion as God assists you and enables you to give. But there are many persons in this land—at least there used to be—worth thousands upon thousands a year, whose contributions to the cause of God are so utterly insignificant that it is difficult to suppose that the love of Christ has ever gone far enough into them to thaw their hearts, for it has not even penetrated their pockets, making the gold to melt and their riches to flow in liberality.  
I was spoken to by a brother minister, not long ago, when I was preaching for him, and he said, “Do not spare them, Sir, do not spare them. There is one pew there, in front of the pulpit, where three men sit who are worth a million between them. Our chapel is a thousand pounds in debt and yet three of our members have a million between them.” I said to him, “I think you ought not to ‘spare them,’ yourself, I do not know why I should say it, only coming here to preach occasionally.” “Well,” he said, “but you may say, perhaps, what nobody else may.” Really it is a most horrible thing that there should be such positive covetousness allied with a profession of Christianity—Christian men—shall I call them so?—who, after all the plain precepts of Scripture, practice idolatry! They talk of being “stewards,” but they act practically as if they were the owners. When a man once gets into the habit of giving to the cause of God, it becomes as much a delight to contribute of his substance as to pray for God’s bounty or to drink in the promises! How could I dare to exist if I still do not do something for Christ? Not do something for Jesus? Were it not to rob me of the highest privilege which can be accorded a man this side the grave? When I pray, I ask for something for myself or other people. When I praise, it is but little I can render. But oh, to think that I, a poor creature of God’s own making, should be able to give to Him! It puts the creature in the highest conceivable light! It lifts him well above angels. There are works which laborious, disinterested, selfsacrificing Christians can do for Christ—  
*“Which perfect saints above  
And holy angels cannot do.”*  
Let the wealthy empty themselves upon the earth, and this shall be the way to fill themselves!  
But, dear Friends, not many of us are entrusted with much wealth. Some Christians have a considerable amount of ability to serve the Lord. They are, perhaps, able to speak for the Master. Now, I think that wherever there is some knowledge of God’s Word, a personal acquaintance with its power and some ability to speak, we should exercise our talent, if it is but one. And if we have ten, we should not keep one of the ten to ourselves. “If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth.” And if a man is full of ability, he is the more bound to empty himself. If there is any minister who ought to work hard, it is the man who is successful. If there is a person living who ought to be always successful, it is the man whom God helps to preach with power. If God makes me to be a full cloud, I must go on emptying myself. If He gives me good store, I must take care that I scatter it. We must do, each man according to his ability, for God requires not what a man has not, but what he has. Now, dear Christian Friends, are you all, out of love for Jesus, doing what you can for Him? Are you, whether you are big clouds or little clouds, trying to empty yourselves upon the earth? The nearest people of your acquaintance—your children, your kinsfolk, your neighbors—are you trying to show these the way of life—  
*“Gladly telling to sinners round  
What a dear Savior you have found”?*  
Though comparatively few of us have great ability, we all have some little capacity. Some Christians have a large amount of experimental knowledge. They are not eloquent, they are not educated, but they are wise. It has been our privilege to have some, in the very humblest walks of life, whose experimental knowledge of Divine things was very much more profound than would usually be found in a doctor of divinity—men and women who have learned their theology, not in halls and colleges, but in courts and cellars. They have learned how to pray on bare knees. They have learned how to cry to the God of Providence when the cupboard was empty. They have tried the reality of religion in the hospital and perhaps in the workhouse. Some have done business in the great waters and have seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. It is a great treat to talk to some of those old saints! Their lips are like the lips of the girl in the fable, which dropped jewels. There is a savor, an unction, about what they say. It is not theory, but experience with them—not the letter, but the very soul, marrow and fatness of the Truth of God! You do not find them looking to an arm of flesh, or talking about the dignity of manhood, or the glory of mental power and so on. They know of nothing human except weakness and nothingness! They trust in nothing but the Divine arm and the invincible strength of the Holy Spirit! Are there not some such here this evening? If you have any experience, let me say to you—as you have opportunity tell it out. Empty it upon the earth! If you have gained some knowledge of God, communicate it. If you have proved Him, confess to the generation about you that He is a faithful God!  
I recollect, in a time of very great despondency, deriving wonderful comfort from the testimony of a very aged minister who was blind and had been so for 20 years. When he addressed us with the weak voice of a tottering old man, but with the firmness of one who knew the truth of what he said—and spoke of the faithfulness of God because he had tasted and handled it, I thanked God for what he said! It was not much in itself. If I had read it in a book, it would not have struck me. But as it came from him—from the very man who knew it and understood it, it came with force and power! So, you experienced Christians, if any others are silent, you must not be! You must tell the young ones of what the Lord has done for you! Why, some of you good old Christian people—I do not mean all of you—but a few of you are very apt to get to talking about difficulties, troubles and afflictions more than about your joys, not unlike those persons in The Pilgrim’s Progress who told poor Christian about the lions, and giants, and dragons, and the sloughs and hills, and all that sort of thing! They might have told this, but they should also have told of the eternal arm that sustains the Christian in his pilgrimage! Tell about the troubles—that is wise—but also tell about the strength of God that makes you sufficient! That is wiser! If you have experience, empty yourselves upon the earth!  
I cannot particularize an instance of what may happen to be the form of treasure which God has committed to any or all of you, but I think there is not one saint out of Heaven but has his niche to fill, some particular work to do and, therefore, some special talent entrusted to him. Do not hide it in the earth. Dig up that talent and put it out to heavenly interest for the benefit of others and for the glory of your God! Herein is the folly of so many Christians, that being wrapped up in the interest of their own salvation and taken up with their own doubts and fears, they feel little care and they take little trouble for others. They never seem to empty themselves out into the world that is around them, and never seem to get into a world bigger than the homestead in which they live. But when a man begins to think about others, to care for others, to value the souls of others, then his thoughts of God get larger! Then his consolations grow greater and his spirit becomes more Godlike. A selfish Christianity—what shall I call it but an unchristian Christianity, an impropriety in terms, a contradiction in its very essence? You do not find the men who are anxious after others so often troubled as those who give no thought except to themselves!  
Mr. Whitefield, in his diary, tells of his times of depression, but they are comparatively few. And when he is going from one “pulpit-throne,” as he calls it, to another, and is preaching all day long and is hearing the sobs and cries of sinners—and perhaps bearing the hoots and pelting of a mob—sitting down as soon as he has done preaching in public, to finish up his letters, or to devote an hour to prayer, why, he has not time enough to get to desponding! He cannot afford space enough to be doubting his own interest in Christ. He is so engaged in his Master’s service and has so much of the blessing of God upon it, that he goes right on without needing to stop! Christian, may you get into the same delightful state—warm with love to Christ, fervent with zeal for the spread of His Kingdom! You shall not need, then, to ask any longer—

*“‘Tis a point I long to know  
Oft it causes anxious thought—  
Do I love the Lord or no,  
Am I His, or am I not?”*

But you may give a very practical answer by saying—  
*“There’s not a lamb in all Your flock  
I would refuse to feed.  
There’s not a foe before whose face  
I’d fear Your cause to plead.”*

“If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth.”

Observe, lastly, when it is that the clouds empty themselves. The text says when they are full. This is a broad hint, I think, to the Christian—it tells him, then, to work. David was to attack the Philistines at a certain signal—“When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then shall you bestir yourself.” Take this as a Divine signal, then— when you are full, it is time for you to set about doing good, emptying yourselves upon the earth! Mr. Jay tells young students—and there are some here—that they cannot always sermonize, but that there will come times when they can. “Now,” he says, “when I find that the wind blows, I put up the sails. I make hay while the sun shines. And I get the outlines of my sermons when God assists me to do so, that I may have them in readiness, when, perhaps, the breeze may not seem to be so favorable and my mind not so much upon the wing.”

Do good to yourselves by storing up when you have opportunity. But yet, Christians have particular times when they feel fuller than at others. A sermon has warmed you, or you feel very joyous and zealous just now. Well, you will, perhaps, feel sick tomorrow. You had better go and do some good tonight! “Nothing like the time present,” is the old world’s motto. “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,” says the proverb. So rest assured that a duty done today will be worth two duties saved up for tomorrow! A word spoken for Christ to somebody before you go out of the Tabernacle may be the word you ought to speak. But if you wait till you have another opportunity, you may wait and wait, but the opportunity may never come. A Primitive Methodist Brother said at one of the meetings, lately, that the reason why the Primitive Methodists got on so was that other Christians were waiting for something to turn up, but that the Primitive Methodists turned it up, themselves! It was an odd thing to say, but there is a great truth in it. Some Christian people are always waiting for something to turn up. They want an opportunity of doing good and they mean to do it—oh, so well—when they get the opportunity.

My Brothers and Sisters, you always have an opportunity if you will. How does Solomon put it? “Whatever your hand finds to do”—the first thing which comes—“do it with all your might.” You want work in a city like London? A Christian woman wants work for God in a city of three million inhabitants? A Christian man does not know what to do to serve his Master with all these courts, alleys and crowded houses—and all this filth and these thousands of gin-palaces—and this drunkenness running down the streets? Nothing for a Christian to do? You are lazy, Sir, or else you would never raise such a question! Say not, “What should I do?” but, “Where shall I begin doing it?” And I would say, begin at the point that is nearest to you. So they did when they built the walls of Jerusalem—every man built opposite to his own house. There, you see, the advantage was that he had not to walk two miles to his work, and then come back at night. They built opposite to his own house, and so he was spared all that trouble. And then, again, when he had a little leisure time when he went to his dinner, he could sit and look at his work and think how to do it better next time, so that there was an advantage in that. And there is a great advantage in Christians working near where they live and in taking up that part of Christian service most congenial to their circumstances and to their tastes. “Whatever your hand finds to do”—next to it, close to it—“do it with all your might.” Begin to do it and continue to do it, being always steadfast and immovable in the work of the Lord!

But if there is a time when you shall specially and particularly work for Christ, do it when you are full of His love. You have had a mercy lately—a great mercy—now is the time for special liberality! You were spared from bankruptcy during the great crisis, consecrate to God what might have been lost! You feel full of love to Jesus—go and talk about Jesus to those who do not know Him. You are full of zeal—let it manifest itself. You are full of faith—exercise it. You are full of hope—now go and lead others into the same hopeful state. Pray for a blessing upon others when you have had the best season of prayer, the sweetest period of communion at the Lord’s Table, or when you have been well fed on the Word. “If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth.”

May God grant to some here who have no rest, who are without God and without Christ, that they may know their emptiness—and then may the Lord fill them with His own rich Grace, as He will do to all those who put their trust in Him. The Lord bless you, every one! Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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÷Ecc 11.4

SOWING IN THE WIND, REAPING UNDER CLOUDS

NO. 2264

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 10, 1892. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“He that observes the wind shall not sow; and he that regards the clouds shall not reap.”  
Ecclesiastes 11:4.**

**S** OW when the time comes, whatever wind blows. Reap when the times comes, whatever clouds are in the sky! There are, however, qualifying proverbs which must influence our actions. We are not to discard prudence in the choice of the time for our work. “To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under Heaven.” It is well to sow when the weather is propitious. It is wise to “make hay while the sun shines.” Cut your corn when there is the probability of getting it dry.

But Solomon here is pushing the other side of the matter. He had seen prudence turn to idleness. He had noticed some people wait for a more convenient season which never came. He had observed sluggards making excuses which did not hold water. So he, with a blunt word, generalizes, in order to make the truth more forcible. Not troubling about the exceptions to the rule, he states it broadly thus—“Take no notice of winds or clouds. Go on with your work whatever happens. ‘He that observes the wind shall not sow; and he that regards the clouds shall not reap.’”

I. The first thought that is suggested by these words is this—NATURAL DIFFICULTIES MAY BE UNDULY CONSIDERED. A man may observe the wind and regard the clouds a great deal too much, and so neither sow nor reap.

Note here, first, that in any work this would hinder a man. In any labor to which we set our hands, if we take too much notice of the difficulties, we shall be hindered in it. It is very wise to know the difficulty of your calling, the sorrow which comes with it, the trial which arises out of it, the temptation connected therewith, but if you think too much of these things, there is no calling that will be carried on with any success. Poor farmers, they have a crop of hay and cannot get it in—they may fret themselves to death if they like—and never earn a penny for a seven years’ fretting! We say of their calling that it is surrounded with constant trouble. They may lose everything just at the moment when they are about to gather it in. The seed may perish under the clods when it is first sown. It is subject to blight and mildew, and birds and worms—and I know not what besides—and then, at the last, when the farmer is about to reap the harvest, it may disappear before the sickle can cut it!

Take the case of the sailor. If he regards winds and clouds, will he ever be put to sea? Can you give him a promise that the wind will be favorable in any of his voyages, or that he will reach his desired haven without a tempest? He that observes the winds and clouds will not sail—and he that regards the clouds will never cross the mighty deep! If you turn from the farmer and the sailor, and come to the trader, what tradesman will do anything if he is always worrying about the competition and about the difficulties of his trade which is so cut up that there is no making a living by it? I have heard this, I think, about every trade—and yet our friends keep on living and some of them get rich—when they are supposed to be losing money every year! He that regards the rise and fall of prices and is timid— and will do no trading because of the changes on the market—will not reap. If you come to the working man, it is the same as with those I have mentioned, for there is no calling or occupation that is not surrounded with difficulties.

In fact, I have formed this judgment from what friends have told me— that every trade is the worst trade—for I have found somebody in that particular line who has proved this to a demonstration! I cannot say that I am an implicit believer in all I hear about this matter. Still, if I were, this would be the conclusion that I should come to, that he who observed the circumstances of any trade or calling would never engage in it at all! He would never sow and he would never reap. I suppose he would go to bed and sleep all the 24 hours of the day and, after a while, I am afraid he would find it become impossible even to do that—and he would learn that to turn, with the sluggard, like a door on its hinges, is not unalloyed pleasure, after all!

Well now, dear Friends, if there are these difficulties in connection with earthly callings and trades, do you expect there will be nothing of the kind with regard to heavenly things? Do you imagine that, in sowing the good Seed of the Kingdom and gathering the sheaves into the garner, you will have no difficulties and disappointments? Do you dream that when you are bound for Heaven, you are to have smooth sailing and propitious winds all the voyage? Do you think that, in your heavenly trading, you will have less trials than the merchant who has only to do with earthly business? If you do, you make a great mistake! You will not be likely to enter upon the heavenly calling if you do nothing else but unduly consider the difficulties surrounding it.

But, next, in the work of liberality this would stop us. This is Solomon’s theme here. “Cast your bread upon the waters.” “Give a portion to seven, and also to eight,” and so on. He means, by my text, that if anybody occupies his mind unduly with the difficulties connected with liberality, he will do nothing in that line. “He that observes the wind shall not sow; and he that regards the clouds shall not reap.” “How am I to know,” says one, “ that the person to whom I give my money is really deserving? How do I know what he will do with it? How do I know but what I may be encouraging idleness or begging? By giving to the man, I may be doing him real injury.” Perhaps you are not asked to give to an individual, but to some great work. Then, if you regard the clouds, you will begin to say, “How do I know that this work will be successful, the sending of missionaries to a cultivated people like the Hindus? Is it likely that they will be converted?”

You will not sow, and you will not reap, if you talk like that! Yet there are many who do speak in that fashion. There was never an enterprise started yet but somebody objected to it—and I do not believe that the best work that Christ, Himself, ever did was beyond criticism—there were some people who were sure to find some fault with it. “But,” says another, “I have heard that the management at headquarters is not all it ought to be. I think that there is too much money spent on the secretary and that there is a great deal lost in this direction and in that.” Well, dear Friend, it goes without saying that if you managed things, they would be managed perfectly, but, you see, you cannot do everything and, therefore, you must trust somebody. I can only say, with regard to societies, agencies, works and missions of all kinds, “He that observes the wind shall not sow; and he that regards the clouds shall not reap.” If that is what you are doing— discovering imperfections and difficulties, it will end in this—you will do nothing at all!

Going a little further, as this is true of common occupations and of liberality, so it is especially true in the work of serving God. Now, if I were to consider in my mind nothing but the natural depravity of man, I would never preach again! To preach the Gospel to sinners is as foolish a thing as to bid dead men rise out of their graves! But, for that very reason I do it, because it has pleased God, “by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe”! When I look upon the alienation from God, the hardness of the human heart, I see that old Adam is too strong for me—and if I regarded that one cloud of the Fall, and original sin, and the natural depravity of man, I, for one, would neither sow nor reap!

I am afraid that there has been a good deal of this, however. Many preachers have contemplated the ruin of man and they have had so clear a view of it that they dare not say, “Thus says the Lord, you dry bones, live!” They are unable to cry, “Dear Master, speak through us and say, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’” Some seem to say, “Go and see if Lazarus has any kind of feeling of his condition in the grave. If so, I will call him out, because I believe he can come”—thus putting all the burden on Lazarus and depending upon Lazarus for it! But we say, “Though he has been dead four days, and is already becoming corrupt, that has nothing to do with us. If our Master bids us call him out from his grave, we can call him out and he will come—not because he can come by his own power—but because God can make him come, for the day is now when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of God—and they that shall hear and shall live!

But, dear Friends, there are persons to whom we should never go to seek their salvation if we regarded the winds and the clouds, for they are peculiarly bad people. You know, from observation, that there are some persons who are much worse than others—some who are not amenable to kindness, or any other human treatment. They do not seem to be terrified by law, or affected by love. We know people who go into a horrible temper, every now and then, and all the hope we had of them is blown away like sere leaves in the autumn wind! You know such and you “fight shy” with them. There are such boys and there are such girls, full of mischief, levity, or full of malice and bitterness—and you say to yourself, “I cannot do anything with them. It is of no use.” You are observing the winds and regarding the clouds! You will not be one of those to whom Isaiah says, “Blessed are you that sow beside all waters.”

Someone may say, “I would not mind the moral condition of the people, but it is their surroundings that are the trouble. What is the use of trying to save a man while he lives, as he does, in such a horrible street, in one room? What is the use of seeking to raise such and such a woman while she is surrounded, as she is, with such examples? The very atmosphere seems tainted.” Just so, dear Friend—while you observe the winds and regard the clouds—you will now sow and you will not reap! You will not attempt the work and, of course, you will not complete what you do not begin.

So, you know, you can go on making all kinds of excuses for doing nothing with certain people because you feel or think that they are not those whom God is likely to bless. I know this to be a common case, even with very serious and earnest workers for Christ. Let it not be so with you, dear Friends! But be you one of those who obey the poet’s words—

*“Beside all waters sow!  
The highway furrows stock!  
Drop it where thorns and thistles grow—  
Scatter it on the rock.”*

Let me carry this principle, however, a little further. You may unduly consider circumstances in reference to the business of your own eternal life. You may, in that matter, observe the winds, and never sow. You may regard the clouds and never reap. “I feel,” says one, “as if I never can be saved. There never was such a sinner as I am. My sins are peculiarly black.” Yes, and if you keep on regarding them and do not remember the Savior and His infinite power to save, you will not sow in prayer and faith. “Ah, Sir, but you do not know the horrible thoughts I have, the dark forebodings that cross my mind!” You are correct, dear Friend, I do not know them. I know what I feel, myself, and I expect that your feelings are very like my own, but, be what they may, if, instead of looking to Christ, you are always studying your own condition, your own withered hopes, your own broken resolutions—then you will still stay where you are and you will neither sow nor reap.

Beloved Christians, you who have been Believers for years, if you begin to live by your frames and feelings, you will get into the same condition. “I do not feel like praying,” says one. Then is the time when you ought to pray most, for you are evidently most in need! But if you keep observing whether or not you are in the proper frame of mind for prayer, you will not pray. “I cannot grasp the promises,” says another, “I should like to joy in God and firmly believe in His Word, but I do not see anything in myself that can minister to my comfort.” Suppose you do not—are you, after all, going to build upon yourself? Are you trying to find your ground of consolation in your own heart? If so, you are on the wrong tack! Our hope is not in self, but in Christ—let us go and sow it. Our hope is in the finished work of Christ—let us go and reap it, for, if we keep on regarding the winds and the clouds, we shall neither sow nor reap.

I think it is a great lesson to learn in spiritual things, to believe in Christ and His finished salvation, quite as much as when you are down as when you are up, for Christ is not more Christ on the top of the mountain than He is in the bottom of the valley. And He is no less Christ in the storm at midnight than He is in the sunshine of the day. Do not begin to measure your safety by your comfort—but measure it by the eternal Word of God which you have believed and which you know to be true—and on which you rest, for still here, within the little world of our bosom, “he that observes the wind shall not sow; and he that regards the clouds shall not reap.” We need to get out of that idea altogether.

I have said enough to prove the truth of my first observation, namely, that natural difficulties may be unduly considered.  
II. My second observation is this—SUCH CONSIDERATION INVOLVES US IN SEVERAL SINS.  
If we keep on observing circumstances instead of trusting God, we shall be guilty of disobedience. God bids me sow—I do not sow because the wind would blow some of my seed away. God bids me reap—I do not reap because there is a black cloud and before I can house the harvest, some of it may be spoiled. I may say what I like, but I am guilty of disobedience. I have not done what I was bid to do. I have made an excuse out of the weather and I have been disobedient. Dear Friends, it is yours to do what God bids you do, whether the heavens fall down or not and, if you knew they would fall, and you could prop them up by disobedience, you have no right to do it! What may happen from our doing right, we have nothing to do with—we are to do right and take the consequences cheerfully. Do you need obedience to be always rewarded by a spoonful of sugar? Are you such a baby that you will do nothing unless there shall be some little toy for you directly after? A man in Christ Jesus will do right though it shall involve him in losses and crosses, slanders and rebukes—yes, even martyrdom itself! May God help you to do so! He that observes the wind and does not sow when he is bid to cast his seed upon the waters is guilty of disobedience.  
Next, we are guilty also of unbelief if we cannot sow because of the wind. Who manages the wind? You distrust Him who is Lord of the north, and south, and east, and west? If you cannot reap because of a cloud, you doubt Him who makes the clouds, to whom the clouds are the dust of His feet. Where is your faith? Where is your faith? “Ah,” says one, “I can serve God when I am helped, when I am moved, when I can see hope of success.” That is poor service—service devoid of faith. May I not say of it, “Without faith it is impossible to please God”? Just in proportion to the quantity of faith that there is in what we do, in that proportion will it be acceptable with God! Observing of winds and clouds is unbelief! We may call it prudence, but unbelief is its true name.  
The next sin is rebellion. So you will not sow unless God chooses to make the wind blow your way? And you will not reap unless God pleases to drive the clouds away? I call that revolt or rebellion. An honest subject loves the king in all weathers. The true servant serves his master, let his master do what he wills. Oh, dear Friends, we are too often aiming at God’s Throne! We want to get up there and manage things— *“Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod, Rejudge His judgments, be the god of God.”*“Oh, if He would but alter my circumstances!” What is this but tempting God, as they did in the wilderness, wishing Him to do other than He does? It is wishing Him to do wrong, for what He does is always right! But we must not so rebel and vex his Holy Spirit by complaining of what He does. Do you not see that this is trying to throw the blame for our shortcomings upon the Lord? “If we do not sow, do not blame us—God did not send the right wind. If we did not reap, pray not to censure us—how could we be expected to reap while there were clouds in the skies?” What is this but a wicked endeavor to blame God for our own neglect and wrongdoing and to make Divine Providence the packhorse upon which we pile our sins? God save us from such rebellion as that!  
Another sin of which we are guilty, when we are always looking at our circumstances, is foolish fear. Though we may think that there is no sin in it, there is great sin in foolish fear. God has commanded His people not to fear—then we should obey Him. There is a cloud—why do you fear it? It will be gone directly—not a drop of rain may fall out of it. You are afraid of the wind—why fear it? It may never come. Even if it were some deadly wind that was approaching, it might shift about and not come near you. We are often fearing what never happens. We feel a thousand deaths in fearing one. Many a person has been afraid of what never would occur. It is a great pity to whip yourselves with imaginary rods. Wait till the trouble comes—otherwise I shall have to tell you the story I have often repeated of the mother whose child would cry. She told it not to cry, but it would cry. “Well,” she said, “if you will cry, I will give you something to cry about!” If you get to fearing about nothing, the probability is that you will get something really to fear, for God does not love His people to be fools.  
There are some who fall into the sin of stinginess. Observe that Solomon was here speaking of liberality. He that observes the clouds and the winds thinks, “That is not a good object to help,” and that he will do harm if he gives here, or if he gives there. It amounts to this, poor Miser, you want to save your money! Oh, the ways we have of making buttons with which to secure the safety of our pockets! Some persons have a button always ready. They always have a reason for not giving to anything that is proposed to them, or to any poor person who asks their help. I pray that every child of God here may avoid that sin. “Freely you have received, freely give.” And since you are stewards of a generous Master, let it never be said that the most liberal of Lords has the stingiest of stewards!  
Another sin is often called idleness. The man who does not sow because of the wind is usually too lazy to sow. And the man who does not reap because of the clouds is the man who wants a little more sleep, a little more slumber and a little more folding of the hands to sleep. If we do not want to serve God, it is amazing how many reasons we can find. According to Solomon, the sluggard said there was a lion in the streets. “There is a lion in the way,” he said, “a lion is in the streets!” What a lie it was, for lions are as much afraid of streets as men are of deserts! Lions do not come into streets! It was idleness that said the lion was there. You were asked to preach the other night and you could preach, but you said, no, you could not preach. However, you attended a political meeting, did you not, and talked twice as long as you would have done if you had preached?  
Another friend, asked to teach in Sunday school, said, “I have no gifts of teaching.” Somebody afterwards remarked of you that you had no gifts of teaching, and you felt very vexed and asked what right had anyone to say that of you? I have heard persons run themselves down when they have been invited to any Christian work, as being altogether disqualified— but when somebody has afterwards said, “That is true, you cannot do anything, I know,” they have looked as if they would knock the speaker down! Oh, yes, yes, yes—we are always making these excuses about winds and clouds—and there is nothing in either of them. It is all meant to save our corn seed and to save us the trouble of sowing it.  
Do you not see that I have made a long list of sins wrapped up in this observing of winds and clouds? If you have been guilty of any of them, repent of your wrongdoing and do not repeat it!  
III. I will not keep you longer over this part of the subject. I will now make a third remark very briefly—LET US PROVE THAT WE HAVE NOT FALLEN INTO THIS EVIL. How can we prove it?  
Let us prove it, first, by sowing in the most unlikely places. What says Solomon? “Cast your bread upon the waters: for you shall find it after many days.” Go, my Brothers and Sisters, and find the most unlikely people—and begin to work for God with them. Now, try, if you can, to pick out the worst street in your neighborhood and visit from house to house. And if there is a man or woman worse off than another, make that person the objective of your prayers and of your holy endeavors. Cast your bread upon the waters—then it will be seen that you are trusting God, not trusting the soil, nor trusting the seed!  
Next, prove it by doing good to a great many. “Give a portion to seven, and also to eight.” Talk of Christ to everybody you meet! If God has not blessed you to one, try another. And if He has blessed you with one, try two others! And if He has blessed you to two others, try four others— always keep on enlarging your seed plot as your harvest comes in! If you are doing much, it will be shown that you are not regarding the winds and the clouds.  
Further, prove that you are not regarding winds and clouds by wisely learning from the clouds another lesson than the one they seem made to teach. Learn this lesson—“If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth.” Say to yourself, “If God has made me full of His Grace, I will go and pour it out on others. I know the joy of being saved. Since I have had fellowship with Him, I will make a point of being more industrious than ever because God has been unusually gracious to me. My fullness shall be helpful to others. I will empty myself for the good of others, even as the clouds pour down the rain upon the earth.”  
Then, Beloved, prove it by not needing to know how God will work. There is a great mystery of birth—how the human soul come to inhabit the body of the child and how the child is fashioned. You know nothing about it and you cannot know. Therefore do not look about you to see what you cannot understand and pry into what is concealed from you. Go out and work! Go out and preach! Go out and instruct others! Go out to seek to win souls! Thus shall you prove, in very truth, that you are not dependent upon surroundings and circumstances.  
Again, dear Friend, prove this by consistent diligence. “In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand.” “Be instant in season, out of season.” I had a friend who had learned the way to put a peculiar meaning upon that passage of Scripture, “Let not your right hand know what your left hand does.” He thought that the best way was to have money in both pockets—put one hand into each pocket—and then put both hands on the collection plate. I never objected to this interpretation of the passage. Now, the way to serve Christ is to do all you possibly can— and then much more. “No,” you say, “that cannot be!” I do not know that it cannot be. I found that the best thing I ever did was a thing I could not do. What I could do well, that was my own—but what I could not do, but still did, in the name and strength of the Eternal Jehovah, was the best thing I had done! Beloved, sow in the morning, sow in the evening, sow at night, sow all day long, for you can never tell what God will bless—and by this constant sowing you will prove that you are not observing the winds, nor regarding the clouds!  
IV. I now come to my concluding observation—LET US KEEP THIS EVIL OUT OF OUR HEARTS AS WELL AS OUT OF OUR WORK.  
And, first, let us give no heed to the winds and clouds of doctrine that are everywhere about us now. Blow, blow, you stormy winds, but you shall not move me! Clouds of hypotheses and inventions, come up, as many as you please, till you darken all the sky—but I will not fear you! Such clouds have come before and have disappeared, and these will disappear, too. If you sit down and think of man’s inventions of error and their novel doctrines and how the churches have been bewitched by them, you will get into such a state of mind that you will neither sow nor reap. Just forget them! Give yourself to your holy service as if there were no winds and no clouds—and God will give you such comfort in your soul that you will rejoice before Him and be confident in His Truth.  
And then, next, let us not lose hope because of doubts and temptations. When the clouds and the winds get into your heart. When you do not feel as you used to feel. When you have not that joy and elasticity of spirit you once had. When your ardor seems a little damped and even your faith begins to hesitate a little, go to God all the same! Trust Him still— *“And when your eye of faith grows dim,  
Still hold to Jesus, sink or swim!  
Still at His footstool bow the knee,  
And Israel’s God your strength shall be.”*  
Do not go up and down like the mercury in the weather glass—but know what you know and believe what you believe! Hold to it and may God keep you in one mind, so that none can turn you, for, if not, if you begin to notice these things, you will neither sow nor reap.  
Lastly, let us follow the Lord’s mind, come what will. In a word, set your face, like a flint, to serve God by the maintenance of His Truth, by your holy life, by the savor of your Christian character and, that being done, defy earth and Hell! If there were a crowd of devils between you and Christ, kick a lane through them by holy faith! They will flee before you. If you have but the courage to make an advance, they cannot stop you. You shall make a clear gangway through legions of them. Only be strong and of good courage—and do not regard, even, the clouds from Hell, or the blasts from the infernal pit—but go straight on in the path of right and, God being with you, you shall sow and you shall reap unto His eternal Glory!  
Will some poor sinner, here, tonight, whether he sinks or swims, trust Christ? Come, even if you feel less inclined, tonight, to hope, than you ever did before! Have hope even now! Hope against hope! Believe against belief! Cast yourself on Christ, even though He may seem to stand with a drawn sword in His hand, to run you through! Trust even an angry Christ! Though your sins have grieved Him, come and trust Him. Do not stop for winds to blow over, or clouds to burst. Just as you are, without one trace of anything that is good about you, come and trust Christ as your Lord and Savior, and you are saved! God give you Grace to do so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON  
**ECCLESIASTES 11-12.**

Ecclesiastes 11:1. Cast your bread upon the waters: for you shall find it after many days. Hoard not your bread, for if you do, it will mildew—it will be of no use to you. Cast it on the waters. Scatter it abroad. Give it to unworthy men if necessary. Some here have seen an allusion to the casting of seed into the Nile when it overflowed its banks. When the waters subsided, the corn would grow and be gathered in, “after many days.”

2. Give a portion to seven. And if that is a perfect number, give beyond it.  
2. And also to eight. Give to more than you can afford to give to! Help some who are doubtful, some who are outside of the perfect number—give them a portion, a fair portion. Our Savior went beyond Solomon, for He said, “Give to every man that asks of you.”  
2. For you know not what evil shall be upon the earth. You know not what need there may be of your help, nor what need may come to you, and how you, yourself, may be helped by those whom you help now.  
3. If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth. The tree falls the way it is inclined, but when it has fallen, there it must be. God grant that you and I may fall the right way when the axe of death hews us down! Which way are we inclined?  
4, 5. He that observes the wind shall not sow; and he that regards the clouds shall not reap. As you know not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so you know not the works of God who makes all. There are great mysteries which we can never comprehend. God alone knows how the soul comes into the body, or even how the body is fashioned. This must remain with Him. We do not know how sinners are regenerated. We know not how the Spirit of God works upon the mind of man and transforms the sinner into a saint. We do not know. There are some who know too much, already. I have not half the desire to know what I have to believe and to love. Oh, that we loved God more, and trusted God more! We might then get to Heaven if we knew even less than we do.  
6. In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand: for you know not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good. You cannot make the Gospel enter into men’s hearts. You cannot tell how it does enter and change them. The Spirit of God does that—your duty is to go on telling it out. Go on spreading abroad the knowledge of Christ! In the morning and in the evening, and all day long, scatter the good Seed of the Kingdom. You have nothing to do with the result of your sowing—that remains with the Lord. That which you sow in the morning may prosper, or the seed that you scatter in the evening. Possibly God will bless both. You are to keep on sowing, whether you reap or not.  
7, 8. Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: but if a man lives many years and rejoices in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that comes is vanity. Take Christ away and this is a truthful estimate of human life. Put Christ into the question and Solomon does not hit the mark at all. If we have Christ with us, whether the days are light or dark, we walk in the Light of God and our soul is happy and glad! But apart from Christ, the estimate of life which is given here is an exactly accurate one— a little brightness and long darkness, a flash and then midnight. God save you from living a merely natural life! May you rise to the supernatural! May you get out of the lower life of the mere animal into the higher life of the regenerated soul! If the life of God is in you, then you shall go from strength to strength like the sun that shines unto the perfect day.  
9. Rejoice, O young man, in your youth; and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes: but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. Young man, will you dare, then, to follow your passions and the devices of your own heart, with this at the back—“God will bring you into judgement”? Oh no, the advice of Solomon apparently so evil, is answered by warning at the end, which is also true—  
10. Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity. “Remove sorrow,” or rather, anger, ambition, or anything else that would cause sorrow, “from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh.” Let not your fleshly nature rule you! You are in the period when flesh is strong towards evil, when “vanity” is the ruin of many.  
Chapter 12:1. Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth. Now we get on solid ground. There is an irony in the advice, “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth; and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes.” There is no irony here—there is solid, sound advice—“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth.” May every young man take this advice and carry it out!  
1-3. While the evil days come not, nor the years draw near, when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars are not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble. These arms and hands of ours shake by reason of weakness.  
3. And the strong men shall bow themselves. These limbs, these legs of ours, begin to bend under the weight they have to support.  
3. And the grinders cease because they are few. The teeth are gone.  
3. And those that look out of the windows are darkened. The eyesight begins to fail.  
4. And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low. The old man sleeps very lightly; anything awakens him. He hides away from public business. The doors are shut in the streets.  
5. Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way. There is none of the courage of youth. Daring is gone— prudence, not to say cowardice—sits on the throne.  
5. And the almond tree shall flourish. The hair is white and gray, like the early peach or almond tree in the beginning of the year.

5. And the grasshopper shall be a burden. A little trouble weighs the old man down. He has no energy now. The grasshopper is a burden.  
5, 6. And desire shall fail: because men go to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets; or ever the silver cord is loosed, or the golden cord is broken. Before the spinal cord is broken, or the skull becomes emptied of the living inhabitants.  
6. Or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. The circulation of the blood begins to fail, the heart grows weak, it will soon stop. The man’s career is nearly over.  
7. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. This will happen to us all, either to return to dust or else return to God. Whether we die and return to dust, or live until the coming of Christ, our spirit shall return to God who gave it. May the return be a joyous one for each of us!  
8-11. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher; all is vanity. And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads. They prick us onward, as the goad does the bullock, when he is trying to stop instead of plowing in the furrow.  
11. And as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. The words of the wise are driven home, like nails, and clinched. There is one Shepherd who, by means of His servants’ words, leads His flock where He would have them go.  
12, 13. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much of the study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His Commandments: for this is the duty of man. Or, “this is the whole of man.” It makes a man of him when he fears God and keeps His Commandments—he has that which makes him “the whole man.”  
14. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it is good, or whether it is evil. Depend upon it that it will be so! At the Last Great Day, there will be a revealing of everything, whether it is good, or whether it is evil. No need for the righteous to fear that revealing, for they will only magnify in that day the amazing Grace of God which has put all their iniquities away—and then shall all men know how great the Grace of God was in passing by iniquity, transgression and sin!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—748, 747, 753.

÷Son 1.2

FRAGRANT GRACES  
NO. 3480

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1915.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“While the King sits at His table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance.” Song of Songs 1:12.

THIS passage may be read in several ways. Literally, when Christ tabled among men, when He did eat and drink with them, being found in fashion as a Man, the loving Spirit broke the alabaster box of precious ointment on His head while the King was sitting at His table. Three times did the Church thus anoint her Lord, once His head and twice His feet, as if she remembered His threefold office and the threefold anointing which He had received of God the Father to confirm and strengthen Him. So she rendered Him the threefold anointing of her grateful love, breaking the alabaster box and pouring the precious ointment upon His head and upon His feet. Beloved, let us imitate the example of those who have gone before. Though we cannot, as the weeping penitent, wash His feet with our tears, or wipe them with the hairs of our head, like that gracious woman—we may be cautious of nothing, of fair adornments, or fond endowments—if we can but serve His cause or honor His Person. Let us be willing to “pour contempt on all our pride,” and “nail our glory to His Cross.” Have you anything tonight that is dear to you? Resign it to Him! Have you any costly thing like an alabaster box hidden away? Give it to the King! He is worthy and when you have fellowship with Him at His table, let your gifts be brought forth. Offer unto the King thanksgiving and pay your vows unto the Most High.

But the King is gone from earth. He is seated at His table in Heaven, eating bread in the Kingdom of God. Surrounded now not by publicans and harlots, but by cherubim and seraphim, not by mocking crowds, but by adoring hosts, the King sits at His table and entertains the glorious company of the faithful—the Church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven! He fought before He could rest. On earth He struggled with His enemies and it was not till He had triumphed over all, that He sat down at the table on high! There sit, You King of kings, there sit until Your last enemy shall be made Your footstool! What can we do, Brothers and Sisters, while Christ sits at the table above? These hands cannot reach Him. These eyes cannot see Him. But our prayers, like sweet perfume, set burning here on earth, can rise in smoke to the place where the King sits at His table—and our spikenard can diffuse a perfume even in Heaven itself! Do you want to reach Christ? Your prayers can do it! Would you now adore Him? Would you now set forth your love? With mingled prayer and praise, like the offering of the morning and the evening sacrifice, your incense can come up acceptably before the Lord!

And, Brothers and Sisters, the day is coming when the King shall sit at His table in royal state. Lo, He comes! Lo, He comes! Let the Church never forget that. The First Advent is her faith—the Second Advent is her hope. The First Advent with the Cross lays the foundation—the Second Advent with the crown brings forth the top stone. The former was ushered in with sighs—the latter shall be hailed with shouts of, “Grace, Grace unto it.” And when the King, manifested and recognized in His Sovereignty over all lands, shall sit at His table with His Church, then, in that blessed Millennium, the Graces of Christians shall give forth their odors of sweet savor!

We have thus read the text in three ways, and there is a volume in each, but we turn over another page, for we need to read it in relation to the spiritual Presence of Christ as He does now reveal Himself to His people. “When the King sits at His table”—that is, when we enjoy the Presence of Christ—“my spikenard gives forth its fragrance.” Then our graces are in active exercise and yield a perfume agreeable to our own soul and acceptable before God.

In the train of reflection I shall now attempt to follow. My manner must be hurried and should it seem feeble, Brothers and Sisters, I cannot help it. If you get fellowship with Christ, I care little for the merits of my sermon, or the perils of your criticism. One thing, alone, I crave, “Let Him kiss us with the kisses of His mouth”—then shall my soul be well content, and so will yours be also! The first observation we make shall be this—

I. EVERY BELIEVER HAS GRACE IN POSSESSION AT ALL TIMES. The text implies that when the King is not present, the spikenard yields no smell, but the spikenard is there for all that. The spouse speaks of her spikenard as though she had it, and only needed to have the King come and sit at the table to make its presence known and felt. Ah, well, Believer, there is Grace in your heart if you are a child of God! When you cannot see it yourself. When your doubts have so covered up all your hopes, that you say, “I am cast out from His Presence”—yet for all that, Grace may be there. When the old oak has lost its last leaf by the howling blasts of winter. When the sap is frozen up in the veins and you cannot, though you search to the uttermost branch, find so much as the slightest sign of verdant existence, still, even then, the substance is in the tree when it has lost its leaves. And so with every Believer, though his sap seems frozen and his life almost dead, yet if once planted, it is there! The eternal life is there when he cannot discover it himself. Do you know—if not, I pray you may never know experimentally—that there are many things that keep a Christian’s spikenard from being poured out? Alas, there is our sin! Ah, shameful, cruel sin, to rob my Master of His Glory! But when we fall into sin, of course, our Graces become weak and yield no fragrance to God. Ah, too, there is our unbelief which puts a heavy stone on all our Divine Graces, and blows out the heat which was burning the frankincense, so that no altar smoke arises towards Heaven. And often, it may be, it is our bitterness of spirit, for when our mind is cast down, we hang our harps upon the willows so that they give forth no sweet music unto God. And, above all, if Christ is absent, if through neglect or by any other means our fellowship with Him is suspended, Grace is there—but oh, it cannot be seen! There is no comfort springing from it. But, Beloved, though we mention this to begin with, we rather choose to pass on and observe that—  
II. GRACE IS NOT GIVEN TO A CHRISTIAN TO BE THUS HIDDEN, BUT IT IS INTENDED THAT, LIKE SPIKENARD, IT SHOULD ALWAYS BE IN EXERCISE.  
If I understand a Christian aright, he should be a man readily discerned. You do not need to write upon a box that contains spikenard, with the lid open, the word, “Spikenard.” You will know it is there—your nostrils would tell you. If a man should fill his pockets with dust, he might walk where he would, and though he should scatter it in the air, few would notice it. But let him go into a room with his pockets full of musk, and let him drop a particle about—he is soon discovered because the musk speaks for itself! Now true Grace, like spikenard or any other perfume, should speak for itself. You know our Savior compares Christians to lights. There is a crowd of people standing yonder—I cannot see those who are in the shadow, but there is one man whose face I can see well, and that is the man who holds the torch. Its flames light up his face so that we can readily catch every feature. So, whoever is not discovered, the Christian should be obvious at once! “You also were with Jesus of Nazareth, for your speech betrays you.” Not only should the Christian be perceptible, but Grace has been given to him that it might be in exercise! What is faith, unless it is believing? What is love, unless it is embracing? What is patience, unless it is enduring? To what purpose is knowledge, unless it is revealing truth? What are any of those sweet Graces which the Master gives us, unless they yield their perfume? I fear we do not gaze enough upon that face covered with the bloody sweat, for if we did, as sure as the King was thus in our thoughts sitting at His table, we would be more like He, we would love Him more, we would live more passionately for Him and would spend and be spent, that we might promote His glory. I just note this point, and then pass on, that Believers’ Graces, like spikenard, are meant to give forth their smell. But here is the pith of our whole subject, though we have little time to linger upon it—  
III. THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH A CHRISTIAN’S GRACES CAN BE PUT INTO EXERCISE IS THAT HE MUST HAVE THE PRESENCE OF THE MASTER.  
He is called “the King.” I am told that the Hebrew word is very emphatic, as if it said, “The King”—the King of kings, the greatest of all Kings. He must be such to us—absolute Master of our hearts, Lord of our soul’s domain, the unrivalled One in our estimation to whom we render obedience with alacrity. We must have Him as King, or we shall not have His Presence to revive our Graces. And when the King communes with His people, it is said to be at “His table,” not at ours. Specially may this apply to the Table of Communion. It is not the Baptists’ table. It is not my table. It is His Table because if there is anything good on it, remember, He spread it! No, there is nothing on the table unless He Himself is there. There is no food to the child of God unless Christ’s body is the flesh, and Christ’s blood the wine. We must have Christ! It must be emphatically His Table by His being present, by His spreading it, His presiding at it, or else we have not His Presence at all. I find the Hebrew word here signifies a “round table.” I do not know whether that is intended which I understand by it—perhaps it is—it suggests to me a blessed equality with all His disciples sitting at His round table, as if there were scarcely a head, but He was one of them, so close the communion He holds with them sitting at the table, so dear His fellowship, sitting like one of them, made like unto His Brothers and Sisters in all things at His round table.  
Well, now, we say that when Christ comes into the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, or any other ordinance, straightway our Graces are vigorous. How often have we resolved that we would live nearer to Christ? Yet, though we have resolved, and re-resolved, I fear it has all ended with resolving. Perhaps we have prayed over our resolutions and for a little season we have sought them very earnestly, but our earnestness soon expired like every other fire that is of human kindling—and we made but little progress. Be not disheartened, my Beloved in the Lord! I tell you, whether you are able to believe it or not, that if your heart is this night cold as the center of an iceberg, yet if Christ shall come to you, your soul shall be as coals of juniper that have a most vehement flame! Though to your own apprehension you seem to be dead as the bones in a cemetery, yet if Jesus comes to you, you shall forthwith be as full of life as the seraphs who are as flames of fire! Why do you think He will not come to you? Do you not remember how He did melt you when first He manifested Himself to your soul? You were as vile, then, as you are now. You were certainly as ruined, then, as you are now! You had no more to merit His esteem, then, than you have now—you were as far off from Him, then, as you are now—I might say even further off. But lo, He came to you when you did not seek Him! He came in the Sovereignty of His Grace and the sweetness of His mercy when you despised Him! Why, then, should He not come to you now?  
Oh, breathe the prayer—tenderly and hopefully breathe the prayer— “Draw me,” and you will soon find power to run, and when all your passions and powers are fled, the King will speedily bring you into His chamber! Dark as your present state may be, there are sure signs of breaking day. I want you, Brothers and Sisters, to believe and to expect that you shall hold this night with Christ the richest, sweetest fellowship that ever mortal was privileged to enjoy, and that all of a sudden! I know your cares—forget them! I know your sins—bring them to His feet! I know the wandering of your heart—ask Him to tether you to His Cross with the same cords that bound Him to the pillar of His flagellation. I know your brain is perplexed and your thoughts flying here and there, distracted with many cares—put on the crown of thorns and let that be the antidote of all your manifold disquietudes! I think Jesus is putting in His hand by the hole of the door. Is not your heart moved for Him? Rise up and welcome Him! And as the bread is broken and the wine is passed round, come, and eat and drink of Him, and be not a stranger to Him. “Let not conscience make you linger.” Let not doubts and fears hold you back from fellowship with Him who loved you before the earth was, but rest your unworthy head upon His blessed bosom and talk with Him, even though the only words you may be able to say may be, “Lord, is it I?” Do seek fellowship with Him, as one who ignores every thought, feeling, or fact besides. So may it please Him to manifest Himself to you and to me as He does not to the world.  
If you that have never had fellowship with Christ think I am talking nonsense, I do not marvel. But let me tell you, if you had ever known what fellowship with Christ means, you would pawn your eyes, and barter your right arm, and give your estates away as trifles for the priceless favor! Princes would sell their crowns and peers would renounce their dignities to have five minutes’ fellowship with Christ. I will vouch for that. Why, I have had more joy in my Lord and Master in the space of the ticking of a clock than could be crammed into a lifetime of sensual delights, or of the pleasures of taste, or of the fascinations of literature! There is a depth, a matchless depth, in Jesus’ love! There is a luscious sweetness in the fellowship with Him. You must eat, or you will never know the flavor of it. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Behold how ready He still is to welcome sinners. Trust Him and live. Feed on Him and grow strong. Commune with Him and be happy. May every one of you who shall sit at the Table have the nearest approach to Jesus that you ever had! Like two streams that, after flowing side by side, at length unite, so may Christ and our soul melt into one, even as Isis melts into Thames, till only one life shall flow so that the life we live in the flesh shall be no more ours, but Christ that lives in us! Amen.

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #558 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Son 1.13

A BUNDLE OF MYRRH  
NO. 558

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 6, 1864, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“A bundle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me;  
He shall lie all night between my breasts.”  
Song of Solomon 1:13.**

CERTAIN Divines have doubted the inspiration of Solomon’s Song. Others have conceived it to be nothing more than a specimen of ancient love songs. Some have been afraid to preach from it because of its highly poetical character. The true reason for all this avoidance of one of the most heavenly portions of God’s Word lies in the fact that the spirit of this Song is not easily attained. Its music belongs to the higher spiritual life and has no charm in it for unspiritual ears.

The Song occupies a sacred enclosure into which none may enter unprepared. “Put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground,” is the warning voice from its secret tabernacles. The historical books I may compare to the outer courts of the Temple. The Gospels, the Epistles and the Psalms bring us into the Holy Place or the Court of the Priests. But the Song of Solomon is the Most Holy Place—the Holy of Holies before which the veil still hangs to many an untaught Believer.

It is not all the saints who can enter here, for they have not yet attained unto the holy confidence of faith and that exceeding familiarity of love which will permit them to commune in conjugal love with the great Bridegroom. We are told that the Jews did not permit the young student to read the Canticles—that years of full maturity were thought necessary before the man could rightly profit by this mysterious Song of loves. Possibly they were wise. At any rate the prohibition foreshadowed a great Truth of God.

The Song is, in truth, a book for full-grown Christians. Babes in Grace may find their carnal and sensuous affections stirred up by it towards Jesus, whom they know, rather “after the flesh” than in the spirit. It needs a man of fuller growth who has leaned his head upon the bosom of his Master and been baptized with His Baptism, to ascend the lofty mountains of love on which the spouse stands with her Beloved. The Song, from the first verse to the last, will be clear to those who have received an unction from the Holy One and know all things (1 John 2:20).

You are aware, dear Friends, that there are very few commentaries upon the Epistles of John. Where we find fifty commentaries upon any book of St. Paul, you will hardly find one upon John. Why is that? Are the books too difficult? The words are very simple. There is hardly a word of four syllables anywhere in John’s Epistles. Ah, but they are so saturated through and through with the spirit of love, which also perfumes this Book of Solomon, that those who are not taught in the school of communion, cry out, “We cannot read it, for it is sealed.”

The Song is a golden case of which love is the key rather than learning. Those who have not attained unto heights of affection—those who have not been educated by familiar communion with Jesus cannot come near to this mine of treasure, “seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living and kept close from the fowls of Heaven.” O for the soaring eagle wings of John and the far-seeing dove’s eyes of Solomon!

But the most of us are blind and cannot see afar off. May God be pleased to make us grow in Grace and give us so much of the Holy Spirit that with feet like hind’s feet we may stand upon the high places of Scripture and this morning have some near and dear communion with Christ Jesus!

Concerning our text let us talk very simply, remarking first, that Christ is very precious to Believers. Secondly, that there is good reason why He should be. Thirdly, that mingled with this sense of preciousness there is a joyous consciousness of possession of Him. And therefore, fourthly, there is an earnest desire for perpetual fellowship with Him. If you look at the text again you will see all these matters in it.

I. First, then, CHRIST JESUS IS UNUTTERABLY PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS. The words manifestly imply this—“A bundle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me.” She calls Him her “well-Beloved,” and so expresses her love most emphatically. It is not merely Beloved, but well-Beloved. Then she looks abroad about her to find a substance which shall be at once valuable in itself and useful in its properties. And lighting upon myrrh, she says, “A bundle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me.”

Without looking into the figure just now, we keep to the statement that Christ is precious to the Believer. Observe first that nothing gives the Believer so much joy as fellowship with Christ. Ask yourselves, you who have eaten at His Table and have been made to drink of His cup, where can such sweetness be found as you have tasted in communion with Jesus? The Christian has joy as other men have in the common mercies of life. For him there are charms in music, excellence in painting, and beauty in sculpture. For him the hills have sermons of majesty, the rocks hymns of sublimity and the valleys lessons of love.

He can look upon all things with an eye as clear and joyous as another man’s. He can be glad both in God’s gifts and God’s works. He is not dead to the happiness of the household—around his hearth he finds happy associations, without which life were dreary, indeed. His children fill his home with glee, his wife is his solace and delight, his friends are his comfort and refreshment. He accepts the comforts which soul and body can yield him according as God sees it wise to afford them unto him.

But he will tell you that in all these separately, yes, and in all of them added together, he does not find such substantial delight as he does in the Person of his Lord Jesus. Brethren, there is a wine which no vineyard on earth ever yielded. There is a bread which even the wheat fields of Egypt could never bring forth. You and I have said, when we have beheld others finding their god in earthly comforts, “You may boast in gold and silver and raiment, but I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.” In our esteem, the joys of earth are little better than husks for swine compared with Jesus the heavenly Manna.

I would rather have one mouthful of Christ’s love and a sip of His fellowship than a whole world full of carnal delights. What is the chaff to the wheat? What is the sparkling paste to the true diamond? What is a dream to the glorious reality? What is time’s mirth in its best trim compared to our Lord Jesus in His most despised estate? If you know anything of the inner life you will, all of you, confess that our highest, purest and most enduring joys must be the fruit of the Tree of Life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. No spring yields such sweet water as that Well of God which was dug with the soldier’s spear.

As for the house of feasting, the joy of harvest, the mirth of marriage, the sports of youth, the recreations of mature age—they are all as the small dust of the balance compared with the joy of Immanuel our bestBeloved. As the Preacher said, so say we, “I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What does it do? Vanity of vanities. All is vanity.” All earthly bliss is of the earth earthy, but the comforts of Christ’s Presence are like Himself heavenly. We can review our communion with Jesus and find no regrets of emptiness. There are no dregs in this wine, No dead flies in this ointment.

The joy of the Lord is solid and enduring. Vanity has not looked upon it, but discretion and prudence testify that it abides the test of years and is in time and in eternity worthy to be called “the only true delight.” What is the world with all its store?—

*“It is but a bitter sweet—  
When I attempt to pluck the rose,  
A pricking thorn I meet.  
Here perfect bliss can never be found,  
The honey’s mixed with gall—  
‘Midst changing scenes and dying friends,*

*Be You my All in All.”*  
We may plainly see that Christ is very precious to the Believer, because to him there is nothing good without Christ. Believer, have you not found in the midst of plenty a dire and sore famine if your Lord has been absent? The sun was shining, but Christ had hidden Himself and all the world was black to you. Or it was a night of tempest and there were many stars, but since the bright and Morning Star was gone on that dreary main, where you were tossed with doubts and fears, no other star could shed so much as a ray of light.

O, what a howling wilderness is this world without my Lord! If once He grows angry and does, though it is only for a moment, hide Himself from me—withered are the flowers of my garden! My pleasant fruits decay. The birds suspend their songs and black night lowers over all my hopes. Nothing can compensate for the company of the Savior—all earth’s candles cannot make daylight if the Sun of Righteousness is gone.

On the other hand, when all earthly comforts have failed you, have you not found quite enough in your Lord? Your very worst times have been your best times! You must almost cry to go back to your bed of sickness, for Jesus made it as a royal Throne whereon you reigned with Him. Those

dark nights—ah, they were not dark—your brightest days since then have been far darker. Do you remember when you were poor? Oh, how near Christ was to you and how rich He made you! You were despised and rejected of men, and no man gave you a good word! Ah, sweet was His fellowship, then, and how delightful to hear Him say, “Fear not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God”!

As afflictions abound, even so do consolations abound by Christ Jesus. The devil, like Nebuchadnezzar, heated the furnace seven times hotter, but who would have it less furiously blazing? No wise Believer! For the more terrible the heat the greater our Master’s Glory in the fact that we were made to tread those glowing coals and not a hair of our head was singed, nor so much as the smell of fire passed upon us because the Son of God walked those glowing coals in our company! Yes, we can look with resignation upon penury, disease and even death—for if all comforts are taken from us we should still be blest so long as we enjoy the Presence of the Lord our Savior.

Nor should I be straining the truth if I say that the Christian would sooner give up anything than forsake his Master. I have known some who have been afraid to look that text in the face which says, “He that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” Or that—“Except a man hate (or love less) his father and mother, and wife and children, he cannot be My disciple.” Yet I have found that those have frequently proved to be the most sincere lovers of Jesus who have been most afraid that He had not the best place in their hearts.

Perhaps the best way is not to sit down calmly to weigh our love, for it is not a thing to be measured with cool judgment, but to put your love to some practical test. Now, if it came to this, that you must deny Christ, or give up the dearest thing you have, would you deliberate? The Lord knows I speak what I feel in my own soul. When it comes to that—by His Grace I could not hesitate a second. If there were a stake and burning firewood, I might flinch from the fire, but so mighty is Divine love that it would doubtless drive me to the flames sooner than let me leave Jesus.

And if it comes to this, “Will you lose your eyes or give up Christ?” I would cheerfully be blind. Or if it were asked, “Will you have your right arm withered from its socket or give up Christ?” Yes—let both arms go! Let them both drop from the shoulder blades. Or if it should be, “Will you be from this day dumb and never speak before the multitude?” Oh, better to be dumb than lose Him! Indeed, when I talk of this it seems to be an insult to my Master—to put hands and eyes and tongue in comparison with Him—

*“Nor to my eyes is light so dear  
Nor friendship half so sweet.”*

If you compare life itself with Jesus, it is not to be named in the same day. If it should be said, “Will you live without Christ or die with Christ?” you could not deliberate—for to die with Christ is to live with Christ forever! But to live without Christ is to die the second death, the terrible death of the soul’s eternal perdition. No, there is no choice there! I think we could go further, dear Friends, and say not only could we give up everything, but I think, when love is fervent and the flesh is kept under, we could suffer anything with Christ.

I met, in one of Samuel Rutherford’s letters, an extraordinary expression where he speaks of the coals of Divine wrath all falling upon the head of Christ so that not one might fall upon His people. “And yet,” says he, “if one of those coals should drop from His head upon mine and did utterly consume me, yet if I felt it was a part of the coals that fell on Him and I was bearing it for His sake and in communion with Him, I would choose it for my Heaven.” That is a strong thing to say, that to suffer with Christ would be his Heaven if he assuredly knew that it was for and with Christ that he was suffering! Oh, there is, indeed, a heavenliness about suffering for Jesus! His Cross has such a majesty and mystery of delight in it that the more heavy it becomes, the more lightly does it sit upon the Believer’s shoulders.

One thing I know proves, Beloved, that you esteem Christ to be very precious, namely, that you want others to know Him, too. Do you not feel a pining in your souls till others hearts are filled with the love of Christ? My eyes could weep themselves out of their sockets for some of you who are ignorant of my Master’s love. Poor Souls! You are sitting outside the feast when the door is wide open and the King Himself is within. You choose to be out in the highways and under the hedges sooner than come to this wedding feast where the oxen and fatlings are killed and all things are ready!

Oh, if you knew Him! If you knew Him you would never be able to live without Him! If your eyes had ever seen Him once, or if your heart had ever known the charm of His Presence, you would think it to be a Hell to be for a moment without Christ! O poor blind eyes which cannot see Him and deaf ears which cannot hear Him and hard stony hearts which cannot melt before Him and Hell-besotted souls which cannot appreciate the majesty of His love, God help you! God help you! And bring you yet to know and rejoice in Him. The more your love grows, Beloved, the more insatiable will be your desire that others should love Him, till it will come to this that you will be, like Paul, “in labors more abundant,” spending and being spent that you may bring the rest of Christ’s elect body into union with their glorious Head.

II. But, secondly, THE SOUL CLINGS TO CHRIST, AND SHE HAS GOOD REASON FOR SO DOING, for her own words are “A bundle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me.” We will take the myrrh first and then consider the bundle next.

1. Jesus Christ is like myrrh. Myrrh may well be the type of Christ for its preciousness. It was an exceedingly expensive drug. We know that Jacob sent some of it down into Egypt as being one of the choice products of the land. It is always spoken of in Scripture as being a rich, rare and costly substance. But no myrrh could ever compare with Him—for Jesus Christ is so precious that if Heaven and earth were put together they could not buy another Savior. When God gave His Son to the world, He gave the best that Heaven had.

Take Christ out of Heaven and there is nothing for God to give. Christ was God’s All, for is it not written, “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”? Oh, precious gift of the whole of Deity in the Person of Christ! How inestimably precious is that Body of His which He took of the substance of the virgin! Well might angels herald the coming of this Immaculate Savior! Well might they watch over His holy life, for He is precious in His birth and precious in all His actions! How precious is He, dear Friends? As myrrh in the offering of His great Atonement! What a costly Sacrifice that was!

At what a price were you redeemed! Not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ! How precious is He too, in His Resurrection! He justifies all His people at one stroke—rising from the dead—that glorious Sun scatters all the nights of all His people by one rising. How precious is He in His Ascension as He leads captivity captive and scatters gifts among men! And how precious today in those incessant pleadings of His through which the mercies of God come down like the angels upon Jacob’s ladder to our needy souls! Yes, He is to the Believer in every aspect like myrrh for rarity and excellence!

Myrrh, again, was pleasant. It was a pleasant thing to be in a chamber perfumed with myrrh. Through the nostrils myrrh conveys delight to the human mind. But Christ gives delight to His people, not through one channel, but through every avenue. It is true that all His garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia, but He has not spiritual smell alone. The taste shall be gratified, too, for we eat His flesh and drink His blood. No, our feeling is ravished when His left hand is under us and His right hand does embrace us. As for His voice it is most sweet and our soul’s ear is charmed with its melody. Let God give Him to our sight and what can our eyes want more? Yes, He is altogether lovely.

Thus every gate of the soul has commerce with Christ Jesus in the richest and rarest commodities. There is no way by which a human spirit can have communion with Jesus which does not yield unto that spirit fresh and varied delights. O Beloved, we cannot compare Him merely to myrrh. He is everything which is good to look upon, or to taste, or to handle, or to smell—all put together in one—the quintessence of all delights. As all the rivers run into the sea, so all delights center into Christ. The sea is not full, but Jesus is full to the very brim.

Moreover, myrrh is perfuming. It is used to give a sweet smell to other things. It was mingled with the sacrifice, so that it was not only the smoke of the fat of kidneys of rams and the flesh of fat beasts, but there was a sweet fragrance of myrrh which went up with the sacrifice to Heaven. And surely, Beloved, Jesus Christ is very perfuming to His people. Does not He perfume their prayers so that the Lord smells a sweet savor? Does He not perfume their songs, so that they become like vials full of sweet odor?

Does He not perfume our ministry, for is it not written, “He causes us to triumph in Christ and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish”? Our persons are perfumed with Christ. Where do we get we our spikenard but from Him? Where shall we go to gather camphire which shall make our persons and presence acceptable before God but to Him? “For we are accepted in the Beloved.” “You are complete in Him.” “Perfect in Christ Jesus.” “For He has made us kings and priests unto our God and we shall reign forever and ever.”

Myrrh has preserving qualities. The Egyptians used it in embalming the dead—and we find Nicodemus and the holy women bringing myrrh and aloes in which to wrap the dead Body of the Savior. It was used to prevent corruption. What is there which can preserve the soul but Christ Jesus? What is the myrrh which keeps our works, which in themselves are dead, and corrupt and rotten? What, I say, keeps them from becoming a foul stench in the nostrils of God, but that Christ is in them? What we have done out of love to Christ, what we have offered through His mediation, what has been perfumed by faith in His Person becomes acceptable. God looks upon anything we say, or anything we do and if He sees Christ in it, He accepts it.

But if there is no Christ, He puts it away as a foul thing. See to it then, Beloved, that you never pray a prayer which is not sweetened with Christ. I would never preach a sermon—the Lord forgive me if I do—which is not full to overflowing with my Master. I know one who said I was always on the old string and he would come and hear me no more. He said if I preached a sermon without Christ in it, he would come. Ah, he will never come while this tongue moves—for a sermon without Christ in it—a Christless sermon? A brook without water? A cloud without rain? A well which mocks the traveler? A tree twice dead, plucked up by the root? A sky without a sun? A night without a star? It would be a realm of death—a place of mourning for angels and laughter for devils!

O Christian, we must have Christ! Do see to it that every day when you wake you give a fresh savor of Christ upon you by contemplating His Person. Live all the day, trying as much as lies in you, to season your hearts with Him and then at night lie down with Him upon your tongue. It is said of Samuel Rutherford that he often did fall asleep talking about Christ and was often heard in his dreams saying sweet things about his Savior. There is nothing which can preserve us, and keep us from sin and make our works holy and pure like this “bundle of myrrh.”

Myrrh, again, was used as a disinfectant. When the fever is abroad we know people who wear little bags of camphor about their necks. That may be very good—I do not know. But the Orientals believed that in times of pest and plague, a little bag of myrrh worn between the breasts would be of essential service to whomever might carry it. And there, doubtless, is some power in myrrh to preserve from infectious disease.

Well, Brethren, certain I am it is so with Christ! You have to go into the world which is like a great lazar-house. But if you carry Christ with you, you will never catch the world’s diseases. A man may be worth ever so much money, he will never get worldly if he keeps Christ on his heart. A man may have to tug and toil for his livelihood and be very poor. He will never be discontented and murmuring if he lives close to Christ. O you who have to handle the world, see to it that you handle the Master more than the world! Some of you have to work with drunken and swearing men. Others are cast into the midst of frivolities—O take my Master with

you—and sin’s plagues can have no influence upon your moral nature!

But myrrh was believed by the ancient physicians to do more than this—it was a cure—it did not merely prevent, but it healed. I do not know how many diseases are said to be healed by the use of myrrh, nor do I altogether suppose that these Oriental physicians spoke from facts, for they were too much given to ascribe qualities to drugs which those drugs did not possess. However, even modern physicians believe myrrh to have many valuable medical properties. Certain is it that your Christ is the best medicine for the soul. His name is Jehovah Rophi—“I am the Lord that heals them.”

When we see Luke called, “the beloved physician,” we almost grudge him the name. I will take it from him and give it to my Master, for He deserves it far more than Luke. The Beloved Physician! He touched the leper and he was made whole. He did but look upon those who were lame and they leaped as a hart! His voice startled the silence of Hades and brought back the soul to the body. What cannot Christ do? He can heal anything.

You who are sick this morning, sick with doubts and fears! You who are sick with temptation! You who struggle with an angry temper, or with the death-like sleep of sloth—get Christ and you are healed! Here all things meet and in all these things we may say, “A bundle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me.” I have not done yet, for myrrh was used in the East as a beautifier. We read of Esther, that before she was introduced to Ahasuerus, she and the virgins were bid to prepare themselves.

And among other things, they used myrrh. The belief of Oriental women was that it removed wrinkles and stains from the face and they used it constantly for the perfecting of their charms. I do not know how that may be, but I know that nothing makes the Believer so beautiful as being with Christ. He is beautiful in the eyes of God, of holy angels and of his fellow men. I know some Christians whom it is a great mercy to speak to—if they come into your cottage they leave behind them tokens of remembrance in the choice words they utter. To get them into the Church is a thousand mercies and if they join the Sunday school, of what value they are!

Let me tell you that the best gauge of a Christian’s usefulness will be found in the degree in which he has been with Jesus and learned of Him. Do not tell me it is the scholar! Do not say to me it is the man of eloquence! Do not say it is the man of substance! Well we would have all these consecrate what they have to Christ—but it is the man of God who is the strong man. It is the man who has been with Jesus who is the pillar of the Church. And a light to the world. O Brethren, may the beauty of the Lord be upon us through being much with Christ!

And I must not close this point without saying that myrrh might well be used as an emblem of our Lord from its connection with sacrifice. It was one of the precious drugs used in making the holy oil with which the priests were anointed and the frankincense which burned perpetually before God. It is this, the sacrificial Character of Christ, which is at the root and bottom of all that Christ is most precious to His people. O Lamb of God our Sacrifice, we must remember You!  
2. Now there has been enough, surely, said about the myrrh. Have patience while we just notice that He is called a bundle of myrrh, or as some translate it, a bag of myrrh, or a box of myrrh. There were three sorts of myrrh. There was the myrrh in sprigs, which, being burnt made a sweet smell. Then there was myrrh, a dried spice. And then thirdly, there was myrrh, a flowing oil. We do not know to which there is reference here. But why is it said “a bundle of myrrh”?

First, for the plenty of it. He is not a drop of it, He is a case full. He is not a sprig or flower of it, but a whole bundle full. There is enough in Christ for my necessities. There is more in Christ than I shall ever know— perhaps more than I shall understand even in Heaven. A bundle, again, for variety—for there is in Christ not only the one thing needful, but “you are complete in Him”—there is everything needful!

Take Christ in His different Characters and you will see a marvelous variety—Prophet, Priest, King, Husband, Friend, Shepherd. Take Him in His life, death, resurrection, ascension, second advent. Take Him in His virtue, gentleness, courage, self-denial, love, faithfulness, truth, righteousness—everywhere it is a bundle. Some of God’s judgments are manifold, but all God’s mercies are manifold and Christ, being the sum of God’s mercies, has fold upon fold of goodness.

He is “a bundle of myrrh” for variety. He is a bundle of myrrh again, for preservation—not loose myrrh to be dropped on the floor or trod on, but myrrh tied up, as though God bound up all virtues and excellencies in His Son. He is not myrrh spilt on the ground, but myrrh in a box—myrrh kept in a case. Such is Christ. The virtue and excellence which goes out of Christ are quite as strong today as in the day when the woman touched the hem of His garment and was healed. “Able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God through Him,” is He still unto this hour.

A bundle of myrrh, again, to show how diligently we should take care of it. We must bind Him up, we must keep our thoughts of Him and knowledge of Him as under lock and key lest the devil should steal anything from us. We must treasure up His words, prize His ordinances, obey His precepts, tie Him up and keep Him ever with us as a precious bundle of myrrh. And yet again, a bundle of myrrh for specialty, as if He were not common myrrh for everybody. No, no, no! There is distinguishing, discriminating Grace—a bundle tied up for His people and labeled with their names from before the foundation of the world.

No doubt there is an allusion here to the scent bottle used in every land. Jesus Christ is a bottle of myrrh and He does not give forth His smell to everybody but to those who know how to draw forth the stopper— who understand how to get into communion with Him—to have close dealings with Him. He is not myrrh for all who are in the house but for those who know how to put the bottle to their nostrils and receive the sweet perfume. Oh, blessed people whom the Lord has admitted into His secrets! Oh, choice and happy people who are thus made to say, “A bottle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me.”

But I am afraid I tire you, especially those of you who do not know anything about my subject. There are some such here who know no more about what I am talking of than if they were Muslim. They are listening

to a new kind of religion now. The religion of Christ is as high above them as is the path of the eagle above that of the fish and as much hidden from them as the way of the serpent on the rock from the eyes of man. This is a path which the eagle’s eye has not seen, nor has the lion’s whelp trod. But I trust there are some here who know it.

III. Our third remark was to be that with a sense of Christ’s preciousness is combined A CONSCIOUSNESS OF POSSESSION. It is, “my wellBeloved.” My dear Hearer, is Christ your well-Beloved? A Savior—that is well. But my Savior—that is the best of the best. What is the use of bread if it is not mine? I may die of hunger. Of what value is gold, if it is not mine? I may yet die in a workhouse. I want this preciousness to be mine. “My well-Beloved.”

Have you ever laid hold on Christ by the hand of faith? Will you take Him again this morning, Brethren? I know you will. Would that those who never did take Him would take Him now and say, “My Savior.” There stands His Atonement, freely offered to you—may you have the Grace to take it and say, “My Savior, my Savior,” this morning! Has your heart taken Him? It is well for us to use both hands, not only the hand of faith, but the hand of love, for this is the true embrace, when both arms meet around our Beloved.

Do you love Him? O Souls, do you LOVE Christ, with an emphasis upon the word love? Do not talk to me about a religion which dwells in the head and never gets into the heart. Get rid of it as quickly as you can. It will never bring you to Heaven. It is not, “I believe this and that” merely, but “I love.” Ah, some who have been great fools in doctrine have been very wise in love. We tell our children to learn things, “by heart.” I think you can. You love Jesus and if you cannot you must confess as I do—

*“A very wretch, Lord, I should prove,  
Had I no love to You.  
Sooner than not my Savior love,  
O may I cease to be.”*

But that is not the only word. “A bundle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me.” That is not a redundant expression, “unto me.” He is not so to many. Ah, my Lord is a root out of a dry ground to multitudes. A threevolume novel suits them better than His Bible. They would sooner go to a play or a dance than they would have any fellowship with Him. They can see the beauties upon the cheeks of this Jezebel world, but they cannot see the perfections of my Lord and Master. Well! Well! Well! Let them say what they will and let them think as they please, every creature has its own joy, but “a bundle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me.” Unto me! Unto me, and if there is not another who finds Him so, yet “a bundle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me”!

“I would it were not with others as it is—I would that others did think so also of Him. But let them say what they will, they shall not drive me out of my knowledge of this—“a bundle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me.” The infidel says, “There is no God.” The atheist would altogether laugh me to scorn. They shall say what they will, but “a bundle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me.” Even bishops have been found who will take away a part of His Book and so rend His garments and rob Him!

And there are some who say His religion is out of date and Grace has lost His power. And they go after philosophy and vain conceit and I know not what, but “a bundle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me.” They may have no nostril for Him. They may have no desire after Him. So let it be, but “a bundle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me.” I know there are some who say they have tried Him and not found Him sweet. And there are those who have turned away from Him and gone back to the beggarly elements of the world because they see nothing in Christ that they should desire Him. But “a bundle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me.”

Ah, Christian, this is what you want, a personal experience, a positive experience! You want to know for yourself! There is no religion which is worth a button which is not burnt into you by personal experience. And there is no religion worth a straw which does not spring from your soul, which does not lay hold upon the very vitals of your spirit. Yes, you must say—I hope you can say as you go down those steps this morning and enter again tomorrow into that busy, giddy world—you must say, “Let the whole world go astray, ‘a bundle of myrrh is my well-Beloved unto me.’ ”

IV. Now the practical point closes it. A SENSE OF POSSESSION AND A SENSE OF ENJOYMENT WILL ALWAYS LEAD THE CHRISTIAN TO DESIRE CONSTANT FELLOWSHIP. “He,” or rather “it, shall lie all night between my breasts.” The Church does not say, “I will put this bundle of myrrh on my shoulders”—Christ is no burden to a Christian. She does not say, “I will put this bundle of myrrh on my back”—the Church does not want to have Christ concealed from her face. She desires to have Him where she can see Him, and near to her heart.

The bundle of myrrh shall lie all night upon my heart. The words, “All night,” are not in the original. I do not know how they got into the translation. He is to be always there, not only all night but all day. It would be always night if He were not there and it cannot be night when He is there, for—

*“Midst darkest shade, if He appears,*

*My dawning has begun.”*  
He shall always be upon our heart. I think that expression just means these three things. It is an expression of desire—her desire that she may have the consciousness of Christ’s love continually. Do not you feel the same desire? O Christian, if you have ever been made like the chariots of Amminadib, it will be ill for you if you can be content to be otherwise. If you have but once tasted Christ, you will wait to feed upon Him all day and all night, and as long as you live.

My desire is that Jesus may abide with me from morn till evening in the world and in the Church! When I awake, when I sleep, when I go abroad and when I come home into the bosom of my family. Is not that your desire that He may be always with you? But then, it is not only her desire, but it is also her confidence. She seems to say, “He will be with me thus.” You may have a suspension of visible fellowship with Christ, but Christ will never go away from people, really. He will be all night between your

breasts.

He will at all times abide faithful to you. He may close His eyes and hide His face from you, but His heart never can depart from you. He has set you as a seal upon His heart and increasingly will make you sensible of it. Remember there is no suspension of Christ’s union with His people and no suspension of those saving influences which always make His people to stand complete in Him.

To conclude, this is also a resolve. She desires, she believes and she resolves it. Lord, You shall be with me, You shall be with me always. I appeal to you, Brethren, will you not make this resolve in God’s strength this morning to cling close to Christ? Do not go talking, as you go home, about all sorts of nonsense. Do not spend this afternoon in communion with folly and vanity. But throughout this day let your soul keep to Christ, to nothing but Christ. This evening we shall come to His Table to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Him. Let us try, if we can, that nothing shall make us give up Christ all this day.

Have you got Him? Hold Him and do not let Him go till you bring Him to your mother’s house, to the chamber of her who bore you. Then there will be the family prayer at night. O, seek to keep Him till you put your head upon the pillow. And then, on Monday morning, some of you have to go to work and as soon as you get into the workshop or the factory, you say, “Now I must lose my Master.” No! Do not lose Him! Hold Him fast! When your hand plies the hammer and when your fingers hold the needle, still cling to Him! In the market or in the Exchange, on board ship, or in the field, do not let Him go!

You may have Him with you all day. The Muslim usually wears a piece of the Koran round his neck and one, when converted to Christianity, put his New Testament in a little silken bag and always wore it there. We need not such outward signs, but let us always have the Savior there! Let us hang Him about our neck as a charm against all evil. Seek His blessed company. Place Him as a star upon your breast to be your honor and joy. Well, I have done, but I must have a word with the unconverted.

There are some who can say, “I will have Christ always on my tongue.” Away with tongue religion! You must have Him on your heart. Ah, there are some who say, “I hope I shall have Christ on my heart in all eternity.” You cannot have Christ in eternity if you do not have Him in time. If you despise Him today—in this life—He will reject you tomorrow in the world to come. And if He calls and you refuse, one day you will call and He will refuse. Do not put up with desires merely, dear Friends!

Some of you have desires and nothing more. Do not only desire Christ, but get Him. Do not stop short with saying, “I should like to have Him in my heart”—give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till by humble faith you have taken Christ to be your All in All. May the Lord bless these poor words, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2459 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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**“BETTER THAN WINE”**

**NO. 2459**

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, APRIL 5, 1896. *DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 2, 1872.   
*“Your love is better than wine.” Song of [Solomon 1:2](tw://bible.*?id=22.1.2|_AUTODETECT_|).***

THE Scriptural emblem of wine, which is intended to be the symbol of the richest earthly joy, has become desecrated in process of time by the sin of man. I suppose in the earlier ages when the Word of God was written, it would hardly have been *conceivable* that there could have existed on the face of the earth such a mass of drunken men and women as now pollute and defile it by their very presence. For man, nowadays, is not content with the wine that God makes, but he manufactures some for himself of which he cannot partake, at least in any abundance, without becoming drunk. Redeem the figure in our text, if you can, and go back from the drinking customs of our own day to more primitive and purer times, when the ordinary meal of a man was very similar to that which is spread upon this communion table—bread and wine—of which men might partake without fear of evil effects. But do not use the metaphor as it would now be understood among the mass of mankind, at least in countries like our own.

“Your love is better than wine.” In considering these words, in the spirit in which the Inspired writer used them, I shall, first of all, try to show you that *Christ’s love is better than wine because of what it is not.* And, secondly, that *it is better than wine because of what it is*. Next, we will examine the marginal reading of the text which will teach us something about *Christ’s love in the plural—*“Your *loves* are better than wine.” And then, lastly, we will come back to the version we have before us, in which we shall see *Christ’s love in the singular*, for the love of Christ, even when it is described in the plural, is always one—though there are many forms of it—it is always the same love.

I. First, then, I want to prove to you that CHRIST’S LOVE IS BETTER THAN WINE BECAUSE OF WHAT IT IS NOT.   
It is so, first, *because it may be taken without question.* There may be and there always will be in the world, questions about wine. There will be some who will say, and wisely say, “Leave it alone.” There will be others who will exclaim, “Drink of it abundantly.” While a third company will say, “Use it moderately.” But there will be no question among upright men about partaking to the fullest of the love of Christ! There will be none of the godly who will say, “Abstain from it,” and none who will say, “Use it moderately”—all true Christians will echo the words of the Heavenly Bridegroom, Himself, “Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.” The wisdom of imbibing freely of the love of Christ shall never be questioned, even, by the pure spirits in Heaven—this is the wine which they themselves quaff in everlasting bowls at the right hand of God, and the Lord of Glory, Himself, bids them quaff it to their fill! This is the highest delight of all who know Christ and have been born again by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit! This is our greatest joy while here below and we can never have too much of it! Yes, we may even swim in this sea of bliss, and there shall be none who shall dare to ask any of us, “What are you doing there?” Many delightsome things, many earthly joys, many of the pleasures of this world are very questionable enjoyments. Christians had better keep away from everything about which their consciences are not perfectly clear—but all our consciences are clear concerning the Lord Jesus and our heart’s love to Him! So, in this respect, His love is better than wine.   
Christ’s love is also better than wine *because it is to be had without money*. Many a man has beggared himself and squandered his estate through his love of worldly pleasure—and especially through his fondness for wine. But the love of Christ is to be had without money. What says the Scripture? “Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” The love of Christ is unpurchased and, I may add, it is unpurchaseable! Solomon says, in the eighth chapter of this Book, “If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly despised.” And we may as truly say, “If a man would give all the substance of his house for the love of Christ, it would be utterly despised.” The love of Jesus comes to His people freely! Not because they deserve it, or ever will deserve it—not because, by any merits of their own, they have won it, or by any prayers of their own, they have secured it—it is spontaneous love. It flows from the heart of Christ because it must come, like the a stream that leaps from an ever-flowing fountain. If you ask why Jesus loves His people, we can give no other reason than this—   
*“Because it seemed good in His sight.”*Christ’s love is the freest thing in the world—free as the sunbeam, free as the mountain torrent, free as the air! It comes to the child of God without purchase and without merit and, in this respect, it is better than wine.   
Again, Christ’s love is better than wine *because it is to be enjoyed without spoiling*. The sweetest matter on earth which is, for a while, pleasant to the taste, sooner or later sours upon the palate. If you find honey, you can soon eat so much of it that you will no longer relish its sweetness. But the love of Jesus never yet soured upon the palate of a newborn soul. He who has had most of Christ’s love has cried, “More! More! More!” If ever there was a man on earth who had Christ’s love in him to the fullest, it was holy Samuel Rutherford, yet you can see in his letters how he labored for suitable expressions while trying to set forth his hungering and thirsting after the love of Christ. He says he floated upon Christ’s love like a ship upon a river And then he quaintly asks that his vessel may founder, and go to the bottom, till that blessed stream shall flow right over the masthead of his ship! He wanted to be baptized into the love of Christ, to be flung into the ocean of his Savior’s love—and this is what the true Christian always longs for.   
No lover of the Lord Jesus has ever said that he has had enough of Christ’s love. When Madame Guyon had spent many a day and many a month in the sweet enjoyment of the love of Jesus, she penned most delicious hymns concerning it, but they are all full of craving after more—there is no indication that she wished for any change of affection to her Lord, or any change in the object of her affection. She was satisfied with Christ and longed to have more and more of His love. Ah, poor drunk, you may put away the cup of devils because you are satiated with its deadly draft, but never did he who drinks of the wine of Christ’s love become satiated or even content with it! He always desires more and yet more of it.   
Further, Christ’s love is better than wine *because it is without sediment*. All wine has something in it which renders it imperfect, and liable to corruption—there is something that will have to settle, something that must be skimmed off the top, something that needs purifying. So is it with all the joys of earth—there is sure to be something in them that mars their perfection. Men have sought out many inventions of mirth and pleasure, amusement and delight, but they have always found some hitch or flaw somewhere. Solomon gathered to himself all manner of pleasant things that are the delight of kings. He gives us a list of them in the Book of Ecclesiastes—“I made me great works; I built me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that brings forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of rings and of the provinces: I got me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.” But his verdict concerning all of them was, “Behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit.”   
But he who delights himself in the love of Christ will tell you that he finds no vanity and vexation of spirit *there*, but everything to charm and rejoice and satisfy the heart! There is nothing in the Lord Jesus Christ that we could wish to have taken away from Him! There is nothing in His love that is impure, nothing that is unsatisfactory. Our precious Lord is comparable to the most fine gold! There is no alloy in Him. No, there is nothing that can be compared with Him, for, “He is altogether lovely,” all perfections melted into one perfection and all beauties combined into one inconceivable beauty! Such is the Lord Jesus and such is His love to His people—without anything of imperfection needing to be removed!   
The love of Christ, too, blessed be His name, is better than wine *because it will never, as wine will, turn sour*. In certain stages of development and under certain influences, the sweet ferments and vinegar is formed instead of wine. Oh, through what fermentations Christ’s love might have passed if it had been capable of being acted upon by anything from outside! Oh, how often, Beloved, have we grieved Him! We have been cold and chill towards Him when we ought to have been like coals of fire! We have loved the things of this world, we have been unfaithful to our Best-Beloved, we have suffered our hearts to wander to other lovers—yet never has He been soured toward us and never will He be! Many waters cannot quench His love, neither can the floods drown it. He is the same loving Savior, now, as He always was, and such He will always be. And He will bring us to the rest which remains for the people of God. Truly, in all these respects, because there are none of these imperfections in His love, it is better than wine!   
Once more, Christ’s love is better than wine *because it produces no ill effects*. Many are the mighty men who have fallen down slain by wine. Solomon says, “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.” But who was ever slain by the love of Christ? Who was ever made wretched by this love? We have been inebriated with it, for the love of Christ sometimes produces a holy exhilaration that makes men say, “Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell.” There is an elevation that lifts the soul above all earthly things and bears the spirit up beyond where eagles soar, even into the clear atmosphere where God communes with men! There is all that sacred exhilaration about the love of Christ, but there are no evil effects arising from it. He that will, may drink from this golden chalice, and he may drink as much as he wills, for the more he drinks the stronger and the better shall he be!   
Oh, may God grant to us, dear Friends, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge! I feel sure that while I am preaching on such a theme as this, I must seem, to some here present, to be talking arrant nonsense, for they have never tasted of the love of Jesus! But those who have tasted of it will, perhaps, by my words, have many sweet experiences called to their minds which will refresh their spirits and set them longing to have new draughts of this all-precious love which infinitely transcends all the joys of earth! This, then, is our first point—Christ’s love is better than wine because of what *it is not*.   
II. But, secondly, CHRIST’S LOVE IS BETTER THAN WINE BECAUSE OF WHAT IT IS.   
Let me remind you of some of the uses of wine in the East. It was often used as a medicine, for *it had certain healing properties.* The good Samaritan, when he found the wounded man, poured into his wounds, “oil and wine.” But the love of Christ is better than wine—it may not heal the wounds of the flesh, but it does heal the wounds of the spirit. Do not some of you remember when your poor heart was gashed through and through by the dagger of Moses, when you felt the wounds caused by the Law of God, the deadly wounds that could not be healed by human hands? Then, how sweetly did that wine of Christ’s love come streaming into the gaping wounds!   
There were such healing drops as this—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Or such as this, “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Or this, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Or this, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Or this, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” I cannot, perhaps, quote the text that dropped like wine and oil into *your* wounds, but I remember well the text that dropped into mine. The precious vial of wine that healed up all my wounds as in a moment and made my heart whole was that text I quoted last, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” Wine made by man cannot be medicine to a broken heart, nor can it heal a wounded spirit—but the love of Jesus Christ can do this and do it to perfection!   
Wine, again, was often *associated by men with the giving of strength*. Now, whatever strength wine may give or may not give, certainly the love of Jesus gives strength—strength mightier than the mightiest earthly force—for when the love of Jesus Christ is shed abroad in a man’s heart, he can bear a heavy burden of sorrow. If he could have the load of Atlas piled upon his shoulders, and if he could have all the care of all the world pressing upon his heart, yet if he had the love of Christ in his soul, he would be able to bear the load! The love of Christ helps a man to fight the battles of life. It makes life, with all its cares and troubles, a happy one. It enables a man to do great exploits and makes him strong for suffering, strong for self-sacrifice, and strong for service. It is wonderful, in reading the history of the saints, to notice what the love of Christ has fitted them to do! I might almost say that it has plucked up mountains and cast them into the sea, for things impossible to other men have become easy enough to men on fire with the love of Christ. What the Church of Christ needs, just now, to strengthen her, is more love to her Lord and her Lord’s love more fully enjoyed in the souls of her members! There is no strengthening influence like it.   
Wine was also frequently used as the *symbol of joy* and certainly, in this respect, Christ’s love is better than wine. Whatever joy there may be in the world (and it would be folly to deny that there is some sort of joy which even the basest of men know), yet the love of Christ is far superior to it! Human joy derived from earthly sources is a muddy, dirty pool, at which men would not drink did they know there was a stream sweeter, cooler and far more refreshing. The love of Jesus brings a joy that is fit for angels, a joy that we shall have continued to us even in Heaven, itself, a joy which makes earth like Heaven! It is, therefore, far better than wine.   
It is better than wine, once more, for *the sacred exhilaration which it gives*. I have already spoken of this—the love of Christ is the grandest stimulant of the renewed nature that can be known! It enables the fainting man to revive from his swooning. It causes the feeble man to leap up from his bed of languishing and it makes the weary man strong again. Are you weary, Brothers and Sisters, and sick of life? You only need more of Christ’s love shed abroad in your heart! Are you, dear Brother, ready to faint through unbelief? You only need more of Christ’s love and all shall be well with you. I would to God that we were all filled with it to the fullest, like those Believers were on the day of Pentecost, of whom the mockers said that they were full of new wine! Peter truly said that they were not drunk, as men supposed, but that it was the Spirit of God and the love of Christ filling them with unusual power and unusual energy and, therefore, men knew not what it was! God grant to us, also, this great power, and Christ shall have all the glory of it!   
III. But now, passing rapidly on, for our time is flying, the marginal reading of our text is in the plural—“Your *loves* are better than wine”—and this teaches us that CHRIST’S LOVE MAY BE SPOKEN OF IN THE PLURAL because it manifests itself in so many ways. I ask all renewed hearts that have been won to Jesus, the virgin souls that follow Him wherever He goes, to walk with me in imagination over the sacred tracks of the love of Christ.   
Think, Beloved, of *Christ’s Covenant love*, the love he had to us before the world was! Christ is no new lover of His people’s souls—He loved them before the daystar knew its place, or the planets began their mighty revolutions! Every soul whom Jesus loves now, He loved forever and ever! What a wondrous love was that—infinite, unbounded, everlasting—which led Him to enter into Covenant with God that He would bear our sins and suffer our penalties, that He might redeem us from going down into the Pit! Oh, the Covenant love of Jesus! Some dear souls are afraid to believe this Truth of God—let me persuade them to search the Scriptures till they find it, for, of all the doctrines of Holy Writ, I know of none more full of consolation to the heart, when rightly received, than the great foundation Truths of Divine Predestination and Personal Election. When we see that we were eternally *chosen* in Christ, eternally *given* to Christ by His Father, eternally *accepted* in the Beloved and eternally *loved* by Christ, then shall we say, with holy gratitude, “Such love as this is better than wines on the lees, well refined.”   
Think next, Beloved, of *Christ’s forbearing love*—the love which looked upon us when we were born, saw us full of sin and yet loved us—the love which saw us when we went astray from the womb speaking lies—the love which heard us profanely speak, wickedly think and obstinately disobey, yet loved us all the while! Let the thought of it ravish your heart as you sing—   
*“He saw me ruined in the Fall,   
Yet loved me, notwithstanding all!   
He saved me from my lostestate,   
His loving kindness, oh, how great!”*Thus were we the subjects of Christ’s electing love and forbearing love.   
Yes, but the sweetness to us was when was realized *Christ’s personal love*, when, at last, we were brought to the foot of His Cross, humbly confessing our sins. May I ask you who can do so, to go back to that happy moment? There you lay at the foot of the Cross, broken in pieces, and you thought there was no hope for you. But you looked up to the crucified Christ and those blessed wounds of His began to pour out a stream of precious blood upon you—and you saw that He was wounded for *your* transgressions, that He was bruised for *your* iniquities, that the chastisement of your peace was upon Him—and that with His stripes *you* were healed! That very instant your sins were all put away! You gave one look of faith to the bleeding Savior and every spot and speck and stain of your sin were all removed—and your guilt was forever pardoned!   
When you first felt *Christ’s forgiving love—*I will not insult you by asking whether it was not better than wine. Oh, the unutterable joy, the indescribable bliss you felt when Jesus said to you, “I have borne your sins in My own body on the tree, I have carried the great load of your transgressions, I have blotted them out like a cloud, and they are gone from you forever!” That was a love that was inconceivably precious! At the very recollection, our heart leaps within us and our soul does magnify the Lord!   
Since that glad hour, we have been the subjects of *Christ’s accepting love*, for we have been “accepted in the Beloved.” We have also had *Christ’s guiding love*, *providing love* and *instructing love*. His love in all manner of ways has come to us and benefited and enriched us. And, Beloved, we have had *sanctifying love—*we have been helped to fight this sin and that, and to overcome them by the blood of the Lamb. The Spirit of God has been given to us so that we have been enabled to subdue this ruling passion and overcome that evil power. The Lord has also given us *sustaining love* under very sharp troubles. Some of us could tell many a story about the sweet upholding love of Christ—in poverty, or in bodily pain, or in deep depression of spirits, or under cruel slander, or reproach. His left hand has been under our head while His right hand has embraced us. We have almost courted suffering, itself, by reason of the richness of the consolation which suffering times have always brought with them! He has been such a precious, precious, precious Christ to us that we do not know how to speak well enough of His dear name!   
Then let us reflect with shame upon *Christ’s enduring love to us*. Why, ever since we have been converted, we have grieved Him times without number! As I have already reminded you, we have often been false to Him—we have not loved Him with the love which He might well claim from us. Yet Christ has never cast us away, but still, to this very moment He smiles upon us! He says to His own brethren whom He has bought with blood and to each one of us, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands. I have espoused you unto Myself forever. I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” He uses the most kind and endearing terms towards us to show that His love will never die! Glory be to His holy name for this! Is not His love better than wine?   
There is one word I must not leave out and that is, *Christ’s chastening love*. I know that many of you who belong to Him have often smarted under His chastening hand, but Christ never smote you in anger. Whenever He has laid a cross on your back, it has been because He loved you so much that He could not keep it off. He never took away a joy without meaning, thereby, to increase your joy, and it was always done for your good. Perhaps we cannot, at present, say that the Lord’s chastising love has always been sweet to us, but we shall say it, one day, and I think I must say it now! I bless my dear Master for everything He has done to me and I can never tell all that I owe to the anvil, the hammer, the fire and the file! Blessed be His name, for many of us can say, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word.” Therefore will we put in Christ’s chastising love among the rest of His loves and say of it, “This love, also, is better than wine.” We would sooner have the chastisements of God than the pleasures of the world! We would rather have God’s cup full of gall than the devil’s cup full of the sweetest wine he ever made! We prefer to take God’s left hand instead of the world’s right hand—and would sooner walk with God in the dark than walk with the world in the light! Will not every Christian say that?   
Beloved, there are other forms of Christ’s love yet to be manifested to you. Do you not, sometimes, tremble at the thought of dying? Oh, you shall have—and you ought to think of it now—you shall have special revelations of *Christ’s love in your dying moments*! Then shall you say, like the governor of the marriage feast at Cana, “You have kept the good wine until now.” I believe we have hardly any conception of what comfort the Lord pours into His people’s souls in their dying moments. We do not need those comforts, yet—we could not bear them *now*—but they are laid up in store and when we need them, they will be brought out. And then shall our spirits find that the Lord’s promise is fulfilled, “As your days, so shall your strength be.”   
And then—but perhaps I had better be silent upon such a theme—when the veil is drawn and the spirit has left the body, what will be the bliss of *Christ’s love to the spirits gathered with Him in Glory?—   
“Oh, for the bliss of flying,   
My risen Lord to meet!   
Oh, for the rest of lying   
Forever at His feet!   
Oh, for the hour of seeing   
My Savior faceto face!   
The hope of always being   
In thatsweet meeting place!”*Or, as Dr. Watts puts it—   
*“Millions of years my wondering eyes Shall over Yourbeauties rove   
And endless ages I’ll adore   
The glories of Your love.”*Then think of *the love of the day of our resurrection*, for Christ loves our bodies as well as our souls and, arrayed in glory, these mortal bodies shall rise from the tomb! Oh, the bliss of being like our Lord and being with Him when He comes in all the splendor of the Second Advent—sitting as assessors with Him to judge the world and to judge even the angels! And then to be in His triumphal procession when He shall ascend to God and deliver up the Kingdom to the Father and the Mediatorial system shall be ended, and God shall be All in All! And then to be forever, forever, forever, “forever with the Lord,” with no fear of the soul dying out, with no dread of the false doctrine of annihilation, like a grim specter always crossing our blissful pathway! With a life coeval with the life of God and an immortality divinely given, we shall outlast the sun! And when the moon grows pale and wanes forever, and this old earth and all that is therein shall be burned up, yet shall we be forever with Him! Truly, His love is better than wine! It is the very essence of Heaven! It is better than anything that we can conceive!   
God grant us foretastes of the loves of Heaven in the present realization of the love of Jesus, which is the same love, and through which Heaven, itself, shall come to us!   
IV. Now, I must have just a few minutes for my last point, and that is, CHRIST’S LOVE IN THE SINGULAR—a theme which might well suffice for half a dozen sermons at the very least! Look at the text as it stands—“Your love is better than wine.”   
Think, first, of *the love of Christ in the cluster*. That is where the wine is first. We talk of the grapes of Eshcol, but these are not worthy to be mentioned in comparison with the love of Jesus Christ as it is seen, in old eternity, in the purpose of God, in the Covenant of Grace and, afterwards, in the promises of the Word, and in the various Revelations of Christ in the types and symbols of the Ceremonial Law. There I see the love of Christ in the cluster. When I hear God threatening the serpent that the Seed of the woman would bruise his head, and when, later on, I find many prophecies concerning Him who is mighty to save, I see the wine in the cluster, the love of Christ that is *really there*, but not yet enjoyed! What delight it gives us to even look at the love of Christ in the cluster!   
Next, look at *the love of Christ in the basket*, for the grapes must be gathered and cast into the basket before the wine can be made. I see Jesus Christ living here on earth among the sons of men—gathered, as it were, from the sacred vine and, like a cluster thrown into the basket. Oh, the love of Jesus Christ in the manger of Bethlehem, the love of Jesus in the workshop of Nazareth, the love of Jesus in His holy ministry, the love of Jesus in the temptation in the wilderness, the love of Jesus in His miracles, the love of Jesus in His communion with His disciples, the love of Jesus in bearing shame and reproach for our sakes, the love of Jesus in being so poor that He had not where to lay His head, the love of Jesus in enduring such contradiction of sinners against Himself! I cannot hope to enter into this great subject! I can only point it out to you and pass on.   
There is, first, Christ’s love in the cluster, and next, there is Christ’s love in the basket. Think of it and, as you think of it, say, “It is better than wine.”   
But oh, if your hearts have any tenderness towards Him, think of *the love of Christ in the winepress*. Look at Him there, when the cluster in the basket begins to be crushed! Oh, what a crushing was that under the foot of the treader of grapes when Christ sweat, as it were, great drops of blood! And how terribly did the great press come down, again, and again when He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair! And He hid not His face from shame and spitting! But oh, how the red wine flowed from the winepress—what fountains there were of this precious sweetness when Jesus was nailed to the Cross—suffering in body, depressed in spirit and forsaken of His God! “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?” These are the sounds that issue from the winepress and how terrible and yet how sweet they are! Stand there and believe that all your sins were borne by Him—and that He suffered what you ought to have suffered—and, as your Substitute, was crushed for you—  
*“He bore, thatyou might never bear,   
His Father’s righteous ire.”*Yes, Beloved, Christ’s love in the winepress is better than wine!   
Now I want you to think of *the love of Christ in the flagon*, where His precious love is stored up for His people—the love of His promises, given to you. The love of His Providence, for He rules for you. The love of His intercession, for He pleads for you. The love of His representation, for He stands at the right hand of the Father as the Representative of His people. The love of His union with His people, for you are one with Him—He is the Head and you are the members of His body—the love of all that He is, all that He was and all that He ever shall be, for in every capacity and under all circumstances He loves you and will love you without end! Think of His rich love, His abundant love towards His people! I call it love in the flagon, this love of His to all the saints which He has stored up for them.   
And then, Beloved, not only think of but enjoy *the love of Christ in the cup*, by which I mean His love to *you*. I always feel, when I get to this topic, as if I would rather sit down and ask you to think it over, than try to talk to you about it. This theme seems to silence me. I think, like the poet—   
*“Come, then, expressive silence, museHis praise.”*Love to *me*! Dear child of God, think of it in this way—let me speak for you—“He loves *me*! He, a King, loves me! A King? The King of Kings, HE loves *me*! *God*, very God of very God, loves *me*!” Strange conjunction, this, between the Infinite and a worm! We have heard and read romantic stories of the loves of emperors to poor village maidens, but what of these? Worms were never raised so high above their meaner fellow worms as the Lord Jesus is above us! If an angel loved an ant, there would be no such difference as when Jehovah-Jesus loves us! Yet there is no fact beneath Heaven, or in Heaven, that is so indisputable as this fact—that He loves us if we are His believing people! For this we have the declaration of Inspiration. No, Brothers and Sisters, we have even more than that to confirm it beyond all question, for we have His own death upon the Cross! He signed this document with His own blood in order that no Believer might ever doubt its authenticity!   
“Herein is love.” “Behold what manner of love” there is in the Cross! What wondrous love is there! Oh, then, let us have Christ’s love in the cup, the love that we may daily drink, the love that we may personally drink just now at this moment, the love which shall be all our own as if there were no others in the world—and yet a love in which ten thousand times ten thousand have an equal share with ourselves!   
God bless you, dear Friends, and give you to drink of this wine! And if any here know not the love of Jesus Christ, I pray the Lord to bring them to know it. May He renew their heart and give them faith in Him, for whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God! “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” His great Gospel Word is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” May the Lord confirm this Word by His Spirit, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
*[ISAIAH 26:20](tw://bible.*?id=23.26.20|_AUTODETECT_|), [21](tw://bible.*?id=23.26.21|_AUTODETECT_|); [27:1-9](tw://bible.*?id=23.27.1-23.27.9|_AUTODETECT_|).*We will read a short passage in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, commencing with the 26th chapter, and the 20th verse. [Isaiah 26:20](tw://bible.*?id=23.26.20|_AUTODETECT_|). *Come, my people, enter into your chamber, and shut your doors about you: hide yourself, as it were, for a*

*little moment, until the indignation is past.* There is never a flood for the wicked without an ark for the righteous! Never shall a storm sweep over the earth till God has prepared a great rock wherein His people may be hidden.

21. *For, behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.* The earth has often covered up the evidences of human guilt. Blood shed in battle has soaked into the soil and men have forgotten the violence of tyrants and conquerors, but the earth shall disclose her blood. Sin, though it is sown in the earth, shall spring up like wheat, but to a terrible harvest. “Be sure your sin will find you out.”

[Isaiah 27:1](tw://bible.*?id=23.27.1|_AUTODETECT_|). *In that day the LORD, with His sore and great and strong sword, shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent.* That is to say, He will punish those who are like leviathan—the proudest, the greatest and the most powerful sinners shall not escape Divine Justice. God’s Laws are not like cobwebs, meant to catch the little flies while the great ones break through—He will strike leviathan—He will surely punish the mightiest sinners of the earth.

1. *Even leviathan that crooked serpent.* Hard to come at, difficult to find, he shall not escape the sword of the Lord.   
1. *And He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.* If men should try to hide from God in Hell, itself, yet would He find them. There is no possibility that any offender shall escape His all-seeing eyes.   
2, 3. *In that day sing you unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.* Thus the Lord reveals the tenderness of His love to His Church. Then follows a remarkable passage in which, it seems to me, we have the plan of salvation plainly set out. First, here is man at enmity with his Maker.   
4. *Fury is not in Me: who would set the briers and thorns against Me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.* Men who are at enmity with God little know how terrific is the force of His strength. They are like dry thorns when the fire catches them and nothing burns more readily. The bush upon the common, when some wild youth sets fire to it, suddenly blazes up, crackles and is gone—so will it be with the ungodly. God has but to go through them and they shall be destroyed. But now comes a message of mercy.   
5. *Or let him take hold of My strength.* This is what the repenting and believing sinner does—he lays hold of Christ—he takes the strength of God to be his defense and then the strong God, instead of being a terror, becomes a comfort to him.   
5, 6. *That he may make peace with Me and he shall make peace with Me. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root.* Taking root should be well looked after by the Christian. Some professors have no root—they are all leaf and flower, but they have no root and, consequently, they soon wither and die. Happy is that man who is rooted and grounded in the faith!   
6, 7. *Israel shall bloom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. Has He struck Israel as He struck those that struck him?* No. God strikes His people, but He never strikes them as He does their enemies. He strikes His people, as old Trapp says, with the palm of His hand, as a man may strike His child, but He strikes His enemies with His fist, as one would dash His foe to the ground! There is a great difference between the chastisements of God’s people and the righteous judgments that fall upon the wicked.   
7, 8. *Or is Israel slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by Him? In measure, when it shoots forth, You will debate with it.* God always chastens His people in measure. He makes a debate about it. He weighs their troubles in scales and their sorrows in balances.   
8. *He stays His rough wind in the day of the east wind.* He never sends too many troubles at a time. If the east wind is blowing, He does not send His rough wind. We have much to thank God for, that He times our troubles. Had they come an hour before, they might have been too much for us. Had they been kept back a week longer, they might have overthrown us. God knows when to chasten His people and He will always chasten them at the right time.   
9. *By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.* When one of the old Puritans was afflicted with a very painful disease—perhaps the most painful to which flesh is heir—he kept crying out, “The use, Lord? The use, Lord? Show me the use of it.” This should be the point at which the Christian should always aim.   
9. *When he makes all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up.* You see, the Israelites had piled up stones and held them in veneration. But when God brought them back to Himself, they counted those stones to be but as common chalkstones of the valley. It is a good thing for us, when our sins bring us no pleasure, when they are only like common stones of the street. When we break our images and dash down our idol gods, we show that we prize them no longer. The Lord make this to be the issue of all our trials! Then will we bless Him for our troubles as for our chief mercies.

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THE MEMORY OF CHRIST’S LOVE  
NO. 2294

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1893. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 2, 1890.

**“We will remember Your love more than wine: the upright love You.” Song of Solomon 1:4.**

I Do not think I can preach tonight. I feel so weary, and worn, and ill. Still, I can talk to you a little concerning the great love of Christ. If I were dying, I think I could speak upon that theme, and oh, when we rise again, how we shall talk forever and ever about Christ’s love! This will be our endless theme throughout the eternal ages, “His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins.”

I have taken for a text the last two sentences in the Song of Solomon, the first chapter, and the fourth verse—“We will remember Your love more than wine: the upright love You.”

This is a night for remembering Christ’s love. The Communion Table is spread before us, the sacred feast to which we are about to come is meant to recall to our minds our Savior’s words, “This do in remembrance of Me...This do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” But, while we remember Christ, the central thought in our minds shall be that of which Paul wrote, “who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” We will, above all other things, tonight, remember His love. Have any of you been forgetting it? Is it long since you had an hour’s real enjoyment in meditating upon the love of Christ? Then, Beloved, come tonight, and renew your vows! Begin, again, your fellowship, and make this firm resolve, “We will remember our Lord; we will remember His love tonight!” May the Holy Spirit, who brings everything to remembrance whatever Christ has said to us, help us now to remember Him! For Him to remember us when He comes to His Kingdom, will be our Heaven. For us to remember Him, though He has gone away to His Kingdom, shall be a little Heaven to us tonight.

As I am able, I will talk with you briefly, first, upon the preparations for the holy memory mentioned in our text. We shall find them in the verse in which the text is embedded—“Draw me, we will run after You: the king has brought me into His chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in You.” When we have considered the preparations for the holy memory here referred to, I will speak upon the Divine subject of this holy memory—“We will remember Your love more than wine.” Then, thirdly, we will meditate upon the Divine product of this holy memory—“The upright love You, love You because they remember Your love.”

I. First, then, dear Friends, as I may be helped by the Holy Spirit, I would remind you of THE PREPARATIONS FOR THIS HOLY MEMORY. Here they are.

The first word is, “ Draw me.” Lord, I would gladly come to You, but like Mephibosheth, I am lame in both my feet. I would gladly fly to You, but my wings are broken, if, indeed, I ever had any. I cannot come to You. I lie inert, and dead, and powerless. So the first preparation is, “Draw me.” It is a sweet, gracious, efficacious exercise of Divine power that I need and entreat. I say not, “Drive me,” but, “Lord, draw me.” I say not, “Throw me there, or force me yonder, but, “Lord, draw me. While You draw, I shall have liberty left to run—draw me, we will run after You.”

We do not need to be born again—we who are believers in Christ have had that miracle worked upon us already. We are not now asking for pardon and justification—as believers in Christ, we have these priceless gifts already. What we need is the gentle influence of the Holy Spirit to attract us nearer to Christ—so each one cries to the Lord, “Draw me.” We are not dead. We are quickened and made alive. Our very pain and anguish, because we are not able to come to Christ as we would, prove that we are alive. I commend this prayer to you, “Lord, draw me; draw me.” It is the work of Christ to draw. “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” It is the work of the Father. “No man can come to Me,” said Christ, “except the Father which has sent Me draw him.” It is the work of the Spirit of God to draw a soul towards Christ. I pray this for myself and, I trust that you will pray with me, “Come, Sacred Spirit, and draw us nearer to Christ! Enliven our hopes; incline our hearts; awaken our desires and then help us to yield our whole being to Your gracious influences!”—

*“If You have drawn a thousand times,  
Oh, draw me, Lord, again!”*  
That, then, is the first preparation for the holy memory mentioned in our text, Divine drawing—“Draw me.”

Notice, next, that this verse says, “Draw me, we will run after You.” I like the change in the pronouns, as though I should pray tonight, “Lord, draw me; I am the most weighted, the heaviest of all Your children in this congregation; but draw me, we will run after You. All my Brothers and Sisters will run at once if You do draw me. If You draw the most burdened one towards Yourself, all the rest will come to You at a rapid rate,” Do you not feel, my dear Brother or Sister, as if you could use this expression? Lord, if You will draw me, all my fellow members will be running with me; yet they will not outstrip me in their eagerness to reach You, for we will together run after You. Do, therefore, draw me, my gracious Lord!

If we would be fully prepared to remember Christ, we must get into this running pace—“Draw me: we will run after You.” Be quick, my Soul, be quick, about heavenly things! Creep, if you will, about your worldly business, but run after your Lord. Oh, that we might everyone attain the running pace tonight! Oh, that we might speed along towards our Lord with that strong, impetuous desire which will not let us rest till we are close to Him! “Draw me, we will run after You.”

Divine drawing is the first preparation for the holy memory. And next comes speedy running.  
Now, in the further preparation, if you read the verse through, you will find that an answer comes to the prayer as soon as it is uttered—“The king has brought me into His chambers.” “What I asked for, I have obtained at once! And I have received more than I asked for. I prayed, ‘Draw me,’ and He has carried me bodily. ‘The king has brought me into His chambers.’ I did but pray that I might come a little nearer to my Lord, but He has brought me into His secret places, into His withdrawing rooms! He has brought me where He brings His bride. He has brought me where He receives His courtiers. The King has brought me into His chambers and now I see how truly royal He is. The King has done it! The King, not a king, but that King who is King of all kings, the most royal of all monarchs—‘the Prince of the kings of the earth,’ even my Lord Jesus, has brought me into His chambers.”  
How quickly this was done! I want you to believe, Beloved, that it could be done just as quickly in your case. Pray, “Lord, draw me. I feel as if I were coming to the Communion Table quite unfit to come.” Is that what you say? Then pray, “Draw me,” and in a moment, before the prayer is uttered, you shall find yourself not only drawn, but actually brought into the secret place of fellowship! “The king has brought me into His chambers.” “Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” I know, and some of you know, unhappily, what it is to feel very cold and lifeless. But I also know, and some of you know, what it is to become full of life, full of love, full of joy, full of heavenly rapture in a single moment! You who could only creep begin to run. You who could only sigh begin to sing! I want it to be so with every one of you, dearly Beloved, tonight! And you who think you are forgotten, shall be remembered tonight, at any rate. You who have almost forgotten what a real, hallowed time of communion means, may learn it over again, tonight, as you cry, “Draw me, we will run after You: the king has brought me into His chambers.”  
Thus we have had three preparations for the holy memory mentioned in our text—drawing, running, and bringing.  
There is only one more preparation for remembering Christ and that is to feel gladness and joy in Him—“We will be glad and rejoice in You.” Come, take those ashes from your head, you that are sighing by reason of affliction! Come, unbind that sackcloth, and throw it aside, you that have lost fellowship with God, and are, consequently, in the dark! Christ is yours if you believe in Him. He has given Himself to you and He loves you. Rejoice in that blessed fact! Remember who He is and what He is—very God of very God, yet perfect Man, God in Human Nature, Immanuel, God With Us, glorified now in the highest heavens, though once, for our sakes, He sank down into the very depths of death and the grave. Bless His dear name! Be glad and rejoice in Him!  
Now, I pray you, let your mouth be filled with laughter, your tongue with singing and your heart with holy ecstasy as you think of who your Well-Beloved is, how great He is, and what greatness He puts upon you by virtue of His union with you! We cannot very well remember Christ as we should while we carry about with us a heavy heart. Come, sad spirit, be glad in the Lord! “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.” If ever a human soul had reason to rejoice, it must be the soul that believes in Christ! If ever there were any of the sons of Adam who had cause to be glad and to clap their hands with holy mirth, it is the men who have found Christ to be their salvation and their All in All!  
These, then, are the preparations for the holy memory of which our text speaks. If they are well made, you will have no difficulty in remembering Christ’s love tonight!  
II. So now, in the second place, as I may be strengthened, I would like to speak about THE DIVINE SUBJECT OF THIS HOLY MEMORY—“We will remember Your love.”  
First, we will remember the fact of Christ’s love. What a wonderful thing it is that the Son of God should love us! I do not wonder so much that He should have any love for you—but I am lost in wonder at the fact that He has any love for me, even for me! Does not each Believer feel that the wonder of wonders must ever be that the Lord Jesus Christ loves him? He was in Glory, needing nothing. He was in His Father’s bosom, enjoying ineffable delight. If He wanted to cast His eyes of love on any of His creatures, there were myriads of bright spirits before the Throne. But, no, He must look down, down, down, to earth’s dunghills and find us who were utterly unworthy of His regard!  
Then He might have pitied us, and left us in our lost estate, but it could not be so with One who has such a heart as our dear Savior has—He must love us! What it is for God to love, God only knows. We faintly guess, by the love that burns in our bosom towards the objects of our affection, what the love of God must be. The love of God must be a mighty passion! I use the word because I know no better—I am conscious that it is not the right one, for human language is too feeble to describe Divine Love— *“Stronger His love than death or Hell  
Its riches are unsearchable!  
The first-born sons of light  
Desire in vain its depths to see—  
They cannot reach the mystery  
The length, and breadth, and height.”*  
Oh, the love of Christ! It must always be the wonder of wonders that Jesus Christ, the darling of the heavens, should have set the eyes of His affection upon men of mortal mold—on sinful men—on me! That, to me, is the climax.  
We will remember the fact of Christ’s love. But we will remember, also, the character of Christ’s love. What a love it was! He loved us before the foundation of the world! With the telescope of His Prescience, He foresaw our existence and He loved us when we had no being! Then He struck hands with the great Father and entered into Covenant on our behalf, and engaged that He would stand Sponsor for us and redeem us from the ruin of our sin. Oh, the love, the love, the everlasting love of Christ! He has never left off loving us from the very first. All through the ages before the world was, and through the centuries in which the world has existed, He has loved His chosen every moment—and loved them to the fullest. Can you drink in the sweetness of that thought? Oh, I pray you, remember the antiquity and the constancy of the love of Christ to His people! “We will remember Your love.”  
It was unmerited love which had no reason in us for it to light upon— *“What was there in you that could merit esteem, Or give the Creator delight?  
‘Twas even so, Father,’ you must always sing, ‘Because it seemed good in Your sight.’”*  
He loved us because He would love us. It was the sovereignty of His love that made Him love those whom He chose to love. He loved them freely, without anything in them, or that would ever be done by them, to deserve His love. But He loved fully as well as freely. He loved intensely, Divinely, immeasurably. You know your love to your child—it is but a feeble spark compared to the great sun of Christ’s love to you! You know your love to your husband—it is a tiny rill compared with the ocean of Christ’s love to His people! Beloved, turn over the wondrous qualities of the love of Christ to you, and say, as you sit at the Communion Table tonight, “We will remember Your love, for we cannot forget it. We will remember Your love, for the joyous theme forces itself upon us. We will remember Your love more than wine.”  
We will also remember the deeds of Christ’s love. It is a grand story. I cannot stay to tell it to you tonight. You know how, in the fullness of time, the Son of God came out of Glory and alighted on a stall where the horned oxen fed. He who had made all worlds was hanging at a woman’s breast, for He was made flesh that He might save us from our sins. “Herein is love!” See Him living a laborious life, going about doing good, despised, maligned, yet always ready to give still greater Grace and mercy to the unworthy. You know His life, the wondrous life of Christ. “Herein is love.” At last, He gave Himself up in agony even to a bloody sweat. He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. He hid not His face from shame and spitting. And then He gave Himself—His hands to the nails, His feet to the Cross and the cruel iron, His side to the lance, His body to the tomb, His soul to depart to His Father. “Herein is love.” I wish I could preach upon this theme as it deserves to be proclaimed. Oh, that I knew how to speak of the dying love of Christ! The angels desire to look into the mystery of the love of Jesus, but even they cannot compass its immeasurable height, and depth, and length, and breadth! Will not each of us, who are the objects of it, remember His dying love?—

*“When to the Cross I turn my eyes,  
And rest on Calvary  
O Lamb of God! My Sacrifice!  
I must remember Thee!  
Remember You and all Your pains,  
And all Your love to me.  
Yes, while a breath, a pulse remains,  
Will I remember Thee!”*

But Jesus rose from the grave. He rose with the same love. He ascended with the same love. He lives with the same love, pleading for us! He loves us now and He will come for us in love. Love shall give Him wings to fly down to earth again. He will reign here, but not without His people. “The Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously.” He will reign forever in love! Evermore, throughout the life to come, and the ages that shall never end, Christ will rest in His love! He will rejoice over His people with joy! He will joy over them with singing. He will also give them to share His Glory and to sit upon His Throne—and to reign with Him forever and ever!

Oh, what a theme is this, the deeds of Christ’s love! In trying to talk of it, I feel like a poor schoolboy standing here, speaking on a subject he loves. Oh, that there were a Milton, or some one of Miltonic caliber, to tell out the story of this great love of Christ! Yet, perhaps the theme is better with my poor description than it would be with the loftiest words of men, because you are more likely to forget the description and to remember the love that cannot be described. Whereas, had my discourse been filled with lofty and worthy diction, you might have forgotten the theme and remembered the speaker.

I would like you, Brothers and Sisters, tonight, to remember the proofs of Christ’s love. You were far off, but He sought you and brought you back. You were deaf, but He called you and opened your ears to hear His loving call. You came trembling and afraid, but He cheered you—and in a moment He took your burden from you and set you free! Do you remember it?—

*“Do you recall the place, the spot of ground, Where Jesus did you meet?”*

I remember, tonight, the place where first I saw the Lord. I know it to a yard. Some of you cannot speak as definitely as that, and you need not blush because you cannot. Did Jesus come to you? Did He forgive your sins? Did He comfort you with His love? Then remember it tonight! Never mind about dates and places—just remember His love!

Since Jesus first came to you, and saved you, many a time you have been in trouble and He has comforted you. You have been in labor and He has sustained you. You have been in disrepute, but He has honored you. Alas, you have proved yourself unworthy of His love, but He has forgiven your backslidings. You have wandered from Him, but He has restored you. Remember His great love!

No word of mine will, I fear, help you much, but let your memory begin to run over the pages of your diary. Turn over the leaves that record your Lord’s favor to you. Are there not some pages with great crosses upon them, which you made in the day of trouble, and other crosses which you made in the hour of your deliverance when Jesus came to your relief? Oh, remember His love, remember His love more than wine!

I will not detain you on this point any longer, although there was much more I wanted to say. Only, Brothers and Sisters, if I cannot talk to you, do the thing that we are thinking about. Remember Christ and His great love. Do now, before you partake of the emblems of His broken body and His shed blood, get to Him! You may forget everything else if you like, but I charge you remember Christ’s love! There, fling overboard every other recollection, however precious! Let the golden ingots go, but hold fast to the true lading of the ship, her real cargo—the love wherewith Christ has loved us! Remember that and sit still and enjoy the blessed memory.

Before I come to the last division of my subject, I should like to ask whether there are any here who cannot remember Christ’s love because they never knew it? Is that your case, my dear Friend over yonder? Let me remind you of the lepers of whom we have been reading, and then let me recall to your minds God’s ancient Law concerning the man suffering from leprosy. When he was brought for the High Priest to examine him, the High Priest looked him up and down, from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, and he said to the leper, “Here is a place still on your breast where your flesh is perfectly clean.” And the leper said, “Yes, I am pleased to see that it is so.” But the High Priest replied, “You are unclean, you must not go into the House of the Lord, or associate with the people.” Then there came another, and he searched him all over, and said, “Here, upon this part of your leg, there is still a sound place.” “Yes,” said the other, “I have often thought what a good sign it was.” “You also are unclean,” said the High Priest, “Go to your separate house, and abide there.”

Then there came one poor man who was white all over, and the High Priest said to him, “Have you any clean places?” “No, my lord, not one. Examine me and see.” And the High Priest looked, and there was not a clean spot on him where you could have put a pin’s point—the leprosy was all over him, he was saturated all through with the deadly virus and foul with the loathsome disease. And there he stood and cowered and trembled before the High Priest. Then the High Priest said to him, “Behold, you are clean! When you have performed the ceremony required by the Law of God, you may go home to your house and to the house of your God, for you are clean.” There was a medical reason, I suppose, for this Law—the mischief had thrown itself out, it had come out to the shin, the disease was fully developed, and would soon be removed. But, whatever may have been the medical reason, such was the Law—and if I am addressing anybody here who feels, “There is nothing good about me. I am unclean, unclean, unclean, from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet, and the lowest place in Hell is my dessert,” my Friend, the Grace of God has begun to work in you!  
Now that you are emptied, God will begin to fill you! Trust in the atoning Sacrifice of His dear Son and you shall have the assurance that you are also the subject of His saving Grace—His love shall be shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit—and you shall join with us in remembering that great love wherewith He has loved us!

III. The last thing upon which I have to speak to you is this, THE DIVINE PRODUCT OF THIS HOLY MEMORY—“The upright love You.”  
So it seems, then, that if we remember Christ, we shall have a respect for His people. His people are the upright and she, who speaks in the sacred Canticle, here looks round upon them, and says, “The upright love You.” “That commends You to me; for if they who are of a chaste spirit love You, much more should I.” I think, if you feel as I do sometimes, you would be glad to be sure that you were even the least in God’s House. We know the upright love Christ and we love the upright because they do so— and we esteem Christ because the better men are, the more they think of Him. Is it not so? But sometimes we are afraid we are not among the number of the chosen ones. “The upright love You.” Lord, am I one of the upright? Our hymn puts it, even concerning Heaven—  
*There you that love my Savior sit,  
There I would gladly have place,  
Among your thrones, or at your feet,  
So I might see His face.”*  
Would we not gladly sit at the feet of the very least of His people if we might but love Christ? They love Him! I know how you look about you tonight and you say, “There sits Brother So-and-So. He loves Christ. There is Mistress So-and-So who is so busy in the service of her Lord. She loves Christ. And that dear man (Mr. William Olney), whose death we still commemorate by these sad memorials around the pulpit—he loved Christ.” “Ah, well!” you say, “I wish I loved Him, too, and that I were among the upright in character who truly admire Him.”  
Seek that blessing, dear Friends, for it is to be had if you seek it aright! Seek it, for the love of Christ will make you love the upright and foster in you an esteem for them. I do not like to hear Christian people speak ill of one another— and I do not like to hear Christian people speak ill of the Church. If Christ loves her and is married to her, woe to you if you find fault with my Master’s bride! He loves not those who love not His chosen! Have a great love for the people of God, even the poorest of them! Count them to be the aristocrats of the world, the blood-royal of the universe, the men and women who have angels to be their servants and who are made kings and priests unto God! If you remember Christ, you will remember His people. If you remember His love, you will feel a love towards them, God grant that you may do so!  
One thing more, and I have done. In remembering Christ’s love as the upright do, we shall grow upright. I believe that God blesses trouble to our sanctification and that He can bless joy to the same end. But I am sure of this, that the greatest instrument of sanctification is the love of Jesus! One asked what he should think of to make him holy, and his friend answered, “Think of death.” It is wise to talk with the grave, the mattock and the shroud—but the living love of Christ has a sanctifying power that even thoughts of death have not! One has said, “If you would grow holy, think of the punishment of sin, the pit that God has dug for the wicked. It will make you tremble at the thought of sin and cause you to flee from it as from an arch-destroyer.” This is true. But still, if you would grow in Grace fast, and become holy, rapidly, this is the best theme for your meditation, “We will remember Your love.” If you will remember Christ’s love, you will be lifted up from your crookedness and made straight—and put among the upright who love the Lord.  
Come, then, let us join tonight in sweet thoughts of love to Christ! The sermon is short, but the subject is long, and you have now an opportunity for coming to the Communion Table and thinking out that theme which I have started for you, “The love of Christ to me, the love of Christ to me.” Then follow it up with this, “Oh, my poor love to Christ!” Think, dear Friends, if you remember your own love to Christ, what a small thing it is to remember! His great love is like the sun in the heavens! Your love— well, you have to put on your spectacles before you can see it, it is so small a thing! God grant it may grow tonight and, at the Communion Table, may you have such a visitation from Christ, such delightful fellowship with Him, that you may be able to sing, again, the hymn that you were singing when I was obliged to retire for a while from the platform— *“My Jesus, I love You, I know You are mine, For You all the follies of sin I resign.  
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior, are You, If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ‘tis now.  
I will love You in life, I will love You in death, And praise You as long as You lend me breath. And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow, ‘If ever I loved you, my Jesus, ‘tis now.’”*  
May you sing it now and be able to sing it when the death-dew lies cold on your brow! The Lord be with you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON. **PSALM 113, AND LUKE 17:11-19.**

We will read, this evening, two passages in the Word of God. The first will be Psalm 113.  
Verse 1. Praise you the LORD. Praise, O you servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. Three times are you stirred up to this duty of praise. Adore the Sacred Trinity with threefold praise! There is a trinity in you—let spirit, soul and body praise the Lord. Let the past, the present and the future make another threefold chord. And for each of these, “Praise you the Lord. Praise, O you servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord.”  
2, 3. Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the

LORD’S name is to be praised. “From the rising of the sun until the going down of the same the Lord’s name is to be praised.” In hours of morning light, when the dew is on the grass and our soul is fall of gladness, and in the hours of the setting sun, when the day is weary and the night seems coming on, still let the Lord have the praise that is His due, for He is always to be praised! There is never an hour in which it would be unseemly to praise God. For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under Heaven—but the praising of God is never out of season! All time and all eternity may be dedicated to this blessed work.

4, 5. The LORD is high above all nations, and His Glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwells on high? The loftiness, the majesty, the sublimity of God are attributes that are wonderful in themselves, yet they minister much joy to those who love the Lord. For, you know, we can never make too much of those whom we love. And if we see them exalted, then is our soul glad. Would you wish to have a little God? Would you wish to have a God who had but little honor, or little power? No, you ascribe to Him all conceivable and all inconceivable greatness, and you exult as you think what a high and mighty God He is—

**“Who is like unto Jehovah our God, who dwells on high?”**6. Who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in Heaven, and in the earth! It enables us to get some faint idea of the greatness of God when we read that He has to humble Himself even to look at the things in Heaven, perfect and spotless though they are!. Dr. Watts truly sings—

*“The lowest step around Your seat  
Rises too high for Gabriel’s feet!  
In vain the tall archangel tries  
To reach Your height with wondering eyes.”*

All the faculties of all the angels cannot comprehend the Infinite! When the Lord looks down to us, how much He must humble Himself! If He humbles Himself to see the things in Heaven which are clear and pure, what humility is required that He may look upon the things on the earth!

7, 8. He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill that He may set him with princes, even with the, princes of His people. Have you never noticed that in all these joyous songs to God, there is almost always one of these notes—that God abases the proud and exalts the humble? This was the basis of Hannah’s song. And it was the pith and marrow of Mary’s Magnificat—“He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.” This wonderful turning of things upside down. This withering of the green tree and making the dry tree to flourish. This killing that which lives and quickening that which is dead. This emptying of the full, and filling of the empty. This casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting the poor out of the dust! This is always one of the highest reasons for exulting joy. What a Truth of God there is for you and for me tonight, if we feel ourselves to be spiritually so poor that the dunghill is no offense to us because we feel ourselves to be even more offensive than the filthy things that are cast away by men! What a mercy it is that the Lord “lifts the needy out of the dunghill that He may set Him with princes, even with the princes of His people”!

9. He makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise you the LORD. Does your soul feel barren? May the Lord grant unto it an abundant fruitfulness! Looking back upon the past year, perhaps you have had many barren times, or times that you have thought to be barren. If you are a minister of the Gospel, I should not wonder if those have been your most fruitful seasons. When you have been most empty, God has been pleased to feed the people through you. O dear Brothers and Sisters, those very times of spiritual experience which are most humiliating and most painful are often the most soul-enriching to us—and they also bring the greatest glory to God! Now we will read a New Testament story in order that we may see how some men did not praise the Lord as they should have done. You will find the narrative in the 17th Chapter of the Gospel according to Luke, at the 11th verse.

Luke 17:11. And it came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. There is but One of whom we will think tonight—our Divine Lord who was on His way to Jerusalem. Passing along the frontiers of Samaria and Galilee, He had the Jews on one side of Him and the Samaritans on the other. He took a middle course, as if to show how He was going up to the New Jerusalem loaded with blessings for the Jews on one side, and Gentiles on the other.

12. And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers. Oh, the abundance of human misery that met the Savior’s eye—“ten men that were lepers”! I was reading only yesterday of what happened in Westminster, many years ago. When the king went along the highway there were crowds of poor lepers on either side of the road—a shocking sight to see in this dear land of ours—and the king, in his tender mercy, simply passed a law that the lepers should not come near the road again to shock his gracious majesty with their misery! That is all he had to do for them. But our glorious King treated lepers very differently— “There met Him ten men that were lepers.”

12. Which stood afar off. The rule was that they should never come upon the public road, or near the highway, lest the disease should be taken by others who might come near them.

13. And they lifted up their voices. Not much of voices were they likely to have, for the leprosy dries the throat and the voice is low and husky. And when lepers cry, “Unclean, unclean,” it is an awfully sad sound, but very weak. These ten lepers lifted up their poor voices.

13. And said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! They raised a plain cry and the whole ten of them had to lift up their voices before they could be well heard.

14. And when He saw them. Even before He heard them, He saw their pitiable condition.  
14. He said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. That is all Jesus said to the lepers—“Go show yourselves unto the priests.” They were not to go to the priests till they were clean, for the priests could not heal them. It was the healed man who went to the priests to get a certificate that he was healed, and so might mingle in society again. It was a strange message, then, that the Savior gave to these lepers—“Go show yourselves unto the priests.” And oh, the faith of these men! With only this shell of a promise, as it were, they cracked it and found a promise inside it, for they said to themselves, “He would not send us to the priests for nothing! He would not mock our misery! He must mean to heal us!” And, therefore, away they went. A grand faith this! You are to come to Christ before you feel any Grace in yourself! You are not to wait until you feel you are healed and then come to Him! Come just as you are, without any sense of Grace, or any kind of feeling within you that is worth having. Come just as you are!  
14. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. As the sinner believes he is saved. As a man begins to go towards the Savior—the Savior’s Grace meets him.  
15. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed. They all saw that they were healed and they all must have felt extremely glad. Oh, the happiness of feeling the hot blood cooled and full health taking the place of languor and disease!  
15. Turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God. This was a sure sign that he was healed, that he had his voice back—the disease had so thoroughly gone that the sound, which seemed to hide away in his husky throat, now came out clear and loud—like the stroke of a bell!  
16. And fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. When I read these words just now, I thought, that is where I would like to be and that is what I would like to do, all my life, to fall down—  
**“At His feet, giving Him thanks.”**  
16. And He was a Samaritan. Ah, me! Nine of the seed of Israel were ungrateful—and only one poor outcast Gentile was grateful to the Lord for the miracle of healing that had been worked!  
17-19. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And He said unto him, Arise, go your way: your faith, has made you whole. May the Lord Jesus thus speak to many a poor, leprous sinner here tonight! “Arise, go your way: your faith has made you whole.”

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REJOICING AND REMEMBERING  
NO. 2461

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, APRIL 19, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 4, 1886.

**“We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will  
remember Your love more than wine.”  
Song of Solomon 1:4.**

IT is a very blessed habit of saints who have grown in Grace to enter into actual conversation with the Well-Beloved. Our text is not so much speaking of Him as speaking to Him—“We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine.” Of course, in prayer and in praise, we speak to God, but I suggest that we should seek to have much more of intense and familiar conversations with the Lord Jesus Christ than the most of us at present enjoy. I find it good, sometimes in prayer, to say nothing, but to sit or kneel quite still and to look up to my Lord in adoring silence—and then sometimes to talk to Him, not asking anything of Him, but just speaking familiarly with Jesus, realizing Him to be present, and waiting to hear Him speak until some precious Word of His from Scripture comes into my soul as with living accents newly-spoken by those dear lips which are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh! The French have a word which they use concerning that conversation which is common among those who love one another, or are on terms of intimate friendship. They call it, “tutoyage,” for they say, “you” and, “your,” to one another, instead of the more formal language used towards strangers. I like that form of expression that is used in our text and delight to meet with souls that are brought into so rapt a state of fellowship with Christ that they can speak to Him in this familiar fashion, “We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine.”

If you, dear Friends, have not lately conversed with Jesus, do so now in the quietude of your own spirit. Think that His shadow is over you—do not let it be mere imagination, but let it be what is far better than that—a true realizing faith—for if He is present where two or three are met together in His name, rest assured that He is not absent where this great assembly of His people has come together to commemorate His passion and His death! You are here, blessed Master—we are sure that You are and we worship You and speak with You as really as if we could see You with that vesture on, woven from the top throughout—as truly as if we saw You, now, lifting that beloved pierced hand and laying it upon us! And we say to You from the bottom of our hearts, “We will rejoice and be glad in You, we will remember Your love more than wine.” This text is not so much for me to explain, dear Friends, as for you to enjoy! Forget all about the preacher, but take the text and part it among yourselves— extract as much as you can of its spiritual nourishment and feed upon it!

I. As you do so, you will notice, first, that we have, here, A DOUBLE RESOLVE—“We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine.”

I may say of that resolve that it is, first, a necessary resolve, for it is not according to human nature to rejoice in Christ. It is not according to the tendency of our poor fallen state to remember His love. There must be an act of the will with regard to this resolve—let us will it now—“We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine.” There are so many things that try to come in between our souls and our Savior, so many sorrows that would prevent our rejoicing in Him, that we must be resolved to be glad in Him whatever our sorrows may be. Down with you, sorrows! Down with you! We have said unto the Lord that we will be glad and rejoice in Him and we mean to prove our words to be true! Then there are so many troublous thoughts that come flying in to mar our full fellowship with our Lord. However tightly windows may be closed and doors may be shut, these thoughts will find an entrance and we get to remembering the sick child at home, or some care that has afflicted us during the week. Oh, but, Lord, we will not remember these things, now! We say to You from our hearts, “We will—we will— we will remember Your love!” Away with you, care, sorrow, grief—away with you! Come to me, O Holy Spirit, and help me, now, to have a happy time, to be glad and rejoice in my Lord—and to have a holy time—to remember His love and to remember nothing else!

You must will it most intensely, dear Friends, or it will not come to pass. It is not sufficient to merely walk into a place of worship and put ourselves into the posture of devotion—and then to imagine that, doing whatever is proper to the place and the hour—we shall have fellowship with Jesus. Oh, no, Beloved! Oh, no! We must worship Him in spirit and in truth, not in fiction and in sham—not mechanically, as though we could have true fellowship with Him without earnest and intense desire. No, there must be these two utterances of our holy resolve, “We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine.”

And truly, dear Friends, as this resolve is necessary, it is also a right and proper resolve. Should we not be glad and rejoice in Christ?— *“Why should the children of a King  
Go mourning all their days?”*

Why should the children of the bride-chamber fast while the Bridegroom is with them? With such a Husband as we have in Christ, should not the spouse rejoice in Him? Would it be becoming for a heart that is married to Christ to be in any other condition than that of rejoicing in Him? I know you have many things in which you cannot rejoice. Well, let them go. But you can rejoice in Him—in His Person, in His work, in His offices, in His relationships, in His power, in His Glory, in His First Advent, in His Second Advent1 Surely, these are not things that can be thought of without delightful emotion! It is most proper that we should be glad and rejoice in our Lord. There ought to be a reduplication of our joy—we should joy in Him and then rejoice in Him—we should “be glad and rejoice” in Him.

It is most proper that we should be glad in the Lord and what can be more proper than that we should remember Him? What a shame it is that we ever forget Him! His name should be so deeply engraved on our hearts that we cannot forget Him. Let us remember His love, for, surely if there is anything that we ought to remember, it is that undying love which is our choicest portion on earth and which will be the main constituent of our highest bliss in Heaven! Then, by the help of God’s Spirit, let us make this resolve at this moment. Whatever we may do when we get out of this building, at any rate for the next half-hour let us resolve to stand to this double declaration, “We will rejoice, and we will remember.”

Do you not think, also, that this resolution, if we carry it out, will be very helpful to ourselves? What a help it is to a Christian to be glad in the Lord! I know what it is to be depressed. I do not suppose there is any person in this place who knows what it is to be cast down so low as I sometimes am. Then I feel that there is no help for me and no hope of my living and working unless I can get out of that sad condition and get to be glad in the Lord. And I cry, “My Heart, my Heart, what are you doing? Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.” There is no way of getting right out of the Stygian bog of the Slough of Despond like rejoicing in the Lord! If you try to rejoice in yourself, you will have a poor reason for joy. But if you rejoice and are glad in the Lord, you have the real, abiding, unchanging source of joy, for he who rejoices in Christ rejoices in Him who is “the same yesterday, today and forever.” And he may always rejoice in Him! Come, then, and for your own good hang up the sackbut and take down the psaltery—put away the ashes! What if men call this season, “Lent”? We will keep no Lent, tonight—this is our Eastertide! Our Lord has risen from the dead and He is among us, and we will rejoice in Him! Come, Beloved, surely it is time that we did, for a while, at least, forget our pain, griefs and all the worries of this weary world and, for one, I must, I will, be glad and rejoice in my Lord—and I hope many of you will join with me in the happy occupation which will be helpful to yourselves.

Certainly, it will also be for the good of others. I think that Believers do much harm if they allow their depressions of spirit to be too conspicuous. There is another meaning besides the first one to that text, “You, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face that you appear not unto men to fast.” But if you can get right out of your sorrow and can actually rejoice in the Lord. And if you can so remember Him as to be glad and rejoice in Him, you will allure many to the fair ways of Christ which otherwise will be evilly spoken of if you go mourning all your days! Come, you weak ones, come and feast on bread that can make you strong! Come, you, whose eyes are red with weeping, take a handkerchief that shall dry your tears and make your eyes as bright as diamonds! Remember Christ and be glad and rejoice in Him! Angels around the Throne of God can have no higher joy than this! And they cannot enter so fully into it as you can, for He has not loved them as He has loved you!—

*“Never did angels taste above,  
Redeeming Grace and dying love.”*

This, then, is what I earnestly commend to you, this double resolve, that we should all truly say to our Lord, “We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine.” But, dear Friends, we cannot carry out the resolve without the help of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, let us breathe it unto the Lord in prayer and, as we tell Him what we mean to do, let us, each one, add, “Draw me, O Lord. Then I will run after You. Help me to come to You! Manifest Yourself to me and then I will be glad and rejoice in You.”

II. Now I want to go a step further and say that I think the resolve of the text is A SUITABLE RESOLVE FOR THIS OCCASION—“We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine.”

We are, most of us, coming to the Communion Table to eat of the bread and to drink of the cup in remembrance of our Master’s dying love. Surely now is the hour, if ever in our lives, to be glad and rejoice in Him and to remember Him, for the object of this supper is to commemorate His dying love! It is idle and worse than idle, to come to Christ’s Table if you do not remember Him—what good can it do you? The use that it is to the spectator is that you show Christ’s death “till He comes.” But if there is not in the spectator any thought of that death, of what use is the sight of the Table with its sacred vessels? And if you, yourself, do not think of Christ, of what use to you are the emblems of a forgotten or an unknown Lord? No, we are to commemorate His death—so let us, in our hearts, rejoice in Him and remember Him! Well did we sing just now—

*“Jesus, when faith with fixed eyes,  
Beholds Your wondrous Sacrifice,  
Love rises to an ardent flame,  
And we, all other hope disclaim!  
Hence, O my Soul, a balsam flows  
To heal your wounds, and cure your woes. Immortal joys come streaming down,  
Joys like His griefs, immense, unknown.”*

Remember, next, that in coming to this Communion Table we also commemorate the results of Christ’s death. One result of our Lord’s death is that He gives food to His people. His broken body has become bread for our souls, yes, it is meat, indeed. His blood, which was shed for many for the remission of sins, has become drink, indeed. By His death, Christ has given us life and by the completion of His great redeeming work, and by His ever-living intercession, He has given us bread and wine by which that life may be sustained. He has finished it all and He has gone into Glory to secure the results of His finished work. Sitting around His Table, we are reminded of all this—the bread is ready, the cup is filled. We have nothing to do to prepare the feast. All we have to do, now, is to come and partake of it and feed to the fullest upon heavenly food. So, dear Friends, if we come to this Table in a right spirit, we must rejoice in our Lord and we must remember His love.

I think, also, that there is this further reason why we should rejoice in our Lord and remember His love, because at this Table the commemoration is made by our Lord to be a feast. They miss the meaning of the Lord’s Supper who kneel around what they call an, “altar.” The very point of the Supper is that it should be taken while sitting around a table. It is not meant to be an adoration—it is a communion! We come here that we may have fellowship with Him who sat at the table with His disciples and made them to be His companions at His last supper. Joy is becoming at a royal feast! What? Will you come to the King’s Table with a sorrowful countenances? Will you come sadly to see what He has brought you? Now that He has prepared the bread and wine as a feast for your souls, will you come here hanging your heads like bulrushes? No, but let this be your resolution, “We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine.”

Do kings make feasts? Do they lift high the flowing bowl? Are there shouts of joy and exultation at their banquets and shall it be that this world’s poor vine, whose juice is often to men like the wine of Gomorrah, shall bring even the semblance of joy superior to ours when we drink of the wine that comes from the Vine of God and the clusters that Christ has trod in the winepress? No! Higher, far, is your joy than ever came to them that have made merry at earthly feasts! More delightful, more intense, more real, more true be your hallowed ecstasies than anything that wine or wealth can ever bring! “We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine.” O God, help us to carry out this resolution! It seems to me to be specially right, proper and fit, when we come to this high festival of the Church of God, that we should rejoice in the Lord and remember His love!

Let us also recollect that when we come to the Table of our Lord, we commemorate a very happy union. Our text speaks in the plural—“We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine.” I do not know how you feel, Brothers and Sisters, but I should not like to go to Heaven alone. If nobody else will go on pilgrimage, Christian must set out by himself and march along towards the Celestial City until he finds a suitable fellow-pilgrim. But I like best to go with Christiana, Mercy and the children—and as the company together. Though I should enjoy fellowship with my Lord if I were His only loved one, yet it greatly increases my joy as I look at the faces of many of you whom I have known a score of years and with whom I have lived in such happy union year after year! Many of you who were once “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity,” have been plucked, like brands out of the burning, through the preaching of the Gospel in this pulpit—and it seems such a happy thing for us to be communing together around the Table of our Lord.

Some of you, my dear venerable Brothers and Sisters, will soon be Home—come, we will be glad and rejoice in our Lord, will we not? Before you go away from us, join us in another holy song! Give us another of your patient, quiet, happy, restful looks! One dear Sister went Home this morning, at twelve o’clock, while we were worshipping here. I am sure that her spirit is now rejoicing before the Throne of God and some of you will be going soon—but until you go, we will rejoice and be glad together, will we not? We will still take the cup of blessing at the Lord’s Table, whatever our infirmities and sorrows may be. And we will remember Him until we drink the new wine in our Father’s Kingdom above! And you men and women in the very midst of the battle of life, with all your trials and struggles, we will stand shoulder to shoulder, will we not? We are one in Christ and there is between us a bond of union that never can be snapped! It binds us for time and for eternity. We came to this Communion Table to eat and to drink, not each one for himself, only, but each one in fellowship with all the rest—and this ought to make us glad. If I am not glad about myself, I will be glad to think that you are glad! If I have a heavy burden to carry, I will be glad that you have not. And if you have a burden and I have not, try to be glad that I have not one, or, if you have one, and I have another, let us rejoice that we both have the same God to help us to carry them and let us believe that as our days, so shall our strength be!

What a joy it adds to this festival when we see the young folk coming among us, the sons and daughters of God’s people being brought into the Church! Do you not notice how dear Mr. William Olney, whenever he prays for a blessing upon our ministry, always breaks out into thanksgiving to God that all his family have been brought to Christ? There are many others of us who can praise the Lord for the same favor and it is a great joy to us! Yes, Lord, we will remember Your love—husband and wife, sons and daughters, and some of us can say grandchildren, too—we will all come clustering around Your Table and, together, we will remember Your sweet love to our fathers, to ourselves and to our children! We cannot help remembering it and rejoicing and being glad in it.

I must give you just one more thought upon this point. It does not become us to gather at this Communion Table with a heavy heart when we remember that it is not only a commemoration, but an anticipation. We are to do this “till He comes.” Did I not try, this morning, [Sermon No. 1894, Volume 32—“The Two Appearings and the Discipline of Grace”— Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org . ] to sound the trumpet of His coming? It would not have startled me if He had come while we were assembled and I was speaking of “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Nor should it startle any of you, if, in the dead of this very night, while you are in your beds, you should hear the cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes!” for He may come at any moment and He will come, “in such an hour as you think not.” Let us leap up at the remembrance of this gladsome hope!

We are coming to the Table, keeping up the memorial of our Lord’s first appearing in the fond hope and sure belief of that second appearing when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Therefore, let us keep the feast with high hope. With joyous notes, sound aloud the silver trumpet of the great jubilee and, as you come to the Table, let your hearts be glad in the Lord, whose love you especially remember at this hallowed festival!

III. I will close in a very few minutes, but I must dwell for a brief space upon what I meant to make my third point concerning this double resolve—LET US CARRY IT OUT. That ought always to be the practical conclusion to every sermon—let us carry it out! We have said to our Lord in the language of the text, “We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine.” Very well, now let us carry out this resolve.

“We will remember Your love.” Dear Savior, what we have to remember is Your love—Your love in old eternity, before the earth was, Your prescient love, which—

*“Saw us ruined in the Fall,  
Yet loved us notwithstanding all.”*  
We remember the love of Your espousals when You did espouse Your

people unto Yourself and did resolve that, whatever might be the lot of Your elect, You would share it with them. The Lord Jesus made up His mind that He would be one with His Church—for this purpose He left His Father that He might be one with His bride. I shall get into great deeps if I go much further in speaking about Christ’s love.

“We will remember Your love”—that love which, having once begun, has never wavered, never diminished, never stopped—  
*“Love, so vast that nothing can bound!  
Love, too deep for thought to sound!  
Love, which made the Lord of All  
Drink the wormwood and the gall!  
Love, which led Him to the Cross,  
Bearing there unuttered loss!  
Love, which brought Him to the gloom  
Of the cold and darksome tomb!  
Love, which will not let Him rest  
Till His chosen all are blest!  
Till they all for whom He died  
Live rejoicing by His side!”*

We remember the love which Jesus bore in His heart right up into Glory at the right hand of the Father—that love which is still as great as when He hung on Calvary to redeem us unto Himself. The wonderful part of all this to me is that it should be the love of such an One as Christ is. That ever so Divine a Person should set His love on us is very wonderful. I can understand my mother’s love. I can understand my child’s love. I can understand my wife’s love, but I cannot understand Christ’s love. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we are nothings, we are nobodies! Yet this glorious Everybody, this All in All, did actually set His love upon us! Suppose that all the holy angels had loved us and that all God’s redeemed had loved us? All put together, it would be only so many grains of dust that would not turn the scale! But Christ’s love is a mountain, no, more than all the mountains in the universe! I know of nothing to be compared with it.

That is the first way in which we are to carry out this double resolve— we are to remember and to rejoice in Christ’s love.  
Next, let each one of us say to Christ, “I will remember Your love to me.” Brothers and Sisters, I can believe in Christ’s loving you, but there are times when it seems a great mystery that He should ever have loved me. I can truly say that, often, I have felt that if I might sit at the feet of the poorest, meanest, least of God’s servants and serve them, I would count it a Heaven to do it if I did but feel sure of Christ’s love to my own soul. I see so many beauties in my Brothers and my Sisters that I can admire the Grace of God in them, but, often, I see and feel so many imperfections in myself that I can only wonder that Christ should ever have loved me. I suppose that each of you feels the same. I am sure that you do if you are in a right state of heart, for, truth to tell, there is no beauty in any of us that He should desire us—and there is no excellence in any of us that could have made it worth His while to die for us. “God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”—and died for us as ungodly. Come, then, will you not be glad and rejoice that Christ should ever have loved you? Will you not be glad and rejoice, and yet wonder all the while, that it should ever have been possible for Him to draw you “with cords of a man, with bands of love,” and bring you into living, loving, everlasting union with Himself?  
Still, even that is not all! The text does not merely speak about Christ’s love, and Christ’s love to me, but it talks about Christ Himself. “We will be glad and rejoice in You”—not only in His love, but in Himself! Do try, dear Friends, to let your thoughts dwell upon Christ, His complex Person, God and Man, and all the wonders which lie wrapped up in Emmanuel, God With Us! Your work, Lord, is fair, but the hand that worked the work is still fairer. All Your designs of love are full of splendor, but what shall we say of the mind that first gave creation to those designs? The glance, the look of love which You have given me is blessed, but oh, those eyes of Yours, those eyes which are brighter than the stars of the morning! The Lord Jesus is better than everything that comes from Him! His gifts are infinitely precious—then what must He, Himself, be? Come, then, Beloved, and let us be glad and rejoice in Him, and let us remember His love more than wine!  
The text says, “we will remember,” but some of you cannot remember because you do not know. A man cannot remember what he has never heard of, or seen, or known. But, Brothers and Sisters, let us remember what we do know of Christ’s love. I remember the first day I ever tasted of His love consciously to myself. Ah, but I look back and think of the rivers of love that came steaming down to me when I did not even know that I was receiving them! And I remember that many days have passed since first I could give back the glance of love in return for His love to me. But oh, what His love to me since then has been! His love in sickness, in sorrow, in labor, in backsliding, in prayer, in tears, in unbelief, in faith, in varying and changing as many as the changes of the moon! Yet, His love has always been the same. What a book some of you could write concerning Christ’s love to you if you had but a nimble pen! What a story some of you could tell of Christ’s love if some guest could be detained while you told the wondrous story!  
I sometimes think within myself that if all the interesting things that are written in all the works of fiction could be put together, I could surpass them all in the literal simple facts of a common life like mine—and I believe that many of God’s people here could say the same! A Christian’s life is full of interest. Last Thursday night I called the life of a Christian a cluster of Kohinoors threaded on a string of Divine faithfulness and I am sure that it is so!—  
*“Wonders of Grace to God belong,  
Repeat His mercies in your song.”*  
Repeat His mercies as you remember them and be glad and rejoice in Him even more than in the mercies that come from Him!  
In conclusion, I would say that I think the people of God, in gathering to the Communion Table, should try to be glad and rejoice in their Lord, and in nobody else—and to remember Him—and nothing else. Let all be a blank except what Christ has written on your memory! Let all be a blank except where that dear face appears—  
*“The head that once was crowned with thorns,”*but—  
*“Is crowned with Glory now.”*  
Think only of Him! Put the glass to your eye and shut out all the rest of the landscape—let that glass take nothing within its circle but just the face of the Well-Beloved which we soon hope to see without a cloud between!  
God bless you, dear Friends! I wish that all of you understood this Truth of God of which I have been speaking. Some of you do not—may the Lord lead you to do so, for there is no life like that which is spent at Jesus’ feet, and no joy like that which comes from our dear Lord! I wish you knew it. Believe on Him and you shall know it, and shall know it at once. Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—797, 804, 819. EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**PSALM 22.**

This Psalm is a sort of window through which we can look into the heart of our crucified Savior. We see all the external part of the Crucifixion through the four windows of the Gospels, but this 22nd Psalm brings us into the King’s innermost chamber and here we perceive the secret sufferings of His soul. You can very well conceive of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He was on the Cross, beginning to speak in the language of the first verse of this Psalm and closing with the last words of the Psalm—“He has done this,” which might properly be interpreted, “It is finished.” I have often read this Psalm with you, especially on the evenings of our great Communion services. If we are spared, we will read it together many more times. It is a very wonderful Psalm—the Lord give us to understand it as we read it!!

Verse 1. My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring? That was the very climax of our Lord’s grief upon the Cross, that it was necessary that the Father, Himself, should forsake Him. The penalty of sin is that God must leave the man who has sin upon him even by imputation—and God left this wondrous Man, this perfect Man, in whom was no sin, but upon whom the sin of His people had been laid. He, “His own Self, bore our sins in His own body on the tree” and, therefore, the Father must forsake Him. But it was a bitter experience for our Savior that even His prayers should not be heard when they had become so hoarse as to resemble, rather, the roaring of a wounded beast than the articulate utterance of a man—“Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?”

2, 3. O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But You are holy, O You that inhabit the praises of Israel. Notice that the Lord Jesus, in His greatest agony, does not impugn the justice of His Father’s treatment. In His bitterest sufferings He still adores the holiness of God—“You are holy.” It was because God was holy that His Son must suffer so—in order to save the unholy.

4-6. Our fathers trusted in You: they trusted, and You did deliver them. They cried unto You, and were delivered: they trusted in You, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man—There is a little red worm which seems to be nothing but a mass of blood—and the Savior compares Himself in His agony to that tiny creature—“I am a worm, and no man”—

6-8. A reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see Me, laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him. What vinegar and gall that mockery poured into the Savior’s wounded heart! How these cruel words must have stung His sensitive spirit! It was necessary that God should leave Him while He was bearing His people’s sin, but how shameful it was that evil men should turn that stern necessity into a ground of accusation against Him! Yet they did—they taunted Him with it—“He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.”

9, 10. But You are He that took Me out of the womb: You did make Me hope when I was upon My mother’s breast. I was cast upon You from the womb: You are My God from My mother’s belly. Our Savior remembers His own marvelous birth which differed from ours in some respects—and He thinks of how the Father took care of Him, then. Did He not preserve Him when Joseph and Mary fled into Egypt from the wrath of Herod? Was there not a singular power that controlled the movements of the Wise Men and warned them to return to their own country another way, so that the Infant Christ should not be discovered and destroyed? Jesus on the Cross remembers that remarkable preservation! And I suggest to you who are getting old that you may draw comfort from the fact that when you were infants and could not help yourselves, the Lord took care of you. And if you come to a second childhood—if you should live to be as helpless as when you were infants—the God who watched over you in the beginning will watch over you to the end! Remember how He has said, “Even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.”

11. Be not far from Me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Peter, James, John and all the disciples had fled. “There is none to help.” The women could weep with pitying eyes and sympathetic hearts, but they could not help. “There is none to help.”

12. Many bulls have compassed Me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round. There stood the chief priests and the rulers, and the Roman soldiers with their massive bulk and brute strength.

13. They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. There was nothing but cruelty and spite and fury all round the tender heart of that lonely Sufferer. Ah, me, was there ever sorrow like unto His sorrow?

14. I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint. This was caused by the rough dashing of the Cross into the ground when they lifted it up and plunged it into its place.

14. My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels. It was a living death, a deadly life. Christ’s very heart, which is the center of life, had become dissolved by pain and weakness and sorrow.

15. My strength is dried up like a potsherd and My tongue cleaves to My jaws; and You have brought Me into the dust of death. The terrible death-thirst was upon Him through the fever generated by His wounds.

16. For dogs have compassed Me: this assembly of the wicked have enclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet. The common multitude, with ribald jest and hateful mockery, stood there taunting Him. He was encircled by them—like a poor hunted stag surrounded by the hounds.

17. I may count all My bones: they look and stare upon Me. They stood mocking at His nakedness, jesting at His emaciated form.  
18-19. They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture. But be You not far from Me, O LORD. That is still the very center of our Savior’s suffering, so He turns His pleading in that direction. He does not ask that the dogs may be called off, nor that the bulls may be driven away—His cry is, “Be not You far from Me, O Lord.”  
19-21. O My Strength, hasten You to help Me. Deliver My soul from the sword; My darling from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion’s mouth: for You have heard Me from the horns of the unicorns. He remembers former days wherein God had helped Him, and He prays that the Lord will help Him still, and bring Him safely through this terrible trial, as, indeed, He did! Now the tone of the Psalm changes. A gleam of sunlight plays across the scene. The agony is over, the life is poured out, and now the Savior begins to contemplate the result of His suffering. Think, dear Brothers and Sisters, how the Lord thought of You! He says—  
22. I will declare Your name unto My brethren. In the midst of the congregation will I praise You. The risen Christ is in the midst of us! He has come here to tell us of His Father’s love. He has told it to us by His death and now He bids us praise the Lord and He, Himself, leads our song! This is the reward of His passion, that He and His brethren should bless and praise the Lord forever and ever!  
23, 24. He that fears the LORD, praise Him; all You, the seed of Jacob, glorify Him; and fear Him, all You the seed of Israel. For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the Afflicted, neither has He hid His face from Him; but when He cried unto Him, He heard. Is not this delightful? Your Lord has gone through the black darkness and has come out into the Light of God—and when your turn comes to go through the darkness, you, too, shall come out into the Light even as He did! Therefore, rejoice in His name! If the Head has conquered, the members shall conquer, too. You shall all share in your Savior’s joy as you are partakers of His sufferings.  
25, 26. My praise shall be of You in the great congregation: I will pay My vows before them that fear Him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied. He thought of you, poor, timid, trembling ones! You who are humbled before God under a sense of your sin. Because He died, because He accomplished your redemption, you “shall eat and be satisfied.”  
26, 27. They shall praise the LORD that seek Him: Your heart shall live forever. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before You. See what solace Christ derives from the spread of the faith, the conquest of the world by His death!  
28-30. For the Kingdom is the LORD’S: and He is the governor among the nations. All they that are fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him: and none can keep alive his own soul. A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. This is in accordance with Isaiah’s prophecy—“When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed.”  
31. They shall come—The passion of Christ shall work for a certain deliverance for His people. What He has purchased, He shall surely have— “They shall come”—  
31. And shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He has done this. Or, “it is finished.” When our Lord had uttered these words, “He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.”

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A REFRESHING CANTICLE  
NO. 2794

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 31, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A LORD’S-DAY EVENING, IN THE WINTER OF 1860.

**“We will remember Your love more than wine.”  
Solomon’s Song 1:4.**

THE Hebrew word for, “love,” here is in the plural—“We will remember Your loves.” Think not, however, that the love of Jesus is divided, but know that it has different channels of manifestation. All the affections that Christ has, He bestows upon His Church and these are so varied that they may well be called, “loves,” rather than, “love.” The Septuagint translation is, “We will remember Your breasts.” Bossuet, and many of the Romanist expositors who have brought much sanctity of thought and fervent appreciation of heart to bear upon this superlative Song, dilate very sweetly upon the word, “breasts,” as it appears in the Latin Vulgate. I am disposed to be content with our own Version, with the alteration of one letter—“We will remember Your loves more than wine.” By this expression we must understand, of course, all the love of Jesus, from the beginning even to the end, or, rather, to that eternity which has no end. We will remember those acts of love of which we have heard with our ears and our fathers have declared unto us. It has been told us by Inspired Prophets, and God has revealed it to us in His Word, by His Spirit, that Jesus Christ loved us from before the foundation of the world. We believe that His love is no passion of modern date—no mere spasm of pity. It is ancient as His Glory which He had with the Father before the world was—it is one of the things of eternity. This Divine Love is not a spring that welled up only a few days ago, but it is an everlasting fountain which has never ceased to flow!

We will remember, O Jesus, that love of Yours which was displayed in the council chamber of eternity, when You did, on our behalf, interpose as the Daysman and Mediator—when You did strike hands with Your Father and become our Surety and take us as Your betrothed! We will remember that love which moved You to undertake a work so burdensome to accomplish, an enterprise which none but Yourself could ever have achieved! We will remember the love which suggested the Sacrifice of Yourself. The love which, until the fullness of time, mused over that Sacrifice and longed for the hour of which, in the volume of the Book it was written of You, “Lo, I come.” We will remember Your love, O Jesus, as it was manifested to us in Your holy life, from the manger of Bethlehem to the garden of Gethsemane! We will track You from the cradle to the grave, for every word and every deed of Yours was love. You, wherever You did walk, did scatter loving kindnesses with both Your hands. As it is said of Your Father, “God is Love,” so, surely, You are Love, O Jesus! The fullness of the Godhead dwells in You! The essence of love, nothing else but love, is Your Incarnate Person.

And especially, O Jesus, will we remember Your love to us upon the Cross! We will view You as You come from the garden of Your agony and from the hall of Your flagellation. We will gaze upon You with Your hands and Your feet nailed to the accursed tree. We will watch You when You could, if You had willed it, have saved Yourself, but when You did, nevertheless, give up Your strength and bow Yourself downward to the grave that You might lift us up to Heaven. We will remember Your love which You did manifest through Your poor, bleeding hands and feet and side. We will remember this love of Yours till it invigorates and cheers us “more than wine”—the love of which we have heard, which You have exercised since Your death—the love of Your Resurrection, the love which prompts You to continually intercede before Your Father’s Throne, that burning lamp of Love which will never let You hold Your peace until Your chosen ones are all safely housed, Zion is glorified and the spiritual Jerusalem is settled on her everlasting foundations of light and love in Heaven! We will remember all Your love, from its beginning in the eternal past to the eternity that is to come—no, we will try to project our thoughts and imagination—and so to remember that as long as eternity shall continue, even forever and forevermore, so long shall Your love exist in all its Glory, undiminished in its luster or its force! “We will remember Your love more than wine.

Nor is this all the love we have to remember. Though we ought to recollect what we have heard and what we have been taught, I think the spouse means more than this. “We will remember Your loves”—not only what we have been told, but what we have felt. Come, dear Hearers, let each one of you speak for yourselves, or, rather, you think of this for yourselves and let me speak of it for you. I will remember Your love, O Jesus—Your love to me when I was a stranger, wandering far from God. The love which restrained me from committing deadly sin and withheld my hands from self-destruction! I will remember the love which tracked

me in my course— *“When Satan’s blind slave, I sported with death.”*I will remember the love which held back the axe when Justice said, “Cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?” I will remember the love that took me into the wilderness and stripped me, there, of all my selfrighteousness—and made me feel my weight of guilt and the burden of my iniquity. Specially will I remember the love which said to me, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” I cannot forget that matchless love which, in a moment, washed my sins away and made my spotted soul white as the driven snow! Can you forget, my Brothers and Sisters, that happiest of days when Jesus first whispered to you, “I am yours and you are Mine”? I can never forget the transporting hour when He spoke thus to me! It is as fresh in my memory right now as if it had only happened this afternoon! I could sing of it if it were right to stop a sermon for a sonnet—I could sing of that love, passing all measure, which took my soul and washed it in the precious blood of Jesus and then clothed it in the spotless robe of His righteousness! O Love Divine, You excel all other loves, that You could deal with such a rebellious, traitorous worm and make that worm an heir of Heaven!

But we have more love than this to remember—all the love that we have felt since then. I will remember the valley of Baca and the Hill Mizar. Nor shall my soul forget those chambers of fellowship where You have unveiled Yourself to me. If Moses had his cleft in the rock where he could see the back parts of his God, we also have had our clefts in the rock where we have seen the full splendors of the Godhead in the Person of Christ! Did David remember the tracks of the wild goat where he was hunted on the mountains—the cave of Adullam, the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites? We, too, can remember spots equally dear to these in blessedness. “The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you.” Christian, can you not recollect the sweet exchanges there have been between yourself and your Lord when you have left your griefs at His feet and left with a song? Can you not remember some happy seasons when you went to Him empty, and came away full? Is your heart heavy just now? It has not always been so. There have been times when, like David, you could dance before the Lord! Times of holy merriment when, like Miriam, you could strike your timbrel and say to those around you, “Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.” There have been times when Jesus and you have not been strangers to one another, for He has linked His arms in yours and walked along with you! And there have been other times when your head has been upon His bosom and you could feel His heart beating with warm love to you.

Thus, then, in the summary of Christ’s loves, which I will now humbly endeavor to pass in review, it will be necessary for me to mention not only the love we have heard about, but the love we have felt and enjoyed. Do not suppose, dear Brothers and Sisters, that I am able to refresh your memories upon this sacred subject. It is the Holy Spirit’s work to assist you in that matter! But I do trust that the resolution contained in our text will be formed in the heart of everyone of you—“We will remember Your loves more than wine”—and that you will have the Grace to carry out that resolution.

I. Here then, Beloved, we have A RESOLUTION POSITIVELY EXPRESSED—“We will remember Your love.”  
Why does the spouse speak so positively? Because she is Inspired— she is not like Simon Peter when he said, “Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.” She is speaking the Truth of God, for she will not forget the love of her Lord. Why is that? For one very good reason—because she cannot. If the Church could forget Christ’s love to her, she would do so. She is such a forgetful wife that all her Husband’s affections would be lost upon her, were it possible. But that cannot be—there is something about the love of Christ that makes it adhere to those upon whom it is bestowed—we cannot forget it. It enters into the heart like wine that seasons the cask, and the scent thereof abides. It pervades the soul. It permeates every faculty. It brings the secret thoughts into obedience to Christ. It flows through every vein of hope and fear, passion and desire. So the spouse could truthfully say to her Lord, “We will remember Your love.” The virtue was not in her own constancy, but in the tenacity of His affection—therefore she could not help remembering it!  
What is there, in the love of Christ, that will compel us to remember it? The things that we recollect best are of certain kinds.  
Some that we remember best have been sublime things. When we have stood, for the first time, where we could see a lofty mountain whose snowy summit pierced the thick ebon clouds, we have said, “We shall never forget this sight.” When Humboldt, the great traveler, had his first view of the vast prairies of North America, he declared that he could never forget the sensations of that moment. I can imagine how Dr. Livingstone, when he first came in sight of the magnificent falls which he discovered, might well say, “To my dying day, I shall hear the rushing of that tremendous stream of water.” I can myself remember an unusually violent thunderstorm, when the lightning flew across the heavens, flash after flash, without a moment’s pause, as though a thousand suns were dashing through the sky. I recollect the consternation of men and women when a neighboring house was struck by the lightning and burnt with a terrific blaze which could scarcely be seen by reason of the brightness of the lightning. My recollection of that terrible scene will never depart from me! The sublimity of what we have seen often causes us to remember it. So is it with the love of Christ. How it towers to Heaven! And mark how brightness succeeds brightness, how flash follows after flash of unspeakable love and full of glory! There is no pause, no interval of darkness or blackness, no chasm of forgetfulness. Its sublimity compels us to remember its manifestation.  
Again, we are pretty sure to remember unusual things. If we were asked whether we remembered that the sun had risen, we might say, “It is not a matter of memory at all. I feel certain that it did, though I did not see it.” But if we are asked if we ever saw an eclipse, “Oh, yes!” we reply, “we recollect that! We remember watching it and how disappointed we were because it was not as dark as we expected it to be.” Many people do not notice the stars much, but who forgets a comet? Everybody recollects that phenomenon of Nature because it is unusual. When we see something strange, uncommon, out of the ordinary, the memory at once fixes upon it and holds it fast. So is it with the love of Christ. It is such an extraordinary thing, such a marvelous thing that the like was never known! Ransack history and you cannot find its parallel. There is but one love that is like it—that is the love of the Father to His only-begotten Son. Besides this, there is nothing to which we can compare the love of Christ to His people. That constellation of the Cross is the most marvelous that is to be seen in the spiritual sky! The eyes, once spellbound by its charms, must retain its undying admiration because it is the greatest wonder of wonders and miracle of miracles which the universe ever saw!  
Sometimes, too, things which are not important in themselves are fixed on the memory because of certain circumstances which happen in association with them. The country people often say, if you ask them whether they recollect such-and-such a year, “Ah, Master! It was the year of the hard frost, wasn’t it?” Another time they will say, “Why, yes! That was the year when the blight fell upon our gardens and all our potatoes were of no use—and we were nearly starved that winter.” Circumstances help to make us remember facts. If something particular in politics should happen on our birthday, or our wedding day, or on some other notable occasion, we would say, “Oh, yes! I remember that—it happened the day I was married, or the day So-and-So was buried.” Now, we can never forget the love of Christ because the circumstances were so peculiar when, for the first time, we knew anything at all about it! We were plunged in sin and ruin! We were adrift on the great sea of sin! We had no hope, we were ready to sink and no shore was near—but Jesus came and saved us! We can never forget those circumstances—with some of us, they were truly awful, beyond all description. Therefore we cannot forget the time when Jesus’ love first dawned upon our minds.  
I think, my dear Friends, I might give you 20 reasons why it would be impossible for the children of God to forget the love of Christ to them, but above and beyond every other reason is this one, Christ will not let His people forget His love. If, at any time, He finds them forgetful, He will come to them and refresh their memories. If all the love they have ever enjoyed should be forgotten by them, He will give them some fresh manifestations of love. “Have you forgotten My Cross?” He asks, “then I will cause you to remember it afresh, for at My Table I will manifest Myself to you as I have not done of late. Do you forget what I did for you in the council chamber of eternity? Then I will remind you of it, for you still need a Counselor and I will come to your relief just when you are at your wits’ end—and I will give you wisdom. Have you forgotten that I called you to Myself when you were a stranger? I will bring you back from your wanderings and then you will remember Me again.” Mothers do not let their children forget them if they can help it. If the boy has gone to Australia and he does not write home, his mother writes to him, “Has my John forgotten his mother?” Then there comes back a sweet epistle which lets the mother know that the gentle hint she gave him was not lost. So is it with Christ—He often says to one of His forgetful children, “What? Is your heart cold to Him who loved you so much that He could not live in Heaven without you, but must come to earth, go out into the wilderness, up to the Cross and down to the grave in order to find you?” You can be sure that He will have our hearts! Prone to wander, He knows that they are, and we feel it ourselves, but He will have them. Oh, that He would drive the nail of the Cross right through your heart, that it might be forever fastened there! Painful might the process be—some sharp affliction might tear your flesh—yet, if that would bring you near your Lord and keep you near Him, you might thank Him even for the affliction and love Him all the more because of it!  
II. Now let us advance another step and look at THE COMPARATIVE RESOLUTION—“We will remember Your love more than wine.”  
Why is “wine” mentioned here? I take it to be used here as a figure. The fruit of the vine represents the chief of earthly luxuries. “I will remember Your love more than the choicest or most exhilarating comforts which this world can give me.” We have many things which we might compare to wine, in the good and in the bad sense, too—good, because they cheer, comfort and invigorate—bad, because when we rely upon them, they intoxicate, they overthrow and cast down to the ground. We very readily remember the good things of earth for a season. When creature comforts abound with us and we have happy and merry days, we remember them. And when nights of darkness come upon us, we remember the days of our brightness and we talk of them. It is so with the widow bereaved of her husband—she remembers the days of her happiness, when the partner of her joys was with her. She recollects his affectionate words and his sweet deeds of love. In the case of the mother bereaved of her child, she recalls the love that child had to her and the solace it was to her when her little one slept on her bosom. Have you become poor? Then the “wine” that you remember is the wealth you once possessed—you remember how you had no need to tramp over weary miles and to shiver in the wintry cold. Now that your pain has come, you remember your former joy and it makes your present pain all the more painful. This, “wine,” may be to a minister, the joy of being successful— and there may come to him days when his chapel will be half-empty and then he will look back, with regret, upon the joys he once possessed. The spouse says, “We will remember Your love more than all earthly comforts.” She cannot help doing so. If she could, she would remember the world rather than Heaven! She would have a remembrance of creature comforts and she would be forgetful of her Lord.  
The fact is, the impression which the love of Christ makes on the true Believer is far greater and deeper than the impression which is made by anything earthly. Mere mortal joys write their record on the sand and their memory is soon erased, but Christ’s love is like an inscription cut deeply into marble—the remembrance of it is deeply engraved in our hearts. The joy of the creature is something like a lithograph cut lightly on the stone—when the stone is cleaned, the picture is gone. But the love of Christ is like the steel engraving—it is deeply cut and cannot be easily erased. Earthly joys tread with light feet and leave but a faint impression—but the love of Christ treads into the very core of our soul at every footstep and, therefore it is that we remember it better than we remember any earthly pleasure!  
Earthly comforts, too, like wine, leave but a mingled impression. In the cup of joy there is a dash of sorrow. There is nothing we have here below which is not somewhat tainted with grief. Solomon has warned us against the sparkling wine—“Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it gives his color in the cup, when it moves itself aright. At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder.” Even friendship, the very cream of joy, trembles on the confines of disappointment, as it is written, “Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm.” But in Christ’s love there is nothing for you to ever regret. When you have enjoyed it to the fullest, you cannot say that there has been any bitterness in it. When you have come forth from the secret chamber of communion with your Lord, you have realized the purity of His love— there has been nothing to qualify your enjoyment of it. When you have been to a party of your friends, you have said, “I have been very happy, but—I could not enjoy myself there six days in a week.” But when you have been with Christ, you have felt that you could enjoy yourself in that way to all eternity! You could not have too much of such fellowship, for there was nothing in it to mar your happiness. True, there is the remembrance of your sin, but that is so sweetly covered by your Lord’s forgiveness and graciousness that His love is, indeed, better than wine! It has had all the good effects of wine, but none of its ill results.  
Equally true is it that the remembrance of earth’s comforts, of which wine is the type, must be but transient. If the sinner could live many days and have much wealth, would he remember it when he entered the unseen world? Ah, he might remember it, but it would be with awful sighs and sobs! You know how Abraham spoke, across the great gulf, to the rich man in Hell, “Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted and you are tormented.” But we can say of the love of Christ, that it is better than wine, for we shall rejoice to remember it in eternity— *“There, on a green and flowery mount,  
Our weary souls shall sit  
And with transporting joys recount.”*  
What shall we recount? Dr. Watts says—  
*“The labors of our feet,”*  
but I do not think so. I believe we shall recount the labors of Him who lived and died for us! That is what we shall talk of in Heaven—I am sure that this is the theme of all the music and songs of Paradise— *“Jesus, the Lord, their harps employ,  
Jesus, my Love, they sing!  
Jesus, the life of all our joy  
Sounds sweet from every string.”*  
Do you not see, then, why this comparison is made in our text? We remember Christ’s love more than the best earthly comforts because they make but a feeble impression, a mingled impression, a marred impression and their impression, at best, is but transient. But the love of Christ is remembered as something that is better than wine. I have to hurry over these different points, but if you enjoy hearing about this subject as much as I delight in preaching upon it, you would not mind listening to me all night long! And I should not mind preaching right through the night. Surely, this is a theme that sets one’s tongue at a happy liberty. “My tongue is the pen of a ready writer” if I can but feel the love of Christ shed abroad in my heart!  
III. Now, thirdly, I am to speak of THE PRACTICAL EFFECTS OF REMEMBERING CHRIST’S LOVE.  
If we remember the love of Christ to us, the first practical effect will be that we shall love Him. Can I remember Your love to me, O my sweet Lord, and not love You in return? Surely, Dr. Watts was right when he wrote—  
*“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,  
With all Your quickening powers!  
Come, shed abroad a Savior’s love,  
And that shall kindle ours.”*  
True is it, O Jesus, that there is no light of love in our hearts except the light of Your love! It is the holy fire from Your altar

that must kindle the incense in the censer of our hearts. There is no living water to be drawn out of these dry wells! You, O Jesus, must supply them from the bubbling spring in Your own heart! When my heart is conscious of Your love, it loves You in return.  
Another practical effect of remembering Christ’s love will be love to the brethren. When we remember Christ’s love as we ought, we shall not meet one of Christ’s brethren without falling in love with him directly. Christ has some very poor brethren and some very unhandsome ones. David sent to enquire whether there were any left of the house of Saul to whom he might show kindness for Jonathan’s sake. Ziba told him that Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth who was lame in his feet. What did David do when he heard this? Did he say, “I will have nothing to do with him—I do not want a lame fellow stumbling about my palace”? Oh, no—he might be lame in his feet, but he was Jonathan’s son—so David sent for him and said to him, “You shall eat bread at my table continually.” Did you ever know one of Christ’s beloved who was lame in his feet? There is a little lameness, somewhere or other, about all of them— and if we only love those saints who are very holy, it will seem as if we only loved them for their own sakes. But if we love Christ’s deformed and crippled children, that looks like loving them for His sake! And, I think, if you could remember what a clumsy child you were, yourself, you would not look with such disdain upon any of God’s other children!  
Ministers have much to bear in connection with some of their people. One man’s judgment is so keen that you are always afraid of saying something amiss in his presence. Another man’s temper is so hot that you cannot meddle with him for fear you should provoke a quarrel. Another man is so worldly that although he has the Grace of God in his heart, it seems to be only like a spark in damp tinder. Christ has many very unseemly children—yet if we can but see that they are Christ’s—if they have only a little likeness to Him, we love them directly for His sake and are willing to do what we can for them out of love to Him! The remembrance of the love of Christ to us will, I repeat, always kindle in us a love towards all the brethren!  
The next effect will be, holy practice. When we remember the love of Christ to us, we shall hate sin. Feeling that He has bought us with His precious blood, we shall abhor the very name of iniquity. When Satan tempts us, we shall, each one, say, “Get you gone, for I will have nothing to do with you—I remember Christ’s love to me.” Have you ever heard the story of the Indian woman who, when she was enticed by some great chief who wished to lead her astray, made to him this noble answer, “I know no one in the world to be beautiful or attractive but my husband”? So will the Believer say, when he is tempted, “I know of nothing that is good but Christ. I know of no one who is so fair as He is. So be gone, black Satan—my heart is given wholly to Christ and I will have nothing to do with you.”  
Another effect of remembering the love of Christ will be repose of heart in time of trouble. When we have, for a while, lost the light of God’s Countenance. When we are like the Apostle in that great storm at sea and are in a place where two seas meet and our vessel is already broken by the violence of the waves. When darkness increases our fears, or daylight reveals fresh dangers, then is it especially sweet to remember the love of our Lord! In such a time as that, the tried Believer can say, “He did love me once and His love never changes. Though I cannot now see the light of His Countenance, I know that He is still the same as He always was. I remember the garden of delights where He revealed His love to me and the banqueting house where He gave me such choice fare—and I feel persuaded that He has not forgotten His poor spouse, but that He will come to her, again, and once more lift her out of the mire, set her feet upon a rock, put a new song into her mouth and establish her goings.”  
A constant remembrance of Christ’s love to us will make us always cheerful, dutiful, holy! Dear Lord, grant us this gift, for if You will enable us to remember Your love more than wine, You will give us all good things in one! Let Your good Spirit but keep us up to this good resolution and we shall be both holy and happy, honoring You and rejoicing in You!  
IV. Lastly, I would put before you A FEW PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS AS TO PRESERVING A DEEPER AND MORE SINCERE REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST’S LOVE.  
The old Puritan divines frequently compared their hearers to the Egyptian dog that ran to the Nile and drank and then ran away. They came up to the meeting house and heard the minister, took a little sip of the Gospel, which sufficed them, and then they were off! One preacher said that he wished they were like the fishes—not come and lap at the stream, as the dog did, but swim in it and live in it! There are too many, in this age, who are content with hearing a little of Christ’s love—a sip by the way is all that they seem to need. But it would be far better if you could come up to Rutherford’s ideal—“I would have my soul sunk over its masthead in a sea of love to Christ. I would be sunk 50 fathoms deep in the mighty shoreless ocean of His love so that there might be nothing left of me, and that I might be swallowed up in love to Christ—and in Christ’s love to me.”  
I expect, dear Brothers and Sisters, that your complaint is that you cannot remember good things as you would. I know very well how you feel. You hear a sermon and become, for a while, absorbed in holy meditation—but you have to return to your shop early tomorrow morning and you only left it as late as twelve o’clock on Saturday night. There are six days for the world and only one for Heaven! It is no wonder that you find the sermon so difficult to remember. You remind me of a person going out into a garden on a dark night, carrying a lighted candle. If the wind should blow, there is such a careful shielding of the light with the hand, lest it should be blown out. In like manner, it is but a feeble light that you bear away from the public ministry and there are ten thousand winds blowing around you, and trying to put it out! You must, indeed, be careful to keep it alight all the week in your memory. Let me give you a little practical advice as to how you may keep constantly in your mind a remembrance of Jesus Christ’s love.  
One of the first things I would recommend to you is frequent meditation. See if you cannot more often get a quarter of an hour all alone, that you may sit down and turn over and over again the love of Christ to you. Remember that souls grow more by meditation than by anything else. The cattle go round the fields and eat the grass—that is like hearing the Word. But, afterwards, they lie down in a quiet corner and chew the cud—that is like meditating upon what we have heard. Get a quarter of an hour, if you can, to masticate and digest the Word of God. “A quarter of an hour!” says someone, “why, I could not get five minutes!” I would not be hard with you, dear Brother, but I think you could. Days can sometimes be pulled out either at one end or at the other. If you cannot lengthen the day at the night end, cannot you pull it out at the morning end? Is there not a possibility of a little saving of time at some hour during the day? You will do none the less work for allowing time for meditation and prayer. Our old proverb says, “Prayer and provender hinder no man’s journey,” and I believe that prayer and meditation hinder no man’s work! Try to get a little time to think about your soul. What? So much time to be occupied with this dusty, sinful world, and so little time to be devoted to that which relates to Heaven? So much time to be employed concerning meat, drink and clothes, and so little time to be given to thoughts of our precious Savior and all His loveliness? Get a little time alone, Beloved, for that will help to keep you right. You would not forget your Master’s love nearly as much as you do if you would secure more time for meditation upon it.  
Another means of remembering Christ’s love is this. Take care that you are not content with what you knew of Christ’s love yesterday. You need to know a little more about it today and you ought to know still more about it tomorrow. Some Christians do not commune with their Lord nearly as often as they ought. I wonder how they manage to live on in such a fashion. They get a little manna once a month and they try to live on that until another month comes round. They meet with their Savior, perhaps, at the Communion Table—and not always then—and they are content to live from day to day without having fellowship with Him. Be not you one of that order of Christians! Seek for daily—no, more than that—constant communion with the Lord Jesus Christ! You are to pray for daily bread—then, surely, He who bade you do that must mean that you should seek to be fed daily with Himself, who is the Bread of Heaven! I do not like to hear people talk about what they knew of Jesus five or six years ago unless they can also tell something of what they know of Him now! What would you think of a wife who said, “My husband spoke kindly to me some years ago and I saw him five years ago, but I have not seen him since”? You would say, “How can the woman live, if she is a loving wife, without seeing her husband? Is he in the same house with her and yet has he not spoken to her all that while?”  
The Lord Jesus is always near to you and do you mean to say that you can live without fellowship with Him? Yes, you can, for some of you do! But I pray you not to live so any longer, for it is a poor, starving way of dragging on a miserable existence! You have just enough religion to make you wretched! You have not enough to make you happy—get a great deal more of it! Drink deeply at the heavenly spring of fellowship. If you learn a little more about Christ every day, you will not be likely to forget what you already know of Him.  
Then, again, as another way of keeping in your heart what you do know—take care, when you have a sense of Christ’s love, that you let it go down deeply. If there were a nail so placed that it would slacken its hold a little every day for six days—if I had the opportunity of driving it in the first day—I would try to drive it in right up to the head and to clinch it. So, if you have not much time for fellowship and communion with Christ—if you have only a short season for meditation, try to drive the nail well home. Do not be content with merely thinking about Christ—seek to see Him before your eyes as manifestly crucified. See Him as He groans in the Garden and do not be content unless you can groan with Him. See Him as He hangs upon the Cross and do not rest satisfied until you can feel that you are crucified with Him. Realize your fellowship with Him as He rises from the tomb, for this will help very much to keep you right.  
I have heard the story of a man who was passing by a house where a poor idiot lad, with a piece of sandpaper, was scouring away at a brass plate. The man asked what he was doing and he replied, “I am trying to scour the name out.” “Ah,” said the other, “You may scour away as long as you like, but you will never be able to do that.” And so, I think I see the devil scouring away at some of you, trying to get the name of Jesus out of your heart. Scour away, Satan, if you like, but you will never get it out, for it is too deeply cut! If Christ’s name is engraved upon your heart, Satan may try to get it out, but he will never succeed in doing so! It shall never be obliterated, but shall shine all the more brightly for his attempts to remove it!  
Let me add one more direction. When any of you meet together, it is always a good thing to make Christ the theme of your conversation. Oh, what a deal of idle gossip there is, even on Sundays! Many people do not go out on Sunday afternoon, so they must talk about something. They do not like to talk about their trade— they fancy that would be too secular. They do not like to talk about strictly sacred things—they think that might appear hypocritical. So they begin, “Have you ever heard So-andSo preach?” “Yes, I did once.” “Did you like him?” So, from one, they go on to others—and ministers and their sermons become the bones that they pick on Sunday afternoons! They feel that they must have some theme for their conversation not quite sacred, nor wholly secular. I would advise you to talk more about the Lord Jesus Christ than you have been—you will be less likely to forget His love if you are often talking of Him. Let the music of His name ring in your ears all the day long—and if you would have it ring in your ears, it must ring from your tongue! Whenever you have the opportunity, tell out the marvelous story of His great love to you and so will your own memory be refreshed and others, listening to your testimony, will also get a large and, it may be, an everlasting blessing!  
May God now grant to you, my dear Hearers, that you may retain a sense of Christ’s love to you if you have ever enjoyed it! If you never have, may God now give it to you! If you have never come to Christ, come to Him now! Remember that Jesus loves sinners. Those who are now farthest from Him, when they once return to Him, shall know that He loves them. If you, “take with you words,” and come to Him, groaning and sighing, He will not cast you out. He stands now with open arms and freely invites you! Come to Him, I beseech you. As His ambassador, I entreat you to come. If you do so, He will fold you to His bosom. All that the heirs of Heaven can have, you shall have! All that the glorified saints are now enjoying shall yet be your privilege, also! You shall one day walk with Christ in white, and see His face, and be with Him in Paradise and be blessed throughout eternity! May God grant us His Grace, now, that our text may become the cheerful sonnet of our experience—“We will remember Your love more than wine.”

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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THE UNKEPT VINEYARD—OR, PERSONAL WORK NEGLECTED

NO. 1936

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 19, 1886, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.”  
Song of Solomon 1:6.**

The text is spoken in the first person singular —“They made me.” Therefore let the preaching, tonight, be personal to you, dear Friends—personal to the preacher, first, and then to each one of this mixed multitude. May we at this hour think less of others than of ourselves! May the sermon be of practical value to our own hearts! I do not suppose that it will be a pleasing sermon. On the other hand it may be a saddening one. I may bring unhappy memories before you, but let us not be afraid of that holy sorrow which is health to the soul. Since the spouse in this text speaks of herself, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept,” let each one of us copy her example and think of ourselves.

The text is the language of complaint . We are all pretty ready at complaining, especially of other people. Not much good comes of picking holes in other men’s characters and yet many spend hours in that unprofitable occupation! It will be well for us, at this time, to let our complaint, like that of the text, deal with ourselves. If there is something wrong at home, let the father blame himself. If there is something evil with the children, let the mother look to her own personal conduct as their instructor. Do not let us lend out our ears, but let us keep them at home for our own use. Let us clear out an open passage to the heart so that everything that is said shall go down into the spirit—and purify our inner man. Let us from the heart make the confession—“They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.”

Let us make the text practical . Do not let us be satisfied to have uttered the language of complaint, but let us get rid of the evils which we deplore. If we have been wrong, let us labor to be right. If we have neglected our own vineyard, let us confess it with due humiliation, but let us not continue to neglect it. Let us ask God that holy results may flow out of our self-lamentations so that before many days we may begin to keep our own vineyards carefully by the Grace of God! And then we shall better carry out the office of keeper of the vineyards of others, if we are called to such an employment.

There are two things upon which I am going to dwell at this time. The first is that there are many Christian people—I hope they are Christian people—who will be compelled to confess that the greater part of their life is spent in labor which is not of the highest kind and is not properly their own. I shall point out the worker who has forgotten his heavenly calling. And when I have done with this case—and I am afraid that there will be much about it that may touch many of us—I shall then take a more general view and deal with any who are undertaking other works and neglecting their own proper vocation.

I. First, then, let me begin with THE CHRISTIAN WHO HAS FORGOTTEN HIS HIGH AND HEAVENLY CALLING. In the day when you and I were born again, my Brothers and Sisters, we were born for God. In the day when we saw that Christ died for us, we were bound, from that day on, to be dead to the world. In the day when we were quickened by the Holy Spirit into newness of life, that life was bound to be a consecrated one. For a thousand reasons it is true that, “You are not your own: you are bought with a price.” The ideal Christian is one who has been made alive with a life which he lives for God. He has risen out of the dominion of the world, the flesh and the devil. He reckons that “if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not, from this day on, live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.” This you will not deny. Christian Friends, you admit that you have a high, holy and heavenly calling!

Now let us look back. We have not spent our life idly—we have been forced to be keepers of the vineyards. I hope I am not addressing anybody here who has tried to live without employment and labor of some kind. No, we have worked and we have worked hard. Most men speak of their wages as “hard-earned,” and I believe that in many cases they speak the bare truth. Many hours in the day have to be spent upon our occupations. We wake up in the morning and think of what we have to do. We go to bed wearied at night by what we have done. This is as it should be, for God did not make us that we might sport and play like leviathan in the deep. Even in Paradise man was told to dress the garden. There is something to be done by each man and specially by each Christian.

Come back to what I began with. In the day when we were born again, as many of us as are new creatures in Christ Jesus, we began to live to God and not to ourselves. Have we carried out that life? We have worked, we have even worked hard—but the questions come to us—What have we worked for? Who has been our master? With what objective have we toiled? Of course, if I have been true to my profession as a Christian, I have lived and worked for God, for Christ, for the Kingdom of Heaven. But has it been so? And is it so now? Many are working very hard for wealth, which means, of course, for self, that they may be enriched. Some are working simply for compensation which means, if it goes no farther, still for self. Others work for their families, a motive good enough in its way, but still only an enlargement, after all, of self.

To the Christian there must always be a far higher, deeper, purer, truer motive than self in its widest sense—or else the day must come when he will look back upon his life and say, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard”—that is, the service of Christ, the Glory of Him that bought me with His blood—“have I not kept.” It seems to me to be a terrible calamity to have to look back on 20 years and say, “What have I done in all those 20 years for Christ? How much of my energy has been spent in striving to glorify Him? I have had talents—how many of those talents have been used for Him who gave them to me? I have had wealth, or I have had influence. How much of that money have I spent distinctly for my Lord? How much of that influence have I used for the promotion of His Kingdom?” You have been busy with this notion and that motive and the other endeavor—but have you lived as you will wish to have lived when you stand at His right hand amidst His glories? Have you so acted that you will then judge yourself to have well lived when your Lord and Master shall come to call you to account?

Ask yourself, “Am I an earnest laborer together with God, or am I, after all, only a laborious trifler, an industrious doer of nothing, working hard to accomplish no purpose of the sort for which I ought to work, since I ought to live unto my Lord, alone?” I invite all my fellow servants, in retrospect, to see whether they have kept their own vineyards. I suppose that they have worked hard. I only put the question—Have they kept their own vineyards? Have they served the Lord in all things?

I am half afraid to go a step farther. To a very large degree we have not been true to our own professions—our highest work has been neglected— we have not kept our own vineyards. In looking back, how little time has been spent by us in communion with God! How little a part of our thoughts has been occupied with meditation, contemplation, adoration and other acts of devotion! How little have we surveyed the beauties of Christ—His Person, His work, His sufferings, His Glory! We say that it is, “Heaven below,” to commune with Christ—but do we do it? We profess that there is no place like the Mercy Seat. How much are we at that Mercy Seat? We often say that the Word of God is precious—that every page of it glows with a heavenly light. Do we study it?

Friends, how much time do you spend upon it? I venture to say that the bulk of Christians spend more time in reading the newspaper than they do in reading the Word of God! I trust that I am too severe in this statement, but I am afraid, greatly afraid, that I am not. The last new book, perhaps the last sentimental story will win attentive reading, when the Divine, mysterious, unutterable depths of heavenly knowledge are disregarded by us. Our Puritan forefathers were strong men because they lived on the Scriptures. None stood against them in their day, for they fed on good meat, whereas their degenerate children are far too fond of unwholesome food! The chaff of fiction and the bran of the quarterlies are poor substitutes for the old corn of Scripture, the fine flour of spiritual Truths of God! Alas, my Brothers and Sisters, too many eat the unripe fruit of the vineyards of Satan—and the fruits of the Lord’s vines they utterly despise!

Think of our neglect of our God and see whether it is not true that we have treated Him very evilly. We have been in the shop, we have been on the exchange, we have been at the markets, we have been in the fields, we have been in the public libraries, we have been in the lecture room, we have been in the forum of debate—but our own closets and studies, our walk with God and our fellowship with Jesus—we have far too much neglected.

Moreover, we have too much left the vineyard of holy service for God to go to ruin. I would ask you—How about the work your God has called you to do? Men are dying—are you saving them? This great city is like a seething caldron, boiling and bubbling up with infamous iniquity—are we doing anything by way of antidote to the Hell-broth concocted in that caldron? Are we, indeed, a power working towards righteousness? How much good have we done? What have I done to pluck brands from the burning? What have I done to find the lost sheep for whom my Savior laid down His life? Come, put the questions and answer them honestly! No, do not back out and say, “I have no ability.” I fear you have more ability than you will give an account of with joy at the Last Great Day! I remember a young man who complained that the little Church over which he presided was so small. He said, “I cannot do much good. I have not above 200 hearers.” An older man replied, “Two hundred hearers are a great many to have to give an account of at the Last Great Day.”

As I came in at yonder door, this evening, and looked into these thousands of faces, I could not help trembling! How shall I answer for this solemn charge, for this enormous flock in that Last Great Day? You have all a flock of some kind, larger or smaller. You have all, as Christian people, somebody for whom you will have to answer. Have you done your Master’s work in reference to those entrusted to you? O men and women, have you sought to save others from going down into the Pit? You have the Divine remedy—have you handed it out to these sick and dying ones? You have the heavenly Word of God which can deliver them from destruction—have you spoken it in their ears, praying all the while that God might bless it to their souls? Might not many among you say to himself, “I have been a tailor,” or, “I have been a shop-keeper,” or, “I have been a mechanic,” or, “I have been a merchant,” or, “I have been a physician, and I have attended to these callings—but my own vineyard, which was my Master’s, which I was bound to look to first of all, I have not kept”?

Well, now, what is the remedy for this? We need not talk of our fault any more—let us make, each one, his own personal confession and then seek amendment. I believe the remedy is a very sweet one. It is not often that medicine is pleasant, but at this time I prescribe for you a charming potion. It is that you follow up the next verse to my text. Read it—“My own vineyard have I not kept. Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make your flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?” Get to your Lord and in Him you will find recovery from your neglects! Ask Him where He feeds His flock and go with Him! They have warm hearts who commune with Christ! They are prompt in duty who enjoy His fellowship!

I cannot help reminding you of what I have often spoken of, namely, our Lord’s language to the Church at Laodicea. That Church had come to be so bad that He said, “I will spue you out of My mouth.” And yet what was the remedy for that Church? “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” After supping with Christ you will not be lukewarm! Nobody can say, “I am neither cold nor hot” when they have been in His company! Rather they will enquire, “Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way?” If there is an angel, as Milton sings, whose name is Uriel, who lives in the sun, I will guarantee you he is never cold! And He that lives in Christ and walks with Him is never cold, nor slow in the Divine service! Away to your Lord, then!

Hasten to your Lord and you will soon begin to keep your vineyard, for in the Song you will see a happy change effected. The spouse began to keep her vineyard, directly, and to do it in the best fashion. Within a very short time you find her saying, “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines.” See, she is hunting out her sins and her follies! Farther on you find her with her Lord in the vineyard, crying, “Awake, O north wind and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out!” She is evidently keeping her garden and asking for heavenly influences to make the spices and flowers yield their perfume. She went down to see whether the vines flourished and the pomegranates budded. Soon, with her Beloved, she rises early to go to the vineyard and watch the growth of the plants! Farther on you find her talking about all manner of fruits that she has laid up for her Beloved. Thus you see that to walk with Christ is the way to keep your vineyard and serve your Lord. Come and sit at His feet! Lean on His bosom! Rest on His arm and make Him to be the joy of your spirit!

The Lord grant, dear Brothers and Sisters, that this gentle word which I have spoken as much to myself as to you, may be blessed to us all!  
II. Now, I turn to the congregation in general and speak with THE MAN WHO IN ANY PLACE HAS TAKEN OTHER WORK AND NEGLECTED HIS OWN. He can use the words of the text—“They make me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.”  
We know many persons who are always doing a great deal and yet do nothing—fussy people, people to the front in every movement, persons who could set the whole world right, but are not right themselves. Just before a general election there is a manifestation of most remarkable men—generally persons who know everything and a few things besides, who, if they could but be sent to Parliament, would turn the whole world upside down and put even Pandemonium to rights! They would pay the National Debt within six months and do any other trifle that might occur to them. Very eminent men are these! I have come across impossibly great men. None could be so great as these feel themselves to be. They are an order of very superior persons—reformers, or philosophers who know what nobody else knows, only, happily, they have not patented the secret and are prepared to tell it to others and, thereby, illuminate us all!  
I suggest to our highly-gifted friends that it is possible to be looking after a great many things and yet to be neglecting your own vineyard. There is a vineyard that a great many neglect and that is their own heart. It is well to have talent; it is well to have influence; but it is better to be right within yourself. It is well for a man to see to his cattle and look well to his flocks and to his herds—but let him not forget to cultivate that little patch of ground that lies in the center of his being. Let him educate his head and intermeddle with all knowledge, but let him not forget that there is another plot of ground called the heart, the character, which is more important, still! Right principles are spiritual gold and he that has them and is ruled by them is the man who truly lives. He has not life, whatever else he has, who has not his heart cultivated and made right and pure.  
Have you ever thought about your heart? Oh, I do not mean whether you have palpitations! I am no doctor. I am speaking now about the heart in its moral and spiritual aspect. What is your character and do you seek to cultivate it? Do you ever use the hoe upon those weeds which are so plentiful in us all? Do you water those tiny plants of goodness which have begun to grow? Do you watch them to keep away the little foxes which would destroy them? Are you hopeful that yet there may be a harvest in your character which God may look upon with approval? I pray that we may all look to our hearts. “Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Pray daily, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me,” for if not, you will go up and down in the world and do a great deal—and when it comes to the end you will have neglected your noblest nature—and your poor starved soul will die that second death which is the more dreadful because it is everlasting death!  
How terrible for a soul to die of neglect! How can we escape who neglect this great salvation? If we pay every attention to our bodies, but none to our immortal souls, how shall we justify our folly? God save us from suicide by neglect! May we not have to moan out eternally, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept!”  
Now, pass over that point and think of another vineyard. Are not some people neglecting their families? Next to our hearts, our households are the vineyards which we are most bound to cultivate. I shall never forget a man whom I knew in my youth who used to accompany me, at times, in my walks to the villages to preach. He was always willing to go with me any evening, but I did not need to ask him, for he asked himself until I purposely put him off from it. He liked, also, to preach much better than others liked to hear him, but he was a man who was sure to be somewhere to the front if he could. Even if you snuffed him out, he had a way of lighting himself up again. He was good-natured and irrepressible. He was, I believe, sincerely earnest in doing good. But two boys of his were well known to me and they would swear horribly. They were ready for every vice and were under no restraint. One of them drank himself into a dying state with brandy, though he was a mere boy. I do not believe his father had ever spoken to him about the habit of intoxication, though he certainly was sober and virtuous, himself. I had no fault to find with him except this grave fault—that he was seldom at home, was not master of the house and could not control his children. Neither husband nor wife occupied any place of influence in the household—they were simply the slaves of their children—their children made themselves vile and they restrained them not!  
This Brother would pray for his children at the Prayer Meeting, but I do not think he ever practiced family prayer. It is shocking to find men and women speaking fluently about religion and yet their houses are a disgrace to Christianity! I suppose that none of you are as bad as that but, if it is so, please reread this text over—“They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.” The most careful and prayerful father cannot be held accountable for having wicked sons, if he has done his best to instruct them. The most anxious and tearful mother cannot be blamed if her daughter dishonors the family, provided her mother has done her best to train her up in the right way. But if the parents cannot say that they have done their best and their children go astray, then they are blameworthy. If any of them have come to the Tabernacle, tonight, and their boys and girls are—they do not know where— let them go home quickly and find them! If any of my hearers exercise no parental discipline, nor seek to bring their children to Christ, I do implore them to give up every kind of public work till they have first done their work at home! Has anybody made you a minister and are you not trying to save your own children? I tell you, Sir, I do not believe that God made you a minister, for if He had, He would have begun with making you a minister to your own family!  
“They made me the keeper of the vineyards.” “They” ought to have known better and you ought to have known better than to accept the call! How can you be a steward in the great household of the Lord when you cannot even rule your own house? A Sunday school teacher, teaching other people’s children and never praying with her own? Is not this a sad business? A teacher of a large class of youths who never has taken a class of his own sons and daughters? Why, what will he do when he lives to see his children plunged into vice and sin and remembers that he has utterly neglected them? This is plain dealing, but I never wear gloves when I preach! I know not where this knife may cut, but if it wounds, I pray you, do not blunt its edge. Do you say that this is “very personal”? It is meant to be personal! And if anybody is offended by it, let him be offended with himself—and mend his ways. No longer let it be true of any of us, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.”  
Besides that, every man who knows the Lord should feel that his vineyard lies, also, round about his own house. If God has saved your children, then, dear Friend, try to do something for your neighbors, for your employees, for those with whom you associate in daily labor. God has appointed you to take care of those nearest home. They say the cobbler’s wife goes barefoot. Do not let it be true! Begin at home and go on with those nearest home. Manifest Christian love to your neighbors! It is a great pity that yonder Christian man, living in a very dark part of London, comes to the Tabernacle and does good in our societies but never speaks a word for Jesus in the court where he lives. Poor stuff, poor stuff, is that salt which is only salt when it is in the saltbox! Throw that kind of salt away! We want a kind of salt that begins to bite into any bit of meat it touches! Put it where you like, if it is good salt, it begins to operate upon that which is nearest to it!  
Some people are capital salt in the box—they are also good in the cake—they are beautifully white to look at and you can cut them into ornamental shapes. But they are never used—they are merely kept for show. If salt does not preserve anything, throw it away! Ask the farmer whether he would like it for his fields. “No,” he says, “there is no goodness in it.” Salt that has no saltiness in it is of no use. You can make the garden path of it. It is good to be trod underfoot by men, but that is the only use to which you can put it. O my beloved fellow Christians, do not let it be said that you reside in a place to which you do no good whatever! I am sure if there were individual, personal work on the part of Christians in the localities where they reside, God the Holy Spirit would bless the unanimous action of His earnest, quickened Church and London would soon know that God has a people in the midst of it! If we keep away from the masses of souls—if we cannot think of laboring in a district because it is too low or too poor—we shall have missed our vocation and, at the last, we shall have to lament, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.”  
You and I must cry mightily to the Holy Spirit to help us to live really and truly the lives which our professions demand of us. A day will come when all Church attendance, and Chapel attendance, preaching, singing and sacraments will seem fluff and useless stuff if there has not been the substance of real living for Christ in all our religiousness! Oh that we would awaken ourselves to something like a Divine earnestness! Oh that we felt the grandeur of our heavenly surroundings! We are no common people! We are loved with no common love! Jesus died for us! He died for us! He died for us! And is this poor life of ours, so often dull and worldly, our sole return? Behold that piece of land! He that bought it paid His life for it, watered it with bloody sweat and sowed in it a Divine Seed! And what is the harvest? We naturally expect great things. Is the poor starveling life of many a professor a fit harvest for Christ’s sowing His heart’s blood? God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit—all in action—what is the result? Omnipotence linking hands with love and working out a miracle of Grace! What comes of it?  
A half-hearted professor of religion. Is this all the result? O Lord, was there ever so small an effect from so great a cause? You might almost need a microscope to discover the result of the work of Grace in some people’s lives. Ought it to be so? Shall it be so? In the name of Him that lives and was dead, dare you let it be so? Help us, O God, to begin to live, and keep the vineyard which You, Yourself, have given to us to keep, that we may render in our account, at last, with joy and not with grief! Amen.

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SELF-HUMBLING AND SELF-SEARCHING  
NO. 990

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 15, 1871, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me: my mother’s children were angry with me, they made me the keeper of the vineyards. But my own vineyard have I not kept.” Song of Solomon 1:6.**

FROM WHERE do I draw my text but from the very fountain of love? And to whom shall I address my discourse but to the friends of the Bridegroom? You must have warm hearts, quick sensibilities, lively emotions to interpret the sayings and sympathize the tender notes of this most sacred song. I suppose that the history of the statues in St. Paul’s Cathedral, from year to year, would not be remarkably interesting. They are placed upon their pedestals. They stand there quietly. And unless some terrible convulsion should occur, probably that will be the whole of their history for many years to come, as it has been for many years past.

During the time in which any one of those statues has stood there, however, the history of any one human person has been checkered with all sorts of incidents, happy and sorrowful. Aches and pains, joys and rejoicing, depressions and exultations have alternated in the living. But in the cold marble there has been no such change. Many of you in this house know little of what are the experiences of God’s people. If you hear of their anxieties and encouragements, their temptations and deliverances, their inward conflicts and spiritual triumphs, their gloomy depressions and cheerful exultations—all those things seem to you as an idle tale.

The living, the living, shall know the secret. But unto the mere professor this thing is not revealed. My subject, which will be mainly addressed to God’s working people—to such as are really serving Him—will appear to have very little bearing upon any here present who do not understand the spiritual life, and they will probably think that the evening to them is wasted. Just this word on the outset, however, I would drop in your ears. If you do not know anything of spiritual life, what will you do in the end of your natural life? If there is no work of God’s Spirit upon your soul, and you are a stranger to the living experience of God’s children, what will be your portion forever?

It must be divided to you with the unbelievers. Are you prepared to receive it? Are you willing that this should be your eternal destiny? Are you not, rather, alarmed? Are you not made anxious and desirous if by any means you may pass into that better, truer, state of life? Considering its

boundless interests, notwithstanding all the present struggles and sorrows it may entail on you, do you not wish to know and prove what spiritual life means? I pray God you may. Let me remind you that the Gospel preached to you is still available for your quickening—and whoever believes in Christ Jesus is born of God, and is possessor of that spiritual life.

Now, in conducting the people of God to a special survey of our text, “Look not upon me, because I am black,” our first remark shall be this— the fairest Christians are the most shamefaced with regard to themselves. The person who says, “Look not upon me, because I am black,” is described by someone else in the eighth verse as the “fairest among women.” Others, who thought her the fairest of the fair, spoke no less than the truth when they affirmed it. But in her own esteem she felt herself to be so little fair, and so much uncomely, that she besought them not even to look upon her.

Why is it that the best Christians depreciate themselves the most? Is it not because they are most accustomed to look within? They keep their books in a better condition than those unsafe tradesmen, the counterpart of mere professors who think themselves “rich and increased in goods,” when they are on the very verge of bankruptcy. The Christian in his right state tests himself to see whether he is in the faith. He values too much his own soul to go on blindly. He knows that Heedless and Toobold are always bad pilots, so he sets Caution and Self-Examination at the helm. He cries to God, “Search me, and know my heart.”

He is accustomed to examine his actions and his motives—to pass his words and his thoughts in review. He does not live the life of one who goes recklessly on—he stops and considers his ways—and looks well to the state of everything within him “to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.” Solomon says, “The wise man looks to the state of his flocks and his herds.” And it is no marvel if anyone suffers loss who neglects the counsel. But he also says, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” And it is quite certain that he who fails in this exercise is liable to every kind of moral disorder.

In his anxiety to be pure from evil, the godly man will be eager to notice and quick to detect the least particle of defilement. And for this reason he discovers more of his blackness than any other man is likely to see. He is no blacker, but he looks more narrowly, and therefore he sees more distinctly the spots on his own character. The genuine Christian, also, tries himself by a higher standard. The professor, if he is as good as another professor, is well content. He estimates himself by a comparison with his neighbors. He has no standard but that of ordinary commonplace Christianity. Far otherwise is it with the Believer who walks near to God. He asks himself, “What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?”

He knows the Law to be spiritual and therefore he judges many things to be sinful which others wink at. And he counts some things to be important duties which others regard as trifles. The genuine Christian sets up no lower standard than perfection. He does not judge himself by others, but by the exact measure of the Divine requirements, by the Law of God, and especially by the example of his Lord and Master. And when he thus sets the brightness of the Savior’s Character side by side with his own, then it is that he cries out, “Look not upon me, for I am black.”

The mere professor never does this—he neither scrutinizes himself nor observes his Master with close heed and strained attention, desiring to ascertain the Truth of God. He flatters himself in his own eyes and goes on presumptuously. Not so the genuine Christian. He hides his face, sighs in secret, and cries before God because he is not what he wants to be. Not what his Lord was. Not fully conformed to Christ in all things. And just because these shortcomings grieve and vex his righteous soul, he cries, “Look not upon me, for I am black.”

All the while he may be of the highest type of Christian, yet he is not so in his own esteem. He may be a star to others, but he is a blot, as he thinks, to himself. In God’s esteem he is “accepted in the Beloved,” but in his own esteem he seems to himself to be full of all manner of evil, and he cries out against it before his Lord. Another reason why the fairest Christians are generally those that think themselves the blackest is that they have more light. A person may seem to be very fair in the dark, very fair in the twilight. But when the light gets strong, and the eye is strengthened to perceive, then it is that spots that were not noticed before are soon discovered.

You have, perhaps, a handkerchief that has looked to you extremely white—so it has been in comparison with other linen. But one day, when there has been a snowfall, you have laid your handkerchief side by side with the snow, and you have seen that it was very far from the whiteness which you imagined. When the Light of God comes into the soul, and we see what purity really is, what holiness really is, then it is that the contrast strikes us. Though we might have thought we were somewhat clean before, when we see God in His Light we see Light, and we abhor ourselves in dust and ashes.

Our defects so appall our own heart that we marvel they do not exhaust His patience. The better Christian a man is, the more abashed he always feels—because to him sin is so exceedingly hateful that what sin he sees in himself he loathes himself far more than others do. The ungodly man would condone very great sin in himself—though he might know it to be there, it would not disturb him. But the Christian, being another sort, having a love for holiness and a hatred for sin, cannot bear to see the smallest speck of sin upon himself—He knows what it is.  
There are persons living before the public eye, and jealous of popularity, who appear quite indifferent to the good opinion of the sovereign in whose kingdom they dwell. There are other persons, favorites at court, who would lie awake at night, tossing to and fro in fear if they thought that something had been reported to the sovereign’s ear that was disloyal. A man who does not fear God will break all His Laws with an easy conscience. But one who is the favorite of Heaven, who has been indulged to sit at royal banquets, who knows the eternal love of God to him cannot bear that there should be any evil way in him that might grieve the Spirit and bring dishonor to the name of Christ.

A very little sin, as the world calls it, is a very great sin to a truly awakened Christian. I will ask you now, dear Hearers (most of you are members of this or of other Churches), do you know what it is to fret because you have spoken an unadvised word? Do you know what it is to smite upon your breast because you were angry?—justly provoked, perhaps, but still, being angry, you spoke unadvisedly. Have you ever gone to a sleepless couch because in business you have let fall a word, or have done an action which, upon mature deliberation, you could not justify? Does the tear never come from your eyes because you are not like your Lord, and have failed where you hoped to succeed?

I would give little for your godliness if you know nothing of this. Repentance is as much a mark of a Christian as faith itself. Do not think we have done with repenting when we come to Christ and receive the remission of our sins by the blood that did once atone. No—we shall repent as long as we sin, and as long as we need the precious blood for cleansing. While there is sin, or a proneness to any kind of sin lurking in us, the Grace of God will make us loathe the sin and humble ourselves before the Most High on account of it.

Now I think our text seems to say just this—there were some that admired the Church. They said she was fair. She seemed to say, “Don’t say it. You don’t know what I am, or you would not praise me.” Oh, there is nothing that brings a blush to a genuine Christian’s face like praising him. For he feels—“Praise such a heap of dirt as I am? Give any credit to such a worthless worm as I am? No! Do not cast admiring glances at me! Do not say, ‘That man has many virtues and many excellent qualities!’ Look not upon me, for I am black.’ ” Are there not some who will imitate any Christian—and be very right in so doing—any Christian who is eminently godly and holy?

There will be many who will follow in his footsteps. I think I see such a man turn round to his followers, and say—“Do not look at me. Do not copy me. I am black. Copy a better model—even Jesus. If I follow in His footsteps, follow me. But inasmuch as I have gone astray like a lost sheep, follow the Shepherd—do not follow my example.” Every Christian, in proportion as he lives near to God, will feel this self-abasement, this lowliness of heart. And if others talk of admiring or of imitating him, he will say, “Look not upon me, for I am black.”

And as he thus, in deep humility, begs that he be not exalted, he will often desire of others that they would not despise him. It will come into his mind, “Such-and-such a man of God is a Christian, indeed. As he sees my weakness, he will condemn me. Such-and-such a disciple of Christ is strong. He will never be able to bear with my weakness. Such-and-such a Christian woman does, indeed, adore the doctrine of God, her Savior. But as for me, alas, I am not what I ought to be, nor what I would be! Christ of God, do not look upon me with scorn.

“I will not say that you have motes in your own eyes—I have a beam in mine. Look not upon me too severely. Judge me not harshly. If you do look at me, look to Christ for me, and pray that I may be helped, ‘for I am black, because the sun has looked upon me.’ ” Still I would have you beware of affecting anything that you do not feel. Humility itself may be counterfeited with much ostentation. Wherever there is anything like cant, as it is practiced by some people who depreciate themselves but do not mean it, it is loathsome to the last degree.

I remember a very proud man, certainly twice as proud as he was high, who used to pray for himself as “God’s poor dust.” There was nothing, I am sure, about his conduct and conversation that entitled him to use any such expression. I have heard of a monk who said he was full of sin—he was as bad as Judas. And when somebody said, “That is true,” he turned round, and said, “What did I ever do that you should say so?” The effrontery of the arrogant is not more odious than the servility of the self-seeker. There is a great deal of self-abnegation which is not genuine. It is the offspring of self-conceit, and not of self-knowledge.

Much that we say of ourselves would mightily offend our vainglory if anybody else said the same of us. Oh, let us beware of mock humility! At the same time, the more of the genuine article we have the better, and the more truthfully we can cry out to God’s people, “Look not upon me, because I am black,” the more clear will it be that we are, after all, among the fairest. But I pass on.

The most diligent Christian—let this stand for the second observation— the most diligent Christian will be the man most afraid of the evils connected with his work. “Evils connected with his work!” says one. “Does work for God have evils contingent upon it?” Yes. But for every evil connected with the work of God, there are ten evils connected with idleness. No, all you professors who are doing nothing are wearing yourselves out faster by rust than you could have done by honest wear. But, you see, in the case of our text, there was evil connected with work. She had been made a keeper of the vineyards, and having to trim the vines, the sun had shone upon her.

And she says, “Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me.” The blackness that she confessed was a blackness occasioned by her having to bear the burden and heat of the day. And now I speak to such as live in active service, doing the work of God. Dear Brethren, there are certain evils connected with our lifework coming of the sun that looks upon us which we should confess before our heavenly Father. I speak now only to the workers. I have known some whom the sun has looked upon in this respect—their zeal has grown cold through non-success.

You went out, first of all, as a Christian full of fire and life. You intended to push the Church before you, and drag the world after you. Perhaps you thought that you were going to work a Reformation almost as great as that of Luther. Well, much of that was of the flesh, though beneath the surface there was an earnest zeal for God which was eating you up. But you have been mixed up with Christians for some years of a very cool sort. Use the thermometer tonight. Has not the spiritual temperature gone down in your own soul?

Perhaps you have not seen many conversions under your ministry. Or in the class which you conduct you have not seen many children brought to Jesus. Do you feel you are getting cool? Then wrap your face in your mantle tonight and say—“Look not upon me, for in losing my zeal I am black, for the sun has looked upon me.” Perhaps it has affected you in another way, for the sun does not bring freckles out on all faces in the same place. Perhaps it is your temper that is grown sour. When you joined the Church you felt all love, and you expected, as you had a right to do, that everybody would reciprocate the same feeling.

It may be that since then you have had to do battle against contentions. You have been in a part of the Church where there has been a strife, not altogether for the faith once delivered to the saints, but something of a party feeling was mixed with it, and you have had to take some share in it. And perhaps you have gradually acquired a carping, critical habit, so that where you used to enjoy the Word, you are now all for judging the preacher. You are not so much a feeder upon the Word, as a mere taster of the dishes, to see if you cannot find some fault with their flavor.

Wrap your face again, I beseech you, in your mantle. Again bow before God, and say—“Look not upon me, because I am black. The sun has looked upon me. In my service for God I have been impaired.” Perhaps, dear Friend, you have suffered in another way. I sometimes suffer in this respect very materially. The Christian’s walk ought to be calm, peaceful, quiet, unruffled. Leaving everything with the Lord, and waiting on His will, our peace should be like a river. But you know that when there is much to be done in God’s service, there is a very strong temptation to want to push this and that thing forward with undue haste. Or if it does not move quickly at the rate you would wish, there is a temptation to be sad, careful, and anxious.

To be, in fact, like Martha, cumbered with much service. When you get into that condition it is an injury to yourself and really prejudicial to your own work. For they serve Christ best who commune with Him most, and broken fellowship means broken strength. Yet this is often our trouble. Our energies are exhausted by worry more than by work. Part of our duty is neglected through unexpected cares that have distracted our thoughts. Pardon me if I transfer the thing to myself in a figure. Say that this Tabernacle wants all my vigilance concentrated upon its welfare. Then there is another matter that wants instant attention at the same time.

Here is a soul seeking Christ. Here is another backsliding. Here is a Brother falling out with another Brother. Innumerable things crowd upon one’s view and clamor for immediate investigation till one gets disturbed and troubled. “Look not upon me, because I am black; because the sun has looked upon me. The work I have engaged in for You has brought me into the sun, and burnt my face.” It ought to be bright and fair with fellowship. It is soiled and begrimed with service.

Sometimes this evil of sun-burning will come in the shape of joy taken away from the heart by weariness. I do not think, dear Brothers, any of us are weary of God’s work. If so, we never were called to it. But we may get weary in it. You remember, some of you here—I speak to such as often preach the Gospel—how happy you were when first you were permitted to open your mouth for Christ! Oh, what a joy it was! What a pleasure! How you threw your whole soul into it! There was no sleepiness and dullness in your sermons, then. But now, year after year, year after year, your brain gets weary, and though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.

The joy you once had in the service was your strength, and it has somewhat gone from you. The toil is more irksome when the spirits are less buoyant. Well, I would advise you to confess this before God and ask for a medicine to heal you. You had need get your joy back, but first you must acknowledge that you have lost it. Say, “I am black, because the sun has looked upon me.” On the other hand, it is a bad result of a good work when our humility is injured. Place a Christian man in a position where he has to do much for Christ, and is much thought of and set by—let him have great success—and the tendency will be for him to compliment himself as though he were some great one.

You cannot reap great sheaves for the Master without this temptation coming over your soul. What a glorious workman you are, and what a great reward will your soul have for having done so well! It is the sun looking upon you—taking away the fairness of your humility—freckling and blackening your face with a pride that is obnoxious to God. This ought to be confessed at once and heartily repented of. I do not think I shall attempt to go through the list of all the matters that might come out of

Christian service. It will suffice me to say that I am afraid that in many cases our motives get mixed.

Pure and simple at first in our service, we may get at last to serve Christ only because it is our office to do so. Woe to the man that preaches only because he is a minister, and does not preach because he loves Christ! We may get also to be self-reliant. It is a great mercy for God’s ministers, when they tremble on going into the pulpit, even though they have been accustomed to preach for twenty years. Martin Luther declares that he never feared the face of man, and all who knew him could bear witness that it was even so. Yet he said he never went up the stairs of the pulpit at Wittenburg but he felt his knees knock together with fear lest he should not be faithful to God and His Truth.

When we begin to rely upon ourselves and think we can do it, and our experience and our practice will suffice to bear us safely through the next discourse without help from on high, then the sun has looked upon us and blackened our face, indeed, and the time of our usefulness draws to a close. Come, Christian people, Brothers and Sisters, thankful though I am that I can address so large a number who are engaged in the Master’s work, I beseech you, let us go together to the footstool of the heavenly Grace—confess there our blackness—and own that much of it has come upon us even while we were engaged in the service of God.

In the third place, the most watchful Christian is conscious of the danger of self-neglect. That is the next part of our text. “They made me the keeper of the vineyards. But mine own vineyard have I not kept.” Solemnly, let me speak again to my Brethren who are seeking to glorify Christ by their lives. I met, some time ago, with a sermon by that famous Divine, Mr. Henry Melville, which consists all through of one solitary thought, and one only image well worked out. I will give you the essence of what took some eight pages to get through.

He supposes a man to be a guide in Switzerland. It is his duty to conduct travelers in that country through the sublime passes and to point out to them the glories of the scenery, and the beauties of the lakes, and streams, and glaciers, and hills. This man, as he continues in his office, almost inevitably gets to repeat his descriptions as a matter of course. And everybody knows how a guide at last comes to “talk book,” and just repeat words which do not awaken any corresponding feeling in his own mind.

Yet when he began, perhaps it was a sincere love of the sublime and the beautiful that led him to take up the avocation of a guide. And at first it really was to him a luxury to impart to others what he had felt amidst the glories of Nature. But as, year after year, to hundreds of different parties he had to repeat much the same descriptions, call attention to the same sublimities, and indicate the same beauties—it is almost impossible but that he should get to be at last a mere machine.  
Through the hardening tendency of custom, and the debasing influence of gain, his most apt descriptions and most exquisite eulogies come to be of no greater account than the mere language of a hireling. This thought I will not work out in extenso as that famous preacher has done, but I give it to you as a cutting which may germinate if planted in the garden of your heart. Every worker for Christ is deeply concerned in the application of this parable, because the peril of self-complacency increases in precisely the same ratio as the zeal of proselytizing. When counseling others, you think yourself wise. When warning others, you feel yourself safe. When judging others, you suppose yourself above suspicion.

You began the work with a flush of ardor. It may be with a fever of enthusiasm, a sacred instinct prompted, a glowing passion moved you. How will you continue it? Here is the danger—the fearful danger—lest you do it mechanically, fall into a monotony, continue in the same train, and use holy words to others with no corresponding feeling in your own soul. May we not stir others up to devout emotions, and yet our own hearts fail to burn with the sacred fire?

Oh, may it not be easy for one to stand as a signpost on the road to Heaven, and never stir himself? Every preacher who judges himself aright knows that this is the risk he incurs. And I believe the same danger in a measure threatens Christians in every form of work in which they occupy themselves for Christ. Dear Friends, beware of reading the Bible for other people. Get your own text—your own morsel of marrow and fatness out of Scripture—and do not be satisfied to be sermon-making or lesson-making for your class in the Sunday school.

Feed on the Word yourselves, or else your own vineyard will not be kept. When you are on your knees in prayer, pray for others, by all means—but, oh, let private prayer be kept up with a view to your own edification and your own growth in Grace as well! Preach not the Savior’s blood, and yet be without the blood mark on yourselves. Tell not of the Fountain and yet go unwashed. Do not point to Heaven and then turn your back to it and go down to Hell. Fellow workers, look to yourselves lest after having preached to others you, yourselves, should be cast away. Your neighbors certainly, but yourselves, also. The children in your class certainly, your own children at home certainly, but look to yourselves also—you that are workers in God’s House—lest you keep the vineyards of others and your own vineyards be not kept.

It is very possible for a man to get to dislike the very religion which he feels bound by force of custom to go on teaching to others. “Is that possible?” says one. Alas, that it is. Have you never heard of the flower girl in the streets? What is her occupation? I dare say some girls like her have passed by and seen her with a great basket full of violets, and said— “What a delightful occupation, to have that fragrant smell forever near to you!” Yes, but there was one girl who sold them, and said she hated the smell of violets. She had got to loathe them, and to think that there was

no smell in the world so offensive, because they were always under her nostrils all day, and taken home to her little scanty room at night, and having nothing but violets around her, she hated them altogether.

And I do believe that there are persons without the Grace of Christ in their hearts who keep on talking about Divine Grace, and mercy, and practicing prayer, and yet in their heart of hearts they hate the very fragrance of the name of Jesus and need that there should come upon them an awakening out of their sleep of presumption and hypocrisy to make them know that though they thought they were the friends of God, they were, after all, His enemies. They were mere keepers of other men’s vineyards, but their own vineyards had gone to ruin.

Our last reflection is of the deepest importance. The most conscientious Christian will be the first to enquire for the antidote, and to use the cure. What is the cure? The cure is found in the verse next to my text. “Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me. They made me the keeper of the vineyards. But mine own vineyard have I not kept.”

And next? “Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?” See, then, you workers, if you want to keep up your freshness, and not to get blackened by the sun under which you labor, go to your Lord again—go and talk to Him. Address Him again by that dear name, “You whom my soul loves.” Ask to have your first love rekindled. Strive after the love of your espousals. There are men in married life who seem to have forgotten that they ever loved their wives. But there are others concerning whom the hymn is true—

“*And as year rolls after year,  
Each to other still more dear.”*

So there are some Christians who seem to forget that they ever loved the Savior. But I know there are others in whom that love deepens and becomes more fervent as each year passes over their heads. If any of you are at fault in this, do not give sleep to your eyelids tonight till you have renewed your espousal love. Your Lord remembers it, if you do not, for He says—“I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.” You did some wild things in those early days. You were a great deal more zealous than wise!

But though you look back upon that with censure, Christ regards it with delight! He wishes you were now as you were then. Perhaps today you are not quite cold to Him. Do not flatter yourself on that account. For He has said, “I would you were cold or hot.” It is just lukewarmness that He loathes most of all, and He has threatened to spew the lukewarm out of His mouth. Oh, to be always full of love to Him! You will never get any hurt by working for Him, then. Your work will do you good. The sweat of labor will even make your face the fairer. The more you do for souls, the purer, and the holier, and the more Christ-like will you be—if you do it with Him.

Keep up the habit of sitting at His feet, like Mary, as well as serving Him with Martha. You can keep the two together—they will balance each other, and you shall not be barren or unfruitful. Neither shall you fall into the blackness which the sun is apt to breed. O for more nearness to Christ, more love to Christ, and closer communion with Him! Did you notice what the spouse said—“Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed”? I suppose her object was to go and feed with Him. Look to the feeding of your own soul, Christian.

When a man says, “I have a hard day’s work to do, I shall have no time to eat,” you know full well that he is losing time where he thinks he gains it. For if he does not keep himself in good health he will sicken by-and-by, and in the long run he will do less than if he gave himself due rest. So is it with your soul. You cannot give out a vital energy which you have not in you unless you are healthy and vigorous. And if you have not power from God in your own soul, power cannot come out of you, for it is not there.

Do, therefore, feed upon Christ. Or do you feel yourself like that guide of whom we spoke just now? Has the routine of service blunted your sensibilities till you gaze unmoved on those objects of beauty and marvel that should awaken every passion and thrill every nerve of your being? Do you ask, then, in what way he might keep up his interest in the lakes and the mountains? Would it not be well for him, occasionally, at any rate, to take a lonely journey to find out new features in the gorgeous scenery or to stand in solitude and see the hills in a fresh light, or mark the forest trees in different states of the weather so that he might again renew his own sensations of admiration, and of gratitude to God for having created such sublimities?

Then I can readily believe his enthusiasm would increase rather than abate by an increasing familiarity with the landscape. And you, worker for God, you must go to God alone—feed on the precious Truths of God for yourself—dig into the deep things of God and enrich your own spirit. Thus you may serve God as much as ever you will—you will get no hurt from those exercises.

Did you notice that she also asked—“Tell me where You make Your flock to rest at noon”? Rest is what the worker wants. Where is the rest of Christ’s flock but in His own dear bosom? Where is there repose but in His own fidelity, in the two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie—the oath and the promise? Oh, never turn away from that rest! Turn into it again, tonight, Beloved! As for me, I feel I want my Savior more than ever I did. Though I have preached His Gospel now these fiveand-twenty years and more, I need still to come and cling to His Cross as a guilty sinner, and find “life for a look at the crucified One,” just as I did

at first.

O that God’s Grace may ever keep the most ardent among us always faithful with our own soul, abiding in the Lord, and rejoicing in Him! I have done. This is my word to workers. Let me only say to you for whom there has seemed nothing in the sermon—if you are not workers for Christ, you are workers against Him. “He that is not with Me is against Me. And he that gathers not with Me scatters abroad.”

O Souls, why should you stand out against the Savior? Why should you resist Him? Bleeding out His life for His enemies—the mirror of disinterested love—what is there in Him that can make you fight against Him? Drop your weapons, Man! Drop them tonight, I charge you by the living God! And come, now, ask pardon through the precious blood, and it shall be given you. Seek a new heart, and a right spirit. The Holy Spirit will work it. From this night be a worker for Christ!

The Church wants you. The armies of Christ need recruiting. Take the proffered blessing and become a soldier of the Cross. And may the Lord build up His Zion by many of you who were not His people before, but of whom it is said—“They were not My people, but they shall be the people of the living God.” Amen.

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LOVE TO JESUS  
NO. 338

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 30, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

**“O You whom my soul loves.”  
Song of Solomon 1:7.**

IF the life of a Christian may be compared to a sacrifice, then humility digs the foundation for the altar. Prayer brings the unhewn stones and piles them one upon the other. Penitence fills the trench round about the altar with water. Obedience lays the wood in order—faith pleads the Jehovah-Jireh and places the victim upon the altar. But the sacrifice, even then, is incomplete, for where is the fire? Love, love alone, can consummate the sacrifice by supplying the needful fire from Heaven. Whatever we lack in our piety, as it is indispensable that we should have faith in Christ, so is it absolutely necessary that we should have love to Him. That heart which is devoid of an earnest love to Jesus is surely still dead in trespasses and sins.

And if any man should venture to affirm that he had faith in Christ, but had no love to Him, we would at once also venture to affirm as positively that his religion was vain. Perhaps the great want of the religion of the times is love. Sometimes, as I look upon the world at large, and the Church which lies too much in its bosom, I am apt to think that the Church has light, but lacks fire. She has some degree of true faith, clear knowledge and much beside which is precious, but she lacks to a great extent that flaming love with which she once, as a chaste virgin, walked with Christ through the fires of martyrdom—when she showed to Him her undefiled, unquenchable love in the catacombs of the city and the caves of the rock.

The snows of the Alps might testify to the virgin purity of the love of the saints by the purple stain which marked the shedding of blood in defense of our bleeding Lord—blood which had been shed in defense of Him whom, though they had not seen His face, “unceasing they adored.”

It is my pleasant task this morning to stir up your pure minds, that you, as part of Christ’s Church, may feel somewhat in your hearts today of love to Him and may be able to address Him not only under the title, “You in whom my soul trusts,” but, “You whom my soul loves.” Last Sabbath, if you remember, we devoted to simple faith and tried to preach the Gospel to the ungodly. The present hour we devote to the pure, Spiritborn, godlike, flame of love.

On looking at my text, I shall come to regard it thus—First, we shall listen to the rhetoric of the lips as we here read it in these words, “O You whom my soul loves.” We shall then observe the logic of the heart, which would justify us in giving such a title as this to Christ. I will then come, in the third place, to something which even surpasses rhetoric or logic—the absolute demonstration of the daily life. And I pray that we may be able

to prove constantly by our acts that Jesus Christ is He whom our soul loves.

I. First, then, the loving title of our text is to be considered as expressing RHETORIC OF THE LIPS. The text calls Christ, “You whom my soul loves.” Let us take this title and dissect it a little.

One of the first things which will strike us when we come to look upon it is the reality of the love which is here expressed. Reality, I say— understanding the term “real,” not in contradistinction to that which is lying and fictitious—but in contrast to that which is shadowy and indistinct. Do you not notice that the spouse here speaks of Christ as One whom she knew actually to exist? Not as an abstraction, but as a Person. She speaks of Him as a real Person, “You whom my soul loves.” Why, these seem to be the words of one who is pressing Him to her bosom, who sees Him with her eyes, who tracks Him with her feet, who knows that He is and that He will reward the love which diligently seeks Him.

Brothers and Sisters, there often is a great deficiency in our love to Jesus. We do not realize the Person of Christ. We think about Christ and then we love the conception that we have formed of Him. But O, how few Christians view their Lord as being as real a Person as we are ourselves— very Man—a Man that could suffer, a Man that could die, substantial flesh and blood—very God as real as if He were not invisible and as truly existent as though we could compass Him in our minds. We want to have a real Christ more fully preached and more fully loved by the Church. We fail in our love because Christ is not real to us as He was to the early Church.

The early Church did not preach much doctrine. They preached Christ. They had little to say of truths about Christ. It was Christ Himself—His hands, His feet, His side, His eyes, His head, His crown of thorns, the sponge, the vinegar, the nails. O for the Christ of Mary Magdalene—rather than the Christ of the critical theologian! Give me the wounded body of Divinity, rather than the soundest system of theology. Let me show you what I mean.

Suppose an infant is taken away from its mother and you should seek to foster in it a love to the parent by constantly picturing before it the idea of a mother—and attempting to give it the thought of a mother’s relation to the child. Indeed, my Friends, I think you would have a difficult task to fix in that child the true and real love which it ought to bear towards her who bore it. But give that child a mother. Let it hang upon that mother’s real breast, let it derive its nourishment from her very heart—let it see that mother, feel that mother, put its little arms about that mother’s real neck and you have no hard task to make it love its mother.

So is it with the Christian. We want Christ—not an abstract, doctrinal, pictured Christ—but a real Christ. I may preach to you many a year and try to infuse into your souls a love of Christ. But until you can feel that He is a real Man and a real Person, really present with you and that you may speak to Him, talk to Him, and tell Him of your wants, you will not readily attain to a love like that of the text, so that you can call Him, “You whom my soul loves.” I want you to feel, Christian, that your love to Christ is not a mere pious affection, but that as you love your wife, as you love your child, as you love your parent, so you love Christ. That though your love to Him is of a finer cast and a higher mold, yet it is just as real as the more earthly passion.

Let me suggest another figure. A war is raging in Italy for liberty. The very thought of liberty nerves a soldier. The thought of a hero makes a man a hero. Let me go and stand in the midst of the army and preach to them what heroes should be and what brave men they should be who fight for liberty. My dear Friends, the most earnest eloquence might have but little power. But put into the midst of these men Garibaldi—heroism incarnate. Place before their eyes that dignified man—who seems like some old Roman newly arisen from his tomb—they see before them what liberty means and what daring is, what courage can attempt and what heroism can perform. For there he is, and firmed by his actual presence, their arms are strong, their swords are sharp and they dash to the battle at once. His presence ensures victory, because they realize in his presence the thought which makes men brave and strong.

So the Church needs to feel and see a real Christ in her midst. It is not the idea of disinterestedness. It is not the idea of devotion. It is not the idea of self-consecration that will ever make the Church mighty—it must be that idea incarnate, consolidated, personified in the actual existence of a realized Christ in the camp of the Lord’s host. I pray for you and ask you pray for me, that we may each one of us have a love which realizes Christ and which can address him as, “You whom my soul loves.”

But again, look at the text and you will perceive another thing very clearly. The Church, in the expression which she uses concerning Christ, speaks not only with a realization of His presence, but with a firm assurance of her own love. Many of you who do really love Christ, can seldom get further than to say, “O You whom my soul desires to love! O You whom I hope I love”! But this sentence says not so at all. This title has not the shadow of a doubt or a fear upon it—“O You whom my soul loves”! Is it not a happy thing for a child of God when he knows that he loves Christ? When he can speak of it as a matter of consciousness?—a thing out of which he is not to be argued by all the reasoning of Satan—a thing concerning which he can put his hand upon his heart and appeal to Jesus and say, “Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You”?

I say, is not this a delightful frame of mind? Or rather, I reverse the question, Is not that a sad miserable state of heart in which we have to speak of Jesus otherwise than with assured affection? Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, there may be times when the most loving heart may, from the very fact that it loves intensely and loves sincerely, doubt whether it does love at all. But then such times will be seasons of great soul-searching and nights of anguish. He who truly loves Christ will never give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, when he is in doubt about his heart belonging to Jesus. “No,” says he, “this is a matter too precious for me to question as to whether I am the possessor of it or not, this is a thing so vital that I cannot let it be with a ‘perhaps,’ as a matter of chance. No, I must know whether I love my Lord or not, whether I am His or not.”

If I am addressing any this morning who fear they do not love Christ and yet hope they do, let me beg you, my dear Friends, not to rest content in your present state of mind. Never be satisfied till you know that you are standing on the Rock and until you are quite certain that you really love Christ. Imagine for a moment one of the Apostles telling Christ that he thought he loved Him. Fancy for a moment your own spouse telling you that she hoped she loved you. Fancy your child upon your knee saying, “Father, I sometimes think I love you.” What a stinging thing to say to you! You would almost as soon he said, “I hate you.” Because, what is it? Shall he, over whom you watch with care, merely think he loves you? Shall she who lies in my bosom, doubt and make it a matter of conjecture, as to whether her heart is mine or not?

O God forbid we should ever dream of such a thing in our ordinary relations of life! Then how is it that we indulge in it in our piety? Is it not sickly and maudlin piety? Is it not a diseased state of heart that ever puts us in such a place at all? Is it not even a deadly state of heart that would let us rest content there? No, let us not be satisfied till, by the full work of the Holy Spirit, we are made sure and certain and can say with unstammering tongue, “O You whom my soul loves.”

Now notice something else equally worthy of our attention. The Church, the spouse, in thus speaking of her Lord, thus directs our thoughts not merely to her confidence of love, but to the unity of her affections with regard to Christ. She has not two lovers, she has but one. She does not say, “O You on whom my heart is set!” but, “O You”! She has but one after whom her heart is panting. She has gathered her affections into one bundle—she has made them but one affection—and then she has cast that bundle of myrrh and spices upon the breast of Christ. He is to her the, “Altogether Lovely,” the gathering up of all the loves which once strayed abroad.

She has put before the Sun of her heart a magnifying-glass, which has brought all her love to a focus and it is all concentrated with all its heat and vehemence upon Christ Jesus Himself. Her heart, which once seemed like a fountain sending forth many streams, has now become as a fountain which has but one channel for its waters. She has stopped up all the other issues, she has cut away the other pipes and now the whole stream in one strong current runs toward Him and Him, alone. The Church, in the text here, is not a worshipper of God and of Baal, too. She is no time-server, who has a heart for all comers. She is not as the harlot, whose door is open for every wayfarer. But she is a chaste one and she sees none but Christ and she knows none whom her soul desires but her crucified Lord.

The wife of a noble Persian, having been invited to be present at the wedding feast of King Cyrus, her husband asked her merrily upon her return whether she did not think the bridegroom-monarch a most noble man. Her answer was, “I know not whether he is noble or not—my husband was so before my eyes that I saw none beside him—I have seen no beauty but in him.” So if you ask the Christian in our text, “Is not Such-an-one fair and lovely?” “No,” she replies, “my eyes are fully fixed on Christ. My heart is so taken up with Him that I cannot tell if there is beauty anywhere else—I know that all beauty and all loveliness is summed up in Him.”

Sir Walter Raleigh used to say, “if all the histories of tyrants—the cruelty, the blood, the lust, the infamy, were all forgotten—yet all these histories might be rewritten out of the life of Henry VIII.” And I may say by way of contrast, “If all the goodness, all the love, all the gentleness, all the faithfulness that ever existed could all be blotted out, they could all be rewritten out of the history of Christ.” To the Christian, Christ is the only One she loves, she has no divided aims, no two adored ones, but she speaks of Him as of one to whom she has given her whole heart and none have anything beside—“Oh You whom my soul loves.”

Come, Brothers and Sisters, do we love Christ after this fashion? Do we love Him so that we can say, “Compared with our love to Jesus, all other loves are but as nothing”? We have those sweet loves which make earth dear to us. We do love those who are our kindred according to the flesh— we were, indeed, beneath the beasts if we did not. But some of us can say, “We do love Christ better than husband or wife, or brother or sister.” Sometimes we think we could say with St. Jerome, “If Christ should bid me go this way and my mother did hang about my neck to draw me another and my father were in my way, bowing at my knees with tears entreating me not to go. And my children plucking at my skirts should seek to pull me the other way, I must unclasp my mother, I must push to the very ground my father and put aside my children, for I must follow Christ.”

We cannot tell which we love the most till they have come into collision. But when we come to see that the love of mortals requires us to do this— and the love of Christ to do the reverse—then shall we see which we love best. Oh, those were hard times with the martyrs. That good man for instance, Mr. Nicholas Ferrar, who was the father of some twelve children, all of them but little ones. On the road to the stake his enemies had contrived that his wife should meet him with all the little ones and she had set them in a row kneeling down by the roadside. His enemies expected that surely, now, he would recant and for the sake of those dear babes would certainly seek to save his life.

But no! No! He had given them all up to God and he could trust them with his heavenly Father. He could not do a wrong thing even for the felicity of covering these little birds with his wings and cherishing them beneath his feathers. He took them one by one to his bosom and looked and looked again. And it pleased God to put into the mouth of his wife and of his children words which encouraged him instead of discouraging him and before he went from them his very babes had bid the father play the man and die boldly for Christ Jesus!

Yes, Soul, we must have a love like this which cannot be rivaled, which cannot be shared—which is like a flood tide—other tides may come up very high upon the shore, but this comes up to the very rocks and beats there, filling our soul to the very brim. I pray God we may know what such a love to Christ as this may mean.

Furthermore, I want to pluck you one more flower. If you will look at the title before us, you will have to learn not only its reality, its assurance, its unity—you will have to notice its constancy, “O You whom my soul

loves.” Not “did love yesterday,” or, “may begin to love tomorrow,” but, “You whom my soul loves”—“You whom I have loved ever since I knew You and whose love has become as necessary to me as my vital breath or my native air.” The true Christian is one who loves Christ forever. He does not play fast and loose with Jesus—pressing Him today to his bosom and then turning aside and seeking after any Delilah who may with her witcheries pollute him.

No, he feels that he is a Nazarite unto the Lord. He cannot and he will not pollute himself with sin at any time or in any place. Love to Christ in the faithful heart is as the love of the dove to its mate. She, if her mate should die, can never be tempted to be married unto another, but she sits still upon her perch and sighs out her mournful soul until she dies, too. So is it with the Christian. If he had no Christ to love, he must die, for his heart has become Christ’s. And so if Christ were gone, love could not be. Then his heart would be gone, too, and a man without a heart is dead.

The heart—is it not the vital principle of the body? And love—is it not the vital principle of the soul? Yet there are some who profess to love the Master, but only walk with Him by fits and then go abroad like Dinah into the tents of the Shechemites. Oh, take heed, you professors, who seek to have two husbands! My Master will never be a part-husband. He is not such a one as to have half of your heart. My Master, though He is full of compassion and very tender, has too noble a spirit to allow Himself to be half-proprietor of any kingdom.

Chanute, the Danish king, might divide England with Edmund the Ironside, because he could not win the whole country, but my Lord will have every inch of you, or none. He will reign in you from one end of the isle of man to the other, or else he will not put a foot upon the soil of your heart. He was never part-proprietor in a heart and He will not stoop to such a thing now. What says the old Puritan? “A heart is so little a thing, that it is scarce enough for a kite’s breakfast and you say it is too great a thing for Christ to have it all?”

No, give Him the whole. It is but little when you weigh His merit and very small when measured with His loveliness. Give Him all. Let your united heart, your undivided affection, be constantly, every hour, given up to Him—

*“Can you cleave to your Lord? Can you cleave to your Lord,  
When the many turn aside?  
Can you witness He has the living Word,  
And none upon earth beside?  
And can you endure with the Virgin band,  
The lowly and pure in heart,  
Who, where ever their Lamb does lead,  
From His footsteps never depart?  
Do you answer, ‘We can’? Do you answer, ‘We can, Through His love’s constraining power’?  
But ah, remember the flesh is weak,  
And will shrink in the trial-hour.  
Yet yield to His love, who round you now,  
The bands of a man would cast;  
The cords of His love, who was given for you,*

*To the altar binding you fast.”*  
May that be your constant lot—still to abide in Him who has loved you. I will make but one more remark, lest I weary you in thus trying to anatomize the rhetoric of love. In our text you will clearly perceive a vehemence of affection. The spouse says of Christ, “O You whom my soul loves.” She means not that she loves Him a little, that she loves Him with an ordinary passion, but that she loves Him in all the deep sense of that word. Oh, Christian Brothers and Sisters, I protest unto you that I fear there are thousands of professors who never knew the meaning of this word “love,” as to Christ. They have known it when it referred to mortals. They have felt its flame, they have seen how every power of the body and of the soul are carried away with it. But they have not felt it with regard to Christ.

I know you can preach about Him, but do you love Him? I know you can pray to Him, but do you love Him? I know you trust Him—you think you do—but do you love Him? Oh, is there a love to Jesus in your heart like that of the spouse when she could say, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of his lips, for His love is better than wine.” “No,” you say, “that is too familiar for me.” Then I fear you do not love Him, for love is always familiar. Faith may stand at a distance, for her look is saving. But Love comes near, for she must kiss, she must embrace.

Why, Beloved, sometimes the Christian so loves his Lord that his language becomes unmeaning to the ears of others who have never been in his state. Love has a celestial tongue of her own and I have sometimes heard her speak so that the lips of worldlings have mocked and men have said, “That man rants and raves—he knows not what he says.” Hence it is that Love often becomes a Mystic and speaks in mystic language, into which the stranger intrudes not.

Oh, you should see Love when she has her heart full of her Savior’s presence, when she comes out of her chamber! Indeed she is like a giant refreshed with new wine. I have seen her dash down difficulties, tread upon hot irons of affliction and her feet have not been scorched. I have seen her lift up her spear against ten thousand and she has slain them at one time. I have known her give up all she had, even to the stripping of herself, for Christ, and yet she seemed to grow richer and to be decked with ornaments as she made herself poor, that she might cast her all upon her Lord and give up all to Him.

Do you know this love, Christian Brothers and Sisters? Some of you do, I know, for I have seen you clearly manifest it in your lives. As for the rest of you, may you learn it and get above the low standing of the mass of Christ’s Church at the present day. Get up from the bogs and fens and damp morasses of lukewarm Laodiceanism and come up. Come up higher, up to the mountain top, where you shall stand bathing your foreheads in the sunlight, seeing earth beneath you—its very tempests under your feet, its clouds and darkness rolling down below in the valley while you, talking with Christ, who speaks to you out of the cloud, are almost caught up into the third Heaven to dwell there with him.

Thus have I tried to explain the rhetoric of my text, “You whom my soul loves.”  
II. Now let me come to THE LOGIC OF THE HEART, which lies at the bottom of the text.

My Heart, why should you love Christ? With what argument will you justify yourself? Strangers stand and hear me tell of Christ and they say, “Why should you love your Savior so?” My Heart, you can not answer them so as to make them see His loveliness, for they are blind—but you can at least be justified in the ears of those who have understandings. For doubtless the virgins will love Him, if you will tell them why you love Him. Our hearts give for their reason why they love Him. First, this—We love Him for His infinite loveliness. If there were no other reason, if Christ had not bought us with His blood, yet sometimes we feel if we had renewed hearts, we must love Him for having died for others.

I have sometimes felt in my own soul, that setting aside the benefit I received from His dear Cross and His most precious passion, which, of course, must ever be the deepest motive of love, “for we love Him because He first loved us”—yet setting aside all that, there is such beauty in Christ’s character—such loveliness in His passion—such a glory in that self-sacrifice, that one must love Him. Can I look into Your eyes and not be smitten with Your love? Can I gaze upon Your thorn-crowned head and shall not my heart feel the thorns within it? Can I see You in the fever of death and shall not my soul be in a fever of passionate love to You?

It is impossible to see Christ and not to love Him. You cannot be in His company without at once feeling that you are welded to Him. Go and kneel by His side in Gethsemane’s garden and I am persuaded that the drops of gore, as they fall upon the ground, shall each one of them be irresistible reasons why you should love Him. Hear Him as He cries, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Remember that He endures this out of love to others and you must love Him.

If you ever read the history of Moses you believe him to be the grandest of men and you admire him and look up to him as to some huge colossus, some mighty giant of the olden times. But you never feel a particle of love in your hearts towards Moses. You could not—his is an unlovable character. There is something to admire, but nothing to win attachment.

When you see Christ, you look up, but you do more—you feel drawn up. You do not admire so much as love. You do not adore so much as embrace. His character enchants, subdues, overwhelms—and with the irresistible impulse of its own sacred attraction it draws your spirit right up to Him. Well did Dr. Watts say—

*“His worth, if all the nations knew,*

*Sure the whole earth would love Him, too.”*But still, Love has another argument why she loves Christ, namely, Christ’s love to her. Did You love me, Jesus, King of Heaven, Lord of angels, Master of all worlds? Did You set Your heart on me? What? Did You love me from of old and in eternity choose me to Yourself? Did You continue to love me as the ages rolled on? Did You come from Heaven to earth that you might win me to be Your spouse and do You love me so that You do not leave me alone in this poor desert world? And are You this very day preparing a house for me where I shall dwell with You forever?

A very wretch, Lord, I should prove had I no love to You. I must love You. It is impossible for me to resist it—that thought that You love me has compelled my soul to love You. ME! Me! What was there in me? Could You see beauties in me? I see none in myself. My eyes are red with weeping because of my blackness and deformity. I have said even to the sons of men, “Look not upon me, for I am black, because the sun has looked upon me.” And do You see beauties in me? What a quick eye You must have—no, rather it must be that You have made my eyes to be your looking-glass and so You see Yourself in me and it is Your image that You love—surely You could not love me!

That ravishing text in the Canticles, where Jesus says to the spouse, “You are all fair My love, there is no spot in you.” Can you imagine Christ saying that to you? And yet He has said it, “You are all fair My love, there is no spot in you.” He has put away your blackness and you stand in His sight as perfect as though you had never sinned. As full of loveliness as though you were what you shall be when made like unto Him at last. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, some of you can say with emphasis, “Did He love me? Then I must love Him.” I run my eyes along your ranks—there sits a Brother who loves Christ who not many months ago cursed Him. There sits a drunkard—there another who was in prison for crimes—and He loved you, even you who could abuse the wife of your bosom, because she loved the dear name. You were never happier than when you were violating His day and showing your disrespect to His ministers and your hatred to His cause, yet He loved you.

And me! Even me!—Forgetful of a mother’s prayers, ignoring a father’s tears, having much light and yet sinning much, He loved me and has proved His love. I charge you, oh my Heart, by the roes and by the hinds of the field—give yourself wholly up to my Beloved. spend and be spent for him. Is that your charge to your heart this morning? Oh, It must be, if you know Jesus and then know that Jesus loves you!

One more reason does Love give us which is yet more powerful still. Love feels that she must give herself to Christ, because of Christ’s suffering for her—

*“Can I Gethsemane forget?  
Or there Your conflict see,  
Your agony and bloody sweat,  
And not remember You?  
“When to the Cross I turn my eyes,  
And rest on Calvary  
O Lamb of God! My sacrifice!  
I must remember You.”*

My life, when it shall ebb out, may cause me to lose many mental powers, but memory will love no other name than is recorded there. The agonies of Christ have burnt His name into our hearts.

You cannot stand and see Him mocked by Herod’s men of war. You cannot behold Him made nothing of and spit upon by menial lips. You cannot see Him with the nails pierced through His hands and through His feet. You cannot mark Him in the extreme agonies of His awful passion without saying, “And did You suffer all this for me? Then I must love You, Jesus. My heart feels that no other can have such a claim upon it as You have, for none others have spent themselves for me as You have done. Others may have sought to buy my love with the silver of earthly affection and with the gold of a zealous and affectionate character, but You have bought it with Your precious blood and You have the richest claim to it—

Yours shall it be and that forever.”

This is love’s logic. I may well stand here and defend the Believer’s love to his Lord. I wish I had more to defend than I have. I dare stand here and defend the utmost extravagancies of speech and the wildest fanaticisms of action, when they have been done for love to Christ. I say again, I only wish I had more to defend in these degenerate times. Has a man given up all for Christ? I will prove him wise if he has given up for such an one as Christ is. Has a man died for Christ? I write over his epitaph that he surely was no fool who had but the wisdom to give up his heart for one who had His heart pierced for him.

Let the Church try to be extravagant for once, let her break the narrow bounds of her conventional prudence and for once arise and dare to do wonders—let the age of miracles return to us—let the Church make bare her arm and roll up the sleeves of her formality. Let her go forth with some mighty thought within her at which the worldling shall laugh and scoff and I will stand here and before the bar of a scoffing world dare to defend her. Oh Church of God, you can do no extravagance for Christ. You may bring out your Marys and they may break their alabaster boxes, but He deserves well the breaking. You may shed your perfume and give to Him rivers of oil and ten thousands of the fat of fed beasts, but He well deserves it.

I see the Church as she was in the first centuries, like an army storming a city—a city that was surrounded with a vast moat and there was no means of reaching the ramparts except by filling up the moat with the dead bodies of the Church’s own martyrs and confessors. Do you see them? A bishop has just now fallen in, his head has been smitten off with the sword. The next day at the tribunal there are twenty wishing to die that they may follow him. And on the next day twenty more. And the stream pours on till the huge moat is filled. Then, those who follow after, scale the walls and plant the blood-red standard of the Cross, the trophy of their victory upon the top.

Should the world say, “Why this expense of blood?” I answer, He is worthy for whom it was shed. The world says, “Why this waste of suffering? Why this pouring out of an energy in a cause that at best is but fanatical?” I reply, “He is worthy, He is worthy, though the whole world were put into the censer and all men’s blood were the frankincense, He is worthy to have it all sacrificed before Him. Though the whole Church should be slaughtered, He is worthy upon whose altar it should be sacrificed. Though every one of us should lie and rot in a dungeon, though the moss should grow upon our eyelids, though our bodies should be given to the kites and the carrion crows, He is worthy to claim the sacrifice. And it were all too mean a gift for such an one as He is.” Oh Master, restore unto the Church the strength of love which can hear such language and feel it to be true.

III. Now I come to my last point, upon which I must dwell but briefly. Rhetoric is good, logic is better, but A POSITIVE DEMONSTRATION is the best.

I sought to give you rhetoric when I expounded the words of the text. I have tried to give you logic now that I have given you the reasons for the love in the text. And now I want you to give—I cannot give it—I want you to give, each for himself, the demonstration of your love for Christ in your daily lives. Let the world see that this is not a mere label to you—a label for something that does not exist, but that Christ really is to you “Him whom your soul loves.”

You ask me how you shall do it, and I reply thus—I do not ask you to shave your crown and become a monk, or to cloister yourself, my Sister, and become a nun. Such a thing might even show your love to yourself rather than your love to Christ. But I ask you to go home now and during the days of the week engage in your ordinary business. Go with the men of the world as you are called to do and take the calling which Christ has given to you and see if you cannot honor Him in your calling. I, as a minister, of course must find it to some degree less honorable work to serve Christ than you do, because my calling does, as it were, supply me with gold and for me to make a golden image of Christ out of that is but small work, though God provides, I find, more than my poor strength could do apart from His Grace.

But for you to work out the image of Christ in the iron, or clay, or common metal of your ordinary conversation—oh, this will be glorious, indeed! And I think you may honor Christ in your sphere as much as I can in mine—perhaps more—for some of you may know more trouble, you may have more poverty, you may have more temptation, more enemies. And therefore you, by loving Christ under all these trials, may demonstrate more fully than ever I can, how true your love is to Him and how soul-inspiring is His love to you.

Away, I say, and look out on the morrow and the next day, for opportunities of doing something for Christ. Speak up for His dear name if there are any that abuse Him. And if you find Him wounded in His members, be you as Eleanor, queen of England’s king and suck the poison out of his wounds. Be ready to have your name abused rather than He should be dishonored. Stand up always for Him and be His champion. Let Him not lack a friend, for He stood as your Friend when you had none. If you meet with any of His poor people, show them love for His sake, as David did to Mephibosheth out of love to Saul.

If you know any of them to be hungry, set meat before them. You had as good set the dish before Jesus Christ Himself. If you see them naked, clothe them. You do clothe Christ when you clothe His people. No, not only seek to do this good temporally to His children, but seek evermore to be a Christ to those who are not His children as yet. Go among the wicked and among the lost and the abandoned—tell them the words of Him—tell them Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Go after His lost sheep, be you shepherds as He was a shepherd and so will you show your love.

Give what you can to Him. When you die, make Him heir of some of your estate. I should not think I loved my friend if I did not sometimes make him a present. I should not think I love Christ if I did not give Him something, some sweet cane with money, some fat of my burnt sacrifices.

I heard the other day a question asked concerning an old man who had long professed to be a Christian. They were saying he left so much and so much and one said, “But did he leave Christ anything in his will?”

Someone laughed and thought it ridiculous. Ah, so it would be, because men do not think of Christ as being a Person. But if we had this love, it would be but natural for us to give to Him, to live for Him and perhaps if we had anything, at last to let Him have it—that so even dying we might give our Friend in our dying testament a proof that we remembered Him, even as He remembered us in His last will and testament.

Oh, Brothers and Sisters—what we want more of in the Church is more extravagant love to Christ. I want each of you to show your love to Jesus by doing something the like of which you have never done before. I remember saying one Sabbath morning that the Church ought to be the place of invention as much as the world. We do not know what machine is to be discovered yet by the world, but every man’s wit is at work to find out something new. So ought the wits of the Church to be at work to find out some new plan of serving Christ. Robert Raikes found out SundaySchools, John Pounds the Ragged-School—but are we to be content with carrying on their inventions? No. We want something new.

It was in the Surrey Hall, through that sermon, that our Brethren first thought of the midnight meetings that were held—an invention suggested by the sermon I preached upon the woman with the alabaster box. But we have not come to the end, yet. Is there no man that can invent some new deed for Christ? Is there no Brother that can do something more for Him than has been done today, or yesterday, or during the last month? Is there no man that will dare to be strange and singular and wild and in the world’s eye to be fanatical? For remember, that is not love which is not fanatical in the eye of man.

Depend upon it, that is not love that only confines itself to propriety. I would the Lord would put into your heart some thought of giving an unaccustomed thank-offering to Him, or of doing an unusual service, so that Christ might be honored with the best of your lambs and that the fat of your bullocks might be exceeding glorified by your proof of love to Him.

God bless you as a congregation. I can only invoke His blessing, for O, these lips refuse to speak of love which I trust my heart knows and which I desire to feel more and more. Sinner, trust Christ before you seek to love Him—and trusting Christ you will love Him, by His grace. Amen.

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THE CHURCH’S LOVE TO HER LOVING LORD

NO. 636

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

**“Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?”  
Song of Solomon 1:7.**

We shall need to lift up our hearts to God and ask to be quickened in Divine Grace or the precious truths in our text will not prove to us “as honey out of the rock,” nor the “least of fat things, of wine and marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.” We cannot appreciate the spirituality of this book unless God’s Spirit shall help us. Many read these words and only see a proof of the imaginative power of an eastern mind. Some read to scoff and blaspheme and others, even good people, neglect to read this book altogether, being unable to drink in its spirit because of their need of that higher life of communion with the Beloved which is here so beautifully laid open to our view.

Now I am persuaded of better things of you, Beloved. I am sure that you believe that every Word of God is precious and most certainly we say of this Book, “it is more to be desired than gold, yes, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey, or the droppings of the honeycomb.” This book of the Canticles is most precious to us. It is the inner court of the temple of Truth. It seems to us to belong to the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High. We see our Savior’s face in almost every page of the Bible, but here we see His heart and feel His love to us. We shall hope this morning to speak of our own experience, as well as of the Church who is here speaking.

You will perceive that she begins with a title, she expresses a desire, she enforces it with an argument—“Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?”

I. We commence with the title—“O You whom my soul loves.” It is well to be able to call the Lord Jesus Christ by this name without an “if,” or a “but.” A very large proportion of Christian people can only say of Christ that they hope they love Him. They trust they love Him—but this is a very poor and shallow experience—to be content to stay here. It seems to me that no one ought to give any rest to his spirit till he feels quite sure about a matter of such vital importance. We are not content to have a hope of the love of our parents, or of our spouse, or of our children! We feel we

must be certain there.

And we ought not to be satisfied with a hope that Christ loves us and with a bare trust that we love Him. The old saints did not generally speak with buts and ifs and hopes and trusts—they spoke positively and plainly. “I know whom I have believed,” says Paul. “I know that my Redeemer lives,” says Job. “He whom my soul loves,” says Solomon, in the song as we have it here. Learn, dear Friends, to get that positive knowledge of your love to Jesus and be not satisfied till you can talk about your interest in Him as a reality which you have made infallibly sure by having received the witness of the Holy Spirit and His seal upon your soul by faith that you are born of God and belong to Christ.

Speaking, then, of this title which rings the great bell of love to Jesus, let us notice first the cause and secondly the effect of that love. If we can look into the face of Him who once sweat great drops of blood and call Him, “O You whom my soul loves,” it is interesting to consider what is the cause of our love. And here our reply is very quick. The efficient cause of our love is the Holy Spirit of God. We should never have had a spark of love to Jesus if it had not been bestowed upon us by the Divine Worker.

Well said John, “Love is of God.” Certainly it is so. Our love to Christ is one beam from Himself, the Sun. Certainly a man can no more naturally love Christ than a horse can fly. I grant you there is no physical disability, but there is a moral and spiritual disability which effectually disqualifies him from the high and lofty emotion of love to Jesus. Into that dead corpse the living spirit must be breathed—those who are dead in trespasses and sins cannot love Christ. That heart of stone must be transformed into a heart of flesh, for stones may be hurled at the Savior but they can never love Him.

That lion must become a lamb, or it can never claim Christ as its Shepherd. That raven must be turned into a dove, or it will never fly to Christ as its ark. “Except a man is born again,” we may say, he cannot see this precious sparkling jewel of the kingdom of God—love to Christ. Search yourselves then, Brethren—do you love Him or not? If you love Him, you have been born again! And if you do not love Him, then you are still in darkness and are not His—

*“Can you pronounce His charming name,  
His acts of kindness tell?  
And while you dwell upon the theme,  
No sweet emotion feel?”*

I think some of us would have to answer *—  
“A very wretch, Lord, I should prove,  
Had I no love to You.  
Sooner than not my Savior love,  
Oh, may I cease to be!”*

This, then, is the efficient cause—the Holy Spirit. The rational cause, the logical reason why we love Jesus lies in Himself—in His looks, in His present working and in His Person—besides many other little fountains, which all tend to swell the river—the growing, deepening river of our love to Him. Why do we love Jesus? We have the best of answers—because He first loved us! Hearken you strangers who inquire why we should love the Savior so. We will give you such reasons that we will satisfy you and set your mouths watering to be partakers of the same reasons, that you may come to love Him, too!

Why do we love Him? Because before this round earth was fashioned between the palms of the great Creator—before He had painted the rainbow, or hung out the lights of the sun and moon—Christ’s delights were with us. He foresaw us through the glass of His prescience. He knew what we should be—looked into the book in which all His “members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them.” And as He looked upon us, the glance was love. He delighted to sit upon the Throne of Glory and to remember His dear ones who were yet to be born! It was the great prospect which His mighty and infinite Spirit had—a joy that was set before Him—that He should see a multitude that no man could number who should be His beloved forever—

*“Loved of my Christ, for Him again,  
With love intense I’ll burn.  
Chosen of You before time began,  
I choose You in return.”*

Oh, could you know that Jesus had loved you from before all worlds, you must love Him! At least you will grant there cannot be a better reason for love than love. Love demands—no, it does not demand—it takes by almighty force, by irresistible energy that heart captive upon whom it thus sets itself! This Jesus loved us for no reason whatever in ourselves. We were black as the tents of Kedar. We had much deformity but no beauty and yet He loved us! And our deformity was of such a kind that it might meritoriously have made Him hate us. We kicked against Him and despised Him! Our language naturally was, “We will not have this Man to reign over us,” and when we heard of His loving us, we sneered at it.

He was despised and rejected of men. We hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not. We thought His love an empty tale, a paltry trifle and yet He loved us. No, we were His enemies! We slew Him! We confess with sorrow that we were the murderers of the Prince of Life and Glory. Our hands were stained with His gore and our garments dyed with His blood—and yet He saw all this and still loved us! Shall we not love Him? Surely our heart is harder than adamant because we do not love Him more! But it were Hell-hardened steel if it did not love at all.

Our Savior so loved us that He stripped Himself of His robes of radiance. Listen, you children of God, it is the old story over again, but it is always new to you. He stripped Himself of His bright array. He laid aside His scepter and His crown and became an infant in Bethlehem’s manger among the horned oxen. Thirty years of poverty and shame the King of Heaven spent among the sons of men and all out of love to us! Jesus the heavenly lover, panting to redeem His people, was content to abide here without a place to rest His head that He might rescue us!  
Do you see Him yonder in the garden in His agony? His soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death! His forehead, no, His head, His hair, His garments red with bloody sweat. Do you see Him giving His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that pluck off His hair? See Him as He hides not His face from shame and spitting—dumb like a sheep before her shearers and like a lamb that is brought to the slaughter! He opened not His mouth but patiently bore it all on our behalf. See Him with the Cross upon His mangled shoulders, staggering through Jerusalem’s streets, unwept, unpitied, except by poor feeble women!

See Him, you that love Him, and love Him more as He stretches out His hands to the nails and gives His feet to the iron. See Him, as with power to deliver Himself He is made captive. Behold Him as they lift up the Cross with Him upon it and dash it down into its place and dislocate His bones. Hear that cry, “I am poured out like water: all My bones are out of joint. You have brought Me into the dust of death.” Stand, if you can, and view that face so full of grief. Look till a sword shall go through your own heart as it went through His virgin mother’s very soul. Oh, see Him as He thirsts and has that thirst mocked with vinegar!

Hear Him as He prays and has that prayer parodied, “He cries for Elias, let Elias come and take Him down.” See Him, as they who love Him come and kiss His feet and bathe them with their tears. Will you not love Him who did all that friend could do for friend? He who gave His life for us? Beloved, here are a thousand crimson cords that tie us to the Savior and I hope we feel their constraining power. It is His vast love, the old eternal bond, the love which redeemed, which suffered in our place, the love which pleaded our cause before the eternal Throne—it is this which we give as a sufficient reason why we should love the Savior, if necessary, even unto death!

Moreover, we have another reason. I trust many here can say that they love the Savior because of His present dealings towards them. What has He not done for us this very day? Some of you came here this morning heavy and you went away rejoicing! Perhaps you have had answers to prayer this very week. You have passed through the furnace and not a smell of fire has passed upon you. You have had many sins this week, but you have felt the efficacy of His blood again and again. Some of us have known what it is during the past six days to have the ravishing delights of private communion with Him. He has made us glad! Our spirits have leaped for very joy, for He has turned again the captivity of our soul.

You have drunk of Him as of “the brook by the way,” and you have therefore lifted up your head. Beloved, if there were nothing else which Christ had done for my soul—that which I have tasted and handled of Him within the last few months would make me love Him forever—and I know that you can say the same! Nor is this all. We love the Savior because of the excellency of His Person. We are not blind to excellence anywhere, but still we can see no excellence like His—

*“Jesus You fairest, dearest one,*

***What beauties You adorn  
Far brighter than the noonday sun,  
Or star that gilds the morn.  
Here let me fix my wandering eyes,  
And all Your glories trace;  
Till, in the world of endless joys,***

***I rise to Your embrace.”***  
When Tigranes and his wife were both taken prisoners by Cyrus, Cyrus turning to Tigranes said, “What will you give for the liberation of your wife?” And the King answered, “I love my wife so that I would cheerfully give up my life if she might be delivered from servitude.” Whereupon Cyrus said that if there was such love as that between them they might both go free. So when they were away and many were talking about the beauty and generosity of Cyrus and especially about the beauty of his person, Tigranes, turning to his wife, asked her what she thought of Cyrus and she answered that she saw nothing anywhere but in the face of the man who had said that he would die if she might only be released from servitude.

“The beauty of that man,” she said, “makes me forget all others.” And verily we would say the same of Jesus! We would not decry the angels, nor think ill of the saints—but the beauties of that Man who gave His life for us are so great that they have eclipsed all others—and our soul only wishes to see Him, and none other! As the stars hide their heads in the presence of the sun, so may your all be gone—your delights, your excellencies—when Christ Jesus, the chief Delight, the chief Excellency, makes His appearance. Dr. Watts says*—*

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

And so it seems to us. Could you see Him, you must love Him. It was said of Henry VIII that if all the portraits of tyrants and murderers and thieves were out of existence, they might all be painted from the one face of Henry VII. And turning that round another way, we will say that if all the excellencies, beauties and perfections of the human race were blotted out, they might all be painted again from the face of the Lord Jesus—

*“All over glorious is my Lord.  
He must be beloved and yet adored.”*

These are some of the reasons why our heart loves Jesus. Before I leave those reasons, I should like to put a few questions round among this great crowd. O Friends, would you not love Jesus if you knew something of this love as shed abroad in your hearts—something of this love as being yours? Now, remember, there is a very great promise that Christ has made, and it is this—“He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Now what does that refer to? Why to any “he” in all the world that comes to Christ! Whoever you may be, if you come to Jesus—and you know that means just trusting Him, leaning upon Him—if you come to Him, He will not cast you out. And when He has received you to His bosom, you will then know, (but you cannot know till then), how much He loves you! And then I think you will say with us, “Yes, His name is, ‘You whom my soul loves.’ ”

I shall now for a short time speak on the effects of this love, as we have dwelt on the cause of it. When a man has true love to Christ, it is sure to lead him to dedication. There is a natural desire to give something to the person whom we love and true love to Jesus compels us to give ourselves to Him. One of the earliest acts of the Christian’s life is to take ourselves and lay body, soul, and spirit upon the altar of consecration, saying, “Here I am. I give myself to You.” When the pupils of Socrates had nearly all of them given him a present, there was one of the best scholars who was extremely poor and he said to Socrates, “I have none of these things which the others have presented to you. But, O Socrates, I give you myself.” Whereupon Socrates said it was the best present he had had that day. “My Son, give me your heart”—this is what Jesus asks. If you love Him, you must give Him this.

True love next shows itself in obedience. If I love Jesus, I shall do as He bids me. He is my Husband, my Lord—I call Him, “Master.” “If you love Me,” He says, “keep My commandments.” This is His chosen proof of my love, and I am sure, if I love Him, I shall keep His commandments. And yet there are some who profess to love Christ who very seldom think of keeping any of His commandments. “This do in remembrance of Me,” He says, and yet some of you never come to His Table. May I gently ask you how you make this disobedience consort with genuine affection for Him? “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”—

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

We can do anything for those we love and, if we love Jesus, no burden will be heavy, no difficulty will be great—we should rather wish to do more than He asks of us and only desire that He were a little more exacting that we might have a better opportunity of showing forth our affection.

True love, again, is always considerate and afraid lest it should give offense. It walks very daintily. If I love Jesus, I shall watch my eyes, my heart, my tongue, my hands—being so fearful lest I should wake my Beloved—or make Him stir until He please. And I shall be sure not to take in those bad guests, those ill-favored guests of pride and sloth and love of the world. I shall tell them to be packing, for I have a dear One within who will not tarry long if He sees me giving glances to these wicked ones. My heart shall be wholly His. He shall sit at the head of the table. He shall have the best dishes there—no, I will send all others away that I may have Him all to myself and that He may have my whole heart—all that I am and all that I have.

Again, true love to Christ will make us very jealous of His honor. As Queen Eleanor went down upon her knees to suck the poison from her husband’s wound, so we shall put our lips to the wound of Christ when He has been stabbed with the dagger of calumny, or inconsistency. We shall be willing sooner to take the poison ourselves and to be ourselves diseased and despised than that His name, His Cross should suffer ill! Oh, what matters it what becomes of us if the King reigns? I will go home to my bed and die in peace if the King sits on the Throne. Let me see King David once again installed in Zion’s sacred halls and my soul, in poverty and shame, shall still rejoice if the banished King Jesus shall once again come back and have His own and take His scepter, and wear His crown!

Beloved, I trust we can say we would not mind if Christ would make a door mat of us, if He would wipe His Church’s filthy sandals on us if we might but help to make her pure! We would hold the stirrup for Him to mount any day—yes— and be His horsing-block that He might mount His glorious charger and ride forth conquering and to conquer. Say, what matters it what we are, or where we are, if the King has His own? If we love Christ, again, we shall be desiring to promote His cause and we shall be desiring to promote it ourselves. We shall wish to see the strength of the mighty turned at the gate that King Jesus may return triumphant!

We shall not wish to sit still while our brethren go to war, but we shall want to take our portion in the fray that like soldiers that love their monarch, we may prove by our wounds and by our sufferings that our love is real. The Apostle says, “Let us not love in word only but in deed and in truth.” Actions speak louder than words and we shall always be anxious to tell our love in deeds as well as by our lips. The true disciple asks continually, “Lord what will You have me to do?” He esteems it his highest honor to serve the Lord. “I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”—

*“There’s not a lamb in all the flock,  
I would disdain to feed.  
There’s not a foe before whose face*

*I fear Your cause to plead.  
Would not my ardent spirit vie  
With angels round Your Throne,  
To execute Your sacred will  
And make Your glory known?”*

Yes, indeed, we thus can sing and mean, I trust, every word! Yes, we will go forth into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. We will tell of this love to all and labor to win for the Master’s honor a multitude which no man can number out of every nation and kindred and tribe and tongue and people! I believe in an active love—a love which has hands to labor and feet to run—as well as a heart to feel, eyes to glance and ears to listen. A mother’s love is of the purest and most intense sort in the world, and it is the most practical. It shows itself in deeds of untiring devotion both night and day. So also should it be with us—we should let our affections prompt us to life-long labor.

The love of Christ should constrain us to live, and if necessary, die to serve Him. Heaven is the place of purest, holiest attachment to Christ. Then we shall understand most about His love to us and of all He has done to prove it and the consequence will be that His servants shall serve Him day and night in His holy temple. We are expecting a home in Glory not of idleness, but of continual activity. It is written, “His servants shall serve Him,” and we are taught to pray now that we may do His will on earth as it is done in Heaven.

Let us, therefore, each one, be busily engaged in the great harvest. The harvest is great and the laborers are few. There is room for all and each man’s place is waiting to receive him. If we truly love our Lord we shall at once press to the front and begin the “work of faith and labor of love.” Has not the Master been known to show His love to us in deeds? Look to Bethlehem, to Gabbatha, to Gethsemane, to Golgotha—yes, look to His whole life as He “went about doing good”—and see if all this will not stir you up to service! Listen to the life story of the Lord and you will hear a voice from each one of His deeds of love saying to you, “Go and do likewise.”

And, once again, if we love Jesus we shall be willing to suffer for Him. Pain will become light. We shall sing with Madame Guyon—  
*“To me ’tis equal whether love ordain my life or death, Appoint me ease, or pain.”*

It is a high attainment to come to, but love can make us think ourselves of so small import that if Christ can serve Himself of us, we shall make no choice as to what, or where we may be. We can sing once more*—*

*“Would not my heart pour forth its blood  
In honor of Your name,  
And challenge the cold hand of death  
To dampen this immortal flame?”*

Our hearts are, I trust, so full of real devotion to Christ that we can give Him everything and endure all things for His sake. Cannot we say*— “For Him I count as gain each loss,  
Disgrace for Him renown,  
Well may I glory in His Cross,  
While He prepares my crown”?*

Darkness is light about us if we can serve Him there. The bitter is sweet if the cup is put to our lips in order that we may share in His sufferings and prove ourselves to be His followers. When Ignatius was led to his martyrdom, as he contemplated the nearness of his death and suffering, he said, “Now I begin to be a Christian.” He felt that all that he had done and suffered before was not enough to entitle him to be called a follower of Christ—but now as the Master’s bloody Baptism was before him, he realized the truth so dear to every right-minded Christian—that he was to be “like unto his Lord.” Here we can all prove our love! We can suffer His will calmly if we are not able to do it publicly—

*“Weak as I am, yet through Your love,  
I all things can perform.  
And, smiling, triumph in Your name  
Amid the raging storm.”*

I pray God we may have such a love that thirsts after Jesus and cannot be satisfied without present communion with Him.

II. This brings me to the thought which I shall only touch upon as the swallow skims the brook with his wings and then up and away, lest I weary you. The second point of consideration is the DESIRE OF THE CHURCH AFTER CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD—having called Him by His title, she now expresses her longing to be with Him. “Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where you make Your flock to rest at noon.” The desire of a renewed soul is to find Christ and to be with Him.

Stale meats left over from yesterday are very well when there is nothing else, but who does not like hot food fresh from the fire? And past communion with Christ is very well. “I remember You from the land of the Hermonites and the hill Mizar.” But these are only stale meats and a loving soul wants fresh food every day from the table of Christ. And you that have once had the kisses of His mouth, though you remember the past kisses with delight, yet want daily fresh tokens of His love. He that drinks of this water will never thirst again, it is true, except for this water! And then he will so thirst for it that he will be like Samuel Rutherford who began to be out of heart with the buckets—he wanted to get right to the wellhead that he might lie down and drink—and then, if he could have his fill, he would drink the well quite dry.

But there is no hope of that, or rather no fear of it—the well can never be empty, for it rises as we drink! A true loving soul, then, wants present communion with Christ. So the question is, “Tell me where You feed? Where do You get Your comfort from, O Jesus? I will go there. Where do Your thoughts go? To Your Cross? Do You look back to that? Then I will go there. Where You feed, there will I feed.”

Or does this mean actively, instead of being in the passive or the neuter? Where do You feed Your flock? In Your House? I will go there, if I may find You there. In private prayer? Then I will not be slack in that. In the Word? Then I will read it night and day. Tell me where You feed, for wherever You stand as the shepherd, there will I be, for I want You. I cannot be satisfied to be apart from You. My soul hungers and thirsts to be with You.

She puts it again, “Where do You make Your flock to rest at noon,” for there is only rest in one place—where You cause Your flock to rest at noon. That must be a God-given rest and only to be found in some one chosen place. Where is the shadow of that rock? It is very hot just now here in the middle of summer when the sun is pouring down his glorious rays like bright but sharp arrows upon us. And we that are condemned to live in this great wilderness of brown bricks and mortar often recollect those glades where the woods grow thick and where the waters leap from crag to crag down the hillside and where the birds are singing among the trees.

We delight to think of those leafy bowers where the sun cannot dart his rays, where, on some mossy bank, we may stretch ourselves to rest or have our weary limbs in some limpid stream. And this is just what the spouse is after. She feels the heat of the world’s sun and she longs to be away from its cares and troubles that have furrowed and made her face brown till she looked as if she had been a busy keeper of the vineyards. She wants to get away to hold quiet communion with her Lord, for He is the brook where the weary may lay their wearied limbs! He is that sheltered nook, that shadow of the great rock in the weary land where His people may lie down and be at peace—

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

***But sweeter far Your face to see  
And in Your Presence rest.  
For those who find You find a bliss,  
Nor tongue, nor pen can show  
The love of Jesus, what it is,  
None but His loved ones know.”***

Now do you not want this tonight? Does not your souls want Christ tonight? My Brothers, my Sisters, there is something wrong with us if we can do without Christ. If we love Him, we must want Him. Our hearts ever say—

*“Abide with me from morn till eve,  
For without You I cannot live!  
Abide with me when night is near,  
For without You I dare not die.”*

No, we cannot do without Christ. We must have Him. “Give me Christ, or else I die,” is the cry of our souls. No wonder Mary Magdalene wept when she thought they had taken away her Lord and she knew not where they had laid Him! As the body suffers without food, so should we without Christ. As the fish perish out of water, so should we apart from Christ. I must quote another verse of a hymn, for really the sweet songsters of Israel have lavished all their best prose and very rightly so, to tell for us our love-tale concerning our Beloved. I am sure that our heart’s inner voice can set to sweetest music the words—

*“Oh that I could forever sit  
With Mary at the Master’s feet—  
Be this my happy choice  
My only care, delight and bliss,  
My joy, my Heaven on earth be this,  
To hear the Bridegroom’s voice.”*

Yes! To be with Jesus is Heaven—anywhere on earth, or in the skies— all else is wilderness and desert. It is Paradise to be with Him. And Heaven without Christ would be no Heaven to me. My heart cannot rest away from Him. To have no Christ would be a punishment greater than I could bear! I should wander, like another Cain over the earth, a fugitive and a vagabond. Verily there would be no peace for my soul. I am sure that the true wife, if her husband is called to go upon a journey, longs ardently for his return. If he is gone to the wars, she dreads lest he should fall. How each letter comes perfumed to her when it tells of his love and constancy and how she watches for the day when she shall clasp him in her arms once more.

Oh you know that when you were children, if you were sent to school, how you counted till the holidays came on. I had a little almanac and marked out every day the night before and so counted one day less till the time I should get home again and so may you—

*“May not a captive long his own dear land to see? May not the prisoner seek release from bondage to be free?”*

Of course he may and so may you, Beloved, pant and sigh as the hart pants for the water brooks—for the comfortable enjoyment of the Lord Jesus Christ’s Presence.

III. THE ARGUMENT USED BY THE CHURCH. Here is the desire. Now, to close, she backs that up with an argument. She says, “Why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?” You have plenty of companions—why should I be turned aside? Why should I not be one? Let us talk it over. Why should I lose my Lord’s Presence? But the devil tells me I am a great sinner. Ah, but it is all washed away and gone forever. That cannot separate me, for it does not exist. My sin is buried—

*“Plunged as in a shoreless sea—  
Lost as in immensity.”*

The devil tells me I am unworthy and that is a reason. But I was always unworthy and yet it was no reason why He should not love me at first, and therefore cannot be a reason why I should not have fellowship with Him now. Why should I be left out? Now I am going to speak for the poorest here—I do not know where he is. I want to speak for you that have got the least faith. You that think yourselves the smallest in all Israel. You are Mephibosheths that are lame in your feet and yet sit at the king’s table. You are poor despised Mordecais that sit at the king’s gate—yet cannot get inside the palace.

I have this to say to you—Why should you be left there? Just try and reason. Why should I, Jesus, be left out in the cold, when the night comes on? No, there is a cot for the little one, as well as a bed for his bigger brother. Why should I be turned aside? I am equally bought with a price. I cost Him, in order to save me, as much as the noblest of the saints—He bought them with blood—He could not buy me with less. I must have been loved as much, or else, seeing that I am of so little worth, I should not have been redeemed at all! If there is any difference, perhaps I am loved somewhat better! Is there not greater, better love shown in the choice of me than of some who are more worthy than I am?

Why, then, should I be left out? 1 know if I have a child that is deformed, I love it all the more—it seems as if I had a more tender care for it. Then why should my heavenly Father be less kind to me than I should be to my offspring? Why should I be turned aside? He chose me—He cannot change His mind! Why, then, should He cast me off? He knew what I was when He chose me—He cannot, therefore, find out any fresh reason for turning me aside. He foresaw I should misbehave myself and yet He selected me. Well, then, there cannot be a reason why I should be left to fall away.

Again, I ask, Why should I turn aside? I am a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones—and though I am less than the least of all His saints, yet He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Why should I turn aside? I have a promise all to myself. Has He not said, “I will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed”? Has He not said, “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in them that hope in His mercy”? If I cannot do more, I can do that! I do hope in His mercy.

Then why should I be turned aside? If any should think of doing so, it should not be I, for I want to be near Him! I am such a poor plant that I ought to be kept in the sun—I shall never do in the shade.

My big brother, perhaps, may manage for a little time without comfort, but I cannot, for I am one of the Ready-to-Halts. I recollect how the shepherds of Mount Clear said, “Come in, Mr. Little-Faith! Come in, Mr. Feeble-Mind! Come in, Mr. Ready-to-Halt! Come in, Mary!” But they did not say, “Come in, Father Faithful. Come in, Matthew. Come in, Valiant-forTruth.” No, they said these might do as they liked. They were quite sure to take their own part—but they looked first to the most feeble! Then why should I be turned aside? I am the feeblest and want His Person most. I may use my very feebleness and proneness to fall as the reason why I should come to Him! Why should I be turned aside?

I may fall into sin. My heart may grow cold without His glorious Presence—and then, what if I should perish! Why, here let me think. If I am the meanest lamb in His flock I cannot perish without doing the God of Heaven damage. Let me say it again with reverence. If I, the least of His children, perish, I shall do His Son dishonor, for what will the arch-fiend say? “Aha,” says he, “You Surety of the Covenant, You could keep the strong, but You could not keep the weak—I have this lamb here in the pit whom You could not preserve! Here is one of Your crown jewels,” he says, “and though he is none of the brightest, though he is not the most sparkling ruby in Your coronet, yet he is one of Your jewels and I have him here in Hell! You have no perfect regalia—I have a part of it here.”

Shall that ever be, after Christ has said, “They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand”? Shall this be, when the strong arm of God is engaged for my succor and He has said to me, “The Eternal God is your refuge. And underneath are the everlasting arms”? Jesus, turn me not aside, lest by my fall I grieve Your Spirit and lest by my fall I bring disgrace upon Your name!

Why should I turn aside? There is no reason why I should. Come my Soul, there are a thousand reasons why you should not! Jesus beckons you to come. You wounded Saints, you that have slipped to your falling— you that are grieved, sorrowing and distressed—come to His Cross! Come to His Throne again! Backsliders, if you have been such, return! Return! Return! A husband’s heart has no door to keep out his spouse and Jesus’ heart has no power to keep out His people!

Return! Return! There is no divorce sued out against you for the Lord, the God of Jacob says He hates putting away. Return! Return! Let us get to our chambers, let us seek renewed fellowship. And, oh, you that have never had it and have never seen Christ, may you thirst after Him tonight and if you do, remember the text I gave you, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Whoever you may be, if you will come to Jesus, He will not cast you out—

*“Come and welcome, Sinner, come.”*  
God bring you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.  
[Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307](#link0) Sermon #1115 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE GOOD SHEPHERDESS  
NO. 1115

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 1, 1873, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions? If you know not, O you fairest among women, go your way forth by the  
footsteps of the flock, and feed your kids beside the shepherds’ tents.” Song of Solomon 1:7, 8.**

**THE bride was most unhappy and ashamed because her personal beauty had been sorely marred by the heat of the sun. The fairest among women had become swarthy as a sunburn slave. Spiritually it is so full often with a chosen soul. The Lord’s Grace has made her fair to look upon, even as the lily, but she has been so busy about earthly things that the sun of worldliness has injured her beauty. The bride, with holy shamefacedness, exclaims, “Look not upon me, for I am black, because the sun has looked upon me.” She dreads alike the curiosity, the admiration, the pity and the scorn of men. She then turns herself, alone, to her Beloved, whose gaze she knows to be so full of love that her swarthiness will not cause her pain when most beneath His eyes.**

**This is one index of a gracious soul—that whereas the ungodly rush to and fro and know not where to look for consolation, the believing heart naturally flies to its beloved Savior, knowing that in Him is its only rest. It would appear from the preceding verse that the bride was also in trouble about a certain charge which had been given to her, which burdened her, and in the discharge of which she had become negligent of herself. She says, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards,” and she would wish to have kept them well, but she felt she had not done so, and that, moreover, she had failed in a more immediate duty—“My own vineyard have I not kept.” Under this sense of double unworthiness and failure, feeling her omissions and her commissions to be weighing her down, she turned round to her Beloved and asked instruction at His hands.**

**This was well. Had she not loved her Lord she would have shunned Him when her comeliness was faded, but the instincts of her affectionate heart suggested to her that He would not discard her because of her imperfections. She was, moreover, wise to appeal to her Lord against herself. Beloved, never let sin part you from Jesus. Under a sense of sin, do not fly *from* Him. That were foolishness! Sin may drive you from Sinai—it ought to draw you to Calvary. To the Fountain we should fly with all the greater alacrity when we feel that we are foul. And to the dear wounds of Jesus, where all our life and healing must come, we should resort with the greater earnestness when we feel our soul to be sick, even though we fear that sickness to be unto death.**

**The bride, in the present case, takes to Jesus her troubles, her distress about herself and her confession concerning her work. She brings before Him her double charge, the keeping of her own vineyard and the keeping of the vineyards of others. I know that I shall be speaking to many, this morning, who are busy in serving their Lord and it may be that they feel great anxiety because they cannot keep their own hearts near to Jesus—they do not feel themselves warm and lively in the Divine service. They plod on, but they are very much in the condition of those who are described as “faint, yet pursuing.” When Jesus is present, labor for Him is joy, but in His absence His servants feel like workers underground, bereft of the light of the sun.**

**They cannot give up working for Jesus, they love Him too well for that, but they pine to have His company while they are working for Him. And like the young Prophets who went to the woods to cut down, every man, a beam for their new house, they say to their Master, “Be content, we pray You, and go with Your servants.” Our most earnest desire is that we may enjoy sweet communion with Jesus while we are actively engaged in His cause. Indeed, Beloved, this is most important to all of us. I do not know of any point which Christian workers need more often to think upon than the subject of keeping their work and themselves near to their Master.**

**Our text will help us to this under three heads. We have here, first, a question asked—“Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon?” Secondly, an argument used—“Why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?” And, thirdly, we have an answer obtained—“If you know not, O you fairest among women, go your way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed your kids beside the shepherds’ tents.”**

I. **Here is A QUESTION ASKED. Every word of the enquiry is worthy of our careful meditation. You will observe, first, concerning it, that it is asked in love. She calls Him to whom she speaks by the endearing title, “O You whom my soul loves.” Whatever she may feel herself to be, she knows that she loves Him. She is black, and ashamed to have her face gazed upon, but still she loves her Bridegroom. She has not kept her own vineyard as she ought to have done, but still she loves Him. Of that she is sure, and therefore boldly declares it. She loves Him as she loves none other in all the world. He only can be called, “Him whom my soul loves.”**

**She knows none at all worthy to be compared with Him, none who can rival Him. He is her bosom’s Lord, sole prince and monarch of all her affections. She feels, also, that she loves Him intensely—from her inmost soul she loves Him. The life of her existence is bound up with Him—if there is any force and power and vitality in her, it is but as fuel to the great flame of her love which burns for Him, alone. Mark well that it is not, “O You whom my soul believes in.” That would be true, but she has passed further. It is not, “O You whom my soul honors.” That is true, too, but she has passed beyond that stage. Nor is it merely, “O You whom my soul trusts and obeys.” She is doing that, but she has reached something warmer, more tender, more full of fire and enthusiasm, and it is, “O You whom my soul loves.”**

**Now, Beloved, I trust many of us can speak so to Jesus. He is to us the Well-Beloved, “the chief among a myriad.” “His mouth is every sweetness, yes, all of Him is loveliness,” and our soul is wrapped up in Him, our heart is altogether taken up with Him. We shall never serve Him aright unless it is so. Before our Lord said to Peter, “Feed My lambs,” and “Feed My sheep,” He put the question, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” And this He repeated three times, for until that question is settled we are unfit for His service. So the bride, here, having both herself and her little flock to care for, avows that she loves the Spouse as if she felt that she would not dare to have a part of His flock to look after if she did not love Him—as if she saw that her right to be a shepherdess at all depended upon her love to her Spouse. She could not expect His help in her work, much less His fellowship in the work, unless there was first in her that all-essential fitness of love to His Person.**

**The question, therefore, becomes instructive to us, because it is addressed to Christ under a most endearing title. And I ask every worker here to take care that he always does his work in a spirit of love and always regards the Lord Jesus not as a taskmaster, not as one who has given us work to do from which we would rather escape, but as our dear Lord, whom to serve is bliss and for whom to die is gain. “O You whom my soul loves,” is the right name by which a worker for Jesus should address his Lord. Now note that the question, as it is asked in love, is also asked of Him. “Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where You feed.” She asked Him to tell her, as if she feared that none but Himself would give her the correct answer—others might be mistaken, but He could not be. She asked of Him because she was quite sure that He would give her the kindest answer.**

**Others might be indifferent and might scarcely take the trouble to reply, but if Jesus would tell her Himself, with His own lips, He would mingle love with every word and so console as well as instruct her. Perhaps she felt that nobody else could tell her as He could, for others speak to the ear, but He speaks to the heart. Others speak with lower degrees of influence—we hear their speech but are not moved. But Jesus speaks and the Spirit goes with every word He utters and therefore we hear to profit when He converses with us. I do not know how it may be with you, my Brothers and Sisters, but I feel, this morning, that if I could get half a word from Christ it would satisfy my soul for many a day! I love to hear the Gospel and to read it, and to preach it—but to hear it fresh from Himself, applied by the energy of the Holy Spirit! O, this is refreshment! This is energy and power! Therefore, Savior, when Your workers desire to know where You feed, tell them Yourself. Speak to their hearts by Your own Spirit and let them feel as though it were a new revelation to their inmost nature. “Tell me, O You whom my soul loves.” It is asked in love. It is asked of Him.**

**Now, observe what the question is. She wishes to know how Jesus does His work and where He does it. It appears, from the eighth verse, that she, herself, has a flock of kids to tend. She is a shepherdess and would feed her flock. Therefore her question, “Tell me where You feed?” She desires those little ones of hers to obtain rest as well as food and she is troubled about them. Therefore she says, “Tell me where You make Your flock to rest,” for if she can see how Jesus does His work and where He does it, and in what way, then she will be satisfied that she is doing it in the right way, if she closely imitates Him and abides in fellowship with Him.**

**The question seems to be just this: “Lord, tell me what are the Truths with which You do feed Your people’s souls. Tell me what are the doctrines which make the strong ones weak and the sad ones glad. Tell me what is that precious meat which You are known to give to hungry and fainting spirits to revive them and keep them alive, for if You tell me, then I will give my flock the same food. Tell me where the pasture is where You feed Your sheep and straightway I will lead mine to the same happy fields. Then tell me how You make Your people rest. What are those promises which You apply to the consolation of their spirit so that their cares and doubts and fears and agitations all subside?**

**You have sweet meadows where You make Your beloved flock lie calmly down and slumber. Tell me where those meadows are that I may go and fetch the flock committed to my charge—the mourners whom I ought to comfort, the distressed ones whom I am bound to relieve, the desponding whom I have endeavored to encourage—tell me, Lord, where You make Your flock to lie down, for then, under Your help, I will go and make my flock to lie there, too. It is for myself, but yet far more for others that I ask the question, ‘Tell me where You feed, where You make them to rest at noon.’ ” I have no doubt that the bride did desire information for herself and for her own good, and I believe Dr. Watts had caught some of the spirit of the passage when he sang—**

*“Gladly would I feed among Your sheep,   
Among them rest, among them sleep.”*

**But it does not strike me that this is all the meaning of the passage by a very long way. The bride says, “Tell me where You feed Your flock,” as if she would wish to feed with the flock. “Where You make Your flock to rest,” as if she wanted to rest there, too. But it strikes me the very gist of the thing is this, that she wished to bring her flock to feed where Christ’s flock feeds and to lead her kids to lie down where Christ’s little lambs were reposing. She desired, in fact, to do her work in His company. She wanted to mix up her flock with the Lord’s flock, her work with His work, and to feel that what she was doing she was doing for Him. Yes, and with Him and through Him.**

**She had evidently met with a great many difficulties in what she had tried to do. She wished to feed her flock of kids, but could not find them pasture. Perhaps when she began her work as a shepherdess she thought herself quite equal to the task, but now the same sun which had bronzed her face had dried up the pasture, and so she says, “O You that know all the pastures, tell me where You feed, for I cannot find grass for my flock.” And suffering herself from the noontide heat, she finds her little flock suffering, too. And she enquires, “Where do You make Your flock to rest at noon? Where are cool shadows of great rocks which screen off the sultry rays when the sun is in its zenith and pours down torrents of heat? For I cannot shade my poor flock and give them comfort in their many trials and troubles. I wish I could. O Lord, tell me the secret art of consolation, then will I try to console my own charge by the same means.”**

**We would know the groves of promises and the cool streams of peace, that we may lead others into rest. If we can follow Jesus we can guide others and so both we and they will find comfort and peace. That is the meaning of the request before us. Note well that she said most particularly, “Tell *me*.” “O Master, do not merely tell Your sheep where You feed, though they want to know, but tell me where You feed, for I would gladly instruct others.” She would desire to know many things, but chiefly she says, “Tell me where You feed,” for she wished to feed others. We want practical knowledge, for our desire is to be helped to bring others into rest—to be the means of speaking peace to the consciences of others—as the Lord has spoken peace to ours.**

**Therefore the prayer is, “Tell me.” “You are my Model, O Great Shepherd. You are my Wisdom. If I am a shepherd to Your sheep, yet am I also a sheep beneath Your Shepherdry, therefore teach me that I may teach others.” I do not know whether I make myself plain to you, but I wish to put it very simply. I am preaching to myself perhaps a great deal more than to you. I am preaching to my own heart. I feel I have to come, Sunday after Sunday, and weekday after weekday, and tell you a great many precious things about Christ, and sometimes I enjoy them myself. And if nobody else gets blessed by them, I do, and I go home and praise the Lord for it. But my daily fear is lest I should be a handler of texts for you, and a preacher of good things for others, and yet remain unprofited in my own heart.**

**My prayer is that the Lord Jesus will show *me* where He feeds His people and let me feed with them, that I may conduct you to the pastures where He is, and be with Him, myself, at the same time that I bring you to Him. You Sunday school teachers and Evangelists, and others—my dear, earnest comrades for whom I thank God at every remembrance— I feel that the main point you have to watch is that you do not lose your own spirituality while trying to make others spiritual. The great point is to live near to God. It would be a dreadful thing for you to be very busy about other men’s souls and neglect your own. Appeal to the Well-Beloved and entreat Him to let you feed your flock where He is feeding His people. Pray that He would let you sit at His feet, like Mary, even while you are working in the house, like Martha.**

**Do not do less, but rather more, and ask to do it in such communion with Him that your work shall be melted into His work and what you are doing shall be really only His working in you and you rejoicing to pour out to others what He pours into your own soul. God grant it may be so with you all, my Brothers and Sisters.**

II. **Secondly, here is AN ARGUMENT USED. The bride says, “Why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?” If she should lead her flock into distant meadows, far away from the place where Jesus is feeding His flock, it would not be well. As a shepherdess would naturally be rather dependent and would need to associate herself for protection with others, suppose she should turn aside with other shepherds and leave her Bridegroom—would it be right? She speaks of it as a thing most abhorrent to her mind and well might it be.**

**For, first, would it not look very unseemly that the bride should be associating with others than the Bridegroom? They have each a flock—there is He with His great flock—and here is she with her little one. Shall they seek pastures far off from one another? Will there not be talk about this? Will not onlookers say, “This is not seemly. There must be some lack of love here, or else these two would not be so divided”? Stress may be put, if you like, upon that little word, “I.” Why should I, your blood-bought spouse. I, betrothed unto You, before the earth was, I, whom You have loved—why should I turn after others and forget You?**

**Beloved, you had better put the emphasis in your own reading of it just there. Why should *I*, whom the Lord has pardoned, whom the Lord has loved, whom the Lord has favored so much. *I*, who have enjoyed fellowship with Him for many years. *I*, who know that His love is better than wine. *I*, who have aforetime been inebriated with His sweetness— why should *I*** turn aside? Let others do so if they will, but it would be uncomely and unseemly for me. I pray You, Brothers and Sisters, try to feel that—that for you to work apart from Christ would have a bad look about it. That for your work to take you away from fellowship with Jesus would have a very ugly appearance—it would not be among the things that are honest and of good repute.

For the bride to feed her flock in other company would look like unfaithfulness to her Husband. What? Shall the bride of Christ forsake her Beloved? Shall she be unchaste towards her Lord? Yet it would seem so if she makes companions of others and forgets her Beloved. Our hearts may grow unchaste to Christ even while they are zealous in Christian work. I dread very much the tendency to do Christ’s work in a cold, mechanical spirit. But above even that I tremble lest I should be able to have warmth for Christ’s work and yet should be cold towards the Lord Himself. I fear that such a condition of heart is possible—that we may burn great bonfires in the streets for public display—and scarcely keep a live coal upon our hearth for Jesus to warm His hands.

When we meet in the great assembly the good company helps to warm our hearts and when we are working for the Lord with others they stimulate us and cause us to put forth all our energy and strength. And then we think, “Surely my heart is in a healthy condition towards God.” But, Beloved, such excitement may be a poor index of our real state. I love that quiet, holy fire which will glow in the closet and flame forth in the chamber when I am alone—and that is the point I am more fearful about than anything else—both for myself and for you, lest we should be doing Christ’s work without Christ. Lest we should be having much to do but not thinking much of Him. Lest we should be involved in much serving yet forgetting Him.

Why, that would soon grow into making a Christ out of our own service—an Antichrist out of our own labors! Beware of that! Love your work, but love your Master more! Love your flock, but love the Great Shepherd better, still, and always keep close to Him, for it will be a token of unfaithfulness if you do not. And mark again, “Why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?” We may read this as meaning, “Why should I be so unhappy as to have to work for You and yet be out of communion with You?” It is a very unhappy thing to lose fellowship with Jesus, and yet to have to go on with religious exercises. If the wheels are taken off your chariot it is no great matter if nobody wants to ride. But what if you are called upon to drive on? When a man’s foot is lame he may not so much regret it if he can sit still, but if he is bound to run a race he is greatly to be pitied.

It made the spouse doubly unhappy even to suppose that she, with her flock to feed and herself needing feeding, too, should have to turn aside by the flocks of others and miss the Presence of her Lord. In fact the question seems to be put in this shape—“What reason is there why I should leave my Lord? What apology could I make? What excuse could I offer for doing so? Is there any reason why I should not abide in constant fellowship with Him? Why should I be as one that turns aside? Perhaps it may be said that others turn aside, but why should I be as one of them? There may be excuses for such an act in others, but there can be none for me. Your rich love, Your free love, Your undeserved love, Your special love to me has bound me hand and foot—how can I turn aside?

“There may be some professors who owe You little, but I, once the chief of sinners owe you so much, how can I turn aside? There may be some with whom You have dealt harshly who may turn aside. But You have been so tender, so kind to me, how can I forget You? There may be some who know but little of You, whose experience of You is so slender that their turning aside is not to be wondered at. But how can I turn aside when You have shown me Your love and revealed Your heart to me? Oh, by the banqueting house where I have feasted with You. By the Hermonites and the hill Mizar where You have manifested Your love. By the place where deep called to deep and then mercy called to mercy. By those mighty storms and sweeping hurricanes in which You were the shelter of my head, by ten thousand thousand mercies past which have been my blessed portion, why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?”

Let me address the members of this Church and say to you, if all the churches in Christendom were to go aside from the Gospel, why should you? If in every other place the Gospel should be neglected and an uncertain sound should be given forth. If Ritualism should swallow up half the churches and Rationalism the rest, yet why should you turn aside? You have been peculiarly a people of prayer. You have also followed the Lord fully in doctrine and in ordinances and consequently you have enjoyed the Divine Presence and have prospered beyond measure. We have cast ourselves upon the Holy Spirit for strength and have not relied upon human eloquence, music, or beauties of color, or architecture.

Our only weapon has been the simple, plain, full Gospel and why should we turn aside? Have we not been favored for these many years with unexampled success? Has not the Lord added unto our numbers so abundantly that we have not had room enough to receive them? Has He not multiplied the people and increased the joy? Hold fast to your first love and let no man take your crown! I thank God there are still Churches, a few in England and yet more in Scotland, which hold fast the doctrines of the Gospel and will not let them go. To them I would say, why should you turn aside? Should not your history, both in its troublous and its joyous chapters, teach you to hold fast the form of sound words?

Above all, should we not try to live as a Church and individually, also, in abiding fellowship with Jesus? For if we turn aside from Him we shall rob the Truth of God of its aroma, yes, of its essential fragrance. If we lose fellowship with Jesus we shall have the standard, but where will be the standard-bearer? We may retain the candlestick, but where shall be the light? We shall be shorn of our strength, our joy, our comfort, our all, if we miss fellowship with Him! God grant, therefore, that we may never be as those who turn aside.

III. Thirdly, we have here AN ANSWER GIVEN by the Bridegroom to His Beloved. She asked Him where He fed, where He made His flock rest, and He answered her. Observe carefully that this answer is given in tenderness to her infirmity—not ignoring her ignorance, but dealing very gently with it. “If you know not”—a hint that she ought to have known, but such a hint as kind lovers give when they would forbear to chide. Our Lord is very tender to our ignorance. There are many things which we do not know, but ought to know. We are children when we should be men and have to be spoken to as unto carnal—unto babes in Christ, when we should have become fathers.

Is there one among us who can say, “I am not faulty in my knowledge”? I am afraid the most of us must confess that if we had done the Lord’s will better we should have known His doctrine better. If we had lived more closely to Him we should have known more of Him. Still, how very gentle He rebuke us. The Lord forgives our ignorance and condescends to instruct it. Note next that the answer is given in great love. He says, “O you fairest among women.” That is a blessed cordial for her distress. She said, “I am black,” but He says, “O you fairest among women.”

I would rather trust Christ’s eyes than mine. If my eyes tell me I am black I will weep, but if He assures me I am fair I will believe Him and rejoice. Some saints are more apt to remember their sinfulness and grieve over it, than to believe in their righteousness in Christ and triumph in it. Remember, Beloved, it is quite as true today that you are all fair and without spot as that you are black, because the sun has looked upon you. It must be true, because Jesus says so. Let me give you one of the sayings of the Bridegroom to His bride—“You are all fair, My Love; there is no spot on you.” “Ah, that is a figure,” you say. Well, I will give you one that it not a figure.

The Lord Jesus, after He had washed His disciples’ feet, said, “He that is washed needs not except to wash his feet, for he is clean every whit.” And then He added, “And you are clean.” If you desire an Apostolic word to the same effect, let me give you this— “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?”—*anything*—any little thing or any great thing! Jesus has washed His people so clean that there is no spot, no wrinkle, nor any such thing upon them in the matter of justification before God—

*“In your Surety you are free,   
His dear hands were pierced for you!   
With His spotless vesture on,   
Holy as the Holy One.”*

How glorious is this! Jesus does not exaggerate when He thus commends His Church. He speaks plain, sober Truth. “O you fairest among women,” says He. My Soul, do you not feel love to Christ when you remember that He thinks you beautiful? I cannot see anything in myself to love, but He does, and calls me, “all fair.”

I think it must be that He looks into our eyes and sees Himself, or else this—that He knows what we are *going* to be and judges us on that scale! As the artist, looking on the block of marble, sees in the stone the statue which he means to fetch out of it with matchless skill, so the Lord Jesus sees the perfect image of Himself in us, from which He means to chip away the imperfections and the sins until we stand out in all His splendor! But still it is gracious condescension which makes Him say, “You are fairest among women,” to one who mourned her own sunburn countenance. The answer contains much sacred wisdom.

The bride is directed where to go that she may find her Beloved and lead her flock to Him. “Go your way forth by the footprints of the flock.” If you will find Jesus, you will find Him in the way the holy Prophets went, in the way of the Patriarchs and the way of the Apostles. And if your desire is to find your flock and to make them lie down—very well, go and feed them as other shepherds have done—Christ’s own shepherds whom He has sent in other days to feed His chosen. I feel very glad, in speaking from this text, that the Lord does not give to His bride in answer to her question some singular directions of great difficulty, some novel prescriptions singular and remarkable. Just as the Gospel, itself, is simple and homely, so is this exhortation and direction for the renewal of communion. It is easy, it is plain. You want to get to Jesus and you want to bring those under your charge to Him? Very well, then, do not seek out a new road, but simply go the way which all other saints have gone! If you want to walk with Jesus, walk where other saints have walked. And if you want to lead others into communion with Him, lead them by your example where others have gone.

What is that? If you want to be with Jesus, go where Abraham went in the path of *separation*. See how he lived as a pilgrim and a sojourner with his God. If you would see Jesus, “Come you out from among them, be you separate, touch not the unclean thing.” You shall find Jesus when you have left the world. If you would walk with Jesus, follow the path of *obedience*. Saints have never had fellowship with Jesus when they have disobeyed Him. Keep His statutes and observe His testimonies. Be jealous over your conduct and character, for the path of obedience is the path of communion. Be sure that you follow the ancient ways with regard to the Christian ordinances—do not alter them, but keep to the good old paths.

Stand and enquire what Apostles did, and do the same. Jesus will not bless you in using fanciful ceremonies of human invention. Keep to those which He commands, which His Spirits sanctions, which His Apostles practiced. Above all, if you would walk with Jesus, continue in the way of holiness and persevere in the way of Grace. Make the Lord Jesus your Model and Example, and by treading where the footprints of the flock are to be seen you will both save yourself and them that hear you. You shall find Jesus and they shall find Jesus, too.

We might have supposed that the Lord would have said, “If you want to lead your flock aright, array yourself in sumptuous apparel. Or go get your music and fine anthems. By these fair things you will fascinate the Savior into your sanctuaries.” But it is not so. The incense which will please the Lord Jesus is that of holy prayer and praise. And the only rituals which are acceptable with Him are these—to visit the fatherless and the widow, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. This is all He wants. Follow that and you shall go right and lead others right.

Then the Spouse added, “Feed your kids beside the shepherds’ tents.” Now, who are these shepherds? There are many in these days who set up for shepherds, who feed their sheep in poisonous pastures. Keep away from them! But there are others whom it is safe to follow. Let me take you to the 12 principal shepherds who came after the great Shepherd of All. You want to bless your children, to save their souls and have fellowship with Christ in the doing of it—then teach them the Truths which the Apostles taught. And what were they? Take Paul as an example. “I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him Crucified.” That is feeding the kids beside the shepherds’ tents—when you teach your children Christ, much of Christ, all of Christ and nothing else but Christ! Mind you, stick to that blessed subject.

And when you are teaching them Christ, teach them all about His life, His death, His Resurrection. Teach them His Godhead and His Manhood. You will never enjoy Christ’s company if you doubt His Divinity. Take care that you feed your flock upon the doctrine of the Atonement. Christ will have no fellowship with a worker unless he represents Him fairly and you cannot represent Christ truthfully unless you see the ruddy hue of His atoning blood as well as the lily purity of His life. “Feed your kids beside the shepherds’ tents.” Then will you teach them the atoning Sacrifice, and Justification by faith, and imputed righteousness, and union with the risen Head, and the coming of the Great One, wherein we shall receive the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body from the grave.

I speak the truth and lie not when I say that if we want to teach a congregation so as to bless them and keep in fellowship with Christ at the same time, ourselves, we must be very particular to teach nothing but the Truth of God— not a part of it, but *all* of it. Preach that blessed doctrine of Election! Oh, the deeps of Divine love which are contained in that blessed Truth of God! Do not shirk it, or keep it in the background. You cannot expect Christ’s Presence if you do. Teach the doctrine of man’s depravity. Lay the sinner low. God will not bless a ministry which exalts men. Preach the doctrine of the Holy Spirit’s effectual calling, for if we do not magnify the Spirit of God we cannot expect that He will make our work to stand.

Preach regeneration. Let it be seen how thorough the change is, that we may glorify God’s work. Preach the final perseverance of the saints. Teach that the Lord is not changeable—casting away His people, loving them today and hating them tomorrow. Preach, in fact, the Doctrines of Grace as you find them in the Book. Feed them beside the shepherds’ tents. Yes, and feed the kids there—the little children. I begin to feel more and more that it is a mistake to divide the children from the congregation. I believe in special services for children, but I would also have them worship with us. If our preaching does not teach children, it lacks some element which it ought to possess. The kind of preaching which is best of all for grown-up people is that in which children, also, will take delight.

I like to see the congregation made up not all of the young, nor all of the old, not all of the mature, nor all of the inexperienced, but some of all sorts gathered together. If we are teaching children salvation by works and grown-up people salvation by Grace, we are pulling down, in the classroom, what we build up in the Church and that will never do! Feed the kids with the same Gospel as the grown-up sheep, though not exactly in the same terms. Let your language be appropriate to them, but let it be the same Truth of God. God forbid that we should have our Sunday schools the hotbeds of Arminianism, while our churches are gardens of Calvinism! We shall soon have a division in the camp if that is so. The same truth for all—and you cannot expect Christ to be with you in feeding your little flocks unless you feed them where Christ feeds us. Where does He feed us but where the Truth grows?

Oh, when I read some sermons, they remind me of a piece of common by the roadside, after a hungry horde of sheep have devoured every green thing! But when I read a solid Gospel sermon of the Puritans, it reminds me of a field kept for hay which a farmer is, at last, obliged to give up to the sheep. The grass has grown almost as high as themselves and so they lie down in it, eating and resting. Give me the Doctrines of Grace and I am in clover! If you have to feed others, take them there! Do not conduct them to the starved pastures of modern thought and culture. Preachers are starving God’s people nowadays. Oh, but they set out such beautiful China plates, such wonderful knives and forks, such marvelous vases and damask tablecloths! But as for *food*, the plates look as if they had been smeared with a feather, there is so little on them.

The real Gospel teaching is little enough. They give us nothing to learn, nothing to digest, nothing to feed upon. It is all slop and nothing substantial. O for the good old corn of the kingdom! We need that! And I am persuaded that when the Churches get back to the old food again—when they begin to feed their flocks beside the shepherds’ tents and when, in practical living Christians, the saints get back to the old Puritan method and follow, once again, the tracks of the sheep and the sheep follow the tracks of Christ—then we shall get the Church into fellowship with Jesus and Jesus will do wonders in our midst! But to get that, each individual must aim at winning it for himself—and if the Lord shall grant it to each one of us—then it will be granted to the whole, and the good times which we desire will certainly have come.

My Beloved, do you desire to work with Christ? Do you want to feel that Jesus is at your right hand? Then go and work in His way. Teach what He would have you teach, not what you would like to teach. Go and work for Him as He would have you work, not as your prejudices might prescribe to you. Be obedient. Follow the footsteps of the flock. Be diligent, also, to keep hard by the shepherds’ tents and the Lord bless you more and more, you and your children, and His shall be the glory.

I have spoken only to God’s people. I wish there had been time to speak to the unconverted, too, but to them I can only say this—may God grant you Grace to know the beauties of Jesus, for then you will love Him, too. May He also show you the deformities of yourselves, for then you will desire to be cleansed and made lovely in Christ. And remember, if any one of you wants Christ, He wants you. And if you long for Him, He longs for you. If you seek Him, He is seeking you. If you will now cry to Him, He is already crying after you. “Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” The Lord save you for His name’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Song of [Solomon 1](tw://bible.*?id=22.1.0|_AUTODETECT_|). Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.

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THE BEST OF THE BEST  
NO. 2472

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 5, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 19, 1881.

**“I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” Song of Solomon 2:1.**

THE time of flowers has come and as they are in some faint degree, emblems of our Lord, it is well, when God thus calls, that we should seek to learn what He desires to teach us by them. If nature now spreads out her roses and her lilies, or prepares to do so, let us try not only to see them, but to see Christ as He is shadowed forth in them. “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” If these are the words of the WellBeloved—and I have no doubt that they are—then it may be suggested by some that here we have the Savior praising Himself—and it is true—but in no unworthy sense, for well may He praise Himself since no one else can do it as it should be done! There is no human language that can ever set forth His beauties as they deserve to be told. As good John Berridge says—

*“Living tongues are dumb at best,*

*We must die to speak of Christ”*  
as He should be spoken of. He will never fully be described unless He shall describe Himself. For certain, we should never have known God if He had not revealed Himself—and every good thing that you or I know of Him, He, Himself, has told us. We make no discoveries of God except as God discovers Himself to us. If, then, any quibblers were to find fault with the Christ of God because He commends Himself, I would answer, Does not God commend Himself and must not His well-beloved Son do the same? Who else is there that can possibly reveal Him to us unless He unveils His own face to our admiring gaze?

Moreover, let it always be remembered that human self-praise is evil because of the motive which underlies it. When we praise ourselves— and, alas, that we should be so foolish as to do so—we do it out of pride! But when Christ praises Himself, He does it out of humility. “Oh,” you say, “how can you prove that to be true?” Why, thus—He praises Himself that He may win our love—but what condescension it is on His part that He should care about the love of such insignificant and undeserving persons as we are! It is a wonderful stoop that the Christ of God should speak about having a bride and that He should come to seek His bride among the sons of men! If princes were to look for consorts among beggars, that would be, after all, but a small stoop, for God has made of one blood all nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth. But for Christ to forsake the thrones and glories of Heaven, and the splendors of His Father’s courts above to come down to win a well-beloved one here and, for her sake, to take upon Himself her nature—and in her nature to bear the shame of death, even the death of the Cross—this is stupendous condescension of which only God, Himself, is capable! And this praising of Himself is a part of that condescension—a necessary means of winning the love of the heart that He has chosen.

So this is a matchless instance, not of pride, but of humility, that those dear lips of the heavenly Bridegroom should have to speak to His own commendation and that He should say, “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” O human lips, why are you silent, so that Christ must speak about Himself? O human hearts, why are you so hard that you will never feel until Christ, Himself, shall address you? O human eyes, why are you so blind that you shall never see till Christ shows Himself in His own superlative light and loveliness? I think I need not defend my Master, though He used these sweet emblems to set forth Himself, for this is an instance, not of His pride, but of His humility.

It is also an instance of the Master’s wisdom, for as it is His design to win hearts to Himself, He uses the best means of winning them. How are hearts won? Very often by the exhibition of beauty. Love at first sight has been begotten by the vision of a lovely countenance. Men and women, too, are struck with affection through the eyes when they perceive some beauty which charms and pleases them. So the Savior lifts the corner of the veil that conceals His glories and lets us see some glimpse of His beauty in order that He may win our hearts. There are some who seem to think that they can bully men to Christ, but that is a great mistake. It is very seldom that sinners can be driven to the Savior—His way is to draw them. He Himself said, “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die.” And the drawings of Christ are not, as it were, with a cart rope, but with silken bonds, yes, with invisible chains, for His beauty is of such a character that it creates love! His beauty is so attractive that it draws the heart! So, in infinite wisdom, our Lord Jesus Christ sets forth His own beauties that He may, thereby, win our hearts.

I believe that there is no preaching like the exaltation of Christ Crucified. There is nothing so likely to win the sons of men as a sight of Him and if God, the Holy Spirit, will but help all His ministers, and help all His people to set forth the beauties of Christ, I shall not doubt that the same Spirit will incline men’s hearts to love Him and to trust Him! Note, then, the condescension and also the wisdom which are perceptible in this self-commendation on the part of Christ—“I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.”

I think that our Lord also speaks thus as an encouragement to timid souls. His tender familiarity in praising Himself to us is one of the most effectual proofs of His lowliness. Does Christ commend Himself to us? Does He say to us, for instance, “I am meek and lowly in heart”? What is His objective in speaking thus but that we may take His yoke upon us and may learn of Him and find rest to our souls? And if He says, “I am the rose of Sharon,” what does He mean but that we may pluck Him and take Him for our own? If He says, “I am the lily of the valleys,” why does He take the trouble to tell us that but because He wants us to take Him and to have Him for our very own? I think that it is so sweet of Christ to praise Himself in order to show that He longs for us to come to Him! He declares Himself to be a fountain of living water, but why is He a fountain but that we may come to Him and drink? He tells us, “I am the bread which came down from Heaven,” but why does He speak of Himself as bread, except that if a man eats, he shall never hunger? Why, because He wants us to partake of Him! You need not, therefore, be afraid that He will refuse you when you come to Him. If a man praises his wares, it is that he may sell them. If a doctor advertises his cures, it is that sick folk may be induced to try his medicine. And when our Lord Jesus Christ praises Himself, it is a kind of holy advertisement by which He would tempt us to “come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” If He praises Himself, it is that we may fall in love with Him—and we need not be afraid to come and lay our poor hearts at His feet and ask Him to accept us—for He would not have wooed us by unveiling His beauties if He had meant, after all, to trample on our hearts, and say, “I care nothing for such poor love as yours.”

I feel most grateful, then, that I have not, at this time, so much to praise my Master as to let Him speak His own praises, for, “never man spoke like this Man!” When He commends Himself, what would have been folly in others is wisdom in Him! And whereas we say to our fellow man, “Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth,” I would say to Christ, “My Master, praise Yourself, for You alone can do it as it ought to be done! As for Your poor servant, he would try to be the echo of Your voice, and that will be infinitely better than anything he, himself, can say.”

I think, also, that there is good reason for our Lord to praise Himself in the fashion that He does in our text because, after all, it is not praise. “What?” you ask, “and yet you have been talking all this while as if it were praise.” Well, so it is in one sense, to us, but it is not to Christ. Suppose the sun were to compare itself with a glowworm—would that be praise? Suppose an angel were to compare himself with an ant, would that be praise? And when my Lord and Master, whose eyes outshine the sun, and who is infinitely higher than the mightiest of the angels, compares Himself to a rose and a lily, is that praise? Well, it is to you and to me, but it certainly cannot be to Him! It is a marvelous stoop for Christ, who is “God over all, blessed forever,” and the Light of the universe, to say, “I am a rose; I am a lily.” O my blessed Lord, this is a sort of Incarnation, as when the Eternal God did take upon Himself an infant’s form! So here, the Everlasting God says, “I am”—and what comes next?—“a rose and a lily.” It is an amazing stoop! I know not how to set it forth to you by human language—it is a sort of verbal rehearsal of what He did afterwards when, though He counted it not robbery to be equal with God, “He took upon Himself the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross.” “I am God, yet,” He says, “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.”

What does our text mean? I think it means that our Lord Jesus Christ is exceedingly delightful, so, let us speak, first, of the exceeding delightfulness of our Lord. And then, inasmuch as He uses two emblems—first the rose, and then the lily—surely this is to express the sweet variety of His delightfulness. And, inasmuch as He speaks of Himself as the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys, I shall have to show you, in the last place, that this hints to us the exceeding freeness of His delightfulness.

I. First, then, the text sets forth THE EXCEEDING DELIGHTFULNESS OF OUR LORD.  
He compares Himself, here, not as in other places, to necessary bread and refreshing water, but to lovely flowers, to roses and lilies. What is the use of roses and lilies? I know what the use of corn is—I must eat it—it is necessary to me for food. I know why barley and rye and all sorts of roots and fruits are created—they are the necessary food of man or beast. But what do we need with roses? What do we need with lilies? They are of no use at all except for joy and delight. With their sweet form, their charming color and their delicious fragrance, we are comforted and pleased and delighted, but they are not necessaries of life. A man can live without roses—there are millions of people, I have no doubt—who live without possessing lilies of the valley. There are all too few roses and lilies in this smoky Babylon of ours, but, when we do get them, what are their uses? Why, they are things of beauty, if not “a joy forever!”  
Jesus is all that and more! He is far more than “a thing of beauty” and, to all who trust Him, He will be “a joy forever.” To you who are Christ’s people, He is your bread, for you feed on Him and He makes you live! You could not do without Him as the sustenance of your soul. He is the Living Water and your soul would pine and perish of a burning thirst if you did not drink of Him! But that is not all that Jesus is to you—God has never intended to save His people on the scale of the workhouse—to give you just as much as you absolutely need, and nothing more. No, no, no! He means you to have joy as well as to have life, to look upon beauty as well as to be in safety and to have not only a healthy atmosphere, but an atmosphere that is laden with the odor of sweet flowers! You are to find in Christ roses and lilies, as well as bread and water! You have not yet seen all His beauties and you do not yet know all His excellence!  
The exceeding delightfulness of Christ is suggested to our mind by His declaration, “I am the rose, and I am the lily.” And first, He is, in Himself, the delight of men. He speaks not of offices, gifts, works, possessions— but of Himself—“I Am.” Our Lord Jesus is the best of all beings! The dearest, sweetest, fairest and most charming of all beings that we can think of is the Son of God, our Savior! Come here, you poets who dream of beauty, and then try to sing its praises—but your imagination could never reach up to the matchless perfection of His Person—neither could your sweetest music ever attain to the full measure of His praise! Think of Him as the God-Man, God Incarnate in human nature and absolutely perfect! I was going to say something more than that, for there is not only in Him all that there ought to be, but there is more than your thoughts or wishes have ever compassed! Eyes need to be trained to see beauty. No man sees half or a thousandth part of the beauty, even, of this poor, natural world. But the painter’s eyes—the eyes of Turner, for instance— can see much more than you or I ever saw.  
“Oh,” said one, when he looked on one of Turner’s landscapes, “I have seen that view every day, but I never saw as much as that in it.” “No,” replied Turner, “don’t you wish you could?” And, when the Spirit of God trains and tutors the eyes, they see in Christ what they never saw before. But, even then, as Turner’s eyes were not able to see all the mystery of God’s beauty in nature, so neither is the most trained and educated Christian able to perceive all the matchless beauty that there is in Christ!  
I do not think, Brothers and Sisters, that there is anything about Christ but what should make His people glad. There are dark Truths of God concerning Him, such as His bearing our sin, but what a joy it is to us that He did bear it and put it away forever! It makes us weep to look at Jesus dying on the Cross, but there is more real joy in the tears of repentance than there is in the smiles of worldly mirth. I would choose my Heaven to be a Heaven of everlasting weeping for sin sooner than have a Heaven—if such a Heaven could be—consisting of perpetual laughing at the mirth of fools! There is more true pleasure in mourning before God than in dancing before the devil! Christ is, then, all beauty—even the dark parts in Him are the Light of God—and the bitter parts are sweet. He has only to be seen by you and you must perceive that, whether it is His Godhead or His Manhood. Whether it is His priesthood, His royalty, or His prophetic office. Whether it is on the Cross or on the Throne. Whether it is on earth, or in Heaven, or in the Glory of His Second Coming, every way—  
*“All over glorious is my Lord,  
Must be beloved, and yet adored.  
His worth, if all the nations knew,  
Sure the whole earth would love Him too.”*  
But, next, our Lord is exceedingly delightful to the eyes of faith. He not only tells us of what delight is in Himself—“I am the rose, and I am the lily”—but He thereby tells us that there is something to see in Him, for the rose is very pleasing to look upon. Is there a more beautiful sight than a rose that is in bud, or even one that is full blown? And the lily— what a charming thing it is! It seems to be more a flower of Heaven than of earth! Well now, Christ is delightful to the eyes of faith. I remember the first time I ever saw Him—I shall never forget that sight—and, by His Grace, I have seen Him many times since, but my grief is that I ever take my eyes off Him, for it is to look away from the sun into blackness! It is to look away from bliss into misery! To you who look at Christ by faith, a sight of Him brings such peace, such rest, such hope, as no other sight can ever afford—it so sweetens everything, so entirely takes away the bitterness of life and brings us to anticipate the glory of the life that is to come, that I am sure you say—“Yes, yes, the figure in the text is quite correct, there is a beauty in Jesus to the eyes of faith! He is, indeed, red as the rose and white as the lily.”  
And, next, the Lord Jesus Christ is delightful in the savor which comes from Him to us. In Him is a delicious, varied, abiding fragrance which is very delightful to the spiritual nostril. Smell is, I suppose, a kind of delicate feeling—minute particles of certain substances touch sensitive membranes—and we call the sensation that is produced, smelling. It is a mysterious sense. You can understand sight and hearing better than you can understand smelling. There is a spiritual way of perceiving the savor of Christ—I cannot explain it to you, but there is an ineffable mysterious sweetness that proceeds from Him which touches the spiritual senses and affords supreme delight—and as the body has its nose, and its tender nerves that can appreciate sweet odors, so the soul has its spiritual nostril by which, though Christ is at a distance, it yet can perceive the fragrant emanations that come from Him and is delighted therewith!  
What is there that comes from Christ, from day to day, but His Truth, His Spirit, His influence, His promises, His doctrines, His words of cheer? All these have a heavenly sweetness and make us, with the Psalmist, say to our Lord, “All Your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made You glad.” Whenever these sweet odors are wafted down to us, they also make us glad—anything that has the savor of Christ in it is sweet to a Christian! If Christ has touched it, let me put it in my bosom and keep it there as a sweet forget-me-not until I see His face in Glory! Yes, the very stones He sat on—I was about to say the very mountains at which He looked—have become dear to us! We have no idolatrous or superstitious reverence for Palestine, or even for the garden in which He sweat great drops of blood, but for spiritual things with which He has to do, we have a never-ceasing reverence and affection. Everything that comes from Him is wondrous as the songs of the angels must have been to the shepherds of Bethlehem— and sweet to the taste as the manna that dropped from the skies around Israel’s desert camp. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, there is a sweet savor about the Lord Jesus Christ! Do you all perceive it?  
Once more, in all that He is, Christ is the choicest of the choice. You notice the Bridegroom says, “I am the rose.” Yes, but there were some particularly beautiful roses that grew in the valley of Sharon. “I am that rose,” He said. And there were some delightful lilies in Palestine—it is a land of lilies! There are so many of them that nobody knows which lily Christ meant and it does not at all tell us, for almost all lilies are wondrously beautiful. “But,” He said, “I am the lily of the valleys.” The choicest kind of lily grew where the soil was fat and damp with the overflow of mountain streams. “I am the lily of the valleys,” that is to say, Christ is not only good, but He is the best! And He is not only the best, but He is the best of the best! He is a flower—yes, but He is a rose, the queen of flowers—yes, but then He is the best rose there is, He is the rose of Sharon! He is a Savior, and a great one. Yes, the only Savior. He is a Husband, but what a Husband! Was there ever such a Bridegroom as Christ Jesus the Lord? He is the Head, but Father Adam was a poor head compared with Him! He is inexpressibly, unutterably, indescribably lovely! I might as well leave off talking about Him, for I cannot hope to set Him forth as He deserves! If you could but see Him, I would leave off, for I am sure I should be only hanging a veil before Him with the choicest words that I could possibly use!  
Suppose you had a dear son, or husband, or friend, far away, and that I was a painter who could carry pictures in my mind’s eye, and then draw them to the very life. If I stood here, trying to paint your wellbeloved friend, laying on my colors with all the skill I possessed and doing my best to reproduce his features, suppose, while I was at work, that the door at the back was opened and he came in? I would cry out, “Oh, stop, stop, stop! Let me put away my canvas, let me pack up my brushes and my paints. Here is the loved one, himself—look at him! Look at him, not at my portrait of him!” And you would rise from your seat and say, “It is he! It is he! You may talk as long as you like, dear Sir, when he is away, but when he is, himself, here, your talk seems but mere chatter.” Well, I shall be quite content that you should think so, I shall be even glad if you do, provided that the reason shall be that you can say, “We have seen the Lord. He has manifested Himself to us as He does not to the world.” “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” The best of the best, the fairest of the fair, the sweetest of the sweet is Jesus Christ to you and to me if we are, indeed, His people. I cannot say more about the exceeding delightfulness of my Lord. I wish I could.  
II. I must pass on, next, to notice THE SWEET VARIETY OF CHRIST’S DELIGHTFULNESS.  
He is not only full of joy, pleasure and delight to our hearts, but He is full of all sorts of joy, and all sorts of pleasure, and all sorts of delights to us—  
*“Nature, to make her beauties known,  
Must mingle colors not her own.”*  
The rose is not enough. You must also have the lily, and the two together fall far short of the glories of Christ, the true, “Plant of renown.”  
“I am the rose.” That is the emblem of majesty. The rose is the very queen of flowers. In the judgment of all who know what to admire, it is enthroned above all the rest of the beauties of the garden. But the lily— what is that? That is the emblem of love. The Psalmist hints at this in the title of the 45th Psalm. “Upon Shoshannim, a Song of love.” Shoshannim signifies lilies, so the Lily Psalm is the

love song, for the lilies, with their beauty, their purity, their delicacy, are a very choice emblem of love! Are you not delighted when you put these two things together, majesty and love? A King upon a throne of love! A Prince, whose very eyes beam with love to those who put their trust in Him, a real Head, united by living bonds of love to all His members—such is our dear Lord and Savior! A rose and yet a lily. I do not know in which of the two I take the greater delight—I prefer to have the two together. When I think that my Savior is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, I shout, “Hallelujah!” But when I remember that He loved me and gave Himself for me and that He still loves me, and that He will keep on loving me forever and ever, there is such a charm in this thought that nothing can excel it! Look at the lily and sing—  
*“Jesus, lover of my soul, Let me to Your bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll,  
While the tempest still is high!  
Hide me, O my Savior, hide,  
Till the storm of life are past.  
Safe into the haven guide  
Oh receive my soul at last!”*  
Then look at the rose and sing—  
*“All hail the power of Jesus’ name!  
Let angels prostrate fall.  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown Him Lord of All!”*  
Then put the rose and the lily together and let them remind you of Christ’s majesty and love. The combination of these sweet flowers also suggests our Lord’s suffering and purity—  
*“White is His soul, from blemish free.  
Red with the blood He shed for me.”*  
The rose, with its thorn, reminds us of His suffering, His bleeding love to us, His death on our behalf, His bearing of the thorns which our sin created. Christ is a royal rose beset with thorns, but the lily shows that— *“For sins not His own  
He died to atone.”*  
Jesus, when on earth, could say, “The prince of this world comes, and has nothing on Me.” The devil himself could not see a spot or speck in that lovely lily! Jesus Christ is perfection, itself! He is all purity, so you must put the two together, the rose and the lily, to show Christ’s suffering and perfection, the infinitely pure, infinitely suffering. In which of the two do you take the greater delight? Surely, in neither, but in the combination of both! What would be the value of Christ’s sufferings if He were not perfect? And of what use would His perfections be if He had not died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God? But the two together, the rose and the lily, suffering and purity, fill us with delight!  
Of both of these there is a great variety. I wonder how many different sorts of roses there are? I would not like to have to tell you! They vary exceedingly—perhaps there are as many kinds as there are days in the year. How many varieties of lilies are there? Possibly, there are as many sorts of lilies as there are of roses, for both of them are wonderfully diversified, but the joys that flow from our Lord Jesus Christ are as abundant and as varied as the roses and the lilies together! Bring me which rose you please and I will tell you that it smells sweet. Bring which lily you choose, and I will say, “Yes, that, also, has a delicate perfume. That will do, with the rose, to serve as an emblem of Christ.” Our Lord Jesus possesses every kind of beauty and fragrance. “He is all my salvation and all my desire.” All good things meet in Christ—in Him all the lines of beauty are focused! Blessed are they who truly know Him.  
Further, Christ is the very essence of the sweetness, both of the rose and of the lily. When He says, “I am the rose,” He means not only that He is like the rose, but that He made all the sweetness there is in the rose— and it is still in Him! And all the sweetness there is in any creature comes to us from Christ, or else it is not sweetness such as we ought to love. I like to look upon the bread I eat as His gift to me and to bless His Providential hand that bestows it. I like to look upon all the landscape on such a fair day as this has been, and say, “Christ is in all this, giving this charming view to such a poor, unworthy creature as I am.” He is in all there is that is good! He is the goodness of all the good there is! He is the very soul of the universe, whatever there is in the universe that is worthy of our soul’s love! All good for our soul comes from Him, whether it is pardon of sin, or justification, or the sanctification that makes us fit for Glory hereafter, Christ is the Source of it all and in the infinite variety of delights that we get from Him, He is, Himself, the essence of it all.  
We can become tired of most things. I suppose that we can become tired of everything earthly. But we shall never tire of Christ! I remember one who, when near his death hour, forgot even his wife, and she was greatly grieved that he did not recognize her. They whispered in his ear the name of his favorite child, but he shook his head. His oldest friend, who had known him from his boyhood, was not recognized. At last they asked him, “Do you know Jesus Christ?” Then he said, “Ah, yes, and by His Grace I am going to Him!” The ruling passion was strong in death— Christ was nearer and dearer to him than those he loved best on earth! All flowers will fade, even roses and lilies among them, but not this blessed Rose of Sharon and Lily of the valleys!  
Christ does not say, “I was a rose and I was a lily,” but, “I am the rose, and I am the lily.” He is now all that He ever was! And He will be— in life, in death and throughout all eternity to the soul that knows Him— an infinite variety of everything that is delightful!  
III. I must now, very briefly, take up the last head of my discourse which is THE EXCEEDING FREENESS OF OUR LORD’S DELIGHTFULNESS.  
It is not very pleasant or satisfying for hungry people to stand in the street and hear someone praising a good meal of which they cannot even get a taste. I have often noticed boys standing outside a shop window in which there have been all sorts of dainties—they have flattened their noses against the window—but they have not been able to get anything to eat.  
I have been talking about my Master and I want to show you that He is accessible, He is meant to be plucked and enjoyed as roses and lilies are! He says in the text, “I am the rose of Sharon.” What was Sharon? It was an open plain where anybody might wander and where even cattle roamed at their own sweet will. Jesus is not like a rose in Solomon’s garden, shut up within high walls with broken glass all along the top. Oh, no! He says, “I am the rose of Sharon,” everybody’s rose, the flower for the common people to come and gather. “I am the lily.” What lily? The lily of the palace of Shushan, enclosed and guarded from all approach? No. but, “I am the lily of the valleys,” found in this glen, or the other ravine, growing here, there and everywhere! “I am the lily of the valleys.”  
Then Christ is as abundant as a common flower. Whatever kind of rose it was, it was a common rose. Whatever kind of lily it was, it was a wellknown lily that grew freely in the valleys of that land. Oh, blessed be my Master’s name, He has brought us a common salvation and He is the common people’s Christ! Men in general do not love Him enough, or else they would have hedged Him in with all sorts of restrictions—they would have made a franchise for Him and nobody would have been able to be saved except those who paid, I know not how much a year in taxes! But they do not love our Lord enough to shut Him in and I am glad they have never tried to do so. There He stands, at the four Cross roads, so that everybody who comes by and wants Him, may have Him! He is a Fountain bearing this inscription, “Let him that is thirsty, come. And whoever will, let him of take the Water of Life freely.”  
“I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” Why do roses grow in Sharon? Why do lilies grow in the valleys? Why, to be plucked, of course! I like to see the children go down into the meadow when it is decked in grass and adorned with flowers—gilded with buttercups, or white with the day’s-eyes! I love to see the children pluck the flowers and fill their aprons with them, or make garlands and twist them round their necks, or put them on their heads. “O children, children!” somebody might cry, “do not spoil those beautiful flowers, do not go and pick them.” Oh, but they may! Nobody says they may not—they may not go into our gardens and steal the geraniums and the fuchsias—but they may get away into the meadows, or into the open fields and pluck these common flowers to their heart’s content! And now, poor Soul, if you would like an apron full of roses, come and have them! If you would like to carry away a big handful of the lilies of the valleys, come and take them—as many as you will! May the Lord give you the will! That is, after all, what is needed. If there is that Grace-given will, the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the valleys will soon be yours! They are common flowers, growing in a common place, and there are plenty of them—will you not take them?  
Even to those who do not pluck any, there is one strange thing that must not be forgotten. A man passes by a rose bush, and says, “I cannot stop to think about roses,” but as he goes along, he exclaims, “Dear, dear, what a delicious perfume!” A man journeying in the East goes through a field that is full of lilies. He is in a great hurry, but, for all that, he cannot help seeing and smelling the lilies as he rushes through the field. And, do you know, the perfume of Christ has life in it? He is “a savor of life to life.” What does that mean but that the smell of Him will save? Ah, if you do but glance at Him, though you were so busy that you could not come in till the sermon had begun, yet a glance at this Lily will bring you joy and peace, for He is so free that, often, even when men are not asking for Him, He comes to them!  
“What?” you say, “is it really so?” Yes, that it is! Such is the freeness of Christ’s Grace that it is written, “I am found of them that sought Me not.” He sends His sweet perfume into nostrils that never sniffed after it. He puts Himself in the way of eyes that never looked for Him! How I wish that some man who has never sought for Christ might find Him even now! You remember the story that Christ tells of the man that was plowing the field? He was only thinking of the field and how much corn it would take to sow it. He was plowing up and down, when suddenly his plowshare hit upon something hard. He stopped the oxen and took his spade, and dug, and there was an old crock full of gold! Somebody had hidden it away and left it. This man had never looked for it, for he did not even know it was there, but he had stumbled on it, as men say, by accident. What did he do? He did not tell anybody, but he went off to the man who was the owner of the field and he said, “What will you take for that field?” “Can you buy it?” “Yes, I want it. What will you take for it?”  
The price was so high that he had to sell the house he lived in, his oxen and his very clothes off his back, but he did not care about that! He bought the field and he bought the treasure. And then he was able to buy back his clothes, his house, his oxen and everything else. If you find Christ and if you have to sell the coat off your back in order to get Him! If you have to give up everything you have that you may find Him, you will have such a treasure in Him that, for the joy of finding Him, you would count all the riches of Egypt to be less than nothing and vanity!  
But you need not sell the coat off your back—Christ is to be had for nothing—only you must give Him yourself. If He gives Himself to you and He becomes your Savior, you must give yourself to Him and become His servant. Trust Him, I beseech you! The Lord help you to do so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**GENESIS 8:15-22; JEREMIAH 33:15-26.**

Genesis 8:15-21. And God spoke to Noah, saying, Go out of the ark, you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons’ wives with you. Bring forth with you every living thing that is with you, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went out and his sons, and his wife, and his sons’ wives with him: every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatever creeps upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark. And Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savor. Until then the earth had been obnoxious to Jehovah. He had put it away from Him as a foul thing, drowned beneath the flood. But after the offering of Noah’s sacrifice, the Lord smelled “a savor of rest.”

21, 22. And the LORD said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground. And any more for man’s sake, for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again strike any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. Thus we see what we may expect so long as the earth remains, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. Now let us read a few verses from Jeremiah’s prophecy.

Jeremiah 33:15. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of Righteousness to grow up to David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In the latter days, at the glorious appointed time, Jesus Christ will grow up like a Branch out of the stem of Jesse. The dynasty of David now seems like a tree cut down, whose stock is buried under the ground, but, “the Branch of Righteousness” shall appear in due time, and Jesus, the Son of David, “shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.”

16. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD Our Righteousness. What a wonderful unity there is between Christ and His Church! She actually takes His name—“The Lord Our Righteousness.”

17, 18. For thus says the LORD; David shall never lack a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel, neither shall the priests, the Levites lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually. This shows that the Covenant was not a literal and fleshly one, made with David and his seed according to the flesh, or with the priests and their seed according to the flesh. There is a Kingdom that can never be moved—and our Lord sits on that Throne. There is a Priesthood which is everlasting, it is held by that great High Priest who has offered one Sacrifice for sins, forever, and who abides a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

19, 22. And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, Thus says the LORD; If you can break My covenant with the day, and My covenant with the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season, then may also My Covenant be broken with David, My servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne, and with the Levites the priests, My ministers. As the host of Heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David, My servant, and the Levites that minister to Me. So that they are, at this day, the seed of Jesus, the Son of David, who shall count them! And the company of those whom He has made to be kings and priests to God, who but He can number them!

23-26. Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, Consider you not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD has chosen, He has even cast them off? Thus they have despised My people, that they should be no more a nation before them. Thus says the LORD, If My Covenant is not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of Heaven and earth; then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David, My servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them. This shall be literally fulfilled in the latter days, I doubt not, but it is even now being fulfilled to the spiritual seed of Jacob and David! The Covenant of Grace is made sure to all the seed, even to as many as have believed on Christ’s name.

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Sermon #784 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE ROSE AND THE LILY

NO. 784

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 8, 1867, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” Song of Solomon 2:1.**

HERE are sweet flowers blooming serenely in this wintry weather. In the garden of the soul you may gather fragrant flowers at all seasons of the year. And although the soul’s garden, like every other, has its winter, yet, strange to say, no sooner do the roses and the lilies mentioned in the text begin to bloom than the winter flies and the summer smiles! Outside, in your garden, the summer brings the roses, but within the enclosure of the heart the roses and lilies create the summer.

I trust that we, this morning, may have Divine Grace to walk abroad in the fields of heavenly contemplation to admire the matchless charms of Him whose cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers—whose lips are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh. May our hearts interpret the language of our text and sing*—*

*“Is He a rose?  
Not Sharon yields  
Such fragrance in all her fields:  
Or, if the lily He assumes,  
The valleys bless the rich perfume.”*

It is our Lord who speaks: “I am the rose of Sharon.” How is it that He utters His own commendation, for it is an old and true adage, that “self praise is no recommendation”? None but vain creatures ever praise themselves, and yet Jesus often praises Himself! He says, “I am the good Shepherd.” “I am the Bread of Life.” “I am meek and lowly of heart.” And in many speeches He is frequently declaring His own excellencies, yet Jesus is not vain! Scorned be the thought!

I said if any creature praised itself it must be vain, and that, too, is true. How then shall we solve the riddle? Is not this the answer, that He is no creature at all, and therefore comes not beneath the rule? For the creature to praise itself is vanity, but for the Creator to praise Himself—for the Lord God to manifest and show forth His own glory is becoming and proper. Hear how He extols His own wisdom and power in the end of the book of Job and see if it is not most seemly as the Lord Himself proclaims

it! Is not God constantly ruling both Providence and Grace for the

manifestation of His own glory, and do we not all freely consent that no motive short of this would be worthy of the Divine mind? So, then, because Christ talks thus of Himself, since no man dare call Him vainglorious, I gather an indirect proof of His Deity and bow down before Him! And I bless Him that He gives me this incidental evidence of His being no creature, but the Uncreated One Himself. An old Scotch woman once said, “He is never so bonnie as when He is commending Himself.” And we all feel it so—no words appear more suitable out of His own lips so—no words appear more suitable out of His own lips than these, “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.”

Our Lord, when He thus praises Himself, doubtless does so for an excellent reason, namely, that no one can possibly reveal Him to the sons of men but Himself. No lips can tell the love of Christ to the heart till Jesus Himself shall speak within. Descriptions all fall flat and tame unless the Holy Spirit fills them with life and power—till our Immanuel reveals Himself within the recesses of the heart the soul sees Him not. If you would see the sun, would you light your candles? Would you gather together the common means of illumination and seek, in that way, to behold the orb of day?

No, the wise man knows that the sun must reveal itself and only by its own blaze can that mighty lamp be seen. It is so with Christ. Unless He so manifest Himself to us as He does not unto the world, we cannot behold Him. He must say to us, “I am the rose of Sharon,” or else all the declarations of man that He is the rose of Sharon will fall short of the mark. “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona,” said He to Peter, “for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto you.” Purify flesh and blood by any educational process you may select. Elevate mental faculties to the highest degree of intellectual power, yet none of these can reveal Christ! The Spirit of God must come with power and overshadow the man with His wings— and then in that mystic Holy of Holies the Lord Jesus must display Himself to the sanctified eye as He does not unto the purblind sons of men.

Christ must be His own mirror. As the diamond alone can cut the diamond, so He alone can display Himself. Is it not clear enough to us all that Jesus, being God, befittingly praises Himself? And we, being frail creatures, He must necessarily commend Himself or we should never be able to perceive His beauty at all! Each reason is sufficient. Both are overwhelming. It is most suitable that Jesus should preach Jesus, that Love should teach us love. Beloved, happy are those men to whom our Lord familiarly unveils His beauties! He is the rose, but it is not given unto all men to perceive His fragrance. He is the fairest of lilies, but few are the eyes which have gazed upon His matchless purity.

He stands before the world without form or comeliness—a root out of a dry ground—rejected by the vain, and despised by the proud. The great mass of this bleary-eyed world can see nothing of the ineffable glories of Immanuel. Only where the Spirit has touched the eyes with eye salve, quickened the heart with Divine life, and educated the soul to a heavenly taste—only there is that love word of my text heard and understood, “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” “To you that believe He is precious.” To you He is the cornerstone. To you He is the rock of your salvation, your All in All. But to others He is “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient.”

Let it be our prayer, before we advance a single foot further, that our Redeemer would now reveal Himself to His own chosen people and favor each one of us with at least a glimpse of His all-conquering charms! May the King Himself draw near unto His guests this morning, and as of old, when it was winter He walked in the temple in Solomon’s porch, so may He walk in the midst of this waiting assembly.

I. First, this morning, I shall speak with you a little, as I may be helped by the Holy Spirit, upon THE MOTIVES OF OUR LORD IN THUS COMMENDING HIMSELF. I take it that He has designs of love in this speech. He would have all His people rich in high and happy thoughts concerning His blessed Person. Jesus is not content that His brethren should think meanly of Him. It is His pleasure that His espoused ones should be delighted with His beauty, and that He should be the King and Lord of their spirits. He would have us possess an adoring admiration for Him joined with most cheerful and happy thoughts towards Him.

We are not to count Him as a bare necessity, like bread and water, but we are to regard Him as a luxurious delicacy, as a rare and ravishing delight, comparable to the rose and the lily. Our Lord, you observe, expresses Himself here poetically, “I am the rose of Sharon.” Dr. Watts, when he had written his delightful hymns, was the subject of Dr. Johnson’s criticism. And that excellent lexicographer, who wrote with great authority upon all literary matters, entirely missed his mark when he said that the themes of religion were so few and so prosaic that they were not adapted for the poet—they were not such as could allow of the flight of wing which poetry required. Alas, Dr. Johnson! How little could you have entered into the spirit of these things, for if there is any place where poetry may indulge itself to the uttermost, it is in the realm of the Infinite!

Jordan’s streams are as pure as Helicon, and Siloa’s brook as inspiring as the Castilian fount! Heathen Parnassus has not half the elevation of the Christian’s Tabor, let critics judge as they may! This book of Solomon’s Song is poetry of the very highest kind to the spiritual mind, and throughout Scripture the sublime and beautiful are as much at home as the eagles in their nests of rock. Surely our Lord adopts that form of speech in this song in order to show us that the highest degree of poetical faculty is consecrated to Him, and that lofty thoughts and soaring conceptions concerning Himself are no intruders, but are bound to pay homage at His Cross! Jesus would have us enjoy the highest thoughts of Him that the most sublime prose can possibly convey to us! And His motives I shall labor to lay before you.

Doubtless, He commends Himself because high thoughts of Christ will enable us to act consistently with our relations towards Him. The saved soul is espoused to Christ. Now, in the marriage estate it is a great assistance to happiness if the wife has high ideas of her husband. In the marriage union between the soul and Christ, this is exceedingly necessary. Listen to the words of the Psalm, “He is your Lord; and worship you Him.” Jesus is our Husband, and is no more to be named Baal, that is your master. He is to be called Ishi, your Man, your Husband. Yet at the same time He is our Lord, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church: and He is the savior of the body.”

When the wife despises her husband and looks down upon him, the order of nature is broken and the household is out of joint. And if our soul should ever come to despise Christ, it can no longer stand in its true relation to Him. But the more loftily we see Christ enthroned, and the more lowly we are when bowing before the foot of the Throne, the more truly shall we be prepared to act our part in the economy of Grace towards our Lord Jesus. Brothers and Sisters, your Lord Christ desires you to think well of Him that you may submit cheerfully to His authority and so be a better spouse to this best of Husbands.

Moreover, our Master knows that high thoughts of Him increase our love. Men will not readily love that which they do not highly esteem. Love and esteem go together. There is a love of pity but that would be far out of place in reference to our exalted Head. If we are to love Him at all it must be with the love of admiration—and the higher that admiration shall rise, the more vehemently will our love flame forth. My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I beseech you think much of your Master’s excellencies. Study Him in His primeval Glory, before He took upon Himself your nature! Think of the mighty love which drew Him from His starry throne to die upon the Cross of shame! Consider well the Omnipotent affection which made Him stretch His hands to the nails and yield His heart to the spear! Admire Him as you see Him conquering, in His weakness, over all the powers of Hell, and by His suffering overthrowing all the hosts of your sins so that they cannot rise against you any more forever!

See Him now risen, no more to die! Crowned, no more to be dishonored! Glorified, no more to suffer! Bow before Him, hail Him in the halls of your inner nature as the Wonderful, the Counselor, the mighty God within your spirits, for only thus will your love to Him be what it should. A high esteem of Christ, moreover, as He well knows, is very necessary to our comfort. Beloved, when you esteem Christ very highly, the things of this world become of small account with you and their loss is not so heavily felt. If you feel your losses and crosses to be such ponderous weights that the wings of Christ’s love cannot lift you up from the dust, surely you have made too much of the world and too little of Him!

I see a pair of balances. I see in this one the death of a child, or the loss of a beloved relative. But I perceive in the other scale the great love of Christ! Now we shall see which will weigh the more with the man—if Jesus throws the light affliction up aloft, it is well—but if the trouble outweighs Jesus, then it is ill with us, indeed. If you are so depressed by your trials that you can by no means rejoice knowing your name is written in Heaven, then I think you do not love Jesus as you should. Get but delightful thoughts of Him and you will feel like a man who has lost a pebble but has preserved his diamond—like the man who has seen a few cast clouts and rotten rags consumed in the flames, but has saved his children from the conflagration. You will rejoice in your deepest distress because Christ is yours if you have a high sense of the preciousness of your Master!

Talk not of plasters that will draw out all pain from a wound! Speak not of medicines which will extirpate disease! The sweet love of Christ once clapped on to the deepest wound which the soul can ever know would heal it at once! A drop of the precious medicine of Jesus’ love tasted in the soul would chase away all heart pains forever. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, be within us and we make no choice of situations! Put us in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace—if You will walk the glowing coals as our Companion, we will fear no evil!

Further, our Lord would have us entertain great thoughts of Himself because this will quicken all the powers of our soul. I spoke to you just now of love receiving force from an esteem of Jesus. I might say the same of faith, or patience, or humility. Wherever Christ is highly esteemed all the faculties of the spiritual man exercise themselves with energy. I will judge your piety by this barometer—does Christ stand high or low with you? If you have thought little of Christ, if you have been content to live without His Presence—if you have cared little for His honor or if you have been neglectful of His Laws—then I know that your soul is sick! God grant that it may not be sick unto death!

But if the first thought of your spirit has been, “How can I honor Jesus?” If the daily desire of your soul has been, “O that I knew where I might find Him!” I tell you that you may have a thousand infirmities and may even scarcely know whether you are a child of God at all, and yet I am persuaded, beyond a doubt, that you are safe since Jesus is great in your esteem. I care not for your rags, what do you think of his royal apparel? I care not for your wounds, though they bleed in torrents—what do you think of His wounds? Are they like glittering rubies in your esteem? I think nothing the less of you, though you lie like Lazarus on the dunghill, and the dogs lick you! I judge you not by your poverty—what do you think of the King in His beauty?

Has He a glorious high throne in your heart? Would you set Him higher if you could? Would you be willing to die if you could but add another trumpet to the strain which proclaims His praise? Ah, then, it is well with you. Whatever you may think of yourself, if Christ is great to you, you shall be with Him before long. High thoughts of Jesus will set us upon high attempts for His honor. What will men not do when they are possessed with the passion of love? When once some master thought gets hold of the mind, others who have never felt the power of it think the man to be insane! They laugh at him and ridicule him. When the grand thought of love to God has gained full possession of the soul, men have been able to actually accomplish what other men have not even thought of doing. Love has laughed at impossibilities and proved that she is not to be quenched by many waters, nor drowned by floods.

Impassable woods have been made a footway for the Christian missionary. Through the dense jungle, steaming with malaria, men have passed bearing the message of the Truth of God. Into the midst of hostile and savage tribes, weak and trembling women, even, have forced their way to tell of Jesus. No sea has been so stormy, no mountains have been so elevated that they could shut out the earnest spirit. No long nights of winter in Labrador or in Iceland have been able to freeze up the love of Christ in the Moravian’s heart—it has not been possible for the zeal of the heir of Heaven to be overcome, though all the elements have combined with the cruelty of wicked men and with the malice of Hell itself.

Christ’s people have been more than conquerors through Him that has loved them when His love has been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit and they have had elevated thoughts of their Lord. I wish it were in my power to put this matter more forcibly, but I am persuaded, Brethren, that our Lord, in commending Himself to us this morning in the words of our text, does so with this as His motive—that by the power of His Spirit we may be led to esteem Him very highly in the inmost secret of our heart. And shall He speak to us in vain? Shall He stand in this pulpit, this morning, as He does in spirit, and shall He say, “I am the rose of Sharon”? And shall we reply, “But we see not Your beauty”? Shall He add a double commendation, “I am the lily of the valley”? And shall our cold hearts reply, “But we admire not Your spotless purity”?  
I trust we are not so utterly abandoned to spiritual blindness and ingratitude! Far rather, although we confess before Him that we do not admire Him as we should, we will add humbly, and with the tear of repen

tance in our eyes*— “Yes we love You and adore—  
O for Grace to love You more.”*

II. Whatever may be the commendable motive for any statement, yet it must not be made if it is not accurate, and therefore, in the second place, I come to observe OUR LORD’S JUSTIFICATION FOR THIS COMMENDATION, which is abundantly satisfactory to all who know Him. What our Lord says of Himself is strictly true. It falls short of the mark, it is no exaggeration. Observe each one of the words. He begins, “I am.” Those two little words I would not insist upon, but it is no straining of language to say that even here we have a great deep. What creature can, with exact truthfulness, say, “I am”?

As for man, whose breath is in his nostrils, he may rather say, “I am not,” than “I am.” We are so short a time here, and so quickly gone, that the ephemera which is born and dies under the light of one day’s sun is our brother. Poor short-lived creatures, we change with every moon and are inconsistent as the wave, frail as the dust, feeble as a worm and fickle as the wind. Jesus says, “I Am,” and, blessed be His name, He can fairly claim the attributes of self-existence and immutability. He said, “I Am,” in the days of His flesh. He says, “I Am,” at this hour—whatever He was He is! Whatever He has been to any of His saints at any time, He is to us this day.

Come, my Soul, rejoice in your unchangeable Christ, and if you get no further than the first two words of the text, you have a meal to stay your hunger, like Elijah’s cakes in the strength of which he went for forty days. “I Am” has revealed Himself unto you in a more glorious manner than He did unto Moses at the burning bush! The great “I AM” in human flesh has become your Savior and your Lord!

“I am the rose.” We understand from this that Christ is lovely. He selects one of the most charming of flowers to set forth Himself. All the beauties of all the creatures are to be found in Christ in greater perfection than in the creatures themselves—

*“White and ruddy is my Beloved,  
All His heavenly beauties shine.  
Nature can’t produce an object,  
Nor so glorious, so Divine.  
He has wholly  
Won my soul to realms above.”*

“Whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report,” all are to be found stored up in our WellBeloved. Whatever there may be of beauty in the material world, Jesus Christ possesses all that in the spiritual world, only in a tenfold multiplication He is infinitely more beautiful in the garden of the soul and in the Paradise of God than the rose can be in the gardens of earth, though it is the universally acknowledged queen of flowers.

But the Spouse adds, “I am the rose of Sharon.” This was the best and rarest of roses. Jesus is not “the rose” alone, but “the rose of Sharon,” just as He calls His righteousness, “gold,” and then adds, “the gold of Ophir”—the best of the best! Jesus, then, is not only positively lovely, but superlatively the loveliest—

*“None among the sons of men,  
None among the heavenly train,  
Can with Sharon’s rose compare.  
None so sweet and none so fair.”*

The Son of David takes the first place as the fairest among ten thousand. He is the sun, and all others are the stars. In His Presence all the feebler lights are hidden, for they are nothing and He is All in All. Blush for your deformities, you beauties of earth, when His perfection’s eclipse you! Away, you pageants, and you pompous triumphs of men! The King in His beauty transcends you all! Black are the heavens and dark is the day in comparison with Him!

Oh, to see Him face to face! This would be a vision for which life would be a glad exchange! For a vision of His face we could gladly be blind forever to all joys beside. Our Lord adds, “I am the lily,” thus giving Himself a double commendation. Indeed, Jesus Christ deserves not to be praised doubly, but sevenfold. Yes, and unto seven times seven! Heap up all the metaphors that express loveliness. Bring together all the adjectives which describe delight and all human speech and all earth-born things shall fail to tell of Him. The rose with all its redness is not complete till the lily adds its purity and the two together are but dim reflections of our glorious Lord!

I learn from the text that in Christ Jesus you have a combination of contrasted excellencies. If He is red with the flush of courageous zeal, or red with triumph as He returns from Edom, He is the rose. But He is a warrior without sinful anger or cruel vengeance—He is as pure and spotless as the timid virgin who toys with the dove—He is therefore our snowwhite lily. I see Him red as the rose in His sacrifice, as—

*“From His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love bow mingled down,”*

but I see Him white as the lily as He ascends on high in His perfect righteousness clothed in His white robe of victory to receive gifts for men. Our Beloved is a mingling of all perfections to make up one Perfection, and of all manner of sweetness to compose one complete Sweetness. Earth’s choicest charms commingled feebly picture His abounding preciousness. He is the “lily of the valleys.”

Does He intend, by that, to hint to us that He is a lily in His lowest estate, a lily of the valley? The carpenter’s Son, living in poverty, wearing the common garb of the poor—is He the lily of the valleys? Yes, He is a lily to you and to me, poor dwellers in the lowlands. Up yonder He is a lily on the hilltops where all celestial eyes admire Him. Down here, in these valleys of fears and cares, He is a lily, still, as fair as in Heaven. Our eyes can see His beauty, can see His beauty now, a lily to us this very day! Though we have not seen the King in His beauty, yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like Jesus Christ in our eyes—as we see Him by faith in a glass darkly.

The words, having been opened up one by one, teach us that Christ is lovely to all our spiritual senses. The rose is delightful to the eyes, but it is also refreshing to the nostril, and the lily the same. So is Jesus. All the senses of the soul are ravished and satisfied with Him, whether it is the taste or feeling, the hearing, the sight, or the spiritual smell—all charms are in Jesus. Often when we have not seen the Anointed, we have perceived His Presence. Traveling on the Lake Lugano one morning, we heard the swell of the song of the nightingale, and the oars were stilled on the blue lake as we listened to the silver sounds. We could not see a single bird, nor do I know that we wished to—we were so content with the sweetness of the music.

Even so it is with our Lord. We may enter a house where He is loved and we may hear nothing concerning Christ and yet we may perceive clearly enough that He is there. A holy influence streams through the actions of the household, so that if Jesus is unseen, it is clear that He is not unknown. Go anywhere where Jesus is, and though you do not actually hear His name, yet the sweet influence which flows from His love will be plainly enough discernible. Our Lord is so lovely that even the recollection of His love is sweet. Take the rose of Sharon and pull it leaf from leaf, and lay the leaves in the jar of memory and you shall find each leaf most fragrant long afterwards, filling the house with perfume.

This very day we remember times of refreshing enjoyed at the Lord’s Table still delightful as we reflect upon them. Jesus is lovely in the bud as well as when full blown. You admire the rose quite as much when it is but a bud as when it bursts forth into perfect development. And I think Christ, to you, my Beloved, in the first blush of your piety, was not one whit less sweet than He is now. Jesus full blown, in our riper experience, has lost none of His excellence. When we shall see Him fully blown in the garden of Paradise, shall we not count it to be our highest Heaven to gaze upon Him forever? Christ is so lovely that He needs no beautifying.

When I hear men trying to speak of Him with polished sentences which have been revised, and re-revised upon their manuscripts, I would ask them why they need to paint the rose of Sharon and what they think they are doing in seeking to enamel the lily of the valleys? Hold up Christ Crucified, and He Himself is beautiful enough without our paint and tinsel! Let the roughest tongue speak sincerely of Him in the most broken but honest accents and Jesus Himself is such a radiant jewel that the setting will be of small consequence! He is so glorious that He is “Most adorned when unadorned the most.” May we ever feel thus concerning Him, and if we are tempted to display our powers of oratory when we have to speak of Him, let us say, “Down, busy Pride, and let Christ rule, and let Christ be seen.” He needs no help from you.

He is so lovely, again, that He satisfies the highest taste of the most educated spirit to the fullest. The greatest amateur in perfumes is quite satisfied with the rose, and I should think that no man of taste will ever be able to criticize the lily and laugh at its form. Now, when the soul has arrived at her highest pitch of true taste she shall still be content with Christ. No, she shall be the better able to appreciate Him! In the world’s history we are supposed to have arrived at an age of taste, when color and form are much regarded. I must confess I think it a gaudy, tasteless age, and the fashion of the day is staring, vulgar, childish, and depraved.

Bright and glittering colors, antique, grotesque forms are much sought after—and men must introduce their chosen fineries and fopperies into their worship—supposing that it is comely to worship God with silks, and laces, and ribbons, and gilt, and tinsel, and I know not what of trumpery besides. Just as the harlot of Babylon arrayed herself in pearls and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, even so do her imitators adorn themselves! As for us, my Brothers and Sisters, the beauty of Christ is such that if we go into a barn to worship, we are quite as satisfied as though it were a cathedral with grand arches and glowing windows!

Such is the beauty of Christ in our eyes, that we are quite content to hear of Him without the pealing organ and the swell of Gregorian chants! And we are even satisfied though there should be no display of taste, nothing sensuous and scenic, nothing to please the eye or charm the ear. Jesus alone affords our mind all that delightful architecture, poetry, and music could profess to give! And when our soul gets near to Him, she looks upon all outward adornments as mere child’s toys fit to amuse the rattle-brains of this poor idiot world—vain trinkets to men in Christ Jesus, who by reason of use have had their senses exercised and learned to delight in nobler things than those in which the swine of this earth delight themselves! God give you to know that if you want beauty, Jesus is Sharon’s rose! If you want spotless charms to delight your true taste, He is the lily of the valleys.

Dwelling for another minute on this subject, let me remark that our Lord Jesus Christ deserves all that He has said of Himself. First, in His Divine Glory. The Glory of Christ as God—who shall write about it? The first-born sons of light desire to gaze into this vision but feel that their eyes are unable to endure the excess of light. He is God over all, blessed forever. Concerning Christ I may say that the heavens are not pure in His sight, and He charged His angels with folly. Nothing is great, nothing is excellent but God, and Christ is God! O roses and lilies, where are you now?

Our Lord deserves these praises, again, in His perfection of Manhood. He is like ourselves, but in Him was no sin. “The prince of this world comes, but has nothing in Me.” Throughout the whole of His biography, there is not a fault. Let us write as carefully as we will after the copy, we still blot and blur the pages—but in Him there is no mistake. His life is so wonderfully perfect that even those who have denied His Deity have been astounded at it—and have bowed down before the majesty of His holiness. You roses of ardent love, and you lilies of purest holiness, where are you now when we compare you with this perfect Man?

He deserves this commendation, too, in His editorial qualifications. Since His blood has washed us from all our sins, we talk no more of the red roses, for what can they do to purify the soul? Since His righteousness has made us accepted in the Beloved, we will speak no more of spotless lilies, for what are these? He deserves all this praise, too, in his reigning Glory. He has a Glory which His Father has given Him as a reward in the power of which He sits down at the right hand of God forever and ever, and shall soon come to judge the world in righteousness, and the people with equity. Beloved, when I think of the pompous appearance when He shall descend a second time in splendor upon the earth, I say again, you roses, your radiant beauties are utterly eclipsed, and you lilies, your snow-white purity is forgotten, I can scarcely discern you!

O fair flowers of earth, you are lost in the blaze of the Great White Throne, and in the flames of fire that shall go before the Judge of All to prepare His way! View the Lord Jesus in any way you please—all that He Himself can say concerning Himself He richly deserves—and therefore glory be unto His name forever and ever, and let the whole earth say, Amen.

III. I shall now conduct you to a third consideration, namely, THE INFLUENCE OF THIS COMMENDATION UPON US. Christ desires our loftiest thoughts of Himself and His desires are for our good. O my Beloved, I wish time would stay its wing a moment or two so that I might urge upon you that with all your hearts you would second the endeavors of Christ to labor after holy elevated thoughts concerning Himself since he desires them for you.

And if you ask me how you are to attain them, let me aid you a minute. Think of the ruin of this world till Christ came into it! I think I see in vision a howling wilderness, a great and terrible desert like the Sahara. I perceive nothing in it to relieve the eyes. All around I am wearied with a vision of hot and arid sand strewn with thousands of bleaching skeletons of wretched men who have expired in anguish, having lost their way in the pitiless waste. O God, what a sight! How horrible! A sea of sand without a boundary and without an oasis—a cheerless graveyard for a race forlorn!

But what is that I see? All of a sudden, upspringing from the scorching sand I see a root, a branch, a plant of renown! And as it grows, it buds! The bud expands—it is a rose, and at its side a lily bows its modest head—and miracle of miracles—as the fragrance of those flowers is diffused in the desert air I perceive that wilderness is transformed into a fruitful field, and all around it blossoms unlimited! The glory of Lebanon is given unto it! The excellency of Carmel and Sharon! Call it not Sahara, call it Paradise! Speak not of it any longer as the valley of death, for where I saw the skeletons bleaching in the sun, I see a resurrection—and up spring the dead, a mighty army, full of life immortal! You can understand the vision. Christ is the Rose which has changed the scene.

If you would have great thoughts of Christ think of your own ruin. Yonder I behold you cast out an infant, unwashed, defiled with your own blood, too foul to be looked upon except by beasts of prey! And what is this that has been cast into your bosom, and which lying there has suddenly made you fair and lovely? A rose has been thrown into your bosom by a Divine hand, and for its sake you have been pitied and cared for by Divine Providence. You are washed and cleaned from your defilement, you are adopted into Heaven’s family, the fair seal of love is upon your forehead and the ring of faithfulness is on your hand. You are a prince unto God—though just now you were a castaway orphan.

O prize the rose, the putting of which into your bosom has made you what you are! Consider your daily need of this rose. You live in the pestilential air of this earth—take Christ away—you die. Christ is the daily food of your spirit. You know, Believer, that you are utterly powerless without your Lord. O prize Him, then, in proportion to the necessities you receive from Him! As you cannot even pray or think an acceptable thought apart from His Presence, I beseech you press Him to your bosom as the Beloved of your soul. You are like a branch cut off and withered—thrown outside the garden gate to be burnt as are the noxious weeds—apart from Him. But when you are near Him you bring forth fruit unto the glory of God. Praise Christ, I say, then, after the rate of the needs that you have received from Him.

Think, Beloved, of the estimation of Christ beyond the skies, in the land where things are measured by the right standard, where men are no longer deceived by the delusions of earth. Think how God esteems the Only Begotten, His unspeakable gift to us. Consider what the angels think of Him as they count it their highest honor to veil their faces at His feet. Consider what the blood-washed think of Him as day without night they sing His well-deserved praises with glad voices. Remember how you yourself have sometimes esteemed Him! There have been happy hours when you would freely have given your eyes and felt you cared no longer for the light of earth’s brightest days, for your soul’s eyes would serve you well enough if you could forever be favored with the same clear sight of Christ!

Have there not been moments when the chariots of Amminadib seemed but poor dragging things compared with the wheels of your soul when Jesus ravished your heart with His celestial embrace? Estimate Him today as you did then, for He is the same, though you are not. Think of Him today as you will think of Him in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment when none but Jesus can help to keep your soul alive. The great King has made a banquet and He has proclaimed to all the world that none shall enter but those who bring with them the fairest flower that blooms. The spirits of men advance to the gate by the thousands and they bring, each one, the flower which they think the best.

But in droves they are driven from His Presence and enter not into the banquet! Some bear in their hand the deadly nightshade of superstition, or carry the flaunting poppies of Rome—but these are not dear to the King—the bearers are shut out of the pearly gates. My Soul, have you gathered the Rose of Sharon? Do you wear the Lily of the Valley in your bosom constantly? If so, when you come up to the gates of Heaven you will know its value, for you have only to show this and the porter will open the gate! Not for a moment will he deny the admission, for to that Rose the porter opens.

You shall find your way, with this Rose in your hand, up to the Throne of God Himself, for Heaven itself possesses nothing which excels the Rose of Sharon! And of all the flowers that bloom in Paradise there is none that can rival the Lily of the Valleys. Get Calvary’s blood-red Rose into your hand by faith and wear it. By communion preserve it. By daily watchfulness make it your All in All and you shall be blessed beyond all bliss— happy beyond a dream! So be it yours forever.

IV. Lastly, I shall close by asking you to make CONFESSIONS SUGGESTED BY MY TEXT. I will not make them for you, and therefore need not detain you from your homes. I will utter my own lamentation and leave you, every one apart, to do the same. I stand before this text of mine to blush, this morning, and to weep while I acknowledge my ungrateful behavior.

“My Lord, I am truly ashamed to think that I have not gazed more upon You. I know, and in my heart believe that You are the sum total of all beauty. Yet must I sorrowfully lament that my eyes have been gadding abroad to look after other beauties. My thoughts have been deluded with imaginary excellencies in the creatures, and I have meditated but little upon Yourself. Alas, my Lord, I confess still further that I have not possessed and enjoyed You as I ought. When I might have been with You all day and all night, I have been roving here and there, and forgetting my resting place. I have not been careful to welcome my Beloved and to retain His company. I have stirred Him up by my sins, and have driven Him away by my lukewarmness.

“I have given Him cold lodgings and slender hospitality within the chambers of my heart. I have not held Him fast, neither have I pressed Him to abide with me as I ought to have done. All this I must confess and mourn that I am not more ashamed while confessing it. Moreover, my good Lord, although I know Your great sacrifice for me might well have chained my heart forever to your altar (and O that You had done so!) I must acknowledge that I have not been a living sacrifice as I should have been. I have not been so fascinated by the luster of Your beauty as I should have been. O that all my heart’s rooms had been occupied by You, and by You alone!

“Would God my soul were as the coals in the furnace, all ablaze, and not a single particle of me left unconsumed by the delightful flames of Your love! I must also confess, my Lord, that I have not spoken of You as I should have done. Albeit I have had many opportunities, yet I have not praised You at the rate which You deserve. I have given You at best but a poor, stammering, chilly tongue when I should have spoken with the fiery zeal of a seraph.”

These are my confessions. Brothers and Sisters, what are yours? If you have none to make, if you can justly claim to have done all that you should have done to your Beloved, I envy you! But I think there is not a man here who will dare to say this. I am sure you have all had falls, and slips, and shortcomings, with regard to Him. Well, then, come humbly to Jesus at once! He will forgive you readily, for He does not soon take offense at His spouse. He may sometimes speak sharp words to her because He loves her, but His heart is always true, and faithful, and tender. He will forgive the past! He will receive you at this moment! Yes, this moment He will display Himself to you!

If you will but open the door, He will enter into immediate fellowship with you, for He says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me.” O Christ, our Lord, our heart is open! Come in, and go out no more forever. “Whoever believes on the Son has everlasting life.” Sinner, believe and live!

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A SERMON FOR SPRING  
NO. 436

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 23, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“My Beloved spoke and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one and come way. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the  
earth, the time of the singing of birds is come  
and the voice of the turtle is heard in our  
land. The fig tree puts forth her green  
figs and the vines with the tender  
grape give a good smell. Arise,  
my love, my fair one  
and come away.”  
Song of Solomon 2:10-13.**

THE things which are seen are types of the things which are not seen. The works of creation are pictures to the children of God of the secret mysteries of Divine Grace. God’s Truths are the apples of gold and the visible creatures are the baskets of silver. The very seasons of the year find their parallel in the little world of man within. We have our winter— dreary howling winter—when the north wind of the Law rushes forth against us, when every hope is nipped, when all the seeds of joy lie buried beneath the dark clods of despair, when our soul is fast fettered like a river bound with ice, without waves of joy, or flowings of thanksgiving.

Thanks be unto God, the soft south wind breathes upon our soul and at once the waters of desire are set free, the spring of love comes on, flowers of hope appear in our hearts, the trees of faith put forth their young shoots, the tone of the singing of birds comes in our hearts, and we have joy and peace in believing through the Lord Jesus Christ. That happy springtide is followed in the Believer by a rich summer, when his Graces, like fragrant flowers, are in full bloom, loading the air with perfume. And fruits of the Spirit like citrons and pomegranates swell into their full proportion in the genial warmth of the Sun of Righteousness.

Then comes the Believer’s autumn, when his fruits grow ripe and his fields are ready for the harvest. The time has come when his Lord shall gather together his “pleasant fruits,” and store them in Heaven. The feast of ingathering is at hand—the time when the year shall begin anew, an unchanging year, like the years of the right hand of the Most High in Heaven. Now, Beloved, each particular season has its duty. The husbandman finds that there is a time to plow, a time to sow, a time to reap. There is a season for vintage and a period for the pruning of the vine. There is a month for the planting of herbs and for the ingathering of seeds.

To everything there is a time and a purpose, and every season has its special labor. It seems, from the text, that whenever it is springtide in our hearts, then Christ’s voice may be heard saying, “Arise, My love, My fair

one and come away.” Whenever we have been delivered from a dreary winter of temptation or affliction, or tribulation—whenever the fair spring of hope comes upon us and our joys begin to multiply, then we should hear the Master bidding us seek after something higher and better. And we should go forth in His strength to love Him more and serve Him more diligently than ever before.

This I take to be the Truth of God taught in the text, and it shall be the subject of this morning’s discourse. And to any with whom the time of the singing of birds is come, in whom the flowers appear—to any such I hope the Master may speak till their souls shall say, “My Beloved spoke and said unto me, rise up, My love, My fair one and come away.” I shall use the general principle in illustration of four or five different cases.

I. First, with regard to THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH OF CHRIST. In looking upon her history, with only half an eye, you can plainly perceive that she has had her ebbs and flows. Often it seemed as if her tide retired— ungodliness, heresy, error prevailed. But she has had her flood tide when once again the glorious waves have rolled in, covering with their triumphant righteousness the sands of ignorance and evil. The history of Christ’s Church is a varied year of many seasons. She has had her high and noble processions of victory. She has had her sorrowful congregations of mourners during times of disaster and apparent defeat.

Commencing with the life of Christ, what a smiling spring it was for the world when the Holy Spirit was poured out in Pentecost. Then might the saints sing with sweet accord—

*“The Jewish wintry state is gone,  
The mists are fled, the spring comes on.  
The sacred turtle dove we hear,  
Proclaim the new, the joyful year.  
The immortal vine of heavenly root,  
Blossoms and buds and gives her fruit;  
Lo, we are come to taste the wine,  
Our souls rejoice and bless the vine.”*

The winter was over and past—that long season in which the Jewish state lay dead, when the frosts of Phariseeism had bound up all spiritual life. The rain was over and gone, the black clouds of wrath had emptied themselves upon the Savior’s head. Thunder and tempest and storm—all dark and terrible things—were gone forever.

The flowers appeared on the earth—three thousand in one day blossomed forth, baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Fair promises created for beauty and delight sprang up and with their blessed fulfillment, clothed the earth in a royal garment of many colors. The time of the singing birds was come, for they praised God day and night, eating their bread with joy and singleness of heart. The voice of the turtle was heard, for the Spirit—that hallowed dove from Heaven—descended with tongues of fire upon the Apostles and the Gospel was preached in every land.

Then had earth one of her joyous Sabbaths. The fig tree put forth her green figs. In every land there were some converts. The dwellers in Mesopotamia, Medes, Parthians, Elamites—some of all—were converted to God, and the tender grapes of newborn piety and zeal gave forth a sweet smell before God. Then it was that Christ spoke in words which made the heart of His Church burn like coals of juniper—My Fellow, My Friend, My Beautiful, arise and come your way.”

The bride arose, charmed by the heavenly voice of her Spouse. She girt on her beautiful garments and for some hundred years or more, she did come away. She came away from her narrowness of spirit and she preached to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ—she came away from her attachment to the State and she dared to confess that Christ’s kingdom was not of this world. She came away from her earthly hopes and comforts, for, “they counted not their lives dear unto them that they might win Christ and be found in Him.”

She came away from all ease and rest of body, for they labored more and more abundantly, making herself sacrifices for Christ. Her Apostles landed on every shore. Her confessors were found among people of every tongue. Her martyrs kindled a light in the midst of lands afflicted with the midnight of heathen darkness. No place trod by foot of man was left unvisited by the heralds of God, the heroic sons of the Church. “Go forth into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” was ringing in their ears like a clarion sounding the war charge. And they obeyed it like soldiers who had been men of war from their youth.

Those were brave days of old, when with a word, the saints of God could overcome a thousand foes—that word the faithful promise of a gracious God. Alas, alas, that season passed away! The Church grew dull and sleepy. She left her Lord. She turned aside. She leaned upon an arm of flesh, courting the endowments of earthly kingdoms. Then there came a long and dreary winter, the dark ages of the world, the darker ages of the Church. At last the time of love returned, when God again visited His people and raised up for them new Apostles, new martyrs, new confessors.

Switzerland, France, Germany, Bohemia, the Low Countries, England, and Scotland had all their men of God who spoke with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. The time of Luther and Calvin and Melancthon and of Knox was come—Heaven’s sunny days—when once again the frost should give way to approaching summer. Then it was that men could say once again, “The winter is passed, priest-craft has lost its power, the rain is over and gone. False doctrines shall no more be as tempests to the Church. The flowers appear on the earth—little Churches—plants of God’s right hand planting, are springing up everywhere.”

The time of the singing of birds was come. Luther’s hymns were sung by plowmen in every field. The Psalms translated were scattered among all people—carried on the wings of angels, and the Church sang aloud unto God, her strength—and entered into His courts with the voice of thanksgiving, in such sort as she had not hoped for during her long and weary winter’s night. In every cottage and under every roof, from the peasant’s hut, to the prince’s palace, the singing of birds was come. Then peace came to the people and joy in the Lord, for the voice of the turtle was heard delighting hill and valley, grove and field, with the love-notes of Gospel Grace.

Then fruits of righteousness were brought forth, the Church was “an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits,” camphire with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense. Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices. And a sweet savor of faith and love went up to Heaven and God rejoiced therein. Then the Master sweetly cried—

*“Rise up, My love, My fair one; come away, Soar on the wings of your victorious faith  
Above the realms of darkness and sin!”*

But she did not hear the voice, or she heard it but partially. Satan and his wiles prevailed. The little foxes spoiled the vines and devoured the tender grapes. Corruption, like a strong man armed, held the spouse and she came not forth at her Beloved’s call. In England she would not come away—she hugged the arm of flesh. She laid hold upon the protection of the State—she would not venture upon the bare promise of her Lord. O that she had left dignities, and endowments, and laws to worldly corporations—and had rested on her Husband’s love alone!

Alas for our divisions at this time! What are they but the bitter result of the departure of our fathers from the chastity of simple dependence such as Jesus loves? In other lands she confined herself too much within her own limits, sent forth few missionaries, labored not for the conversion of the outcasts of Israel. She would not come away, and so the Reformation never took place. It commenced, but it ceased—and the Churches, many of them—remain to this day half reformed, in a transition state, somewhere between truth and error.

As the Lutheran Church and the Established Church of England at the present day—too good to be rejected, too evil to be wholly received. Having such a savor of godliness that they are Christ’s but having such a mixture of Popery that their garments are not clean. Oh, would to God that the Church could then have heard her Master’s voice, “Rise up My love, My fair one and come away.”

And now, Brethren, in these days we have had another season of refreshing. God has been pleased to pour out His Spirit upon men again. Perhaps the late revivals have almost rivaled Pentecost—certainly in the number of souls ingathered they may bear rigid comparison with that feast of first fruits. I suppose that in the north of Ireland, in Wales, in America, and in many parts of our own country, there have been worked more conversions than took place at the descent of the Holy Spirit. The Lord’s people are alive, and in earnest, and all our agencies are quickened with new energy.

The time of the singing of birds is come, though there are some harsh, croaking ravens still left. The flowers appear on the earth, though much unmelted snow still covers the pastures. Thank God, the winter is over and passed to a great extent, though there are some pulpits and Churches as frost-bound as ever. We thank God that the rain is over and gone, though there are still some who laugh at the people of God and would destroy all true doctrine. We live in happier days than those which have passed. We may speak of these times as the good old times wherein time is older than ever it was and, I think, better than it has been for many a day.

And what now? Why, Jesus says, “Rise up My love, My fair one and come away.” To each denomination of His Church He sends this message, “Come away.” He seems to speak to Episcopacy and say, “Come away. Cut out of the liturgy that which is not according to My mind, leave the State, be free.” He speaks to the Calvinist and says, “Come away—be no more dead and cold as you have been. Let not your sons hold the Truth of God in unrighteousness.” He speaks to each denomination according to its need, but to the same command, “Rise up and come away. Leave deadness, and coldness, and wrong-doing, and hardness, and harshness, and bitterness of spirit. Leave idleness, and slothfulness and lukewarmness— rise up and come away.

“Come away to preach the Gospel among the heathen. Come away to reform the masses of this wicked city. Come away from your little heartedness, from your coldness of spirit. Come away—the land is before you— go up and possess it.” Come away, your Master waits to aid you—strike! He will strike with you. Build! He will be the great master Builder—plow! He Himself shall break the clods! Arise and thresh the mountains, for He shall make you a sharp threshing instrument, having ties, and the mountains shall be beaten small until the wind shall scatter them like chaff, and you shall rejoice in the Lord. Rise up, people of God, in this season of revival and come away! Why do you sleep? Arise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.

II. I think the text has a very SPECIAL VOICE TO US AS A CHURCH. We must use the Scripture widely but yet personally. While we know its reference to the universal Church, we must not forget its special application to ourselves. We, too, have had a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The day was with this Church in the olden times, when we were diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

We could not meet more than twenty in a place and sometimes not more than five, without fine and persecution. Then the Church had its elders, who could meet the few in private houses—and cheer their hearts, bidding them abide in patience, waiting till better times might come. Then God sent them a pastor after his own heart, Benjamin Rider, who fed them with knowledge and understanding, and gathered together the scattered sheep during the times of peace.

Then there followed him a man worthy to be pastor of this Church—one who had sat in the stocks at  
Aylesbury, had seen his books burned by the common hangman before his face, and who counted not even his life dear unto him that he might win Christ. That man was Benjamin Keach, the opener of the parables and expositor of metaphors. On old Horselydown, then a great common, a large house was built where he preached the Word and his hearers were very many.

The flowers then appeared on the earth and the time of the singing of birds was come to this Church. He passed away and slept with his fathers and was followed by Dr. Gill, the laborious commentator. And for some

time during his sound and solid ministry it was a good and profitable season, and the Church was multiplied and built up. But again, even under his ministry the ranks were thinned and the host grew small. There was doctrine in perfection but more power from on High was needed.

After a space of fifty years or more of Dr. Gill’s ministry, God sent Dr. Rippon and once more the flowers appeared upon the earth, and the Church multiplied exceedingly, bringing forth fruit unto God. And out of her there went many preachers who testified of the Truth of God that was in Jesus and were the parents of Churches which still flourish. Then the good old man, full of years and of good works, was carried to his Home— and there came others who taught the Church and ingathered many souls—but they were not to the full extent successors of the men who went before them, for they tarried but a little season.

They did much good, but were not such builders as those were who had gone before. Then came a time of utter deadness. The officers mourned. There was strife and division. There became empty pews where once there had been full congregations. They looked about them to find one who might fill the place and bring together the scattered multitude. But they looked, and looked in vain, and despondency and despair fell upon some hearts with regard to this Church. But the Lord had mercy on them and in a very short space, through His Providence and Grace, the winter was passed and the rain was over and gone.

The time of singing of birds was come again. There were multitudes to sing God’s praises. The voice of the turtle was heard in our land. All was peace and unity and affection and love. Then came the first ripe fruits. Many were added to the Church. Then the vines gave forth a sweet smell. Converts came, till we have often said, “Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows?” Often has this Church asked the question, “Who has begotten me these?” And now these eight years, by God’s Grace, we have had a season, not of spasmodic revival, but of constant progress.

We have had a glad period of abundant increase in which there has been as many converts as we could receive. Every officer of the Church has had his hands full in seeing enquirers, and we have only had time to stop, now and then, and take breath and say, “What has God worked?” The time came when we erected this house, because no other place was large enough for us. And still God continues with us, till our Church meetings are not sufficient for the reception of converts. And we know not how large a proportion of this assembly are Believers in Christ, because time fails to hear the cases of conversion.

Well, what ought we to do? I hear the Master saying, “Rise up, My love, My fair one and come away.” I hear Jesus speaking to this Church, and saying, “Where much is given, there much shall be required.” Serve not the Lord as other Churches, but yet more abundantly. As He has given you showers of love, so give Him your fertile fields. Let us rejoice with thanksgiving. Let this Church feel that she ought to be more dedicated to Christ than others. That her members should be more holy, loving, living nearer to God. That they should be more devoted, filled with more zeal, more fervency, doing more for Christ, praying more for sinners, laboring more for the conversion of the world.

And let us be asking ourselves what can we do, as a Church, that shall be more than we have ever thought of doing—inasmuch as He feeds us with the bread of Heaven, multiplies our numbers, keeps us in perfect concord, and makes us a happy people? Let us be a peculiar people, zealous for good works, showing forth His glory among the sons of men. It is a solemn responsibility to rest on any man’s mind to be the pastor of such a Church as this, numbering very nearly two thousand in Church fellowship.

I suppose such a Baptist Church has never existed before. If we are found to be cowards in this day of battle, woe unto us! If we are unfaithful to our charge and trust, woe unto us! If we sleep when we might do so much, surely will the Master say, “I will take the candlestick out of its place and quench their light in darkness. Laodicea is neither cold nor hot but lukewarm, I will spew her out of my mouth.”

And there shall come a dark day for us, with Ichabod on the forefront of our House of Prayer, and darkness in our souls, and bitterness and remorse in our spirits, because we served not Christ while we might. I will cry aloud to you and spare not to admonish and encourage you, my Brethren and comrades, in the conflict for Truth. Men, Brethren and fathers. Young men, maidens and mothers in Israel, shall any of us draw back now? O Lord, after You have so richly blessed us, shall we be ungrateful and become indifferent towards Your good cause and work?

Who knows but You, O God, have brought us to the kingdom for such a time as this? Oh, we beseech You, send down Your holy fire on every heart, and the tongue of flame on every head, that everyone of us may be missionaries for Christ, earnest teachers of the Truth as it is in Jesus!

I leave these thoughts with you. You can feel them better than I can express them. And I can better feel their might than I can make you feel it. O God! Teach us what our responsibility is, and give us Divine Grace that we may discharge our duty in Your sight.

III. WHEN THE TIME OF THE BRIDAL OF THE SOUL HAS ARRIVED TO EACH CONVICTED SINNER, THEN ALSO THERE ARE SPECIAL DUTIES.

Can you not remember, dearly Beloved, that day of days, that best and brightest of hours, when first you saw the Lord, lost your burden, received the roll of promise, rejoiced in full salvation, and went on your way in peace? My soul can never forget that day. Dying, all but dead, diseased, pained, chained, scourged, bound in fetters of iron, in darkness and the shadow of death, Jesus appeared unto me.

My eyes looked to Him. The disease was healed, the pains removed, chains were snapped, prison doors were opened, darkness gave place to light. What delight filled my soul! What mirth, what ecstasy, what sound of music and dancing, what soaring towards Heaven, what height and depths of ineffable delight! Scarce since then have we known joys which surpassed the rapture of that first hour.

Oh, do you not remember it, dear Brothers and Sisters? And was it not a spring time to you? The winter was passed. It had been so long, so dreary—those months of unanswered prayer, those nights of weeping, those days of watching. The rain was over and gone. The mutterings of Sinai’s thunders were hushed. The flashings of its lightning were no more perceived. God was beheld as reconciled unto you. The Law threatened no vengeance. Justice demanded no punishment.

Then the flowers appeared in our hearts. Hope, love, peace, patience, sprung up from the sod. The snow drop of pure holiness, the crocus of golden faith, the daffodil lily of love all decked the garden of the soul. The time of the singing birds was come, all that is within us magnified the holy name of our forgiving God. Our soul’s exclamation was—

*“I will praise You every day,  
Now Your anger’s turned away;  
Comfortable thoughts arise,  
From the bleeding Sacrifice.  
Jesus is become at length,  
My salvation and my strength;  
And His praises shall prolong,  
While I live my pleasant song.”*

Every meal seemed now to be a sacrament. Our clothes were vestments. The common utensils of our trade were “holiness to the Lord.” We went out abroad into the world to see everywhere tokens for good. We went forth with joy and were led forth with praise. The mountains and the hills broke forth before us into singing, and all the trees of the fields did clap their hands. It was, indeed, a happy, a bright, and a glorious season!

Do I speak to some who are passing through that spring-tide now? Young Convert, young Believer, in the dawn of your piety, Jesus says, “Rise up, My love, My fair one and come away.” He asks you to come out from the world and make a profession of your faith in Him now—do not put it off. It is the best time to profess your faith while you are young, while as yet to you the days come not, nor the days draw near, when you shall say, “I have no pleasure in them.”

Make haste and delay not to keep His commandments. Arise and be baptized. Come out from among the world, be separate and touch not the unclean thing. Follow Christ in this perverse generation, that you may hear Him say at the last, “Of you I am not ashamed, for you were not ashamed of Me in the day when I was despised and rejected of men.” In this, your early time, dedicate yourselves to God. If you do not draw up a form and subscribe it with your hand, yet draw it up in your heart and subscribe it with your soul—“Lord, I am wholly Yours—all I am and all I have, I would devote to You. You have bought me with Your blood. Lord, take me into Your service—You have put away all Your wrath and given my spirit rest. Let me spend myself and be spent—in life and in death let me be consecrated to You.”

Make no reserves. Come altogether away from selfishness—from anything which would divide your chaste and pure love to Christ—your soul’s Husband. Rise up and come away. In this, the beginning of your spiritual life, the young dawn of marvelous light, come away from your old habits. Avoid the very appearance of evil. Come away from old friendships which may tempt you back to the flesh pots of Egypt. Leave all these things. Come away to higher flights of spirituality than your fathers as yet have known. Come away to private communion. Be much alone in prayer.

Come away—be diligent in the study of God’s Word. Come away, shut the doors of your chamber and talk with your Lord Jesus and have close and intimate dealing with Him. I know I speak to some young babes in Divine Grace, beginners in our Israel. Oh, take care that you begin aright by coming right away from the world, by being strictly obedient to every Divine command, by making your dedication perfect, complete, unreserved, sincere, spotless—

*“While from your newly-sprouted vines  
Whose grapes are young and tender, choice and rich, The flavor comes forth—Beloved one, rise!  
Rise from this visible engrossing scene,  
And with affections linked to things above, Where Christ, your treasure is, be soaring still!”*

IV. But in the next place our text deserves to be used in another light. It may be that you and I have had winters of dark trouble, succeeded by soft springs of deliverance.

We will not enlarge much on our sorrows, but some of us have been to the gates of death and, as we thought then, into the very jaws of Hell. We have had our Gethesmanes, when our souls have been exceedingly sorrowful—nothing could comfort us, we were like the fool who abhorred all manner of meat. Nothing came with any consolation to our aching hearts. At last the Comforter came to us and all our troubles were dissipated. A new season came, the time of the singing of birds was once more in our hearts.

We did not chatter any more like the swallow or the crane, but we began to sing as the nightingale, even with the thorn in our breast. We learned to mount to Heaven as the lark, singing all the way. The great temporal affliction which had crushed us was suddenly removed and the strong temptation of Satan was taken off from us. The deep depression of spirit which had threatened to drive us to insanity was all of a sudden lifted and we became elastic in heart and once again as David, danced before the Ark, singing songs of deliverance!

I address some who this morning are looking back to such seasons. You have just reached the realm of sunlight, and you can look back upon long leagues of shadow and cloud through which you have had to march. The valley of the shadow of death you have just traversed—you can well remember the horrible pit and the miry clay. We can still hear the rushing as of the wings and feet of crowded miseries. We can still remember the terrible shadow of confusion. But we have come through it—through it all, by God’s Grace—the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, and we can rejoice now in Covenant faithfulness and renewed loving kindness.

Now we have our assurance back again. And Christ is near us and we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. Well, then, what are we to do? Why, the Master says to us, “Rise up and come away.” Now is the time when we should mount up to be nearer to Him. Now that the day dawns, and the shadows flee away, let us seek our Beloved amid the beds of spices and by the lilies where He feeds. I would we had more in the Church—more in this Church, like Madame Guyon, who loved the Lord as that woman did—who had much forgiven. Or like Mrs. Rowe, who in England was what Madame Guyon was in France.

Or like Dr. Hawker, or like Samuel Rutherford, who could pant and long and sigh for nearer fellowship with Christ. If there is ever a season when we ought to follow hard after the Lord and not be content until we have embraced Him, it is when we have come up from the wilderness, leaning upon our Beloved. Then should the chaste virgins sing with joyous heart concerning Him to whom they are espoused—

*“What is this vain, this visionary scene  
Of mortal things to me? My thoughts aspire Beyond the narrow bounds of rolling spheres. The world is crucified and dead to me,  
And I am dead to all its empty shows.  
But, oh, for YOU unbounded wishes warm  
My panting soul and call forth all her powers. Whatever can raise desire or give delight,  
Or with full joy replenish every wish,  
Is found in You, You infinite abyss of ecstasy and life!”*

Each Believer should be thirsting for God, for the living God—and longing to put his lip to the Wellhead of eternal life—to follow the Savior and say, “Oh, that You were as my Brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother, when I should find You without, I would kiss you, yes, I should not be despised. I would lead You and bring You into my mother’s house, who would instruct me: I would cause You to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate. His left hand should be under my head and His right hand should embrace me.

“I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up, nor awaken my love, until He pleases. Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved? I raised you up under the apple tree: there your mother brought you forth. There she brought you forth that bore you.”

Oh, that the Believer would never be content with having drops and sips of love, but long for the full feast. O my soul thirsts to drink deep of that cup which never can be drained and to eat of all the dainties of that table which boundless love has furnished. I am persuaded that you and I are content to live on pence when we might live on pounds. That we eat dry crusts when we might taste the ambrosial meat of angels. That we are content to wear rags when we might put on kings’ robes. That we go out with tears upon our faces when we might anoint them with fresh oil.

I am convinced that many a Believer lives in the cottage of doubt when he might live in the mansion of faith. We are poor starving things when we might be fed. We are weak when we might be mighty, feeble when we might be as the giants before God—and all because we will not hear the Master say, “Rise up My love, My fair one and come away.”

Now, Brethren, is the time with you after your season of trouble, to renew your dedication vow to God. Now, Beloved, you should rise up from worldliness and come away from sloth, from the love of this world, from unbelief. What enchants you to make you sit still where you are? What delights you to make you as you now are? Come away! There is a higher life! There are better things to live for and better ways of seeking them. Aspire! Let your high ambition be unsatisfied with what you have already learned and know. Not as though you had already attained, either were already perfect.

This one thing do—press forward to the things that are before. Rise, Soul, greatly Beloved, and enter into your Master’s rest. I cannot get my words this morning as I would have them. But if these lips had language, I would seek by every motive of gratitude for the mercies you are enjoying, by every sensation of thankfulness which your heart can experience for Divine Grace received, to make you now say, “Jesus, I give myself up to You this day, to be filled with Your love. And I renounce all other desires but the desire to be used in Your service, that I may glorify You.”

Then, methinks there may go out of this place this morning many young men, and old men, too. Many youths and maidens, determined to be doing something for Christ. I well remember preaching a sermon one Sunday morning which stirred up some Brethren to the midnight meeting movement and much good was done, by God’s Grace. What if some new thought should pass through some newly quickened spirit and you should think of some fresh invention for glorifying Christ at this good hour? Is there no Mary here who has an alabaster box at home unbroken? Will she not today break it over the Master’s head?

Is there no Zaccheus here who will today receive Christ into his house, constrained by Divine love? Oh, by the darkness that has gone, and by the brightness that has come, live lovingly towards Christ! Oh, by the fears that have been hushed, by the pains that have been removed, by the joy you now experience, and by the delights which He has promised you, I beseech you, cling to Him and seek to serve Him! Go into the world to bring in His lost sheep, to look after His hidden ones, to restore to Him that lost piece of money for which He has lit the candle and desires you to sweep the house.

O Christian Brothers and Sisters, it is an angel’s work I have attempted now, and mortal lips fail. But I beg you, if there is any heart of mercy, if there is any consolation in Christ Jesus, “if you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God.” Lay not up your treasure upon earth where thieves break through and steal. But lay up your treasure in Heaven—for where your treasure is, there shall your heart be also.

If you love my Master, serve Him—if you do not, if you owe Him nothing, oh, if you owe Him nothing and have had no favor from Him—then I beg you to seek mercy. But if you have found it. If you know it—oh, for His love’s sake love Him! This dying world needs Your help, my Lord! This wicked sinful world needs Your aid. Up and be doing! The battle is raging furiously. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! Guards up, and at them! Do you sleep, Sirs? Sleep when now the shots are flying thick as hail and the foemen are rallying for the last charge in the world’s mighty

Armageddon?

Up! For the defiant standard of Hell waves proudly in the breeze. Do you say you are feeble? He is your strength. Do you say you are few? It is not by many nor by few that God works. Do you say, “I am obscure?” God wants not the notoriety and fame of men. Up, men, women, and children in Christ! Up! Be no more at ease in Zion, but serve God while it is called today, for the war needs every hand, and the conflict calls for every heart. And night comes, when no man can fight or work.

V. And now, last of all, the time is coming to us all when we shall die upon our beds. Oh, long-expected day, hasten and come! The best thing a Christian can do is to die and be with Christ which is far better.

Well, when we shall lie upon our deathbeds, panting out our life, we shall remember that then the winter is past forever. No more of this world’s trials and troubles. “The rain is over and gone.” No more stormy doubts, no more dark days of affliction. “The flowers appear on the earth.” Christ is giving to the dying saints some of the foretastes of Heaven. The angels are throwing over the walls some of the flowers of Paradise. We have come to the land Beulah. We sit down in beds of spices and can almost see the Celestial City on the hilltops, on the other side of the narrow stream of death.

“The time of the singing of the birds is come.” Angelic songs are heard in the sick chamber. The heart sings, too, and midnight melodies cheer the quiet entrance of the grave. “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for You are with me.” Those are sweet birds which sing in the groves by the side of the river Jordan. Now it is that “the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.” Calm, peaceful and quiet, the soul rests in the consciousness that there is no condemnation to him that is in Christ Jesus. Now does “the fig tree put forth her green figs.”

The first fruits of Heaven are plucked and eaten while we are on earth. Now do the very vines of Heaven give forth a smell that can be perceived by love. Look forward to your death, you that are Believers in Christ, with great joy! Expect it as your spring tide of life, the time when your real summer shall come and your winter shall be over forever—

*“One distant glimpse my eager passion fires! Jesus! To You my longing soul aspires!  
When shall I hear Your voice divinely say,  
Rise up My love, My fair one come away?  
Come meet your Savior bright and glorious Over sin and death and Hell victorious.”*

May God grant that the people who fear His name may be stirred up this morning, if not by my words, yet by the Words of my text and by the influences of God’s Spirit. And may you who have never had sweet seasons from the presence of God, seek Christ and He will be found of you. And by His Grace, may we all meet in the land where winters of sin and sorrow shall be all unknown. Amen.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2480 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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THE TENDER GRAPES  
NO. 2480

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 30, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 8, 1880.

**“The vines with the tender grape give a good smell.” Song of Solomon 2:13.**

THE vine is of all trees the most useless unless it bears fruit. You cannot make hardly anything of it. You would scarcely be able to cut enough wood out of a vine to hang a pot upon. You cannot turn it into furniture and barely could you use it in the least degree for building purposes. It must either bear fruit, or else it must be consumed in the fire. The branches of the vine that bear no fruit are necessarily cut off and they are used, as I have seen them used in the South of France many a time, in little twisted bundles for kindling the fire. They burn very rapidly, so there is soon an end of them and then they are gone.

The vine is constantly used, in Scripture, as a picture of the nominal Church of Christ, so, like the vine, we must either bring forth fruit or we shall be accounted as good for nothing. Dear Friends, we must serve God! We must bring forth, from our very soul, love to God and service to Him as the fruit of our renewed nature, or else we are useless, worthless, shall only abide our time and then we shall be cut down to be burned. Our end must be destruction if our life is not fruitful. This gives a very solemn importance to our lives and it should make each of us seriously ask, “Am I bringing forth fruit to God? Have I brought forth fruits meet for repentance? For if not, I must, by-and-by, feel the keen edge of the Vinedresser’s knife and I shall be taken away from any sort of union that I now have with the Church which is Christ’s vine—and be flung over the wall as a useless thing whose end is to be burned.”

Beloved, you all know that there is no possibility of bringing forth any fruit unless we are in Christ and unless we abide in Christ. We must bear fruit, or we shall certainly perish—and we cannot have fruit unless we have Christ. We must be knit to Christ, vitally one with Him, just as a branch is really, after a living fashion, one with the stem! It would be no use to tie a branch to the stem of the vine—that would not cause it to bring forth fruit. It must be joined to it in a living union and so must you and I be livingly joined to Christ! Do you know, by experience, what that expression means? For, if you do not know it by experience, you do not know it at all! No man knows what life is but the one who is alive. And no man knows what union to Christ is but he who is united to Christ. We must become one with Christ by an act of faith. We must be inserted into Him as the graft is placed in the incision made in the tree into which it is to be grafted. Then there must be a knitting of the two together, a vital junction, a union of life and a flowing of the sap, or else there cannot be any bearing of fruit. Again, I say, what a serious thing this makes our life to be! How earnest should be our questioning of ourselves! “For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart.” And so may there be about this matter. Let each one of us ask, “Am I bearing fruit? I am not unless I am vitally united to Christ. I have openly professed that I am in Christ, but am I bringing forth fruit to His honor and glory?”

I think I hear someone say, “I hope I have begun to bring forth some fruit, but it is very little in quantity and it is of very poor quality. And I do not suppose that the Lord Jesus will hardly stoop to notice it.” Well, now, listen to what the text says! It is the Heavenly Bridegroom, it is Christ, Himself, who, in this Song, speaks to His spouse and bids her come into the vineyard and look about her. For, says He, “The vines with the tender grape give a good smell.” So, you see, there was some fruit, though it could only be spoken of as, “the tender grape.” Some read the passage, “The vines in blossom give forth fragrance.” Others think it refers to the grape just as it begins to form. It was a poor little thing, but the Lord of the vineyard was the first to spy it out and if there is any little fruit to God upon anyone here present, our Lord Jesus Christ can see it! Though the berry is scarcely formed. Though it is only like a flower which has just begun to knit, He can see the fruit and He delights in that fruit.

I want, as the Holy Spirit shall help me, to speak about those early fruits—those tender grapes—that are being brought forth by some who have but lately come to know the Lord. And first we will enquire, what are these tender grapes? Secondly, what is the Lord’s estimate of them? And thirdly, what is the danger to these tender grapes? You will learn what that is from the 15th verse—“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes.”

I. First, then, WHAT ARE THESE TENDER GRAPES? What are these first-fruits of the Spirit of God of which our text says, “The vines with the tender grape give a good smell”? While I am preaching, I shall be going over my own experience and the experience of many of God’s people. And though I shall not be especially speaking to them, it will do them good to remember what they passed through in the early days of their Christian life.

One of the first tender grapes that we spy out on living branches of the True Vine is a secret mourning for sin and, very often, an open mourning, too. The man is no longer the mirthful, jovial, light-headed, dare-devil sort of fellow that he was. He has found out that his life has not been right in the sight of God. He has become conscious that he has done much that is altogether wrong and that he has left undone a thousand things which he ought to have done—and he feels heavy of heart and sad in spirit. His old companions notice that there is a change in him, but he does not tell them much because they would only laugh at him. But he has a wound somewhere within his heart—an arrow has pierced his conscience—and his soul bleeds inwardly. The pleasure which he once took in sin is all now gone and, what is more, he grieves to think that he ever could have taken any pleasure in it. He hopes that God will forgive him, but he feels that he never will forgive himself. He strikes upon his breast and wishes he could strike so hard as to kill the sin which is there—but he discovers that when he would do good, evil is present with him—and that makes him cry, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

He used to think that to believe in Christ was a very easy thing and that to be a Christian was almost as simple a matter as kissing his hand. But he finds it quite another thing, now. He has a heavy burden to carry and it is crushing him to the ground—he is fighting with himself and cannot get the victory. Whenever he sees his sin, it grieves him and he is grieved because he does not grieve more than he does. He wishes his heart would become softer and that by some means he could weep for sin more thoroughly, for he really does hate it with all his soul. Well now, this is one of the tender grapes and if any of you are brought into that condition, I thank God for it! This is a crop that will ripen and sweeten before long. Surely, there never was a truly gracious soul who did not put forth this as one of the first fruits of the Spirit—a secret mourning for sin.

Another tender grape is a humble faith in Jesus Christ. The man, perhaps, has got no farther than to say, “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief! I trust myself with You and You have said I am saved if I do that and, therefore, I conclude that I am saved, but, oh, that I had more faith! Oh, that I could trust You without a doubt! But, Lord, You know all things— You know that, humbly, tremblingly, I do accept You as my Savior and I am hopeful to be numbered among Your people, though meanest of them all. Though my faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, I bless You that I have even that grain! And I know that it will grow, for it has within it the life You did impart.” That little trembling faith, like a freshly-lighted candle which is easily blown out, is, nevertheless, one of the tender grapes. It will grow, it will come to perfection in due time, for the least true faith has everlasting life in it! All the devils in Hell could not quench a single spark of God-given faith, for it is a living thing and it cannot be destroyed! This faith possesses immortality. It shall defy death, itself, yet, while it is so little, it is like the tender grape which gives a good smell.

Then there comes another tender grape and that is, a genuine change of life. The man has evidently turned right about—he is not looking the way he used to look and he is not living as he used to live. At first he fails and, perhaps, fails a good many times, like a child who is learning to walk and has many a tumble. But it will never walk if it does not tumble a bit. So, when men begin to live the new life, they have many slips. They thought that ugly temper of theirs would never rise again, but it does, and it grieves them very much. And some old habit, from which they thought they had clean escaped, entangles them unawares and they say, “Surely I cannot be a child of God if I do these things again!” And there is great sorrow, brokenness of spirit and soul-humbling. Well, that very soul-humbling is a tender grape! That effort to do better—not in your own strength, because you have none and you are sure to fail utterly if you attempt such a task alone—but the effort to do better in the strength of God, yet with the full consciousness of your own weakness—all that indicates a real change!

I know that there are some men who have been so long steeped in evil that to get their old habits down is a very difficult task. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” Nothing but almighty power could get the blackness out of the Ethiopian’s skin, or the spots out of the leopard. God can do it and He can reverse the whole current of our lives, but, nevertheless, while it is being done, there is often much painful contrition and brokenness of heart before Him. See what a change it is that the Lord works in a man when He converts him from the error of his ways! There is Niagara—see the mighty flood come roaring down—what a sight it is! But can that Niagara be made to flow up-hill? Yes, God can accomplish that marvelous feat, but while it is being done, think of the twists, twirls, whirlpools and sheets of spray that there will be! The vast mass of water has to stop and then to rush up again! What roaring of waves and shaking of rocks there will be even while God is performing this great operation! So is it when there is a change of heart in one who has long been steeped in evil—one who has been an open sinner. There is a great deal of distress of heart while the work is being done. Yet, if there is a radical change in the man, it is like the tender grape which is a sure sign of life in the vine which brings it forth.

Another very blessed fruit of spiritual life in the soul is secret devotion. The man never prayed before. He sometimes went to a place of worship, but he did not care much about it. Now you see that he tries to get alone for private prayer as often as he can. He may not have the privilege of a room to himself, but he climbs up into a hayloft, or goes down into a sawpit, or retires behind a hedge, or, in order to be quite alone, perhaps he walks the streets of London. It is very easy to be alone in a crowded street! In busy Cheapside there is many a man who is utterly lonely, for he does not know anybody in all the throng that rushes past him. It is a really awful loneliness that a man may have in the midst of a dense crowd—and his heart may then be talking with God as well as if he were shut up in some private room. A soul must get alone if it is really born again—it cannot live without private prayer. I also like to see the young beginners in the Divine Life carrying a pocket Testament, so that they may read a short portion whenever they can get a few spare moments— two or three verses to lie in their memory, like a lozenge under the tongue—to melt there and dissolve into their inmost being. It is a grand thing to keep a man right and it is one of the tender grapes on the vine when there is a love for the Word of God and a love for private prayer. I am sure that it is one of the tokens by which we are not very often deceived. “Behold, he prays,” is an indication that God has renewed his heart!

Another of these tender grapes is an eager desire for more Grace, a longing for more of the good things of the Covenant. Why, those who are just brought to know the Lord would like us to preach seven sermons a day—and they would like to hear them all! I know that when I was first brought to Christ, I was ravenous after the Gospel. I felt like the great beast mentioned in the Book of Job, that “drinks up a river, and trusts that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth,” so thirsty did I seem to be after the river of the Water of Life! I do not think that the seats felt hard to me, then, or that standing in the aisle was too tiresome so long as it was but the Gospel that was preached to me, for there was an eager desire after it in my soul. If anyone can tell the poor seeking one who has just a little Light of God where he can get 10 times the Grace he has, I guarantee you that he will make the journey if he may but find it, that his feeble faith may grow to full assurance, that his repentance may be deeper, that his love to God may be more intense! If his whole soul is set on attaining this objective, it is manifest that these are the tender grapes that grow out of the life that is within the branches of the Vine.

There is also, in such persons, another very precious sign of Grace, and that is, a simple love to Jesus. The heart knows little, but it loves much. The understanding is not yet fully enlightened, but the affections are all on fire. “Your first love” is mentioned with special commendation in the Book of the Revelation and I think that some of us who have known the Lord for 30 years or more, can look back upon our first love with something of regret. I hope that we love Christ better, now, than we did then, but there was a vividness about our first love which we do not always realize in our more matured experience. It was then very much as it is when your servant lights a fire—at the first, the shavings, or the paper, or whatever it may be at the bottom of the kindling, makes a great deal more of a blaze than appears afterwards—and the fire is at its best when it all gets into one great steady ruby glow. It is to this state that the ardent love of Christians should come, but still, there is something very pleasing about that first blaze and I could almost wish that we always blazed away as we did in the fervor of our first love. That first flame was one of the sure tokens that the fire was there, just as the tender grapes prove that the life is in the Vine-branches. If, dear Friends, you are now full of love to Christ, do not let anybody quench it, or even dampen it, but may it burn more and more, like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame! God grant that this love, and all the other tender grapes that I have mentioned, may be seen in everyone who has newly sought and found the Lord!

II. Now I must try to answer our second question—WHAT IS THE LORD’S ESTIMATE OF THESE TENDER GRAPES? What does He think of that sorrow for sin, that little faith, that humble trust in His atoning Sacrifice, that earnest attempt to live a changed life, that weariness of frivolity, that private prayer and study of the Scriptures, that eager desire for more Grace and that childlike love? What does the Lord think of all this?

Well, first, He thinks so much of it that He calls His Church to come and look at it. Look at the verses that precede our text—“My Beloved spoke and said to me, Rise up, My love, My fair one and come away, for, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.” We do not usually call our friends to look at things which we do not, ourselves, admire. So here the Bridegroom calls His spouse to share in His joy in these tokens of the heavenly life of the Church of God! Be always on the lookout for the tender grapes. I think I know some Christians who do not appreciate these early fruits as they ought. When dear children are brought to know the Lord, we cannot expect that such little shoots as they are should, at first, bring forth anything but tender grapes.

There are some who do not take that view of the matter. “Ah,” they say, “there is no flavor in those grapes.” Did you expect that there would be? “Oh,” they cry, “they are tart and sour.” Of course they are! While they are tender grapes, they must be so. You cannot get the ripeness or the sweetness of maturity in that which is just beginning to grow! Our Lord would not have us find fault with the fruit of young converts, but rather go and look at it, and admire it, and bless God that there is at least some and that it is as good as it is. “Ah,” says one, “that young man does not know much!” Does he know that one thing, whereas he was blind, now he can see? Then be thankful that he knows as much as that. “Oh,” you exclaim, “but he has not much prudence!” No, my dear Friend, do you suppose that this young man is to have as much prudence as you have at your age—and you are perhaps 60 or seventy? I might possibly say with truth that you have not quite so much zeal as you might have to go with your prudence. “Oh, but,” you say, “we need the young man to be more mature!” Give him time and he will get as mature as you are, but while the grapes are still tender, your Master and his calls you to look at them and to thank Him for them, for there is something very cheering in the sight of the first weak, faint tokens of the working of the Holy Spirit in the soul of a young Believer!

What is Christ’s estimate of these tender grapes? Why, next, He calls them tender. He does not call them mature—He does not speak of them as ripe—He calls them, “tender.” Do you know how He might have described them? He might have called them sour, but He does not. He calls them, “tender.” He likes to use a sweet word, you see—the softest and best word that He can use! So, when you describe a young convert, my dear Brother, do not at once point out his immaturity, but call him, “tender.” Do not speak about his lack of discretion, but call him, “tender.” Do not say, “Oh, well, I question whether he can be a child of God or not!” He is one of God’s little ones. A little child is just as much its mother’s child as the biggest one in the family is! And no doubt that little one whose voice we heard just now is as much beloved of the mother as any of her older sons or daughters. So it should be with those who are the little children in God’s great family of love. Therefore, imitate your Lord and call them, “tender.”

Then He says something more—“The vines with the tender grape give a good smell.” Of what do they smell?  
Well, first, they smell of sincerity. You say, “That young man does not know much, but he is very sincere.” How many do I see, who come to make a confession of their faith in Christ, who do not know this doctrine, or have not had that experience, but they are very sincere! I can tell that they are genuine by the way they speak—they often make such dreadful blunders, theologically, that I know they have not learned it by rote, as they might get up a lesson. They talk straight out of their loving but ignorant hearts and I like that they should do so, for it shows how true they are in what they say! And our Lord Jesus always loves sincerity. There is no smell so hateful as the smell of hypocrisy—a religious experience that is made to order, religious talk such as some indulge in, which is all cant—is a stench in the nostrils of God! The Lord save us from it! But these vines with the tender grape give forth the sweet smell of sincerity.  
Next, there is about these young Believers a sweet smell of heartiness. Oh, how hearty they generally are, how earnest, how lively! By-and-by, some of the older folks talk about the things of God as if they were worn threadbare and there was nothing of special interest in them. But it is not so with these new-born souls—everything is bright and fresh, they are lively and full of earnestness—and Jesus loves that kind of spirit. He said to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, “I would you were cold or hot.” It is lukewarmness that He cannot bear! But He approves of warm, simple heartiness—it is to Him like the smell of the vines that bear the tender grapes.  
There is sure to be, also, about these young Christians the sweet smell of zeal and, whatever may be said against zeal, I will take up the clubs for it as long as I live! In the work of God we cannot do without fire! We Baptists like water because our Master has ordained the use of it, but we must also have fire, fire from Heaven, the fire of the Holy Spirit. When I see our young men and young women full of zeal for God’s Glory, I say, “God bless them! Let them go ahead.” Some of the old folk want to put a bit in the mouths of these fiery young steeds and to hold them in—but I trust that I shall always be on their side and say, “No, let them go as fast as they like. If they have zeal without knowledge, it is a deal better than having knowledge without zeal! Only wait a bit and they will get all the knowledge they need.”  
These young Believers have another sweet smell—they are teachable— ready to learn, willing to be taught from the Scriptures and from those whose instructions God blesses to their souls. There is also another delicious smell about them and that is they are generally very joyful. While they are singing, some dear old Brother who has known the Lord for 50 years, is groaning—what is the matter with the good man? I wish that he could catch the sweet contagion of the early joy of those who have just found the Savior! There is something delightful in all joy when it is joy in the Lord, but there is a special brightness about the delight of those who are newly-converted.  
You see that Christ forms a correct, condescending, wise estimate of these vines with the tender grape. He calls His Church to look at them. He calls them tender. He says that they have a sweet smell and then He shows that He cares very much about them, for He says, “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.” He does not want even the tender grapes to be spoiled. Some people seem to think that none but advanced Christians are worth looking after, but our Lord is not of that opinion. “Oh, it was only a lot of girls that joined the Church,” said somebody. “A lot of girls?” That is not the way that our Lord Jesus Christ speaks about His children! He calls them King’s daughters—and let them be called so. “They were only a pack of boys and young men.” Yes, but they are the material of which old men are made! And boys and young men, after all, are of much account in the Master’s esteem. May we always have many such in this Church!  
III. So I come to my third and closing question—WHAT IS THE DANGER TO THESE TENDER GRAPES? The 15th verse says that they are in danger from foxes and gives the command, “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.”  
Dear young Friends who have lately found Christ, there are foxes about! We try all we can to stop the gaps in the hedge, that we may keep the foxes out, but they are very crafty and they manage to get in, sometimes. The foxes in the East are much smaller than ours and they seem to be even more cunning and more ferocious than those we have in this country—and they do much mischief to the vines.  
In the spiritual vineyard there are foxes of many kinds. There is, first, the hard censurer. He will spoil the vines if he can—and especially the vines that have the tender grapes. He finds fault with everything that he can see in you who are but young Believers. You know that you are simply depending upon Christ for salvation, but this censurer says, “You are no child of God, for you are far from being perfect.” If God had no children but those who are perfect, He would have none under Heaven! These censorious people will find fault with this and that and the other in your life and character. And you know well enough that you have all too many imperfections, but if they look for them, they can soon spy them out. Then they say, “We do not believe that there is any Grace in you at all,” though you know that by the Grace of God you are what you are! It may be that there is a fault in you which they have discovered. Perhaps you were taken by surprise and suddenly overcome. Possibly they even set a trap for you and lured you into it, provoking you to anger, and then turning upon you, saying, “You have made a profession, have you? That is your religion, is it?” and so on. May God deliver you from these cruel foxes! He will often do so by enabling you not to mind them. After all, this is only the way in which all Christians have been tried— there is nothing strange in your experience from these censurers! And they are not your judges—you will not be condemned because they condemn you. Go and do your best in the service of your Lord! Trust in Christ and do not mind what they say—and you will be delivered from that kind of fox.  
A worse fox even than that one, however, is the flatterer. He comes to you smiling and smirking and he begins to express his approval of your religion. And he very likely tells you what a fine fellow you are. Indeed, you are so good that he thinks you are rather too precise, you have gone a little over the line! He believes in religion, he says, fully, though if you watch his life, you will not think so. But he says that he does not want people to be too righteous—he knows that there is a line to be drawn and he draws it. I never could see where he drew it, but still, he says he does and he thinks that you draw the line a little too near the Cross. He says, “You might be a little more worldly—you cannot get through life in your way. If you get out of society, you may as well get out of the world! Why do you make yourself appear so singular?” I know what he is after—he wants to get you back among the ungodly. Satan misses you and he wants to have you again, so he is sending Mr. Flatterer to wheedle you back, if possible, into your former bondage to himself. Get away from that fox at once! The man who tells you that you are too precise ought to be precisely told that you do not need his company! There never lived a man, yet, who was too holy, and there never will live a man who will imitate Christ too closely, or avoid sin too rigidly! Whenever a man says that you are too Puritanical, you may always smell one of these foxes! It would be better if we were all more Puritanical and precise. Has not our Father said to us, “Be you holy; for I am holy”? Did not our Lord Jesus say to His disciples, “Be you, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect”?  
Then there comes another foul fox, Mr. Worldly-Wiseman. He says, “You are a Christian, but do not be a fool! Carry your religion as far as you can make it pay, but if it comes to losing anything by it, well then, don’t you do it. You see, this practice is the custom of the trade—it is not right, I know—but still, other people do it and you ought to do it. If you do not, you will never get on in business.” Mr. Worldly-Wiseman further says, “Never mind if you tell a lie or two, make your advertisements say what is not true—everybody else does it as a matter of course—why shouldn’t you? Then try whether you cannot get a slice out of your customer here and a slice there when he does not know it—it is the custom of the trade! It is the way other people do and, as it is the custom, of course you must do it.” To all such talk I reply that there is another custom, a custom that God has, of turning all liars into Hell! Mind that you do not come under that Divine Rule and Law! There is another custom that God has, namely, that of cutting down as hypocrites those who do not walk honestly and uprightly towards their fellow men. The plea of custom will not stand for a moment at the Judgment Seat of Christ—and it ought to have no weight with us here. I know that there are many young people who, unless they are watchful and careful at the very beginning of their spiritual life, will get lamed and never walk as they ought to, because this fox has bitten them.  
There is another ugly fox about and that is a doubting fox. He comes and says, “You seem very happy and very joyful, but is it true? You appear to have become quite a different person from what you used to be, but is there, after all, such a thing as conversion?” This fox begins nibbling at every doctrine! He even nibbles at your Bible and tries to steal from you this chapter and that verse. God save you young people from all these foxes!  
There are some foxes of evil doctrine and they generally try to spoil our young people. I do not think anybody ever attempts, now, to convert me from my beliefs. The other day, when a man was arguing with another, I asked him, “Why don’t you try me?” “Oh,” he said, “I have given you up as a bad case! There is no use trying to do anything with you!” It is so when we get to be thoroughly confirmed in our convictions of the Truth of God—they give us up and they generally say that we are such fools that we cannot learn their wisdom—which is quite correct! And so we intend to be as long as we live!  
But with some of the younger folk, they manage it thus. They say, “Now, you are a person of considerable breadth of thought. You have an enlarged mind, you are a man of culture. It is a pity that you should cling to those old-fashioned beliefs which really are not consistent with modern progress.” And the foolish young fellow thinks that he is a wonder and so is puffed up with conceit. When a man has to talk about his own culture and to glory in his own advancement, it is time that we suspected the truth about him! When a man can despise others who are doing vastly more good than he ever dreamed of doing and call such people antiquated and old-fashioned, it is time that he should get rebuked for his impudence, for that is what it really is! These clever men, as far as I know them, are simply veneered with a little learning, not a sixteenthousandth of an inch thick! There is nothing in the most of them but mere pretence and bluster. But there are some who hold firmly to the old Gospel who have read as much as they are ever likely to do, and are fully their equals in learning, though they do not care to boast of their acquirements. Do not any of you young people be carried away with the notion that all the learned men are heretics—it is very largely the reverse— and it is your sham, shallow philosopher who goes running after heresy! Get out of the way of that fox, or else he will do much mischief to the tender grapes.  
So, Brothers and Sisters, I close with this remark. If you have any sign of spiritual life. If you have any tender grapes upon your branches, the devil and his foxes will be sure to be at you. Therefore, endeavor to get as close as you can to two persons who are mentioned hard by my text, namely, the King and His spouse. First, keep close to Christ, for this is your life. And next, keep close to His Church, for this is your comfort. Get among elderly Christian people—seek to catch up with those who have long known the Lord, those who are farther on the heavenly road than you are. Pilgrims to Zion should go to Heaven in company and often, when they go in company, and they can get a Mr. Great-Heart to go before them, it saves them from many a Giant Slay-Good and many a Giant Grim—and they get a safe and happy journey to the Celestial City where otherwise they might have been buffeted and worried. Keep close to God’s people, whoever they may be—they are the best company for you, young Believers! Some Christians may, like Bunyan’s pilgrim, start on the road to Heaven, alone, but they miss much comfort which they might have had with companions of a kindred spirit. As for Christiana and her children and especially the younger folk, they will do well to keep in company with some one of the Lord’s champions, and with the rest of the army with banners who are marching towards the Celestial City! God bless and comfort all of you who know His name, henceforth and forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**SOLOMON’S SONG 8:11-14; ISAIAH 5:1-7; LUKE 13:6-9.**

Song of Solomon 8:11, 12. Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon. He leased the vineyard to keepers; everyone was to bring for the fruit thereof a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard, which is mine, is before me. “The great Husbandman has graciously leased His vineyard out to me, that I may keep it, and dress it. He has made it mine for the time being. I have some ground to till, some plants to tend, some vines to prune. It may not be a very large vineyard, but still, it is mine, and I am accountable for it and must look well to it. It is before me. I am thinking of it. I am caring for it, I am praying about it.”

12. You, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred. This is our resolve—that our greater Solomon shall have the profits and proceeds of His own vineyard. It is ours on lease, but the freehold is His. He “must have a thousand,” and we shall be well content with our share of the vintage—joyful and glad that we may have “two hundred.”

13. You that dwells in the gardens, the companions hearken to Your voice: cause me to hear it. “For to hear that voice will be far better than the ‘two hundred’ which shall be my share of the fruit! If I may have You with me, O my Lord, I will be better pleased, though my portion of fruit should be very small, indeed, for in having You, my portion will be great, indeed! I hear, my Lord, that some of Your people live with You until they are called Your companions. There are some whom You call Your friends. There are disciples whom Jesus loves. These ‘hearken to Your voice: cause me to hear it.’ Unstop my deaf ears, give me a sensitive spirit, let my soul thrill and my heart throb, and my whole being delight to obey every syllable that falls from Your blessed lips. ‘You that dwell in the gardens, the companions hearken to Your voice: cause me to hear it.’”

14. Make haste, my Beloved. “Do not let me have to wait long for You, O my Beloved! Even at the beginning of this service, cause me to realize Your presence.” [The exposition was always the first part of the service.—EOD.]

14. And be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices. “Are there mountains that divide me from You? Come and leap over them, for You are swift of foot and sure of standing—‘Be You like a roe or a young hart,’ and when You come, the mountains of division shall change into mountains of spices, and all around me shall be sweet.”

Isaiah 5:1. Now will I sing to my Well-Beloved a song of my Beloved touching His vineyard. My Well-Beloved has a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. You and I, dear Friends, are placed in a position where we have very choice opportunities of glorifying our God. We are like “a vineyard in a very fruitful hill,” most favorably placed for fruitfulness. The Well-Beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill—

2. And He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and He expected that it should bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. Is that my case? Is it your case, dear Friend? Has even our religion been a false thing? Has it been like wild grapes or poisonous berries? Have we been, at times, right only by chance and have we never carefully and sedulously sought to serve our Lord, or to bring forth fruit to His praise? O Lord, You know!

3-6. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done to it? Why, then, when I expected that it should bring forth good grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste. There is no destruction like that which comes when God destroys the fruitless vineyard! When a human enemy or the wild boar out of the forest lays it waste, it may be restored again, but if, in righteous wrath, the Divine Owner of the vineyard, Himself, lays it waste, what hope remains for it? “It shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste”—

6, 7. It shall not be pruned, nor dug; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant: and He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. This passage has a special reference to God’s ancient people and one cannot read it without noting how literally this terrible threat has been fulfilled!

Luke 12:6. He spoke also this parable, A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Let us, everyone, read this parable as if our Lord Jesus Christ were now speaking it for the first time to each of us. There is a lesson here which we shall do well to heed.

7-9. Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and found none: cut it down; why cumbers it the ground? And he answering said to him, Lord, let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it, and fertilize it: and if it bears fruit, well: and if not, then after that you shall cut it down. “In that case, I will plead for it no longer, for it will have had its full time of testing and every opportunity of bearing fruit—‘After that you shall cut it down.”’ The parable is so simple that it needs no explanation and, therefore, our Lord Jesus has not given any. May we all make a personal application of its solemn teaching! Amen.

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PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.  
Sermon #1190 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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A SONG AMONG THE LILIES  
NO. 1190

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 30, 1874, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies.” Song of Solomon 2:16.**

LAST Sabbath, in our morning sermon, [No. 1189, THE TURNING POINT], we began at the beginning and described the turning point in which the sinner sets his face towards his God and for the first time gives practical evidence of spiritual life in his soul. He bestirs himself, he goes to his Father’s house and speedily is pressed to his Father’s bosom, forgiven, accepted and rejoiced over. This morning we are going far beyond that stage to a position which I may call the very crown and summit of the spiritual life! We would conduct you from the doorstep to the innermost chamber—from the outer court to the Holy of Holies—and we pray the Holy Spirit to enable each one of us who have entered in by Christ Jesus, the Door, to pass boldly into the secret place of the tabernacle of the Host High, and sing with joyful heart the words of our text, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.”—

*“For He is mine and I am His,  
The God whom I adore.  
My Father, Savior, Comforter,  
Now and for evermore.”*

The passage describes a high state of Divine Grace and it is worthy of note that the description is full of Christ! This is instructive, for this is not an exceptional case, it is only one fulfillment of a general rule. Our estimate of Christ is the best gauge of our spiritual condition. As the thermometer rises in proportion to the increased warmth of the air, so does our estimate of Jesus rise as our spiritual life increases in vigor and fervency! Tell me what you think of Jesus and I will tell you what to think of yourself! Christ is, yes, more than all, when we are thoroughly sanctified and filled with the Holy Spirit. When pride of self fills up the soul, there is little room for Jesus—but when Jesus is fully loved—self is subdued and sin driven out of the throne.

If we think little of the Lord Jesus we have very great cause to account ourselves spiritually blind, naked, poor and miserable. The rebel despises his lawful sovereign, but the favored courtier is enthusiastic in his praise. Christ Crucified is the revealer of many hearts—the touchstone by which the pure gold and the counterfeit metal are discerned! His very name is as a refiner’s fire and the fuller’s soap. False professors cannot endure it, but true Believers triumph in it! We are growing in Grace when we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Let everything else be gone and let Christ fill up the entire space of our soul—then, and only

then—are we rising out of the vanity of the flesh into the real life of God!

Beloved, the most grand facts in all the world to a truly spiritual man are not the rise and fall of empires, the marches of victory, or the desolations of defeat. He cares neither for crowns nor miters, swords nor shields. His admiring gaze is wholly fixed upon Christ and His Cross and cause! To him, Jesus is the center of history! The soul and core of Providence! He desires no knowledge so much as that which concerns his Redeemer and Lord! His science deals with what Jesus is and what He is to be—what He has done, what He is doing—and what He will do! The Believer is mainly anxious as to how Jesus can be glorified and how sinners can be brought to know Him. That which concerns the honor of Jesus is our chief concern from day to day! As for other matters, let the Lord do as He wills with them, only let Jesus Christ be magnified and all the rest of the world’s story has small significance for us!

The Beloved is the head and front, the heart and soul of the Christian’s delight when his heart is in its best state. Our text is the portrait of a heavenly-minded child of God, or rather, it is the music of his wellstringed harp when love as the minstrel touches the tender chords—“My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies.” We shall note then, first, that here is a delighting to have Christ. Secondly, a delighting to belong to Christ. And thirdly, a delighting at the very thought of Christ.

I. First, here is A DELIGHTING TO HAVE CHRIST. “My Beloved is mine.” The spouse makes this the first of her joy notes, the cornerstone of her peace, the fountain of her bliss, the crown of her glory. Observe, here, that where such an expression is truthfully used, the existence of the Beloved is matter of fact. Skepticism and questioning have no place with those who thus sing. There are dreamers, nowadays, who cast doubt on everything. They call themselves philosophers and professing to know something of science, they make statements worthy only of idiots and demand for their self-evident false assertions the assent of rational men. The word, “philosopher,” will soon come to mean a lover of ignorance—and the term, “a scientific man”—will be understood as meaning a fool who has said in his heart there is no God.

Such attacks upon the eternal Truths of our holy faith can have no effect upon hearts enamored of the Son of God, for, dwelling in His immediate Presence, they have passed the stage of doubt. They have left the region of questioning far behind and in this matter have entered into rest. The power of love has convinced us—to entertain a doubt as to the reality and glory of our Well-Beloved would be torment to us—and therefore love has cast it out. We use no “perhapses,” “buts,” or “ifs” concerning our Beloved! We say positively that He is and that He is ours. We believe that we have better evidence of His being, power, Godhead and love to us than can be given for any other fact. So far from being abashed by the quibbles of skeptics, or quailing beneath the question, “Is there such a Beloved?” we are not hesitant to answer in this matter, for we know that there is! Our love laughs at the question and does not condescend to answer it except by bidding those who seriously inquire—“come and see” for yourselves!

We have always found, Beloved, that when a time of chilling doubt has come over us—and such shivering fits will come—we have only to return to meditations upon Jesus and He becomes His own evidence by making our hearts burn within us with love of His Character and Person—and then doubt is doomed! We do not slay our unbelief by reason, but we annihilate it by affection! The influence of love to Jesus upon the soul is so magical—I wish I had a better word—so elevating, so ravishing, so transporting! It gives such a peace and inspires such holy and lofty aspirations, that the effect proves the cause. That which is holy is true and that which is true cannot rise out of that which is false! We may safely judge a tree by its fruit and a doctrine by its results—that which produces in us selfdenial, purity, righteousness and truth—cannot itself be false—and yet the love of Jesus does this beyond everything else!

There must be truth for a cause where the Truth of God is the effect! And thus Love, by the savor which it spreads over the soul by contemplation of Christ, puts its foot upon the neck of Doubt and triumphantly utters bold, confident declarations which reveal the full assurance of faith! New-born love to Jesus, while yet in its cradle like a young Hercules, takes the serpents of Doubt and strangles them! He who can say from his heart, “My Beloved,” is the man or woman who is in the way to confirmed faith! Love cannot, will not, doubt—it casts away the crutches of argument and flies on the wings of conscious enjoyment, singing her nuptial hymn, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.”

In the case before us the love of the heavenly-minded one is perceived and acknowledged by herself. “My Beloved,” says she. It is no latent affection, she knows that she loves Him and solemnly avows it. She does not whisper, “I hope I love the peerless One,” but she sings, “My Beloved.” There is no doubt in her soul about her passion for the altogether lovely One. Ah, dear Friends, when you feel the flame of love within your soul and give it practical expression, you will no longer inquire, “Do I love the Lord or not?” Then your inner consciousness will dispense with evidences! Those are dark days when we require evidences—well may we, then, fast, for the Bridegroom is not with us! But when He abides with us, enjoyment of His fellowship supersedes all evidences!

I need no evidence to prove that food is sweet when it is still in my month! I need no evidence of the existence of the sun when I am basking in his beams and enjoying his light! And even so, we need no evidence that Jesus is precious to us when, like a bundle of myrrh, He perfumes our bosom! When we are anxious doubters as to our safety and questioners of our own condition, it is because we are not living with Jesus as we ought to be. But when He brings us to His banqueting house and we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with Him and with the Father—and then we believe and are sure—and our love to Jesus is indisputable because it burns within too fervently to be denied!

Why, when a Christian is in a right state, his love to Jesus is the mightiest force in his nature! It is an affection which, like Aaron’s rod, swallows up all other rods! It is the mainspring of his action and sways his whole body, soul and spirit. As the wind sweeps over all the strings of the Alolian harp and causes them all to vibrate, so does the love of Jesus move every power and passion of our soul—and we feel in our entire being that our Beloved is, indeed, ours, and that we love Him with all our hearts! Here, then, is the Beloved realized, and our love realized, too.

But the pith of the text lies here, our possession of Him is proven. We know it and we know it on good evidence—“My Beloved is mine.” You know it is not a very easy thing to reach this point. Have you ever thought of the fact that to claim the Lord and call Him, “my God,” is a very wonderful thing? Who was the first man in the Old Testament who is recorded as saying, “My God”? Was it not Jacob, when he slept at Bethel and saw the ladder which reached to Heaven? Even after that heavenly vision, it took him much effort to reach to, “My God.” He said, “If God will be with me and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God.”

Only after long experience of Divine goodness could he climb up to the height of saying, “My God.” And who is the first man in the New Testament that calls Jesus, “My Lord and My God”? It was Thomas, and he needed abundant proofs because he spoke thus—“Except I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.” Only when He had received such proofs could He exclaim, “My Lord and my God.” Blessed are they who reach it by simpler faith—who have not seen and yet have believed. “My Beloved” is a strong expression. “Beloved” is sweet, but, “MY Beloved” is sweetest of all! If you think of it, it is no little thing to claim God as ours, to claim Jesus, the Beloved, as ours, yes, to put it in the singular and call Him mine!

And yet, when the Believer’s heart is in the right condition, he makes the claim and is warranted in so doing—for Jesus Christ is the portion of all Believers! His Father gave Him to us and He has given Himself to us! Jesus was made over to every believing soul as his personal possession in the Eternal Covenant ordered in all things and sure. Jesus actually gave Himself for us in His Incarnation, becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh! He has made Himself ours by His passion and death, loving us and giving Himself for us, to save us from our sins! He has also given us power to appropriate Him by the gracious gift of faith, by which we are in very deed married to Him and are enabled to call Him the Husband of our souls, who is ours to have and to hold, for better, for worse, for life and for death, by a bond of marriage union which neither death nor Hell, time nor eternity can break! Jesus is ours by the promise, the Covenant and oath of God! A thousand assurances and pledges, bonds and seals, secure Him to us as our portion and everlasting heritage.

This precious possession becomes to the Believer his sole treasure . “My Beloved is mine,” he says, and in that sentence he has summed up all his wealth! He does not say, “My wife, my children, my home, my earthly comforts are mine.” He is almost afraid to say so, because while he is yet speaking they may cease to be his—the beloved wife may sicken before his eyes, the child may need a tiny coffin, the friend may prove a traitor—and the riches may take to themselves wings. Therefore the wise man does not care to say too positively that anything here below is his! Indeed, he feels that in very truth they are not his, but only lent to him, “to be returned someday.” But the Beloved is his own and his possession of Him is most firm. Neither does the Believer, when his soul is in the best state, so much rejoice even in his spiritual privileges as in the Lord from whom they come!

He has righteousness, wisdom, sanctification and redemption. He has both Grace and Glory secured to him, but he prefers, rather, to claim the fountain than the streams! He clearly sees that these choice mercies are only his because they are Christ’s—and only his because Christ is his! Oh, what would all the treasures of the Covenant be to us if it were possible to have them without Christ? Their very sap and sweetness would be gone! Having our Beloved to be ours, we have all things in Him and, therefore, our main treasure, yes, our only treasure is our Beloved! O you saints of God, was there ever a possession like Christ? We have our beloveds, our daughters of earth, but what are our beloveds compared with Him? He is the Son of God and the Son of Man! The Darling of Heaven and the Delight of earth! He is the Lily of the valley and the Rose of Sharon!

He is perfect in His Character, powerful in His atoning death, mighty in His living plea! He is such a Lover that all earthly loves put together are not worthy to touch the hem of His garment, or loose the lace of His shoes! He is so dear, so precious, that words cannot describe Him nor pencil depict Him! But this we will say of Him—He is “the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely”—and He is ours! Do you wonder that we glory in this fact and count this the crowning delight of our lives, “My Beloved is mine”? The very tenure upon which we hold this priceless possession is a matter to glory in! O worldlings, you cannot hold your treasures as we hold ours! If you knew all, you would never say of anything, “It is mine,” for your holding is too precarious to constitute possession. It is yours till that frail thread of life shall snap, or that bubble of time shall burst!

You have only a leasehold of your treasures, terminable at the end of one frail life. Whereas ours is an eternal freehold, an everlasting entail! “My Beloved is mine”—I cannot lose Him, nor can He be taken from me! He is mine forever, for, “who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” So that, while the possession is rare, the tenure is rare, also. And it is the life of our life and the light of our delight that we can sing—

*“Yes, You are mine, my blessed Lord,*

***O my Beloved, You are mine!  
And, purchased with Your precious blood, My God and Savior, I am Yours.  
MY CHRIST! Oh, sing it in the heavens,  
Let every angel lift his voice!***

***Sound with ten thousand harps His praise, With me, you heavenly hosts, rejoice!  
The Gift unspeakable is given,  
The Grace of God has made Him mine!  
And, now, before both earth and Heaven,  
Lord, I will own that I am Yours.”***

Now, beloved Friends, I cannot talk about this as I feel. I can only give you hints of that which fills me with joy. I beg you to contemplate for a single moment the delight which is stored up in this fact, that the blessed Son of God, the “brightness of the Father’s Glory,” is all our own! Whatever else we may have, or may not have, He is ours! I may not exhibit in my character all the Divine Grace I could wish, but, “My Beloved is mine.” I may have only one talent, but “My Beloved is mine.” I may be very poor and very obscure, but, “My Beloved is mine.” I may have neither health nor wealth, but, “My Beloved is mine.” I may not be what I want to be, but, “My Beloved is mine.” Yes, He is altogether mine! His Godhead and His manhood, His life, His death, His attributes and prerogatives—yes, all He is, all He was, all He ever will be, all He has done—and all He ever will do, is mine!

I possess not a portion of Christ, but the whole of Him! All His saints own Him, but I own Him as much as if there were never another saint to claim Him! Child of God, do you see this? In other inheritances, if there are many heirs, there is so much the less for each. But in this great possession everyone who has Christ has a whole Christ all to himself—from the head of much fine gold, down to His legs, which are as pillars of marble! The whole of His boundless heart of love, His whole arm of infinite might and His whole head of matchless wisdom—all is for you, Beloved! Whoever you may be, if you do, indeed, trust in Jesus, He is all your own! My Beloved is all mine and absolutely mine! He is not mine to merely look at and talk about—but mine to trust in, to speak to, to depend upon, to fly to in every troublous hour! Yes, He is mine to feed upon, for His flesh is meat, indeed! And His blood is drink, indeed!

Our Beloved is not ours only to use in certain ways, but ours outright, without restriction. I may draw what I will from Him and both what I take and what I leave are mine! He Himself in His ever-glorious Person is mine, and mine always—mine when I know it and mine when I do not know it— mine when I am sure of it and mine when I doubt it! He is mine by day and mine by night! He is mine when I walk in holiness, yes, and mine when I sin, for, “if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” He is mine on the hill Mizar and mine in the swellings of Jordan! He is mine by the grave where I bury those I love and mine when I shall be buried there myself! He is mine when I rise again— mine in judgment and mine in Glory—He is forever mine!

Note well that it is written, “My Beloved is mine,” in the singular! He is yours, I am glad of it—but still, to me, it is most sweet that He is mine! It is well to bless God that others have a possession in Christ, but what would that matter if we were strangers to Him, ourselves? The marrow and the fatness lie in the personal pronoun singular, “My Beloved is mine.” I am so glad that Jesus loves me. Oh for a blessed grip with both hands on such a Christ as this! Observe well that He is ours as our Beloved so that He is ours as whatever our love makes of Him. Our love can never praise Him enough, or speak well enough of Him. She thinks all descriptions fall short of His deserving—well, then—Jesus is ours at His best! If we think Him so glorious, He is ours in all that glory!

Our love says that He is a fair, lovely, sweet and precious Christ—and let us be sure that, however lovely, sweet and precious He is, He is all ours! Our love says there is none like He—He is King of kings and Lord of lords! He is the ever blessed! Well, as the King of kings and Lord of lords He is yours! You cannot think too much of Him, but when you think your best He is yours at that best! He has not a glory so high that it is not yours, nor a luster so brilliant that it is not yours. He is my Beloved and I would gladly extol Him, but I can never get beyond this golden circle— when I most extol Him, He is still mine!

Here, then, is the basis of Christian life, the foundation on which it rests—to know that most surely Christ is altogether ours is the beginning of wisdom, the source of strength, the star of hope, the dawn of Heaven!

II. The second portion of the text deals with DELIGHTING TO BELONG TO CHRIST. “I am His.” This is as sweet as the former sentence. I would venture to put a question to each loving wife here present—when you were married, which was the sweetest thought to you—that you were your husband’s, or that he was yours? Why, you feel that neither sentence would be sweet alone—they are necessary to each other! Ask any fond, loving heart which of these declarations could best be parted with, and they will tell you that neither can be. Christ is mine, but if I were not His, it would be a sorry case. And if I were His and He were not mine it would be a wretched business. These two things are joined together with diamond rivets—“My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” Put the two together, and you have reached the summit of delight!

That we are His is a fact that may be proven —yes, it should need no proving but be manifest to all that “I am His.” Certainly we are His by creation—He who made us should have us. We are His because His Father gave us to Him and we are His because He chose us! Creation, donation, election are His triple hold upon us! We are His because He bought us with His blood. We are His because He called us by His Grace. We are His because He is married to us and we are His spouse. We are His, moreover, to our own consciousness, because we have heartily, from the inmost depths of our being, given ourselves up to Him—bound by love to

Him forever! We feel we must have Christ and be Christ’s, or die—“For me to live is Christ.” Brothers and Sisters, mind you attend to this clause! I am sure you will if the former one is true to you. If you can say, “My Beloved is mine,” you will be sure to add, “I am His, I must be His, I will be His! I live not unless I am His, for I count that if I am not His I am dead— and I only live when I live to Him!” My very soul is conscious that I am His!

Now this puts very great honor upon us. I have known the time when I could say, “My Beloved is mine” in a very humble, trembling manner. But I did not dare to add, “I am His,” because I did not think I was worth His having. I dared not hope that, “I am His,” would ever be written in the same book side by side with, “My Beloved is mine.” Poor Sinner, first lay hold on Jesus and then you will discover that Jesus values you! You will prize Him first and then you will find out that He prizes you—and that though you do not feel worthy to be flung on a dunghill—yet Jesus has put a value upon you, saying, “Since you were precious in My sight you have been honorable, and I have loved you.” It is no small joy to know that we poor sinners are worth Christ’s having and that He has even said, “They shall be Mine in the day when I make up My jewels.”

This second part of the text is as absolutely true as the first. “I am His”—not my goods only, nor my time, nor my talents, nor what I can spare, but, “I am His”! I fear that some Christians have never understood this. They give the Lord a little of their surplus which they never miss. The poor widow who gave all her living had the true idea of her relation to her Lord. She would have put herself into the treasury if she could, for she felt, “I am His.” As for myself, I wish I could be dropped bodily through the little slit of Christ’s treasure box and be in His casket forever, never to be heard of any more as my own, but to be wholly my Lord’s! Paul desired to spend and be spent. It is not easy to do those two things distinctly with money, for when you spend a thing, it is spent at once.

But the Apostle meant that he would spend himself by activity and then, when he could do no more, he would be glad to be spent by passive endurance for Christ’s sake. The Believer feels that he belongs absolutely to Jesus—let the Lord employ him as He may, or try him as He pleases— let Him take away all earthly friends from him or surround him with comforts! Let Him either depress him or exalt him! Let Him use him for little things or great things, or not use him at all, but lay him on the shelf—it is enough that the Lord does it and the true heart is content—for it truthfully confesses, “I am His. I have no mortgage or lien upon myself, so that I can call a part of my being my own—but I am absolutely and unreservedly my Lord’s sole property!” Do you feel this, Brothers and Sisters? I pray God you may!

Blessed be God, this is true forever—“I am His”—His today, in the house of worship and His tomorrow in the house of business! I am His as a singer in the sanctuary and His as a toiler in the workshop. I am His when I am preaching and equally His when I am walking the streets. I am His while I live. I am His when I die! I am His when my soul ascends and my body lies rotting in the grave! The whole personality of my manhood is altogether His forever and forever! This belonging to the Well-Beloved is a matter of fact and practice—a thing to be talked about, only—but to be really acted upon! I am treading on tender ground, now, but I would to God that every Christian could really say this without lying—“I do live unto Christ in all things, for I am His. When I rise in the morning I wake up as His. When I sit down to a meal I eat as His and drink as His.

“I eat, and drink, and sleep unto the Lord, in everything giving thanks unto Him. It is blessed, even, to sleep as the Lord’s Beloved, to dream as His Abrahams and Jacobs do, to awake at night and sing like David, and then drop off to “sleep in Jesus.” “It is a high condition,” you say. I grant it, but it is where we ought to abide. The whole of our time and energy should be consecrated by this great master principle, “I am His.” Can you say it? Never rest till you can! And if you can, Beloved, it involves great privilege! “I am His,” then am I honored by having such an Owner! If a horse or a sheep is said to belong to the Queen, everybody thinks much of it—now, you are not the Queen’s, but you are the Lord’s—and that is far better! Through belonging to Christ you are safe, for He will surely keep His own. He will not lose His own sheep—He paid too dear a price for them to lose them! Against all the powers of earth and Hell the Redeemer will hold His own and keep them to the end. If you are His, He will provide for you.

A good husband cares for his spouse and even thus the Lord Jesus Christ cares for those who are betrothed unto Him. You will be perfected, too, for whatever Christ has, He will make worthy of Himself and bring it to Glory! It is because we are His that we shall get to Heaven, for He has said, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am.” Because they are His, He would have them with Him! Now, give your thoughts license to wonder that any of us should be able to say, “I am His.” “I who used to be so giddy and thoughtless. So skeptical and perhaps profane, I am His.” Yes, and some of you can say, “I who used to be passionate and proud. I who was a drunkard. I whose lips were black with blasphemy, I am His.”

Glory be unto You, O Jesus Christ, for this, that You have taken up such worthless things as we are and made us Yours! No longer do we belong to this present evil world—we live for the world to come! We do not even belong to the Church, so as to make it our master—we are part of the flock, but like all the rest we belong to the Great Shepherd! We will not give ourselves up to any party or become the slave of any denomination, for we belong to Christ! We do not belong to sin, or self, or Satan—we belong entirely, exclusively and irrevocably to the Lord Jesus Christ! Another master waits upon us and asks us to give our energies to his services, but our answer is, “I am already engaged.”

Satan asks “How is that?” “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus and, therefore, from now on, trouble me no more.” “But can you not serve me in part?” “No, Sir, I cannot serve two masters! I am not like a

man who can do as he pleases—I have no time to call my own.” “How is that?” “I belong to Christ! I am wholly His! If there is anything to be done for Him, I am His man to the best of my ability. I decline no service to which He calls me, and I can serve no other Lord.” Lord Jesus, help each one of us now to say—

*“I am Yours and Yours, alone,  
This I gladly, fully own.  
And in all my works and ways,  
Only now would seek Your praise.”*

III. To conclude—the saint feels DELIGHT IN THE VERY THOUGHT OF CHRIST. “He feeds among the lilies.” When we love any persons and we are away from home, we delight to think of them and to remember what they are doing. You are a husband travailing in a foreign land. This morning you said to yourself, “At this time they are just getting up at home.” Perhaps the time is different, for you are in another longitude, and you say to yourself, “Ah, now the dear children are just getting ready to go to Sunday school.” And by-and-by you think they are at dinner. And so the delight in the thought of Christ made the Church say, “He feeds among the lilies.” She was pleased to think of where He was and what He was doing!

Now, where is Jesus? What are these lilies? Do not these lilies represent the pure in heart with whom Jesus dwells? The spouse used the imagery which her Lord had put into her mouth. He said, “As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.” And she appropriates the symbol to all the saints. A preacher who is great at spiritualizing has well said on this verse, “The straight stalk, standing up erect from the earth, its flowers as high from the ground as possible—do they not tell us of heavenly-mindedness? Do they not seem to say, ‘set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth’? And if the spotless snow of the leaves teaches us of Divine Grace, then the gold of the anthers tells us of that crown which shall be the reward of Divine Grace!”

The violet and the primrose in spring nestle close to the earth, as if in sympathy with her chill condition, but the lily lifts itself up towards Heaven in sympathy with the summer’s light and splendor! The lily is frail and such are the saints of God. If Jesus were not among them to protect them, the wild beasts would soon tread them down. Frail as they are, they are surpassingly lovely and their beauty is not that which is made with hands. It is a beauty put upon them by the Lord, for, “they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” The saints work not for life and spin no righteousness of their own—and yet the royal righteousness which adorns them far surpasses all that wisdom could devise or wealth procure!

Where, then, is my Lord today? He is up and away, among the lilies of Paradise! In imagination I see those stately rows of milk-white lilies growing no longer among thorns! They are lilies which are never soiled with the dust of earth, which forever glisten with the eternal dews of fellowship while their roots drink in unfading life from the river of the Water of Life which waters the garden of the Lord. There is Jesus! Can you see Him? He is fairer, even, than the lilies which bow their heads around Him! But He is here, too, where we are, like lilies which have scarcely opened yet, lily buds as yet, but still watered by the same River and yielding, in our measure, the same perfume! O you lilies of Christ’s own planting, He is among you! Jesus is in this house today, the unction which has made His garments so fragrant is discerned among us!

But what is He doing among the lilies? It is said, “He feeds among the lilies.” He is feeding Himself, not on the lilies, but among them. Our Lord finds solace among His people! His delights are with the sons of men! He joys to see the Graces of His people, to receive their love and to discern His own image in their faces! As He said to the woman of Samaria, “Give Me to drink,” so does He say to each one of His people, “Give Me to drink.” And He is refreshed by their loving fellowship! But the text means, also, that He is feeding His people. He feeds that part of His flock redeemed by blood of which we read that, “the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them and shall lead them into living fountains of waters.” Nor does He forget that part of His flock which is in the low lands of earth—He gives them, also, their portion of food. He has fed us this morning, for He is the Good Shepherd and leaves none of His sheep to famish.

Then what shall I do? Well, I will abide among the lilies! His saints shall be my companions! Where they flourish I will try to grow. I will be often in their assemblies. Yes, and I will be a lily, too. By faith I will neither toil nor spin in a legal fashion, but I will live by faith upon the Son of God, rooted in Him! I would be pure in life and I would have the golden anther of looking to the recompense of the reward. I would lift up my soul aloft towards Heaven as the lily lifts up its flower. Jesus will come and feed by my side if I am a lily—and even I may yield Him some pleasure by my humble gratitude! Beloved, this is a choice subject, but it is more sweet as a matter of fact than mere hearing can make it!

“He feeds among the lilies.” This is our joy—that Christ is in His Church! The pith of all I want to say is this—never think of yourself or of the Church apart from Jesus. The spouse says, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” She weaves the two into one! The cause of the Church is the cause of Christ! The work of God will never be accomplished by the Church apart from Christ! Her power lies in His being in her midst! He feeds among the lilies and therefore those lilies shall never be destroyed— their sweetness shall make all the earth fragrant! The Church of Christ, working with her Lord, must conquer, but never if she tries to stand alone, or to compass any end apart from Him. As for each one of us, personally, let us not think of ourselves apart from Christ, nor of Christ apart from us!

Let George Herbert’s prayer be ours—  
*“Oh, be mine still, still make me Yours,*

*Or rather make nor mine nor Yours.”*  
Let mine melt into Yours. Oh, to have joint stock with Christ and to trade under one name! To be married to Christ and lose our old name and use His name, and say, “I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.” As the wife is lost in the husband, and the stone in the building, and the branch in the vine, and the member in the head, we would be so amalgamated with Christ, and have such fellowship with Him that there shall be no more mine nor Yours!

Last of all, poor Sinner, you will say, “There is nothing in all this for me,” and I should not like to send you away without a word. You are saying, “This is a day of good tidings, but it is only for God’s own people.” I beg you to read through the first and second chapters of the Song and see who it was that said, “My Beloved is mine,” because I should not wonder but what you are very like she. She was one who confessed, “I am black,” and so are you. Perhaps Grace will, one of these days, help you to say, “I am comely.” She was one with whom her mother’s children were angry— perhaps you, too, are a speckled bird. She had done servile work, for they made her a keeper of the vineyards. I should not wonder but what you are doing servile work, too, trying to save yourself instead of accepting the salvation which Jesus has already worked out for sinners!

So it came to pass that she became very sorrowful and passed through a winter of rain and cold. Perhaps you are there. And yet you know she came out of it—her winter was past and the birds began to sing! She had been hidden in the secret places of the stairs, as you are now. But she was called out from the dust and cobwebs to see the face of her Lord! One thing I wish to whisper in your ears—she was in the clefts of the Rock. O Soul, if you can but get there—if you can shelter in the side of our Beloved—in that deep gash of the spear from which flowed blood and water—“to be of sin the double cure.” If you can get there, I say, though you are black and grimed with sin—and an accursed sinner only fit to be a firebrand in Hell—yet shall you, even you, be able to sing with all the rapture of the liveliest saint on earth!

And one day with all the transport of the brightest ones above, you will sing, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies.” There, go your way with those silver bells ringing in your ears! They ring a marriage peal to saints, but they also ring a cheery invitation to sinners—and this is the tune they are set to—Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Sinner, come! God bless you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Song of Solomon 2.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—660, 663, 614. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #1634B Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Son 2.16

LOVED AND LOVING  
NO. 1634B

AMONG THE GOLDEN APPLE TREES,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON.  
“My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies.” Song of Solomon 2:16.

“MY BELOVED”—this is a sweet name which our love takes liberty to apply to the Lord Jesus. His inexpressible beauty has won our affection and we cannot help loving Him whatever may come of it—whether He is ours or not and whether He smiles upon us or frowns—we love Him and cannot do otherwise. We are carried away by the torrent of His goodness and have no longer the control of our affections. As long as we live, we must and will love the Altogether Lovely One. Yes, He is and must be to me, “My Beloved.”

BUT suppose—suppose for a moment that we loved and had no right to love? Many a heart that has cried, “My Beloved,” has been wounded even unto death because it could not come at its choice, but was doomed never to exclaim, “My Beloved is mine.” The beloved was longed for but could not be grasped. This is often so in earthly love, since such love may be unlawful, or unwise, and in every case it is the source of grievous misery. Thank God, this is not the case with the soul enamored of Christ Jesus, for He freely presents Himself in the Gospel as the Object of our confidence and love! Though He is infinitely above us, yet He delights to be one with all His loving ones—and of His own will He gives Himself to us.

A polluted sinner may love the perfect Savior, for there is no word in Scripture to forbid. Yes, if a sinner would be wedded to the Lord of Glory, there is none to forbid it. Suppose that our possession of Jesus were a matter of doubt, as, alas, it is with far too many? That would be a door of sorrow, indeed. Life would be unhappy if it were soured by a question as to whether our Well-Beloved is ours or not. To an awakened and instructed mind it is anguish to be dubious of our hold of Christ—about this we must be sure, or be unhappy. All else may be in jeopardy, but, O most blessed Lord, never allow our possession of Yourself to be in dispute! It would be a poor thing to say, “My beloved may be mine,” or even, “He was mine,” or, “perhaps He is mine.” We cannot bear any verb but one in the indicative mood, present tense—“My beloved is mine.”

Suppose yet, once again, that though we loved, and rightly loved, and actually possessed the beloved object, yet our affection was not returned. Ah, misery! To love and not be loved! Blessed be God, we can not only sing, “My Beloved is mine,” but also, “I am His!” He values me, He delights in me, He loves me! It is very wonderful that Jesus should think us worth the having but since He does, we find a matchless solace in the fact! Which is the greater miracle—that He should be mine, or that I should be His? Certainly, the second is the surer ground of safety, for I cannot keep my treasures, since I am feebleness itself! But Jesus is able to preserve His own and none can pluck them out of His hands.

The truth that Jesus calls me His is enough to make a man dance and sing all the way between here and Heaven! Realize the fact that we are dear to the heart of our Incarnate God and amid the sands of this wilderness a fountain of overflowing joy is open before us!

THE TEXT IS FREE FROM ALL SUPPOSITION—it is the language of indisputable possession, the exclamation of a confidence which has made its assurance doubly sure! There are two positive verbs in the present tense and not the smell of a doubt has passed upon them. Here is a brave positiveness which fears no controversy, “my Beloved is mine and I am His.” Doubt it who may, no, if you must doubt it, ask Him! There He is, for, “He feeds among the lilies.” The spouse sees Him of whom she speaks. He may be a mere myth to others but He is a substantial, lovable, lovely and actually beloved Person to her!

He stands before her and she perceives His Character so clearly that she has a comparison ready for Him and likens Him to a gazelle feeding on the tender grass among the lilies. This is a very delightful state of heart. Some of us know what it is to enjoy it from year to year. Christ is ours and we know it. Jesus is present and, by faith, we see Him. Our marriage union with husband or wife cannot be more clear, more sure, more matter of fact than our oneness with Christ and our enjoyment of that oneness! Joy! Joy! JOY! He whom we love is ours! We can also see the other side of the golden shield, for He whom we prize beyond all the world also prizes us and we are His! Nothing in the universe deserves, for an instant, to be compared in value with this inestimable blessing!

We would not change with the cherubim—their chief places in the choirs of Heaven are poor as compared with the glory which excels—the glory of knowing that I am my best Beloved’s and He is mine! A place in Christ’s heart is more sweet, more honorable, more dear to us than a throne among the angels! Not even the delights of Paradise can produce a rival to this ecstatic joy—“My Beloved is mine, and I am His.”

YET THE TEXT HAS A NOTE OF CAUTION. The condition of fully assured love is as tender as it is delightful. The spouse, in the seventh verse, had charged her companions by all things of gentleness, delicacy and timidity—“by the roes and by the hinds of the field”—to refrain from offending her Beloved while He deigned to abide with her. She had also compared Him to a roe or a young hart, rather hiding than revealing Himself, and here she likens Him to the same roe, quietly pasturing in the gardens, so gently moving that He does not break or even bruise a lily, but softly insinuates Himself among their delicate beauties as one of the same dainty mold.

This hints, in poetic imagery, at the solemn and sacred Truth of God that the dearest fellowship with Jesus can never be known by the rough and the coarse, the hard and the restless, but remains the priceless heritage of the lowly and meek. And these can only retain it by a studious care which cherishes love and guards it from even the least intrusion. A gazelle among the lilies would start at the bark of a fox and be gone at the voice of a stranger. And, therefore, soft whispers of inward love must say, “Take us the foxes, the little foxes,” and nimble hands with noiseless fingers must draw up the lattice that kindly eyes may look forth at the windows and may be seen of Him who delights in love.

The evident intent of the language is to set forth the delicacy of the highest form of holy fellowship. The Lord our God is a jealous God and that jealousy is most seen where most His love is displayed. The least sin, willfully indulged in, will grieve the Holy Spirit. Slights, forgetfulnesses and neglects will cause Him to turn away. If we would remain positively and joyously assured that the Beloved is ours and that we are His, we must use the utmost circumspection and holy vigilance. No man gains full assurance by accident, or retains it by chance. As the gentle hind wanders in lovely spots where the pure white lilies grow and as he shuns the places profaned by strife and foul with rank weeds and nettles, so does the Lord Jesus come to holy minds perfumed with devotion and consecrated to the Lord—and there, in sacred quiet—He finds solace and abides with His saints.

May the Lord preserve us from pride, from self-seeking, from carnality and wrath, for these things will chase away our delights even as dogs drive off the hind of the morning! Both our inward and outward walk must be eagerly watched lest anything should vex the Bridegroom. A word, a glance, a thought may break the spell and end the happy rest of the heart—and it may be a long while before the blessing is regained. We have, some of us, learned by bitter experience that it is difficult to establish a settled peace and easy enough to destroy it. The costly vase, the product of a thousand laborious processes, may be broken in a moment! And so the supreme delight of communion with the Lord Jesus, the flower of 10,000 eminent delights, may be shattered by a few moments’ negligence.

Hence the one lesson of our little sermon is—I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my Love, till He please”—

*“For I am jealous of my heart  
Lest it should once from Him depart.  
Then should I lose my best delight  
Should my Beloved take to flight.”*

Mentone, December 10, 1881. BELOVED FRIENDS—In a few days I hope to turn my face homeward, much refreshed by laying aside the harness for a season. I beseech you continue your prayers for me—prayer which I value beyond all earthly treasures. If these sermons profit you, ask that I may have Grace to continue them. Entering upon a 27th volume, I entreat your help to increase their circulation, that they may have a wider range of influence.  
Yours heartily, *C. H. SPURGEON.*

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2442 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

“MY BELOVED IS MINE”  
NO. 2442

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, DECEMBER 8, 1895. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 11, 1887.

**“My beloved is mine, and I am His.”  
Song of Solomon 2:16.**

THIS is a short verse from the Song of Songs and I do not hesitate to say that it is the soul and heart of that Divine composition. The bride dressed in her richest poesy wears no jewel more precious than this diamond of full assured possession! There is poetry here which none of the sons of music can excel. It is the heart’s minstrelsy at its very best. This little sonnet might be sung in Heaven and the golden harps would be well employed if every string went with the accompaniment. How I wish you could, each one, sing it now with a clear sweet voice!—

*“Now I my best Beloved’s am,  
And He is mine.”*

Alas, many of the Lord’s own chosen and called ones are afraid to take up this chorus and join with us! I do not condemn them, but I am eager to comfort them. What would they give?—rather, what would they not give—if they could but say, “Christ is mine”? Yet they hesitate. The desire is strong, but the doubt is killing and they dare not sing with us. It seems too good, too great, too glorious a claim to come from their lips! They sometimes hope, but they as often fear. They make a dash for it, now and then, and trust that Christ is theirs—and then they subside into their former doubting. They are humble, modest, retiring—but I fear I must add—they are, at least in a measure, unbelieving!

I want to lead these true hearts up to the table that they may feast upon the dainties provided for faith. I know that even now, as they hear the text, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His,” they are saying, “Happy people that can speak thus, but I cannot. I am afraid it would be presumption and, perhaps, hypocrisy, on my part, if I were to use such language.” And yet, dear Heart, it is very possible that you have a perfect right to put in your claim—yes, and that you ought to be among the most confident and the most fully assured! What a pity it is that you should be losing so much joy! Yet some of the most true children of God walk in darkness at times and we have provision made for them under the circumstances—“Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” Oh, that I might be the means, by His Grace, of enabling some of you to trust more bravely and hold to your Lord in the darkness—for soon that darkness would be over!

Did I hear one mourn his faults and lament his temptations? This need not be a hindrance! She who first sang this priceless stanza was, herself, warring against enemies. Read the previous verse—“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.” Instead of letting go her Lord to hunt the foxes, she clung the more to Him and joined Him with herself in the effort to take them. “Foxes or no foxes,” she says, “my Beloved is mine.” Jesus belongs to us in our imperfect condition—while yet we are beset with many mischievous and cunning foes! The Song before us is found in our own Bible, which is a Book to be used on earth rather than in Heaven. While yet the foxes prowl around us we may sing, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.”

Indeed, it is by strength derived from such a cheering confidence that we are enabled to kill these foxes and preserve the tender clusters of grapes till they are ripe for our Lord. Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us not do ourselves the serious hurt of refusing the greatest of blessings for reasons which are not valid! Let us mourn our faults, but let us not, therefore, forego our privileges! I will not let my Lord go because I see a fox. No, rather, I will cling to Him the more closely. If that fox should hurt my vine, yet I have a better Vine in my Lord, and one which no fox can touch! Away, you beasts of the field—you sins, doubts and fears—for my heart dares to sing, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.”

I feel that I am a bearer of a tenfold portion to the Benjamin of the family. Joseph—I mean, Jesus—has sent it and I am eager to deliver it fresh from His dear hands! O trembling Believer, it is all for you! Receive it and eat abundantly thereof. I am under the impression that my Master has bid me remember that there is a Ruth here who only desires to glean—and she trembles while she gathers a few scanty ears. She has not the courage to take a sheaf, herself, but my Lord has said, “Let fall handfuls on purpose for her.” And I would try to do so, but I pray that timid Ruth may have courage enough to take up what I shall gladly let fall for her, for the good Boaz, in whose field I serve, has his eyes upon her and means more kindness to her than I can tell!

What I have to do, tonight, is to mention a few things which may help some timid one to say, “My Beloved is mine,” and then to do the same with regard to the second sentence in the text, “I am His.”

You ask, perhaps, “May I say, ‘My Beloved is mine?’” You know who that Beloved is. I have no need to tell you that. He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely! You believe that it is He who is the ever-blessed Son of God, who became Man for our sake and, as the GodMan, made atonement for our sin and, having died, has risen from the dead and gone into His Father’s within the veil where He ever makes intercession for us. It is that Christ who is the Light of Heaven, the Joy of everlasting bliss, the Adored of angels! It certainly does seem a great thing to call Him mine, to think that He should ever be mine, and that all He is, and all He has, and all He says, and all He does, and all He ever will be, is all mine! When a wife takes a husband to be hers, he becomes all hers, and she reckons that she has no divided possession in him. And it is certainly so with you, dear Heart, if Christ is yours. He is still yours and altogether yours even if it looks as though you were opening your mouth very wide to be able to say it. Some of you were brought up in a school which is full of the Law and you are afraid to say what the Gospel permits you to say—you have not yet dared to avail yourselves of your privileges! Some of God’s heirs are often kept in the back kitchen when they have a right to sit in the parlor and to eat of the dainties of their Lord! Some are kept from the joys to which they have a fair claim, so I am going to ask you a few questions to see whether you are one of them.

First, have you taken hold of Christ by faith? Faith is the hand with which we grasp the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you believed that Jesus is the Christ and that God has raised Him from the dead? Do you trust yourself wholly to Him? I say, “wholly”—with no other secret confidence. Do you lean your whole weight on Him? He that hangs on two branches, one of which is rotten, will go down. You had best trust your whole self with Christ and let Him be the top and bottom of your confidence. If you do that, then He is yours—this faith makes Him yours to your joyful experience! Listen to His own words—“God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” If you believe in Christ, you have Christ to be your everlasting life and you may say, “My Beloved is mine.”

I should hope that this is not a very difficult question for you to answer—you are either trusting in Christ or you are not. If you are not trusting in Christ, God forbid that I should exhort you to say what would be presumptuous! But if you are resting on Him who lived, loved and died that He might wash us from our sins in His blood—I say, if He is all your salvation and all your desire, then hesitate not to say, “My Beloved is mine.” There is no surer claim in the world than the claim of faith! God has given Christ to every believing sinner—be he who he may—God has given Christ to him by a covenant of salt and Christ is his, and shall be his forever! Poor Trembler, if you believe on Him, even you may say, “My Beloved is mine.”

Let me ask you another helpful question. Is He truly your Beloved, the Beloved of your soul? I remember well a dear Christian woman who frequently said to me, “I love Jesus, I know I do. But does He love me?” Her question used to make me smile. “Well,” I said, “that is a question that I never put to myself—‘If I love Him, does He love me?’ No, the question that used to puzzle me was, ‘Do I love Him?’ When I could once settle that point, I was never again the victim of your form of doubt.” If you love Christ, Christ loves you for sure, for your love to Christ is nothing more nor less than a beam out of the great sun of His love and the Grace that has created that love in your heart towards Him! If you do, indeed, love Him, proves that He loves you! Is it not so—“We love Him because He first loved us”? Did love ever get into the heart by any other door than that? I am sure that it never did! So that, if you love Him, you can say, “My Beloved is mine.”

There are many who may love on earth and never obtain the object of their affection. But if you love Christ, raise no question about His love to you! He is yours and you are His! That test may help someone who, perhaps, is standing trembling behind the door, full of blushes and afraid to come in among God’s people. To you, poor timid Soul, we say, “Come in, you blessed of the Lord, why do you stand outside? If you love Him, you are welcome to all He has.”

Next, I would help you with a third question. Is Jesus dear to you above all your possessions? Perhaps you have a great deal of this world’s goods. Do you set small store by all that you have as compared with Jesus? Could you see it all burn away, or melt away, or be stolen, rather than lose Christ? If you can say, “Yes,” to that question, then He is yours. Perhaps you have very little—a few earthly comforts, a narrow room and a scant pittance to live upon—but would you sooner have Christ than all the riches of the world, or would you be willing to sell Christ in order to rise in the world? Would you sell Him that you might be made rich, great and famous? You who are sick—which would you sooner have, your sickness and Christ, or go without Christ to be made healthy and strong? According to your answer to these enquiries will be my answer to the other questions, “Are you Christ’s and is Christ yours?” I hope that many of you can say, “O Sir, we would give all that we have, we would suffer all that might be suffered, we would part with the very light and our eyes, too, if we could but be sure that we might, each one, truly say, ‘My Beloved is mine.’” Well, if you love Christ beyond all earthly things, rest assured that He is yours!

Further, do you love Him beyond all earthly companions? Could you part with your dearest ones for His sake? Say, are you sure of this? Oh, then, He is assuredly yours! Do you love Him beyond all earthly objects? Yes, beyond the desire of learning, or honor, or position, or comfort— would you let all go for His dear sake? Many of His saints have had to do it and they have done it very cheerfully, and said with the Apostle, “Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him.” Can you go that length? If you can, then surely He is yours!

Let me further help you by another question. Is Jesus so fully your hope and your trust that you have no other? I have often led persons into liberty through that question. They have said, “I am afraid that I do not trust Christ.” I have then asked, “Well, what do you trust? Every man has a reliance of some sort—what are you trusting?” When I have pressed them closely, they have said, “Oh, we have no other trust! God forbid that we ever should have!” When I have mentioned their good works, they have said, “Good works? Why, we would be foolish, indeed, to talk of them!” When I have mentioned trusting in a priest, or in sacraments, they have scorned the thought—it has been loathsome to them. Then I have said, “If you have no other trust but Christ, and you are sure that you have a trust somewhere, then your trust is in Christ, and though you may question it, and doubt it, yet if you do so trust in Him as to trust nowhere else, He is yours and you are His.”

There is many a good and true Believer who, nevertheless, is afraid that he is not a Believer. When you are once on board ship, even if the vessel is tossed to and fro and you, yourself, are ill, perhaps sadly seasick, yet as long as that ship does not go down, you will not go down—for your safety now does not depend upon your health and strength, but upon the ship into which you have entered! So, if you have fled to Christ away from everything else, then, though you may sigh, and cry, and fear, and tremble—for all of which I am sorry, for I would have every man on board ship to be well and strong and able to handle the ropes—still, if you cannot touch a rope, and if you cannot even eat your meals in your cabin, yet, if you are aboard the ship, and if that ship gets safe to land, so will you! Therefore, be of good cheer! O poor Heart, if you are clean divorced from every confidence but Christ, then I believe that you are married to Christ, notwithstanding that you tremble, sometimes, and ask whether it is so or not! Let that thought help you.

I would further help you in this way. If Christ is yours, your thoughts go after Him. You cannot say that you love a person if you never think of him. You could not, I am sure, let another person fill your heart as Christ must fill His people’s hearts and yet never let that person occupy your thoughts. He to whom Christ belongs often thinks of Him. “Well,” says one, “I am so busy during the day that, often, my mind is taken up with my business and I do not think of Christ.” Do you know where those crows live that are feeding on that plowed field? They are going up and down the furrows, picking up all the worms they can find. And as you look at them, you cannot tell where their home is, can you? No, but wait till evening, when the day’s feeding is over—then you will see which way the crows fly and you will find out where their nests are! Do you see how quickly they are winging their way to yonder rookery?

So is it with us—while we are busy in the world, picking up the worms, as it were, we have to think about those things. We cannot do our business properly without our thoughts going that way. But when the business is over, when the evening comes—which way do you go then? When you have an opportunity for thought, when your mind is going to its resting place—which way do your thoughts fly? That shall be the true test! And if, when your thoughts are set free, they fly away to Jesus, rest assured that He is yours! That thought may help some of you poor trembling ones.  
We read of the Apostles, “Being let go, they went to their own company.” Just so. I heard a working man who was expounding that chapter very well. He said, “If some fellows were put in prison and they were let out, they would go to the first public house they see, for that is where they would find their company. Just so—“birds of a feather flock together.” Now when you are let go, when your mind gets out of the prison of your daily business, do you go to the world for your pleasure? Do you go to carnal things for your mirth, or do you fly to Christ? If you can answer, “My thoughts go naturally to Christ,” then you can truly say, “My Beloved is mine.”

Again, do you do more than this? Do you long for Christ’s company? If, “my Beloved” is, indeed, mine, I shall want to see Him! I shall want to speak with Him. I shall want Him to abide with me. How is it with you? There is a great deal of religion in the world which only consists of shells, or husks—the kernels are not there at all. A man goes upstairs and kneels down for a quarter of an hour and he says that he is praying, yet possibly he has not really prayed at all. Another opens his Bible and he reads a chapter and he says that he has been studying the Scriptures. Perhaps it has been a mere mechanical act and there has been no heart and soul in it. John Bradford, the famous martyr, used to say, “I have made a point of this, that I will never go from a duty till I have had communion with Christ in it.” And, when he prayed, he prayed till he did really pray. When he praised, he praised till he did truly praise. If he was bowing in humiliation before God, he humbled himself till he was actually humbled. If he was seeking communion with Christ, he would not go away with the pleasure of merely having sought, but he kept on seeking until he found, for he felt that he had done nothing aright till he had come into communion with God and into touch with Christ.

And, once more, if your Beloved is yours, you will acknowledge it to be so. Coming into this Tabernacle, or going down to the Communion Table, or gathering round the family altar—what is all that if Christ is not there? It should be with you as it is with a wife whose husband is far away across the sea. “Oh,” she cries, “that I could hear the music of his footsteps! The rooms seem all empty now that he is away. There is his portrait on the wall, but it only makes me sigh the more for my Beloved. The very dog, as he comes in, seems to know that his master is away and he makes me think of him.”

Is it so with you in regard to Christ? In every duty do you sigh for Him and long for Him? Holy Bernard was known to say and I believe that he could truly say it (it was in Latin, but I will give you the English of it), “O my Jesus, I never went from You without You!” He meant that he never left his knees and left Christ behind him. He never went out of the house of God and left Christ behind him. But he went through the outward act of devotion with a consciousness of the Presence of Christ. Now, if this is your habit—to keep up or to labor to keep up continued communion with Christ, and if you are longing for more and more of that communion— then, dear Friends, you are His, and He is yours!

Further, let me help you with a still closer question. Have you ever enjoyed that communion with Christ? Did you ever speak with Him? Have you ever heard His voice? I think I see you turning over the leaves of your diary! I hope you have not to go far back to read the record of your fellowship with your Lord. I hope that this morning was one instance of it and that this evening may be another! But are there not some special days, red-letter days, in your history? I recollect that Rutherford sent this message to one of his friends who was in great sorrow, “Tell him to remember Torwood.” Nobody knew what was meant except the two who had been to Torwood where they had enjoyed such fellowship with Christ that they could never forget it all their days! That is what David meant when He said, “Therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and the hill Mizar.” Those were some choice spots that he remembered where the Lord had met with him!

How can Christ be yours if you know nothing about communion with Him? Are you married to Him if He has never shown you His face and you have never heard His voice, and never spoken with Him? But if you have had Christ’s company, He has manifested Himself to you as He does not unto the world. He would never have shown you such things as these if you were not His. Ah, have you not, sometimes, crept out of the very dungeon of despair and seen your Lord’s blessed face—and in a moment you have been dancing for joy? Have you not lain on the bed of sickness, “weary, and worn, and sad,” till His Presence has made the chamber of affliction bright with the light of Heaven? Have you not, sometimes, at the dead of night, been weary in watching for sleep that would not come and your Lord has come to you—and then you have been afraid to go to sleep lest you should lose the joy of His Presence and wake up without Him?

Oh, some of us know what that experience means—when earth has been the vestibule of Heaven and when, even in our sickness and sadness, we have been on the very verge of Jordan—and we have smelt the fragrance of the spices that was wafted by the breath of the Spirit from the golden gardens on the other side of the stream! If you know anything experimentally about this matter, then you may conclude that your Beloved is, indeed, yours!

But supposing that you are not enjoying Christ’s Presence, I am going to put another question to you. Are you cast down when He is away? If you have grieved His Spirit, are you grieved? If Christ is gone, do you feel as if the sun, itself, had ceased to shine and the candle of your existence had been snuffed out in utter darkness? Do you cry when He is away—

*“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But now I find an aching void  
The world can never fill”?*

Oh, then, he is thine! If thou canst not bear his absence, he is thine. Last Thursday night, I preached a sermon which was intended to be very searching one, and I hope that it was. It was upon the text, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Now see the difficulty of a poor minister. If I preach very comforting sermons, there are sure to be hypocrites who suck them down, and say, “How delightful!” But when I preach a soul-searching sermon, some dear child of God, who is as precious to her Lord as gold tried in the furnace, takes everything to herself, and begins to be very sorrowful, and to say, “That sharp knife is meant for me, for I am not one of the Lord’s people.” Well, after last Thursday night’s sermon, a dear woman came to my vestry, brokenhearted, crying and sobbing. I hope that the discourse will be a blessing to her in the long run; but I protest that I never meant to preach to her at all, I was not aiming at her or at the sort of people to whom she belongs; it was a very different class whom I was addressing. If the preacher says anything about hypocrites, very often the hypocrites will not take it to heart, but the most sincere saint in the congregation very likely says, “Oh, I am afraid that I am a hypocrite!” If you are, you are an odd sort of hypocrite, for I never knew of a hypocrite who was afraid that he was one. He has not grace enough for that kind of fear, but just goes on in the self-conceit that all is right with him. I, for my part, feel more confidence in the brokenhearted tremblers than I do in the boasters who never have a question about their being all right, but set it down as an undisputed fact that they are in the covenant of grace. O beloved, I am glad if sometimes thou dost moan like a dove, and cry in the bitterness of thy spirit, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him!” It may seem to be a spot on your character, but this spot is the spot of God’s children, and I am not sorry to see it upon you. If the Prince Immanuel has left the town of Mansoul, then there can be no marriage bells or joyous music there until he comes back again. We must invite him and entreat him to return, we must clothe ourselves in sackcloth till he does come back; if we do not act thus, then he is not ours. If you can do without Christ, you shall do without Christ; but if you cannot do without him, if you cry,-”Give me Christ, or else I die,” then he shall be yours. Stretch out the hand of faith, and take him, and then say without hesitation, “My Beloved is mine.” I am not going on to the rest of the text; but I want to say just this,-if there is any man or woman here (and I know there are many), who can sit down in the pew, and quietly say, “Yes, weighing everything the preacher has said, and judging myself as severely as I can, yet I dare take Christ to be mine, and to say, ‘My Beloved is mine.’“ If that is your case, dear friend, then you shall get confirmatory evidence of this fact by the witness of the Spirit within your soul, which will very likely come to you in the form of perfect contentment of spirit, perfect rest of heart. “When I can say, ‘My God is mine,’ When I can feel thy glories shine; I tread the world beneath my feet, And all that earth calls good or great.”

“There,” says the believer, “now that my Beloved is mine, I have no other wish or want.” Now will he be like Simeon when he took that blessed Babe into his arms. “Lord,” said he, “now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy Word.” “Have you nothing more to live for, Simeon?” “No,” replies the good old man, “what more can there be?” “Don’t you think that, if you lived a little longer, you might have a heavy purse of gold in your hands?” “Yes,” he answers, “possibly I might; but it would be a cumbrous burden. This dear Child is better than all the gold and silver in the world. If he is mine, I have enough, yea, I have all” That blessed rest of soul, which comes of a sure possession of Christ, is not to be imitated, but it is greatly to be desired. I know that some good people, who I believe will be saved, nevertheless do not attain to this sweet rest. They keep on thinking that it is something that they may get when they are very old, or when they are about to die, but they look upon the full assurance of faith, and the personal grasping of Christ, and saying, “My Beloved is mine,” as something very dangerous. I began my Christian life in this happy fashion as a boy fifteen years of age; I believed fully and without hesitation in the Lord Jesus Christ; and when I went to see a good Christian woman, I was simpleton enough to tell her that I believed in Christ, that he was mine, and that he had saved me. She said to me, “Ah! I don’t like such assurance as that.” And then she added, “I trust you are believing in Christ,-I hope so;-but I have never got beyond a hope, or a trust, and I am an old woman.” Bless the old woman, she was no example for us who know whom we have believed; we are to rise infinitely beyond that groveling kind of life. The man who begins right, and the boy who begins right, and the girl who begins right, will begin by saying, “God hath said it: ‘He that believeth on him is not condemned.’ I believe on him, therefore I am not condemned; Christ is mine.” O dear friends, do not always keep on with that miserable hoping, and hoping, and hopping! Walk on both your feet, and get a good firm standing on the Rock of Ages, and say without boasting, but without doubting, “My Beloved is mine.” This will bring you into the condition of the psalmist when he said, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.” David would never have said that if he had not begun the Psalm with “The Lord is my Shepherd.” If he had begun by saying, “Perhaps the Lord is my Shepherd,” he would have gone on to say, “Perhaps there may be green pastures, possibly there may be still waters; but as yet my soul is in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, and not a blade of grass either.” Ah! David was not so stupid as that; he had his times of depression, but when he was singing that Psalm, he was in a positive, certain frame of mind. “The Lord is my Shepherd.” He used the indicative mood, not the subjunctive or conditional. The Lord help you to do the same! And you may. If Christ is a satisfaction to your spirit, so that your soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, then do not hesitate to say, and to emphasize the utterance, “My Beloved is mine.” He either is, or he is not; which is it? Do not go to sleep tonight till you know. If Christ is yours, heaven is yours. If Christ is not yours, you are neither fit to live, nor fit to die. Remember that awful verse, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha,”-”let him be accursed, the Lord cometh!” Take heed unto yourselves, therefore; if Christ is not yours, you are in terrible poverty; but if Christ is yours, you are eternally rich to all the intents of bliss. Oh, that he might be yours now by your stretching out the hand of faith, and taking him to yourself!

“I dare not take him,” says one. Well, you are a strange person;

I dare not let him alone, and I challenge you to shape that “dare” into any other proper form. If he bids you take him, and trust him, how dare you refuse him? Take him now, and be safe and happy forever. God bless you, for Jesus sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.**

***[PSALM 63](tw://bible.*?id=19.63.0|_AUTODETECT_|).***

This is said to be “A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.” I suppose, therefore, that it was composed when he fled from Jerusalem because of the cruel treachery of his son Absalom. He must have been heart-broken, and stricken with the greatest possible sorrow as he fled away with his faithful followers into the wilderness of Judah. But even there he praised his God; and he did not sing unto him with old and stale Psalms, but with a new song. How restful and calm he must have been, in his great sorrow, to sit down even in the wilderness of Judah, and make a new hymn of praise unto the Lord! How gloriously he begins!

**Verse 1.** *O God, thou art my God;*

The psalmist has no doubt about this great fact, he does not hesitate or falter, but he makes the positive assertion, “O God, thou art my El, my mighty God, strong to deliver me.” In the sixty-second Psalm, he had finished up with the power of God: “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.” So he begins this new song with the great name El, which expresses the might and power of God: “O God, thou art my El, my mighty God;”

**1.** *Early will I seek thee:*

People in the wilderness have hard beds to lie on, and they sleep all the fewer hours. David was up in the morning early, and he began the day with prayer to God: “Early will I seek thee.” “While the dew is on the grass, the dew of the Spirit shall be upon my soul.” He means also, “I will seek thee at once, immediately, now, without delay.”

But how could he seek the God who was already his God? “Thou art my God; early will I seek thee.” Brethren, nobody ever seeks another man’s God. Till God is your God, you will not want to seek him; and when you have him, you will seek him yet more and more.

**1.** *My soul thirsteth for thee,*

He had a strong passion for God. There is, sometimes, an unbearable, insatiable pang of the body, which you cannot forget; and David bad an insatiable longing of soul, which nothing could make him forget: “My soul thirsteth for thee.”

**1.** *My flesh longeth for thee*

Even his flesh, his body-not his carnal nature,-but his body mastered by his soul, was caused to yield its little help towards the making of this verse: “My flesh longeth for thee

**1.** *In a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;*

And this world is just like that. To the most of Christians, the six days of the week take them through the wilderness, and the Sabbath brings them to an oasis in the desert, an Elim, a place where there are wells of living water. But oh! what longings they have after God! What did David want when he was in the wilderness?

**2.** *To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*

He did not want the sanctuary so much as to see God in the sanctuary. Brethren, it is well to have a love to our own place of worship, but it is infinitely better to have a soul longing for the God we worship, and to feel that the place of worship is nothing unless God be there.

**3.** *Because thy lovingkindness is better than life my lips shall praise thee.*

“In the wilderness, when my comforts are cut off, when my son, who was my darling, is seeking my life, my lips shall praise thee, for still thy lovingkindness is better than life.”

**4.** *Thus will I bless thee while I live:*“As long as I live, I will praise thee; every breath of mine shall be perfumed with thankfulness and adoration.”  
**4.** *I will lift up my hands in thy name.*

“In astonishment at the power of thy great name, and in confidence will I lift them up when they have been hanging down in weakness. I will go forth in holy activity, with uplifted hands, in thy name.”

**5.***My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness;*

Orientals, in their feasts, are very fond of fat such as you and I would hardly eat; they think that the choicest part of their diet. So David, using his own metaphor, says that God would satisfy his soul as with the very marrow and fatness of joys.

**5.** *And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:*

A heart full of grace makes a mouth full of praise. When God makes thee inwardly to be content with himself, thou wilt be outwardly full of thanksgiving and praise.

**6.** *When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.*

Of course, in the wilderness, they had to set a watch against Absalom and his men; and David very likely could hear the noise in the camp as they changed the sentries, and marked the hours of the night. “Oh!” said he, “while I lie awake, and the watchers are on guard all around, I will make the night to be a time of spiritual feasting: ‘My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness;’ and I will make a song at night unto the God who giveth songs in the night: my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.”’

**7. 8.** *Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee:*

If he could not keep pace with his Lord, and did in some measure lose the joy of walking with God, then he would run after him. If thou canst not lean on Christ’s arm, keep close at Christ’s heel; be as near him as thou canst, like a dog who keeps close to his master: “My soul followeth hard after thee.” Where did David get the grace and the strength thus to follow after God? Listen

**8.** *Thy right hand upholdeth me.*

There is the secret upholding of divine grace, even when the soul cannot attain the fellowship at which it aims. When we are struggling to be near to God, let us thank the Lord who, by his Spirit, worketh in us the heavenly ardor that makes us run to him.

The last three verses of the Psalm describe what would become of David’s enemies.  
**9.** *But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth.*

The wicked always grovel, they never rise to higher things; and their course shall be downward,-downward to the grave, downward to eternal death.

**10.** *They shall fall by the sword:*  
PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.  
Sermon #1035 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE REAL PRESENCE, THE GREAT NEED OF THE CHURCH  
NO. 1035

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 11, 1872, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves: I held Him, and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother’s house,  
and into the chamber of her that conceived me.  
I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem,  
by the roes, and by the hinds of**

**the field, that you stir not up, nor awake  
my Love, till He pleases.”  
Song of Solomon 3:4, 5.**

IS it necessary to say that the Lord Jesus Christ is no longer corporeally present in His Church? It ought not to be necessary to assert so evident a truth and yet it is important to do so, since there are some who teach that in what they are pleased to call, “the Holy Sacrament,” Christ is actually present in His flesh and blood. Such persons unwittingly deny the real Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, for if He has, indeed, assumed our Humanity and is in all points made like unto His brethren, His flesh and blood cannot be in two places at one time. Our bodies could not be present in more places than one at one time, and if Christ’s Humanity is like ours it cannot be in They took the sword; they shall perish by the sword. They were seeking to slay David; they shall be themselves slain.  
**10.** *They shall be a portion for foxes.*Not for lions; but for foxes, or jackals, for that is the word; the jackals shall gnaw them in pieces.  
**11.** *But the king shall rejoice in God;*David was the king; so you see that he did not rejoice in the slaughter of his enemies, but he did rejoice in his God.  
**11.** *Every one that sweareth by him shall glory:*

Those who were true and loyal to the king would have reason for rejoicing when the rebels were overthrown; and those who were true and loyal to God would have still greater reason for exultation.

**11.** *But the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.*

Every true man must be glad that it is so. The mouths of liars will be stopped by the sexton with a shovel full of earth, if in no other way; but every lying tongue in all the world shall be silent one day at the judgment bar of God.

The Lord bless to us the reading of his Word! Amen.

THE INTEREST OF CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE IN EACH OTHER  
NO. 374

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON GOOD FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 29, 1861, DELIVERED BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“My Beloved is mine and I am His.”  
Song of Solomon 2:16.**

**THE Church says concerning her Lord, “My Beloved is mine and I am His.” No “ifs,” no “buts.” The two sentences are solemn assertions. Not, “I hope, I trust, I think.” But, “my Beloved *is* mine and I *am* His.” “Yes,” but you will say, “the Church must then have been gazing upon her husband’s face. It must have been a season of peculiar enjoyment with Him, when she could speak thus.” No, Brethren, no. The Church when she thus spoke, was in darkness, for in the very next verse she cries—“Until the day break and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.”**

**I say, Brethren, this solemn certainty, this double assertion of her interest in Christ and Christ’s interest in her, is the utterance of the Church even in her darkness, in the cheerless season of His absence. So then, you and I, if we believe in Christ, ought, even when we do not see His face, still to cultivate full assurance of faith and never be satisfied unless we can say, “My Beloved is mine and I am His.” When you cannot say this, my Hearer, give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids. Be not happy—take no solace—find no comfort as long as there is any doubt about your union with the Beloved—His possession of you and your possession of Him.**

**We will now, having thus prefaced the text, come at once to it. There are two members, you perceive, to the sentence, “My Beloved is mine and I am His.” These two things come in a strange order, you will say, “Surely we are first Christ’s, before Christ is ours.” A right thought of yours. We shall take the text, then, this evening two ways. We shall first speak of it *as it would be in the order of time*. “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine.” We shall afterwards speak *in the order of the text, which is the order of experience*. The words as Solomon penned them are not the order of fact as far as God is concerned, but the order in which we find out God’s great doings.**

**You know God’s first things are our second things and our second things are God’s first things. “Make your calling and election sure.” Calling is your first thing—election is the second. But election is God’s first thing and calling is the next. You are not elected because you are called. And yet, at the same time, you shall never know your election until first you have made your calling and election sure. The order of the text is the order of *experience***. We shall take the members of the sentence as they would be if they spoke in the order of fact.

I. To begin, then I AM MY BELOVED’S, AND BELOVED IS THEREFORE MINE.   
1. “*I am my Beloved’s*.” Glorious assertion! I am His *by His Father’s gift.* Long before suns and moons were made and stars twinkled in the midnight darkness, God the eternal Father had given the chosen to Christ, to be His heritage and marriage dowry. If God, then, has given my soul to Christ, I am my Beloved’s. Who shall dispute the right of God to give, or who shall take from Christ that which His Father has given to be His heritage? Fiends of Hell! Legions of the pit! When God gives, can you take back the gift? If He puts the souls of the chosen into the hands of Christ, can you pluck them from Him? If *He* makes them Christ’s sheep, can you pluck them out of His fold and make them your own? God forbid we should indulge the blasphemous thought, that any can dispute the ownership which Christ has in His people, derived from His Father’s gift.  
But I am my Beloved’s, if I am a Believer, because of *Jesus Christ’s purchase* of me. We were bought not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ. Christ has an absolute right to all that He bought with blood. I do not believe in that dreamy atonement, by which Christ redeems and purchases and yet the purchase is a fiction and the redemption a metaphor. All that Christ bought with blood He will have. If a man buys with gold and silver of an honest man, he gets his own, nor will he be content until he does. But when Christ ransoms with blood and buys of God Himself and redeems His own people, it is not possible that He should be frustrated of His purpose or denied the object of His death.   
I am my Beloved’s then, because He has paid the full price for me, counted down the purple drops and positively and surely has as much bought me with His money as ever Abraham of old bought flocks of sheep and oxen, or as ever of old Jacob served for Rachel and for Leah. No title deeds ever made estate more truly the property of the purchaser, than did the resurrection guarantee the rights of Christ in the “purchased possession.”   
“I am my Beloved’s,” by a double tie—by the Father’s gift and by the Son’s Divine purchase. These two things are not easily reconcilable to some minds. But let it be carried in your hearts as a matter of fact that there is as much grace in the Father’s giving the elect to Christ as if no price were paid. And secondly, that there was as full and true a price paid to the Father as though the Father had been Justice only and not love. The grace of God and His justice are both of them full-orbed, they are never eclipsed. They are never made to you with divided luster—He is as gracious as though He were not just. He is as awfully severe as though there were no grace in His nature.   
But more than this, “I am my Beloved’s,” for I am His *by conquest*. He fought for me and He won me, let Him possess me. He went alone to that great battle. He defied all the hosts which had made me their prey, encountered first my sins and slew them with His blood. He encountered next Satan himself and bruised the serpent’s head, encountered Death and slew him by “destroying him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” O Christ! You deserved to have those for whom You did wrestle and agonize even unto blood and who by your strong hand you brought out of the land of their captivity. Never could a conqueror claim a subject so justly as Christ claims His people. They were not only His, eternally His, by the purchase of His blood, but they are His because He has taken them by overwhelming might, having delivered them out of the hand of him who was stronger than they. That word which He gird upon His thigh, is both the right by which He claims and the might by which He keeps His ransomed.   
Besides this, every true Believer can add, “I am my Beloved’s,” by a *gracious surrender*. With full consent I give myself to You.” This is your language, Brothers and Sisters. It is mine. “I am my Beloved’s.” If I were never His before, I do desire to give myself up to Him now. His love shall be the fetters in which I, a happy captive, will walk at His triumphant chariot wheels. His grace shall bind me with its golden chains so that I will be free and yet His bondman forever. The mercies of each hour shall be fresh links and the benefits of each day and night shall be new rivets to the chain.   
No Christian man would like to be his own. To be one’s own is to be lost. But to be Christ’s is to be saved. To be one’s own is to be a wandering sheep. To be Christ’s is to return to the great bishop and shepherd of our souls. Do you not remember, many of you, the night when you first surrendered to Christ? He stood at the door and knocked—the door was overgrown with brambles, the hinges had rusted from long disuse. The key was lost. The keyhole of the lock was welded together with filth and rust. Yes, from within the door was bolted fast.   
He knocked—at first a gentle knock, enough to let you know who it was. You laughed. He knocked again. You heeded not. You heard His voice as he cried, “Open to Me, open to Me. My hair is wet with dew and My locks with the drops of the night.” But you had a thousand frivolous excuses and you would not open to Him. Oh, do you remember when at last He put in his hand by the hole of the lock and your heart was moved for Him? “Jesus, Savior! I yield, I yield! I can hold out no longer, my heart melts. My cruel soul relents. Come in! Come in! Please pardon me that I have kept You out so long, resisted so long the wooings of Your heavenly love.” Well, you will say tonight and set your solemn hand and seal to it, that you are Christ’s because you do once again, voluntarily and freely, surrender yourself to Him.   
I think tonight would be a very proper occasion for each of us to renew our dedication vows. We are many of us Believers. Let us go to our chamber and say thus—“O God! You have heard our prayers as a Church. We have entered into Your house. We have seen it filled to the full. By this, the answer which You have given to our prayers we rededicate ourselves to You, desiring to say with the spouse more fully than heretofore, ‘I am my Beloved’s.’ ”   
Let us pause here an instant. We have seen how we came to be our Beloved’s, let us enquire in what sense we are so now. We are His, first of all, by *a near affinity* that never can be divided. Christ is the Head. We are His members. There is nothing which my Head possesses so truly as my hand and my heart. Your head could not say that its helmet and plume are so truly its own as the neck, the sinews, the veins, which are joined thereunto. The head manifestly has a distinct and peculiar property in every member. “I am my Beloved’s,” then, even as my hand and foot are mine. “I am my Beloved’s”—if He loses me, I will be mutilated.   
“I am my Beloved’s,” if I am cut away, or even wounded, He will feel the pain. The Head *must* suffer, when the members are tempted and tried. There is nothing so true and real, in the sense of property, as this. I would that you who doubt the perseverance of the saints would take these few words to heart. If once Christ should lose His people, He would be a head without a body. That would be a ghastly sight. No, if He lost one of His people He would be the head of a mutilated body—that would not be a glorious sight. If you imagine the loss of one mystical member of Christ, you must suppose an imperfect Christ—one whose fullness is not full, whose glory is not glorious, whose completeness is not complete. Now I am sure you would reject that idea. And it will be joy for you to say, “as the members belong to the Head, so am I my Beloved’s.”   
Further than this—we are our Beloved’s by a most *affectionate relationship*. He is the Husband, Believers are the spouse. There is nothing that a man has that is so much his property as his own wife, except it be his very life. A man’s wealth may melt by losses, a man’s estate may be sold to pay his debts. But a man’s wife, as long as she lives, is his absolute property. She can say, “He is mine.” He can say, “She is mine.” Now Christ says of all His people, “You are mine, I am married to you. I have taken you unto Myself and betrothed you unto Me in faithfulness.” What do you say? Will you deny the celestial marriage bond? God forbid. Will you not say to your Lord tonight, “Yes, I am my Beloved’s”? Ah, there is no divorce court in Heaven, there is no division, no separation bill possible for He “hates divorce.” If chosen, He will not reject, if once embraced, He will never cast out. His she is and His she shall be evermore. In this sense, then, “I am my Beloved’s.”   
Yet once more—“I am my Beloved’s” by an *indissoluble connection*, just as a child is the property of his father. The father calls his child his own. Who denies it? What law is so inhuman as to allow another to rend away the offspring of his heart from the parent? There is no such law among civilized men. Among the aboriginal savages of the Southern States of America such a thing may exist. But among civilized men there never can be any dispute but that the father’s right to his child is supreme and that no master and no owner can override the rights of the parents to his son.   
Come, then—even so are we His. “He shall see *His* seed.” “He shall see of the travail of His soul.” If He could lose His glories, if He could be driven from His kingdom, it He could be despoiled of His crown, if His Throne could totter, if all His might could melt away as the snow wreath melts before the summer’s sun—yet at least His seed would be His own. No law, human or Divine, could unchild the believing child, or unfather Christ, the everlasting Father. So then, it is a great joy to know that each Believer may say, in the highest sense—“I am my Beloved’s. I am His child and He is my Parent.”   
I half wish that instead of my preaching now, we could stand up, each of us who feel the force of this sweet sentiment and say, “ ‘Tis true, great God, by eternal donation, by complete purchase, by a full surrender, by a mighty conquest, I am my Beloved’s. He is my Head, my Husband, my Father and my All.”  
2. The second sentence in order of time is, “My Beloved is mine.” Ah, you very poor men and women, you who could not call one foot of land your own and probably never will till you get the space where you lie down to sleep the sleep of death! If you can say, “My Beloved is mine,” you have greater wealth than Croesus ever knew, or than a miser ever dreamed. If my soul can claim Christ, the eternal God and the perfect Man, as being my own personal property then my soul is rich to all the intents of bliss—even if the body walk in rags, or should the lips know hunger, or the mouth be parched with thirst!   
But how is my Beloved mine? He is mine, because *He gave Himself to me of old*. Long before I knew it, or had a being, He covenanted to bestow Himself on me—on all His chosen. When He said, “Lo, I come. In the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O God,” He did in fact become My Substitute, giving Himself to do my work and bear my sorrow. Mine He is because *that covenant has been fulfilled* in the *actual gift*. For me (I speak in the first person, because I want you each to speak in the first person, too), for you, my Soul, He laid aside His robes of glory to become a Man. For you He was swaddled in the weakness of infancy and lay in the poverty of the manger. For you, my Soul, He bore the infant body, the childish form and the human flesh and blood.   
For you the poverty which made Him cry, “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head.” For you, my Soul, for you that shame and spitting, that agony and bloody sweat, that Cross, that crown of thorns, those expiring agonies, that dying groan. “My Beloved,” in all this, “is mine.” Yes, yours the burial. Yours the resurrection and its mystic meaning. Yours the ascension and its triumphant shouts. Yours the session at the right hand of God. Yours and by holy daring we avow it, He who sits today, “God over all, blessed forever,” is ours in the splendor of His majesty, in the invincibility of His might, in the omnipresence of His power, in all the glory of His future advent. Our Beloved is ours, because He has given Himself to us, just as He is.   
But besides that, our Beloved is not only ours by His own gift, which is the reality of it all, but He is ours by a *graciously completed union*. What a wonderful thing is the doctrine of union with Christ. “We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” Christ and His Church are one—one as the stones are one with the foundation. One, as the branches are one with the vine—as the wife is one with the husband. One, as the members are one with the Head—as the soul is one with the body—no, if there can be conceived a union closer still and there is but one, we are one with Christ, even as Christ is one with His Father.   
“I in them and You in Me.” For thus the union stands. Now, as soon as ever we are one with Christ, you see at once that Christ must be ours. There is a common property between Christ and His people. All theirs belongs to Him—His belongs to them. They have not two stocks, they have but one. He has cast in His wealth, they have cast in their poverty—from that day they have common funds. They have but one purse—they have all things in common. All He is and all He has is theirs and all they are or can be belong to Him.   
I might add, but this is a high point and needs to be experienced rather than preached upon, Christ is ours *by His indwelling*. Ignatius used to call himself the God-bearer and when some wondered at the title he said—“I carry God about within me. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit.” That is an awful text, awful in the splendor of its meaning. Does the Holy Spirit dwell in a man? Yes, that He does. Not in this temple, “not in tabernacles made with hands.” That is to say of man’s *building*, but within this soul and in your soul and in the souls of all His called ones, He dwells. “Abide in Me,” said He, “and I in you.” Christ *must* be in you, the hope of glory. Christ must be formed in you, as He was in Mary, or you have not come yet to know to the full the Divine meaning of the spouse, when she said—“My Beloved is mine and I am His.”   
Now, tonight, I wish that we could get practical good, to our comfort, out of the thought that Christ is ours, if we are Believers. Hear me, then, a moment or two, while I dilate upon that thought. Christ is surely yours. It is not a questionable property, a matter to be put into dispute with Heaven’s chancery. Beyond question Christ is the *property*—the rightful *heritage*—of every elect and called one.   
Again—Christ *is ours personally*. We sometimes speak of severally and jointly. Well then, Christ is ours jointly. But, blessed be His name, He is ours severally, too. Christ is as much yours tonight, however mean you may be, as though He did not belong to another man living. The whole of Christ is yours. He is not part mine and part yours and part another man’s. He is all mine, all yours—*personally* mine, *personally* yours. Oh that we could realize this fact!   
And then, again—Christ is *always* ours. He is never more ours at one time and less ours at another. The moment we believe in Him we may know our perfect and invariable right to Christ—a right which depends not upon the changes of the hour, or upon the temperature of our frames and feelings, but upon those two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie. Christ is ours tonight. And, glory be to His name for it, if we believe, He is ours forever— *“This sacred bond shall neverbreak,   
Though earth’s old columns bow   
The strong, the feeble and the weak   
Can claim their Savior now.”*And this they shall do, perhaps with greater joy, but not with greater *right* when they stand before the Throne of God.   
I cannot, tonight, in a place to which I am so little accustomed, bring all my thoughts together as I would. But, methinks if I could but put this Truth before you, or rather, if the Spirit of God would put it so that you could feel Christ to be yours, it would make you spring from your pew with ecstasy. Why, it is enough to thrill

every chord in a man! And if a man may be compared to a harp, make every string in him pour forth an ocean of music. Christ *mine*—*myself* Christ’s— there cannot be a more joyous or more heavenly theme beneath the skies.   
II. I have thus completed the first work of this evening—taking the sentences of the text in the order of *time*. I shall now take the text IN THE ORDER IN WHICH IT IS GIVEN TO US, WHICH IS THE ORDER OF OUR EXPERIENCE.   
Do you not see, that to a man’s experience, God’s order is reversed? We begin thus—“My Beloved is mine.” I go to Him, take Him up in the arms of my faith, as Simeon took up the little child in the temple and pressing Him to my heart, I say—“Jesus, You are mine. All unholy and unclean, I nevertheless obey Your command. I believe You, I take You at Your word. I touch the hem of Your garment. I trust my soul wholly with You. You are mine and my soul can never part with You.” What next? Why then, the soul afterwards says—“Now I am Yours, tell me what You would have me to do. Jesus, let me abide with You. Lord, I would follow You wherever You go, put me on any service, dictate to me any Commandment, tell me what You would have me do to glorify You”—   
*“Through floods, through flames, if Jesus lead,   
I’ll follow where He goes.”*I am His. Christ is mine—this is faith. I am His—this is good works. Christ is mine—that is the simple way in which the soul is saved. I am Christ’s—that is the equally simple method by which salvation displays itself in its practical fruits. I am afraid some of you have never carried out the last sentence, “I am Christ’s.” I know some, for instance, who believe (mark, I am not speaking to those who do not) who believe it to be the duty of every Christian to profess his faith in baptism, but nevertheless are not baptized. They say they are Baptists in principle. They are Baptists without any principle at all. They are men who know their Master’s will and do it not and they shall surely be beaten with many stripes.   
In other men it becomes a sin of ignorance, but with such men it is willful. They reply, “It is a non-essential.” Things non-essential to salvation are nevertheless essential to *obedience*. As I said a few Sabbaths ago, you would not like a servant who only did what he liked to do and told you that some of your commands were non-essential. I am quite certain that if a soldier did not load his gun, or stand in rank, or shoulder arms at the word of command, the court martial would never listen for an instant to the plea of non-essential. God’s commands require *obedience* and it is *essential* that every servant be found faithful. I say, it is exceedingly *essential* to a Christian to do what he is told to do. Whatever Jesus bids us do, if it save us from nothing, at any rate the fulfillment of it will save us from the sin of being disobedient to Him.   
Now will you try, my dear Friends, not in the one command only, which lies at the threshold of the house, but in all others, to feel that you are not your own? “Ah,” says one man, “I am not my own, I have so much to do for my family.” Another says, “I am not my own, I belong to a political party.” Another, “I am not my own, I belong to a firm.” Just so—all these are ways in which men are kept from saying, “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine.” Oh that we could, by any means whatever, feel that we were all Christ’s! I, though I had a drop of blood in my veins that was not His, I would seek to have it let out. And if there were a single power I have, mental, physical, or spiritual which could not and would not serve God, though it might impair my comfort, I would devoutly pray that this Jonah might be thrown into the sea, this Achan stoned with stones, this Haman hanged on the gallows.   
This cankered thing, it is a deadly thing—this damnable thing must be cut away once and for all, for, “better to enter into Heaven halt and maimed, than having two eyes and two arms to be cast into Hell-fire.” We must have a single eye. We must feel that we are all Christ’s and live as if we were all Christ’s. For we have no right to say, “My Beloved is mine,” unless we can add, “And I am His.” Why look, Sirs, look at the great multitude of professors. How few there are that ever live as if they belonged to Christ! They act independently of Him. They buy, they sell on their own account— they that are stewards never penetrates their thick brains. That all they have is not their own, but His, never seems to have come into their heart, though they have sung it with their lips—   
*“And if I might make some reserve,   
And duty did not call,   
I love my God with zeal so great,   
That I would give Him all.”*Many a man has sung that, with his thumb-nail going round a coin in his purse, to find out whether it was a four penny or a three penny bit. He says he would give Christ all. But then he means that the bill is to be drawn at a very long credit and he will pay when he dies—he will give up what he cannot take away with him and when he leaves his rotten carcass he will leave his rotten wealth. Oh that we could all feel that we were all Christ’s! Why, the Church of God would not be penned and shut up within the narrow bounds of England and America long, if once we felt we were Christ’s. At this very moment China is open to Christian enterprise. The leader of the so-called “rebels” turns out to be, after all, a man who is exceedingly enlightened in the things of God.   
He has said to Mr. Roberts, the missionary, “I open today eighteen chapels in Nankin—write to your friends and tell them to come over and preach and we will be glad to hear them. I give you a passport, that no man may touch you and any man who will preach Christ’s Gospel shall go unharmed through my dominions.” And he actually issued, but a few days before the coming of the last mail, a proclamation by which all idolatry is abolished throughout his dominions and witchcraft and fortune-telling are made crimes and he invites and prays his Brethren in England especially to send over the Word of Life, that they may have it among the people.   
Now I do honestly avow, if this place had not been built and I had had nothing beyond the narrow bounds of the place in which I have lately preached, I should have felt in my conscience bound to go to learn the language and preach the Word there. But I now know what to do. I *must* here abide, for this is my place. But I would to God some were found in the Church, some in London, who have not such a gracious tie as this to keep them in their own land, to say, “Here am I, send me. I am Christ’s man. There is Christ’s field. Let me go and reap it, for the harvest is ripe. Help me, O God and I will seek to ingather it for Your honor.” “My Beloved is mine and I am His.”   
That last “I am His” would make life cheap and blood like water and heroism a common thing and daring but an every-day duty and self-sacrifice the very spirit of the Christian life. Learn well, then, the meaning of that sentence, “*I am His*.” But will you please to notice once again—(I fear lest I shall weary you and therefore will be brief)—“My Beloved is mine”—that is my calling. He calls me to Him. He gives Himself to me. He is mine. I am His—that is my *election*. I was His before I knew Him *to be mine*. But I learned my calling first and my election *afterwards*. We have scores of people who will not come to Christ because they cannot understand election. Meet a boy in the street and invite him to go to a two-penny school. “No,” says the boy, “I don’t feel fit to go to a national school to learn to read and write—for, to tell you the truth, I don’t understand the Hebrew language,”   
You would reply, “But, my good lad, you will learn Hebrew afterwards, if you can—but that is no reason, at any rate, why you should not learn English first. Come first to the little school. You shall go afterwards to the grammar school. If you get on, you shall go to the University, take your B.A. degree and perhaps come out as a Master of Arts.” But here we have poor souls that want to be have their M.A. before they have gone to the penny school. They want to read the tomes before they will read the horn-book. They are not content to spell A, B, C—“I am a sinner, Christ is a Savior”—but they long to turn over the book of decrees and find out the deep things of God.   
You shall find them out afterwards—you shall go step by step, while the Master shall say to you each time, “Friend, come up higher.” But if you *begin* with election, you will have to come *down* again—for there will be a more honorable man than you who will come in and you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. I have seen plenty of high-flying Christians who began at the top of the tree. They were the men—wisdom would die with them the judges, the dictators, the very consuls, the cardinals, the popes—they knew everything. And whenever such men are gracious men, the Lord always puts the lancet into them and makes them grow smaller and smaller and smaller, till at last they say, “Woe is me, for I am undone.” And they cry, “My soul is even as a weaned child.”   
*Begin* at the bottom and grow *up*. But do not begin at the top and come down. *That* is hard work—but going up is pleasant work, joyous work. Begin by saying, “My Beloved is mine.” You shall come to know your election by-and-by and say, “I am His.”   
And now I do not think I will preach any longer about my text, but just come down upon my Hearers for a few minutes, with all my might. How many among us can dare to say this tonight? Hundreds of you can! Thousands of you can! If this were the Day of Judgment—if tonight you stood, fresh risen from your graves—if *now* you heard the trumpet sound—if now you saw the King in His beauty sitting upon the great white Throne, I know that many of you would say, “My Beloved is mine and I am His.”   
If this day the millennial reign of Christ had begun—if the vials had been opened, the plagues poured out and if now Christ were come—that the wicked might be driven out and that his saints might reign—I am sure there are many of you who would say, “Welcome, welcome, Son of God—my Beloved is mine and I am His.” And there are many of you, too, who if the angel of death should pass the pew and flap his black wing into your face and the cold air of death should smite you, would say, “ ‘Tis well, for my Beloved is mine and I am His.” You could shut your eyes and your ears to the joys and to the music of earth and you could open them to the splendors and melodies of Heaven.   
To be fearless of death should always be the mark of the Christian. Sometimes a sudden alarm may rob us of our presence of mind. But no believer is in a healthy state if he is not ready to meet death at any hour and at any moment. To walk bravely into the jaws of the dragon—to go through the iron gates and to feel no terror—to be ready to shake hand with the skeleton king, to look on him as a *friend* and no more a foe—this should be the habitual spirit and the constant practice of the heir of Heaven. Oh, if this is written on my soul, “My Beloved is mine and I am His!” Come, welcome death—   
*“Come, death and some celestial band,   
I’ll gladly go with you.”   
But—*and a solemn “but”—pass the question round these galleries and in this area and how many among you must say, “I never thought of that. I never thought whether I was Christ’s, or Christ mine.” I will not rebuke you tonight. I will not thunder at you. God’s grace to me forbids that *this* should be a day of thunder. Let it be a day of feasting to everyone and of sorrow to none. What shall I say to you, then, but this? O that Christ *may* be yours. When He was here on earth He chose to go among sinners—sinners of the blackest hue. And now He is in Heaven. Up yonder He loves sinners as much as ever He did. He is as willing to receive you tonight as to receive the thief. It will give as much joy to His heart to hear your cry tonight, as when He thanked God that these things were revealed unto babes.   
It is to His honor that you should be His. It is to His joy that He should be yours. Sinner! If you will have Christ—if now the spirit of God makes you willing—there is no bar on God’s part when the bar is taken away on your part. If you are willing, by His grace, He is more willing than you are. If the gate of your heart is on the latch, the gate of Heaven is wide open. If your soul does but yearn after Christ His heart has long yearned after you. If you have but a spark of love to Christ, He has a furnace of love to you. And if you have none at all—no love, no faith—oh I pray you have it now! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” You! You! You!   
Did you come here out of curiosity? Zaccheus heard Christ out of curiosity. But he was saved. Did you come for a worse purpose? God bless you, anyhow, for whatever reason you came. And may He bring you to Himself tonight! Trust Christ now and you are saved. My life for yours—if you perish trusting in Christ I will perish, too. Even should I have an ear listening to me which belongs to a harlot, to a thief, to a murderer, yet “he that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.” And if you believe in Him and you are lost I will be lost with you. And the whole Church of Christ must be lost, too. For there is the same way to Heaven for the best as for the worst—for the most vile as for the most righteous. “No man comes unto the Father but by Christ.”  
Nothing can damn a man but his own righteousness. Nothing can save him but the righteousness of Christ. All your sin— your past sin—shall not destroy you—if you now believe in Jesus. It shall be cast into the sea forever and you shall begin again as though you had never sinned. His grace shall keep you for the future and you shall hold on your way an honor to Christ’s grace and a joy to your own soul. But if you are disobedient and will not eat of the good of the land, then will I say, as Isaiah said of old, “I am found of them that sought Me not, but all day long have I stretched out my hands to an ungodly and gain-saying generation.” God *has* stretched out His hands. Oh that you were wise and would run into His arms tonight!   
I know I am speaking to some self-righteous men—some who say, “It is a shame to tell men they are depraved. *I* am not.” Well, we think if their lives were written it might be proved they were. “It is a shame,” they say, “to tell men that they cannot get to Heaven by their good works, because then they will be wicked.” It is an odd thing, though, that the more this Truth is preached, the better people are. Preaching good works as the way to Heaven always makes drunkards and thieves, but preaching faith in Christ always produces the best effects. Dr. Chalmers, who was no fanatic, says, “When I preached mere morality I preached sobriety till they were all drunkards. I preached chastity till it was not known anywhere. I preached honesty till men grew to be thieves. But,” he says, “as soon as ever I preached Christ there was such a change in the village as never was known.”   
Well, we believe that self-righteousness will destroy you, my Friend, and we therefore tell you, honestly and plainly that you might as well hope to get to Heaven by flying up in a balloon as to get there by your good works. You may as soon sail to India in a sieve as get to Glory by your own goodness. You might as well go to court in cobwebs as seek to go to Heaven in your own righteousness. Away with your rags, your filthy, rotten rags! They are only a harbor for the parasites of unbelief and pride. Away with your rotten righteousness, your counterfeit gold, your forged wealth! It is of no worth whatever in the sight of God. Come to Him empty, poor, naked! It grates on your proud ear does it? Better, I say, to lose your pride than to lose your soul!   
Why be damned for pride’s sake? Why carry your head so high that it must be cut off? Why feed your pride on your soul’s blood? Surely there is cheaper stuff than that for pride to drink! Why let it suck the very marrow out of your bones? Be wise! Bow, stoop, stoop to be saved.   
And now, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the Man, the God, I do command you, as His messenger and His servant—and at your peril reject the command—“Believe, repent and be baptized, every one of you.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,” “for he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.”   
God add His blessing, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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“A SONG OF MY BELOVED”  
NO. 3185

A SERMON  
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.” Song of Solomon 2:16, 17.**

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon parts of the same passage, are #1190, Volume 20—

A SONG AMONG THE LILIES; #2442, Volume 41—“MY BELOVED IS MINE” and #2477, Volume 42—DARKNESS BEFORE THE DAWN—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

IT has been well said that if there is a happy verse in the Bible, it is this one—“My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies.” So peaceful, so full of assurance, so bursting with happiness and contentment is it, that it might well have been written by the same hand which penned the 23rd Psalm—“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.” The verse savors of Him who, just before He went to Gethsemane, said to His disciples, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you...In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Let us ring the silver bell of this verse again, for its notes are exquisitely sweet! “My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies.”

Yet there is a shadow in the latter part of the text. The prospect is exceedingly fair and lovely—earth cannot show its superior—but it is not entirely a sunlit landscape! There is a cloud in the sky which casts a shadow over the scene. It does not dim it—everything is clear and stands out sharply and brightly—“My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” That is clear enough, yet I say again that it is not altogether sunlight—there are shadows—“Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.” There is also a mention of the “mountains of Bether”—the mountains of division— and to have anything like division is bitterness. I see here a paschal lamb, but I see bitter herbs with it. I see the lily, but I think I see it still among the thorns. I see the fair and lovely landscape of assured confidence, but a shadow, just a slight shadow, takes away some of its glory. And he who sees it has to still look for something yet beyond—“till the day breaks and the shadows flee away.”

The text seems to me to indicate just this state of mind. Perhaps some of you may at this time exemplify it. You do not doubt your salvation— you know that Christ is yours. You are certain of that, albeit you may not be at present enjoying the light of your Savior’s Countenance. You know that He is yours, but you are not feeding upon that precious fact. You realize your vital interest in Christ, so much so that you have no shadow of a doubt that you are His and He is yours—but still, His left hand is not under your head, nor does His right hand embrace you. A shade of sadness is cast over your heart, possibly by affliction, certainly by the temporary absence of your Lord. So even while exclaiming, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His,” you are forced to fall on your knees and pray, “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of division.”

We may occupy the time profitably if God the Holy Spirit shall enable us in speaking upon these matters. We have here, first, a soul enjoying personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ or, personal interest assured. We have, next, a soul taking the deepest interest in Christ and longing to know where He is or, the deepest interest evinced. And then we have a soul anxiously desiring present communion with Christ or, visible fellowship, conscious communion sought after.

I. We have here, first, PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST ASSURED.  
I do not mean to try to preach tonight. I should like my text to preach. And the way in which I should like it to preach would be to see how far we can get hold of it. How we can take it word by word and drink it in! Come to each word as to a well and sit down on the brink and drink a refreshing draught! Come to each word as to a palm tree and eat of the fruit thereof!  
The text begins with the words, “my Beloved.” Come, Soul, can you venture to call Christ your Beloved? Certainly He should be beloved by you, for what has He not done for you? Favors rich and rare have been the gifts of His hands—gifts purchased by His own most precious blood! If you do not love Him, my Heart, you are a most ungrateful thing, indeed! You are deceitful, rotten, loathsome above all things and desperately wicked, O my Heart, if Jesus, being your Savior, you do not love Him! He ought to be loved by the most of you here, for you profess to have been redeemed by His blood and adopted into the family of God through Him. You professed, when you were baptized, to be dead with Him—and when you come to this Communion Table, tonight, you will profess that He is your meat and your drink, your life, your soul’s stay and comfort! So, if you do not love Him, what shall I say to you? I will let you say it to yourselves—

*“A very wretch, Lord! I should prove, Had I no love for Thee—  
Rather than not my Savior love,  
Oh may I cease to be!”*

“My Beloved.” He ought to be so and He has been so. There was a time when you and I did not love Him, but that time is over. We recollect the happy moment when first, by faith, we saw His face and heard Him say, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” Oh, the happiness of the day of conversion! You have not forgotten it. How alive and zealous some of you were then! In those first months when you were brought into the house of mercy and were washed and clothed, and had all your needs supplied out of the fullness that is treasured up in Christ Jesus, you did, indeed, love Him! You were not hypocrites, were you? And you used to sing with such force of voice as well as of heart—

*“Jesus, I love Your charming name,  
‘Tis music to my ear—  
Gladly would I sound it out so loud  
That earth and Heaven should hear!”*

Yes, we did love Him, but we cannot stop at that—we do love Him! With all our faults, imperfections and frailties, the Lord, who knows all things, knows that we do love Him. Sometimes, Brothers and Sisters, it is not easy to know whether we love Christ, or not. I have heard many remarks about the hymn containing that line—

*“Do I love the Lord, or no?”*  
but I believe that every honest Christian sometimes asks that question and I think one good way of getting it answered is to go and hear a faithful minister. Last Sabbath morning, I sat and listened to a very simpleminded preacher in a Wesleyan Chapel. He was a most unsound Wesleyan, but a thoroughly sound Calvinistic Brother. And when he began to preach about the love of Jesus Christ, the tears streamed down my cheeks. I could not help letting them fall upon the sanded floor as I sat there—and I thought to myself, “Well, now, I do love the Savior.” I had thought that perhaps I did not, but when I heard of Him and the preacher began to play upon my heartstrings, the music came! When I did but have Christ set before me, that woke up my soul if, indeed, it had been asleep before. When I heard of Him, though only in broken accents, I could not but feel that I did love Him and love Him better than life itself! I trust that it is true of many here that Christ is our “Beloved.”

But the text says, not only, “Beloved,” but, “ my Beloved is mine,” as if the spouse took Him all to herself. It is the nature of love, you know, to monopolize. There is a remarkable passage in the third chapter of the prophecy of Hosea, which I need not quote except in outline, where the Prophet is bid to take one who had been unclean and unchaste, and to say to her, “You shall be for me, so will I also be for you.” This was meant to be typical of what Christ does unto His Church. Our love goes gadding abroad unto 20 objects until Christ comes! And then He says, “You silly thing, now you shall fly abroad no more. Come, you dove, I will give you a new heart and my wounds shall be your dovecot, and you shall never wander away again. I will be altogether yours and you shall be altogether Mine—there shall be a monopoly between us. I will be married to you and you shall be married to Me. There shall be communion between us. I will be yours, you wandering sinner, as your Husband, and you shall be Mine.”

Every heart that has been subdued by Sovereign Grace takes Jesus Christ to be the chief Object of its love. We love our children, we love all our dear ones—God forbid that we should ever fail to love them—but, over and above them all, we must love our Lord. There is not one among us, I think, who would make it a matter of question which we would sooner part with—it would be a melancholy experience to have to follow the partner of one’s bosom to the grave—but if it were a choice between wife and Savior, we could not deliberate for a moment! And as for the children of our love, whom we hope to see springing up to manhood and womanhood, it would be a sorry blow to us to have them laid low, but it would not take us a second to decide whether we should lose our Isaacs or lose our Jesus! No, we should not feel that they were lost if God took them from us, but we could not afford to think for a single instant of losing Him who is our everlasting All-in-All. The Christian, then, makes Christ his Beloved beyond all besides! Let other people love what they will, but as for him, he loves his Savior! He stands at the foot of the Cross and says, “This once-accursed tree is now the blessed bulwark of my confidence.” He looks up to the Savior and He says, “Many see no beauty in Him that they should desire Him, but to me He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.” Let the scholar take his classics, let the warrior take his weapons of war, let the lover take his tender words and his amatory lyrics, but as for the Christian, he takes the Savior! He takes the Lord Jesus to be to his Alpha and Omega, the beginning, the end, the midst, the All-in-All—and in Him he finds his soul’s solace!

Some people have thought that there is a tautology in the text when it says, “My Beloved is mine.” Why, of course, if He is my Beloved, He is mine—what need is there to say that? Well, those who are acquainted with the Christian’s experience know that all Believers are subject to many doubts and fears, and that they feel that they cannot make their assurance too sure, so they like to double their expressions of assurance when they can, so each of them says, “My Beloved is mine.” There is no tautology—the speaker is only giving two strokes of the hammer to drive the nail home! It is put so that there can be no mistake about it, so that the spouse means what she is saying, and intends others to also understand it! “My Beloved is mine.”

But I think it may mean more than that because we may love a thing, and yet it may not be our own. A man may call money his Beloved, yet he may never get it. He may pursue it, but not be able to reach it. The lover of learning may court the love he covets in all the academies of the world, yet he may not be able to win the attainment of his desires. Men may love, and on their dying beds may have to confess that their Beloved is not theirs—but every Christian has that upon which his heart is set—h! has Christ! He loves Him and possesses Him, too.

Besides, dear Friends, you know that there is a time when men are not able to say that their Beloved is theirs. He who has been most wealthy or most wise can take neither his wealth nor his wisdom with him to the tomb. And when the sinner who died and was buried, wakes up in another world, Croesus will be as poor as Lazarus—and the wisest man without Christ will find himself devoid of all wisdom when he wakes up in the day of Resurrection! They may stretch out their hands, but they will only clutch emptiness and have to cry, “Our Beloved is not ours!” But when we shall wake up in the image of Christ and shall see Him— whether we shall fall asleep or whether we shall be changed, in either case we shall be present with Him—then shall each Believer say, “Yes, He is mine, still mine! I have Him, truly have Him! ‘My Beloved is mine.’” I am inclined to think that if a man can truly say this, he can say the grandest thing that ever man said, “My Beloved is mine.” “Look,” says the rich man, “do you see far away beyond those stately oaks, yonder? Do you see as far as that church spire? Well, as far as you can see, that is all mine!” “Ah,” says Death, as he lays his bony hand upon the man, “Six feet of earth, that is yours.” “Look,” says the scholar, as he points to the volumes on his shelves, “I have searched through all these and all the learning that is there is mine.” “Ah,” says Death, again, as he smites him with his cold hand, “who can tell the difference between the skull of the learned and the skull of the ignorant when the worm has emptied them both?” But the Christian, when he can point upwards and say, “I love my Savior,” has a possession which is surely his forever! Death may come, and will come, even to him, but all that Death can do is open the door to admit the Christian into still fuller enjoyment of that which was already his. “My Beloved is mine.” So although I may have but little, I will be satisfied with it! And though I may be so poor that the world will pass me by and never notice me, yet I will live quite content in the most humble possible obscurity because, “my Beloved is mine,” and He is more than all the world to me! “Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.”

Now I want to stop and see whether we have really got as far as this. How many of us have said, “My Beloved is mine”? I am afraid there may be some poor Christian here who says, “Ah, I cannot say that.” Now, my dear Hearer, I will ask you a question—Do you cling to Christ? Is He your only hope? If so, then He is yours! When the tide goes down, have you ever seen the limpets clinging to the rocks, or holding fast, perhaps, to the pier? Now, is that what your faith does with Christ? Do you cling to Him? Is He all your trust? Do you rest on Him? Well then, if you do, you do not need any other mark or sign—that one is quite enough—if you are clinging to Christ, then Christ is yours! She who did but touch the hem of His garment received the virtue which came out of Him. If you can cling to Him and, putting away every other confidence and renouncing all other trust, can say, “Yes, if I perish, I will cling to Christ alone,” then do not let a single doubt come in to take away the comfort of your soul, for your Beloved is yours!

Or perhaps, to put it another way, I may ask you—Do you love Jesus? Does His name wake up the echoes of your heart? See the little child in its mother’s arms—you want to take it for a little while, but no, it will not come away from its mother. And if you still want to take it, it puts its little arms around its mother’s neck and clings there. You could pull it away, perhaps, but you have not the heart to do so. It clings to its mother and that is the evidence to you that she is its mother. Do you cling to Christ in that way? And though you feel that the devil would pull you away from Christ if he could, do you still cling to Him as best you can? Do you remember what John Bunyan said about the prisoner whom Mr. Greatheart rescued from Giant Slay-Good’s clutches? Mr. Feeble-Mind said, “When he had got me into his den, since I went not with him willingly, I believed I would come out alive again.” Is that the case with you? Are you willing to have Christ if you can have Him? Are you unwilling to give Him up? Then you shall never give Him up! He is yours! Do not think that Christ needs a high degree of faith to establish a union between Himself and a sinner, for a grain of mustard seed of faith is sufficient for salvation, though certainly not for the highest degree of comfort. If you can but trust Christ and love Christ, then let not Satan stop you from saying, in the words of the text, “My Beloved is mine.”

Well, we have got so far, but we must remember the next words, “ I am His.” Now this is true of every Christian. I am His by Christ having made me His. I am His by choice—He elected me. I am His by His Father’s gift—God gave me to Him. I am His by purchase—He bought me with His blood. I am His by power, for His Spirit has won me. I am His by my own dedication, for I have vowed myself unto Him. I am His by profession, for I have joined with His people. I am His now by my own deliberate choice of Him, moved by His Grace to choose Him! Every Christian here knows that this is true—Christ is yours and you are Christ’s. You are the sheep of His pasture. You are the partners of His love. You are members of His body. You are branches of His stem. You belong to Him!

But there are some persons who get at a more practical meaning of this sentence, “I am His,” than others do. You know that in the Church of Rome they have certain orders of men and women who devote themselves to various benevolent, charitable, or superstitious work—and who come to be especially considered the servants of the Lord Jesus. Now, we have never admired this form of brotherhoods and sisterhoods, but the spirit of the thing is just that which ought to enter into the heart of every Christian man and woman. You members of Christian Churches, if you are what you ought to be, are wholly consecrated to the Savior. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father” should be practiced by the whole Church of Christ, not merely by certain “orders” and then to be called “religious”! Every Christian woman is “a sister of mercy.” We hear of men who belong to the order of Passionists, but every believing man ought to be of the order of Passionists, moved by the passion of the Savior to consecrate himself to the Savior’s work!

“I am His.” I would like to have you take this for your motto, you professed Christians, if you can honestly do so. When you wake in the morning, breathe a short prayer while you are dressing, and before bowing the knee, feeling, “I am Christ’s, and the first thing when I wake must be a word with Him and for Him.” When you go abroad into the world, I want you to feel that you cannot trade as other men trade, that you cannot imitate their tricks and sharp practices because something whispers within your heart, “I am His! I am His! I am different from other men! They may do what they will, for their judgment is yet to come, but I am different from them, for I am Christ’s.” I wish all Christians felt that the life they live is given to them that they may glorify Christ by it. Oh, if the wealth that is in the Christian Church were but devoted to God’s cause, there would never be any lack of the means of sustaining missions, or of building Houses of Prayer in the dark localities of London! If some rich men gave to the cause of Christ as some poor men and women that I know of, do, there would never be any lack in the treasury! I have sometimes rejoiced over some of you. I have had to bless God that I have seen in this Church, Apostolic piety. I have known men and women who, out of their little, have given almost all that they had and whose one objective in life has been to spend and be spent for Christ—and I have rejoiced over them. But there are others of you who have not given a tithe, no, not a fiftieth part of what you have, to the cause of Christ. Yet, perhaps, you stand up and sing—

*“I love my God with zeal so great*

*That I could give Him all.”*  
Stop that! Do not sing lies, for you know very well that you would not give Him all and do not give Him all! And you also know very well that you would think it the most absurd thing in all the world if you were to give Him all, or even to dream of doing so! Oh, for more consecration! We are, most of us, up to our ankles in our religion—very few of us are up to our knees. But oh, for the man that swims in it, who has got off the earth altogether and now swims in consecration, living wholly unto Him who loved him and gave Himself for him!

I am afraid I shall have to stop here and ask the question, without getting any answer to it—How far can we get toward this second sentence, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His”? Do you feel as if you could not say that? Do you feel that you cannot say it? Then let this be your prayer, “Lord, if I have not yet done all that I can do. If there is anything left which I might have done for You, and which I have not done, give me Grace that I may do all I can for You and give all I can to You!” There ought not to be an unconsecrated hair on a Christian’s head, nor an unconsecrated drop of blood in his veins. Christ gave Himself wholly for us—He deserves that we should give ourselves wholly to Him! Where reserve begins, there Satan’s dominion begins, for what is not Christ’s is the property of the flesh, and the property of the flesh is the property of Satan! Oh, may the spiritual consecration be so perfect in each one of us that if we live, we may live unto Christ—or if we die, it may still be unto Him! I hope, though we may have to make many grave confessions, that we can still say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” If He stood here at this moment. If we could just clear a space and all of a sudden He should come and stand in our midst, with His wounds still visible, it would be so sweet to be able to then say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” But I am afraid that in His Presence we would have to say, “Jesus, forgive us. We are Yours, but we have not acted as if we were. We have stolen from You what was Your purchase and what You have the right to keep. From this day may we bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus and may we be wholly Yours!”

II. I cannot say much upon the second part of the subject, for our time is already nearly gone. THE SOUL, BEING ASSURED OF ITS PERSONAL INTEREST IN CHRIST, LONGS TO KNOW WHERE HE IS.

“Where is He?” asks the soul, and the answer comes from the text, “He feeds among the lilies.” The worldling cares not where Christ is, but that is the Christian’s one subject of thought—

*“Where He is gone I gladly would know*

*That I might seek and find Him, too.”*  
Jesus is gone, then, among the lilies—among those snow-white saints who bloom in the garden of Heaven—those golden lilies that are round about the Throne of God! He is there in—

*“Jerusalem the golden*

*With milk and honey blest”—*  
and it makes us long to be there that we may feed with Him among the lilies.

But, still, there are many of His lilies here below, those virgin souls who—  
*“Wherever the Lamb does lead,  
From His footsteps never depart.”*

If we would find Christ, we must get into communion with His people. We must came to the ordinances with His saints, for though He does not feed on the lilies, He feeds among them—and there, perhaps, we may meet with Him. You are here, tonight, dear Friends, many of you members of this Church, and some of you members of other Churches, and you have come to the place where Christ feeds His flock. Now that He feeds among the lilies, look for Him! At the Communion Table, do not merely partake of the elements, but look for Him! Look through the bread and the wine to His flesh and blood of which they are the symbols. Care not for my poor words, but for Him! And as to anything else of which you have been thinking, get beyond that unto Him. “He feeds among the lilies,” so look for Him where His saints gather in His name!

If you would meet with Him, look, too, in the blessed lily beds of Scripture. Each Book of the Bible seems to be full of lilies, yet you must never be satisfied merely with Scripture, but must get to the Christ of Scripture, the Word of God, the sum and substance of the Revelation of the Most High! “He feeds among the lilies.” That is where He is to be found. Lord Jesus come and feed us among the lilies tonight! Come and feed our hungry souls and we will bless Your holy name!

III. I must leave that part of the subject unfinished because I want to speak of THE SOUL, ASSURED OF CHRIST’S LOVE, DESIRING HIS CONSCIOUS PRESENCE. “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.”

You observe that the soul speaks here of the day breaking. All of us who love the Lord have to look for daybreak, but the sinner has a night to come. Sinner, this is your day! And when you die, that will be your long and awful night—unbroken by a single star of hope! But Christian, this is your night, the darkest period that you will ever have—but your day will break! Yes, the Lord will come in His Glory, or else you shall sleep in Him and then your day shall break. When the Resurrection trumpet shall sound, the Day of the Lord will be darkness and not light to the sinner, but to you it will be an everlasting daybreak! Perhaps at the present moment your life is wrapped in shadows. You are poor, and poverty casts a shadow. You have a sick one at home, or perhaps you are sickly in body—that is a shadow to you. And the reflection of your sin is another shadow, but when the day breaks the shadows will flee away! No poverty then! No sin then, which is better still! And—

*“No groans to mingle with the songs*

*Which warble from immortal tongues.”*  
Brothers and Sisters, it is so sweet to know that our best things are ahead. O Sinner, you are leaving your best things behind and you are going to your worst things! But the Christian is going to his best things. His turn is coming. He will have the best of it before long, for the shadows will flee away! No longer shall he be vexed, and grieved, and troubled, but he shall be eternally in the light, for the shadows shall flee away!

While the shadows last, you perceive that the soul asks Jesus Christ to turn, as though He had withdrawn His face from her. She says, “Have you turned away from me, my Master? Then turn to me again. Have I grieved and vexed you by growing worldly, carnal, careless, reckless? Then turn to me, my Lord. Have You been angry with me? Oh, love me! Have You not said that Your anger may endure for a moment, but that Your love is everlasting? In a little wrath You have hidden Your face from me, but oh, now turn unto me!” You know that the proper state for a Christian to be in is not a state in which Christ turns away His smiling face, but the state in which Christ’s love is beaming full in His face. I know that some of you think it is best for you to be in the shade but, Beloved, do not think so! You need not have shadows forever—you may have the Presence of Christ even now to rejoice in! And I would have you ambitious to get two heavens—a Heaven below and a Heaven above— Christ here and then Christ there! Christ here making you as glad as your heart can be and the Christ forever filling you with all the fullness of God. May we seek after that double blessing and may we get it!

Then the soul says, “Turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.” Dr. Thomson, who wrote The Land and the Book, tells us that he thinks he knows the mountains of Bether. It matters little whether he does or does not, but he has seen the roes and the harts skipping over the precipices. Certainly those wild creatures that are accustomed to craggy rocks will go where human footsteps would not dare to follow. And such is the love of Jesus Christ! Our love is easily turned aside. If we are badly treated, we soon forget those who seemed to be so fond of us. But Christ is like a roe or a young hart and He skips over the mountains of our sins and all the dividing mountains of our unbelief and ingratitude which might keep Him away. Like a young hart, He skips over them as though they were nothing at all, and so hastens to have communion with us. There is the idea of fleetness here—the roe goes swiftly, almost like the lightning’s flash, and so does the Savior come to the soul in need! He can lift you up from the lowest state of spiritual sorrow to the highest position of spiritual joy—may He do so! Oh, cry to Him! Cry to Him! There is nothing that means so much to a mother than the voice of her child, and there is nothing that means so much to Christ than the voice of His dear people, so come to Him! Say, “Savior, show Your love to me. Dear Savior, do not hide Yourself from Your own flesh. I love you. I cannot live without You. I am grieved to think that I should have driven You away. Come to me! Come to me! Return to me and make me glad in Your Presence.” Cry thus to Him and He will come to you!

And you, poor Sinner, who have never comfortably seen His face— remember that there is life for a look at Him! God give you Grace, now, to trust Him—and may you see His face, here, so that you may see Him hereafter with everlasting joy!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **2 THESSALONIANS 1.**

[This exposition belongs to Sermon #3179, Volume 56—A COMPREHENSIVE BENEDICTION—but there was not sufficient space available for its insertion there.—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Verse 1. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians. Paul loved to associate his fellow workers with himself when writing to his Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Although he had a superior experience to theirs, he put Silvanus, and Timothy, his own son in the faith, with him as his fellow Evangelists in writing to “the church of the Thessalonians.”

1. In God our Father. What a wonderful expression! The Church is in God as God is in the Church! What a blessed dwelling place for the people of God in all generations. “In God our Father.”

1, 2. And the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Apostle’s usual salutation when he is writing to a Christian Church. When he is writing to a minister, it is, “Grace, mercy, and peace,” for God’s most prominent servants especially need great mercy on account of their heavy responsibilities and many shortcomings. But to the Church, Paul’s greeting is, “Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

3. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet,

because that your faith [See Sermons #205, Volume 4—A LECTURE FOR LITTLE-FAITH; #1856, Volume 31—THE HISTORY OF LITTLE-FAITH and #1857, Volume 31—THE NECESSITY OF GROWING FAITH—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

grows exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other abounds. What a kind of sacred network Christian love makes, intertwisting every believer in Christ with every other Believer! “The love of every one of you all toward each other abounds.” Oh, that this might really be the case in all the Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ!

4, 5. So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God. One of the clearest proofs of the judgment to come is to be found in the present sufferings of the saints through persecutions and tribulations, for if they, for the very reason that they love God, have to suffer here, there must be a future state and time for rectifying all this that is now so wrong!

5-7. That you may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God for which you suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us. For us who believe in Jesus there is a long Sabbath yet to come, to be spent with the Apostles and the other holy ones around the Throne of God and of the Lamb, even as Paul wrote to the Hebrews, “There remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God.”

7-11. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. Therefore we also pray always for you. The very people in whom Paul gloried, and over whom he rejoiced, were those for whom he continued to pray! And he did well, for the highest state of Grace needs preserving—and there is a possibility of going beyond the utmost height to which any have yet attained. Hence Paul says, “Therefore we also pray always for you”—

11, 12. That our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the Grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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OVER THE MOUNTAINS  
NO. 3307

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 20, 1912.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“My beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.” Solomon’s Song 2:16, 17.**

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same verses are #1190, Volume 20—A SONG AMONG THE LILIES; #2442, Volume 41—“MY BELOVED IS MINE” and #2477, Volume 42—DARKNESS BEFORE THE DAWN—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

IT may be that there are saints who are always at their best and are happy enough never to lose the light of their Father’s Countenance. I am not sure that there are such persons, for those Believers with whom I have been most intimate have had varied experiences and those whom I have known who have boasted of their constant perfectness, have not been the most reliable of individuals. I hope there is a spiritual region attainable where there are no clouds to hide the Sun of our soul, but I cannot speak positively, for I have not traversed that happy land. Every year of my life has had a winter as well as a summer, and every day its night. I have hitherto seen bright days and heavy rains, and felt warm breezes and fierce winds. Speaking for the many of my Brothers and Sisters, I confess that though the substance is in us, as in the olive tree and the oak, yet we do lose our leaves and the sap within us does not flow with equal vigor at all seasons. We have our downs as well as our ups, our valleys as well as our hills! We are not always rejoicing—we are sometimes in heaviness through manifold trials. Alas, we are grieved to confess that our fellowship with the Well-Beloved is not always that of rapturous delight, but we have at times to seek Him and cry, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” This appears to me to have been in a measure the condition of the spouse when she cried, “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved.”

I. These words teach us, first, that COMMUNION MAY BE BROKEN. The spouse had lost the company of her Bridegroom. Conscious communion with Him was gone, though she loved her Lord and sighed for Him. In her loneliness she was sorrowful, but she had by no means ceased to love Him, for she calls Him her Beloved and speaks as one who felt no doubt upon that point. Love to the Lord Jesus may be quite as true, and perhaps quite as strong when we sit in darkness as when we walk in the light. No, she had not lost her assurance of His love to her and of their mutual interest in one another, for she says, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” And yet she adds, “Turn, my Beloved.” The condition of our Grace does not always coincide with the state of our joys. We may be rich in faith and love, and yet have so low an esteem of ourselves as to be much depressed. It is plain, from this sacred Canticle, that the spouse may love and be loved, may be confident in her Lord and be fully assured of her possession of Him, and yet there may, for the present, be mountains between her and Him. Yes, we may even be far advanced in the Divine Life, and yet be exiled for a while from conscious fellowship. There are nights for men as well as babes, and the strong know that the sun is hidden quite as well as do the sick and the feeble. Do not, therefore, condemn yourself, my Brothers and Sisters because a cloud is over you—cast not away your confidence—but rather let faith burn up the gloom and let your love resolve to come at your Lord again whatever barriers which divide you from Him may be!  
When Jesus is absent from a true heir of Heaven, sorrow will ensue. The healthier our condition, the sooner will that absence be perceived and the more deeply will it be lamented. This sorrow is described in the text as darkness—this is implied in the expression, “until the day breaks.” Till Christ appears, no day has dawned for us. We dwell in midnight darkness! The stars of the promises and the moon of experience yield no light of comfort till our Lord, like the sun, arises and ends the night! We must have Christ with us or we are benighted—we grope like blind men for the wall and wander in dismay.  
The spouse also speaks of shadows. “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.” Shadows are multiplied by the departure of the sun, and these are apt to distress the timid. We are not afraid of real enemies when Jesus is with us, but when we miss Him, we tremble at the shade. How sweet is that song, “Yes, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me”! But we change our note when midnight is come and Jesus is not with us! Then we people the night with terrors—specters, demons, hobgoblins and things that never existed save in fancy, are apt to swarm about us—and we are in fear where there is no fear!  
The spouse’s worst trouble was that the back of her Beloved was turned to her and so she cried, “Turn, my Beloved.” When His face is towards her, she suns herself in His love, but if the light of His Countenance is withdrawn, she is sorely troubled. Our Lord turns His face from His people though He never turns His heart from His people. He may even close His eyes in sleep when the vessel is tossed by the tempest, but His heart is awake all the while. Still, it is pain enough to have grieved Him in any degree—it cuts us to the quick to think that we have wounded His tender heart. He is jealous, but never without cause. If He turns His back upon us for a while, there is doubtless a more than sufficient reason. He would not walk contrary to us if we had not walked contrary to Him. Ah, it is sad work this! The Presence of the Lord makes this life the preface to the celestial life! But His absence leaves us pining and fainting, neither does any comfort remain in the land of our banishment. The Scriptures and the ordinances, private devotion and public worship are all as sundials—most excellent when the sun shines, but of small use in the dark. O, Lord Jesus, nothing can compensate us for Your loss! Draw near to Your beloved yet again, for without You, our night will never end—  
*“See! I repent and vex my soul,  
That I should leave You so!  
Where will those vile affections roll  
That let my Savior go?”*  
When communion with Christ is broken, in all true hearts there is a strong desire to win it back again. The man who has known the joy of communion with Christ, if he loses it, will never be content until it is restored. Have you ever entertained the Prince Emmanuel? Is He gone elsewhere? Your chamber will be dreary till He comes back again. “Give me Christ, or else I die,” is the cry of every spirit that has lost the dear Companionship of Jesus! We do not part with such heavenly delights without many a pang. It is not with us a matter of “maybe He will return, and we hope He will,” but it must be, or we faint and die! We cannot live without Him—and this is a cheering sign, for the soul that cannot live without Him shall not live without Him! He comes speedily where life and death hang on His coming. If you must have Christ, you shall have Him! This is just how the matter stands—we must drink of this well or die of thirst. We must feed upon Jesus or our spirit will famish!  
II. We will now advance a step and say that when communion with Christ is broken, THERE ARE GREAT DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF ITS RENEWAL.  
It is much easier to go downhill than to climb to the same height again. It is far easier to lose joy in God than to find the lost jewel. The spouse speaks of “mountains” dividing her from her Beloved—she means that the difficulties were great. They were not little hills, but mountains that closed up her way! Mountains of remembered sin, Alps of backsliding, dread range of forgetfulness, ingratitude, worldliness, coldness in prayer, frivolity, pride, unbelief! Ah me, I cannot teach you all the dark geography of this sad experience! Giant walls arose before her like the towering steeps of Lebanon. How could she get to her Beloved?  
The dividing difficulties were many as well as great. She does not speak of “a mountain,” but of “mountains.” Alps rose on Alps, wall after wall. She was distressed to think that in so short a time, so much could come between her and Him of whom she sang just now, “His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me.” Alas, we multiply those mountains of Bether with a sad rapidity! Our Lord is jealous and we give Him far too much reason for hiding His face. A fault which seemed so small at the time we committed it, is seen in the light of its own consequences, and then it grows and swells till it towers aloft and hides the face of the Beloved! Then has our sun gone down and Fear whispers, “Will His light ever return? Will it ever be daybreak? Will the shadows ever flee away?” It is easy to grieve away the heavenly sunlight, but ah, how hard to clear the skies and regain the unclouded brightness!  
Perhaps the worst thought of all to the spouse was the dread that the dividing barrier might be permanent. It was high, but it might dissolve. The walls were many, but they might fall. But, alas, they were mountains, and these stand fast for ages! She felt like the Psalmist when he cried, “My sin is always before me.” The pain of our Lord’s absence becomes intolerable when we fear that we are hopelessly shut out from Him. A night one can bear, hoping for the morning, but what if the day should never break? And you and I, if we have wandered away from Christ and feel that there are ranges of immovable mountains between Him and us, will feel sick at heart. We try to pray, but devotion dies on our lips. We attempt to approach the Lord at the Communion Table, but we feel more like Judas than John. At such times we have felt that we would give our eyes to behold once more the Bridegroom’s face and to know that He delights in us as in happier days. Still, there stand the awful mountains—black, threatening, impassable—and in the far-off land the Life of our life is away and grieved.  
So the spouse seems to have come to the conclusion that the difficulties in her way were insurmountable by her own power. She does not even think of herself going over the mountains to her Beloved, but she cries, “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, My Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.” She will not try to climb the mountains, she knows she cannot. If they had not been so high, she might have attempted it, but their summits reach to Heaven! If they had been less craggy or difficult, she might have tried to scale them, but these mountains are terrible, and no foot may stand upon their long crags! Oh, the mercy of utter self-despair! I love to see a soul driven into that close corner and forced, therefore, to look to God alone! The end of the creature is the beginning of the Creator! Where the sinner ends, the Savior begins! If the mountains can be climbed, we shall have to climb them, but if they are quite impassable, then the soul cries out with the Prophet, “Oh that You would rend the heavens, that You would come down, that the mountains might flow down at Your Presence, as when the melting fire burns, the fire causes the waters to boil to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your Presence! When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down, the mountains flowed down at Your Presence.” Our souls are lame, they cannot move to Christ and lo, we turn our strong desires to Him and fix our hopes alone upon Him! Will He not remember us in love and fly to us as He did to His servant of old when He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind?  
III. Here arises that PRAYER OF THE TEXT WHICH FULLY MEETS THE CASE—“Turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.”  
Jesus can come to us when we cannot go to Him. The roe and the young hart, or, as you may read it, the gazelle and the ibex, live among the crags of the mountains and leap across the abyss with amazing agility. For swiftness and sure-footedness they are unrivalled. The sacred poet said, “He makes my feet like hinds’ feet, and sets me upon my high places,” alluding to the feet of those creatures which are so fitted to stand surely on the mountains’ sides. Our blessed Lord is called in the title of the 22nd Psalm, “the Hind of the Morning”—and the spouse in this golden Canticle sings, “My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart; behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.”  
Here I would remind you that this prayer is one that we may fairly offer, because it is the way of Christ to come to us when our coming to Him is out of the question. “How?” you ask. I answer that of old He did this, for we remember “His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sin.” His first coming into the world in human form—was it not because man could never come to God until God had come to him? I hear of no tears, or prayers, or entreaties after God on the part of our first parents—but the offended Lord spontaneously gave the promise that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head. Our Lord’s coming into the world was untaught, unsought, unthought of—He came altogether of His own free will, delighting to redeem—  
*“With pitying eyes the Prince of Grace  
Beheld our helpless grief!  
He saw, and oh, amazing love—  
He ran to our relief.”*  
His Incarnation was a type of the way in which He comes to us by His Spirit. He saw us cast out, polluted, shameful, perishing—and as He passed by, His tender lips said, “Live!” In us is fulfilled that ancient word, “I am found of them that sought Me not.” We were too averse to holiness, too much in bondage to sin to ever have returned to Him if He had not turned to us. What do you think? Did He come to us when we were enemies and will He not visit us, now that we are friends? Did He come to us when we were dead sinners and will He not hear us, now that we are weeping saints? If Christ’s coming to the earth was after this manner and if His coming to each one of us was after this style, we may well hope that now He will come to us in like fashion, like the dew which refreshes the grass and waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men. Besides, He is coming again in Person, in the latter days, and mountains of sin, error, idolatry, superstition and oppression stand in the way of His Kingdom—but He will surely come and overturn, and overturn till He shall reign over all! He will come in the latter days, I say, though He shall leap the hills to do it—and because of that I am sure we may comfortably conclude that He will draw near to us who mourn His absence so bitterly. Then let us bow our heads a moment, and silently present to His most excellent Majesty the petition of our text, “Turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.”  
Our text gives us sweet assurance that our Lord is at home with those difficulties which are quite insurmountable by us. Just as the roe or the young hart knows the passes of the mountains and the stepping-places among the rugged rocks, and is void of all fear among the ravines and the precipices, so does our Lord know the heights and depths, the torrents and the caverns of our sin and sorrow. He carried the whole of our transgression and so became aware of the tremendous load of our guilt. He is quite at home with the infirmities of our nature. He knew temptation in the wilderness, heart-break in the garden, desertion on the Cross. He is quite at home with pain and weakness, for, “He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sickness.” He is at home with despondency, for He was “a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He is at home even with death, for He gave up the ghost and passed through the sepulcher to Resurrection. O yawning gulfs and frowning steeps of woe, our Beloved, like hind or hart, has traversed your glooms! O my Lord, You know all that divides me from You and You also know that I am far too feeble to climb these dividing mountains so that I may come to You. Therefore, I pray You, come over the mountains to meet my longing spirit! You know each yawning gulf and slippery steep, but none of these can stop You. Hasten You to me, Your servant, Your beloved, and let me again live by Your Presence.  
It is easy, too, for Christ to come over the mountains for our relief. It is easy for the gazelle to cross the mountains—it is made for that end. So is it easy for Jesus, for to this purpose was He ordained from of old that He might come to man in his worst estate, and bring with Him the Father’s love. What is it that separates us from Christ? Is it a sense of sin? You have been pardoned once and Jesus can renew most vividly a sense of full forgiveness! But you say, “Alas, I have sinned again! Fresh guilt alarms me.” He can remove it in an instant, for the fountain appointed for that purpose is opened and is still full! It is easy for the dear lips of redeeming love to put away the child’s offenses since He has already obtained pardon for the criminal’s iniquities. If with His heart’s blood He won our pardon from our Judge, He can easily enough bring us the forgiveness of our Father. Oh, yes, it is easy enough for Christ to say again, “Your sins are forgiven!” “But I feel so unfit, so unable to enjoy communion.” He that healed all manner of bodily diseases can heal with a word your spiritual infirmities! Remember the man whose ankle bones received strength so that he ran and leaped? And she who was sick of a fever and was healed at once, and arose and ministered unto her Lord? “My Grace is sufficient for you; for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”  
“But I have such affliction, such troubles, such sorrows that I am weighted down and cannot rise into joyful fellowship.” Yes, but Jesus can make every burden light and cause each yoke to be easy! Your trials can be made to aid your heavenward course instead of hindering it. I know all about those heavy weights and I perceive that you cannot lift them. But skilful engineers can adapt ropes and pulleys in such a way that heavy weights lift other weights. The Lord Jesus is great at gracious machinery and He has the art of causing a weight of tribulation to lift from us a load of spiritual deadness, so that we ascend by that which, like a millstone, threatened to sink us down! What else hinders you? I am sure that if it were a sheer impossibility, the Lord Jesus could remove it, for things impossible with men are possible with God!  
But someone objects, “I am so unworthy of Christ. I can understand eminent saints and beloved disciples being greatly indulged, but I am a worm and not a man, utterly below such condescension!” Say you so? Know you not that the worthiness of Christ covers your unworthiness and He is made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption? In Christ, the Father thinks not so meanly of you as you think of yourself! You are not worthy to be called His child, but He does call you so and reckons you to be among His jewels! Listen, and you shall hear Him say, “Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you. I gave Egypt for your ransom; Ethiopia and Seba for you.” Thus, there remains nothing which Jesus cannot leap over if He resolves to come to you and reestablish your broken fellowship!  
To conclude, our Lord can do all this IMMEDIATELY. As in the twinkling of an eye the dead shall be raised incorruptible, so in a moment can our dead affections rise to fullness of delight! He can stay to this mountain, “Be you removed and be you cast into the midst of the sea,” and it shall be done. In the sacred emblems now upon this Supper Table Jesus is already among us. Faith cries, “He has come!” Like John the Baptist she gazes intently on Him and cries, “Behold the Lamb of God!” At this Table Jesus feeds us with His body and blood. His corporeal Presence we have not, but His real spiritual Presence we perceive. We are like the disciples when none of them dared ask Him, “Who are You?” knowing that it was the Lord. He is come! He looks forth at these windows—I mean this bread and wine—showing Himself through the lattices of this instructive and endearing ordinance. He speaks. He says, “The winter is past, the rain is over and gone.” And so it is. We feel it to be so—a heavenly spring-tide warms our frozen hearts. Like the spouse, we wonderingly cry, “Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” Now in happy fellowship we see the Beloved and hear His voice! Our heart burns! Our affections glow! We are happy, restful, brimming over with delight! The King has brought us into His banqueting house and His banner over us is love. It is good to be here!  
Friends, we must now go our ways. A voice says, “Arise, let us go hence.” O Lord of our hearts, go with us! Some will not be home without You. Life will not be life without You. Heaven itself would not be Heaven if You were absent. Abide with us! The world grows dark, the glooming of time draws on. Abide with us, for it is toward evening. Our years increase and we near the night when dews fall cold and chill. A great future is all about us! The splendors of the last age are coming down and while we wait in solemn, awe-struck expectation, our heart continually cries within herself, “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved!”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOHN 14.**

Let us read that well-known and most blessed Chapter, John 14, which so clearly shows our Savior’s tender consideration for the comfort of His people, lest the great grief excited in them by His impending death should altogether break their hearts.

Verse 1*.*Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also  
in Me. [See Sermon #1741, Volume 29—“LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] I think our Savior

meant to say and really did say, “If you believe in God, you are believing in Me; and if you believe in Me, you are believing in God; for there is such a perfect unity between us that you need not, when I die, make any distinction between Me and God, but still believe in Me as you believe in the Father.”

2. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. “Wicked men will shut you out of My Father’s house below: the Temple at Jerusalem, through being still used for Jewish worship after all its ritual and ceremonialism have been abolished, will cease to be My Father’s house to you; but there is a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, and there is room for all of you there. When this country gets to be a desert to you, remember that there is the Home Country, the blessed Glory Land, on the other side of the river, and the Father’s house there with its many mansions.”

2, 3. I go to prepare a place for you. [See Sermon #2751, Volume 47—“A PREPARED  
PLACE FOR A PREPARED PEOPLE”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. Jesus often keeps this promise in many senses. By His gracious Spirit, He has come again. By His Divine Presence in the means of Grace, He full often comes again. By-and-by, if we die, He will come again to meet us. And if we do not die, then will the promise be fulfilled to the greatest possible extent, for Jesus will come again and receive in His own proper Person those who are alive and remain unto His coming.

Anyhow, “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself,” remains one of the sweetest promises that was ever given to Believers by the Lord Jesus Christ! He did not say, “I will receive you to Heaven.” He promised something far better than that—“I will receive you unto Myself.” Oh, what bliss it will be to get to Christ, to be with Him forever and ever!

4. And where I go you know, and the way you know. “At least, I have taught it to you. I have explained it to you. I have told you that I am the goal of your way, and the way to your goal. That I am the end, and also the way to that end.”

5. Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we know not where You go and how can we know the way? Oh, how much ignorance there may be where there ought to be much knowledge! It is not always the man who lives in the sunlight who sees the most. Thomas had been one of the 12 Apostles for years. He had, during all that time, had Christ for his Teacher, yet he had learned very little. With such poor teachers as we are, it is no wonder if our hearers and scholars learn but little from us, yet they ought to learn much from Christ—although I think that we learn nothing even from Jesus Christ, Himself, except under the teaching of the Holy Spirit!

6. Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man

comes unto the Father, but by Me. [See Sermons #245, Volume 5—THE WAY TO GOD; #942, Volume 16—THE WAY and #2938, Volume 51—JESUS THE WAY—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] “I am going to the Father—

that is where I am going, Thomas, and you can only come to the Father by Me—don’t you know that?”

7. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. For Christ is the express Image of His Father, so that you always see the Father when you see the Son!

7. And from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him. Thomas had made an advance in heavenly knowledge. He had taken a higher degree in Divinity now that the Master had taught Him so much upon this most important point—“from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him.”

8. Philip said unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. It was not merely one of Christ’s scholars, you see, who was so dull of comprehension—here is another of the dunces—Philip.

9. Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father; and how say you, then, Show us the Father? He who really knows Christ and understands Christ’s Character, understands, as far as it can be understood by man, the Character of God. We know more of God from the life of Christ than we can learn from any other source.

10-12. Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very work’s sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto My Father. The Lord Jesus Christ, after He had gone back to Heaven, gave to His servants the power to do these “greater works”—the Holy spirit resting upon them—in the gathering in of the nations unto their Lord. Whereas Christ kept to one little country, He sent His first disciples and He sends us still to preach the Gospel to every creature in the whole world, and He clothes His servants with all necessary authority and power to do the work He has committed to their charge.

13-14. And whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it. There is the only limit to true believing prayer! There are some things which we could not ask in Christ’s name—that is, using His authority in asking for them. There are some wishes and whims that we may cherish, and that we think we may pray about, but we have not Christ’s name or authority to warrant us in expecting that we shall realize them and, therefore, we cannot ask for them in His name. To say, “For Christ’s sake,” is one thing, but to say, “I ask this in Christ’s name,” is quite another matter! He never authorized you to make use of His name about everything. There are only certain things about which you can pray in His name, such as are the express subject of a Divine promise—and when you pray for one of those things, you shall prove Christ’s words to be true, “If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.”

15-16. If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, [See Sermons #1074, Volume 18—  
THE PARACLETE and #1932, Volume 32—LOVE’S LAW AND LIFE—Read/download both sermons,

free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org] The Paraclete, the Succorer, the Helper. The word, “Comforter,” has lost its old meaning. You get it in certain old writings, when you read of such-and-such a man that he gave to someone else succor and comfort. There is more here than merely giving us consolation. It means Helper—“He shall give you another Helper.” Advocatus is the Latin, and that, too, is the correct word. “He shall give you another Advocate”—

16, 17. That He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive because it sees Him not, neither knows Him, but you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you. [See

Sermons #4, Volume 1—THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT; #754, Volume 13—THE SAINT AND THE SPIRIT and #2074, Volume 35—INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT— Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Worldly

men are not cognizant of the existence of the Holy Spirit. They do not believe in Him—they say that there may or may not be such a Divine Being in the world as the Holy Spirit, but they have never come across His path. This, then, is one of the tests of true Believers, the twice-born— they have received a new nature which enables them to recognize the existence of the Spirit of God and to feel the influence of His work—“You know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you.”

18, 19. I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me. [See Sermon #2990, Vo  
lume 52—THE BELIEVER NOT AN ORPHAN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] “Your spiritual sight, which discerns the Presence with you of the Holy Spirit, will also discern My continued Existence when I have gone away from you.”

19, 20. Because I live, you shall live also. At that day you shall know that I am in My father, and you in Me, and I in you. [See Sermon 968, Volume 17—  
LIFE IN CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is something more for us to know. To know that Christ is in the Father is one thing, but it is still more for us to understand the next mystic unity, “you in Me, and I in you.” Oh, wondrous combination of the Father and the Son, and of Immanuel, God with us, and ourselves!

21, 22. He that has My commandment, and keeps them, He it is that loves Me; and He that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the

world? [See Sermon #29, Volume 1—CHRIST MANIFESTING HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Large

hearted Judas, very different from Judas Iscariot! He wants Christ to manifest Himself to all the world! He seems to have been a man of very broad views. He does not comprehend discriminating love and electing Grace—He wants all the privileges of the children of God to be the privileges of the King’s enemies—but that cannot be.

23. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man loves Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and  
make our abode with him. [See Sermon #2895, Volume 50—A BLESSED GOSPEL CHAIN— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Christ is

sure to manifest Himself to those who love Him, but how can He manifest Himself to those who love Him not? They cannot see Him! They would not appreciate Him if they could see Him—they have no spiritual taste with which to enjoy Him.

24-26. He that loves Me not keeps not My saying: and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s which sent Me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you. Do we sufficiently look to the Holy Spirit for Divine teaching? We read our Bibles, I trust, with diligence—and also any explanatory books by which we may better understand our Bibles—but do we look up to the Holy Spirit and ask Him distinctly and immediately to teach us what is the meaning of Christ’s words, and to bring them to our remembrance? I wish we did this more than we do.

27. Peace I leave with you. “That is My legacy to you.”  
27. My peace I give unto you—[See Sermons #247, Volume 5—THE BEST OF MASTERS and #300, Volume 6—SPIRITUAL PEACE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] My own deep calm of spirit, which is not ruffled or broken though the contradiction of sinners continually annoys Me— “My peace I give unto you.” Christ puts His hand into His heart and takes out of that priceless casket the choicest jewel it contains—His own peace! And He says, “Wear that on your finger, the seal and token of My love.” “My peace I give unto you”—

27. Not as the world gives, give I unto you. “With an expectation of getting a reward for it. Neither do I give it to take it back again. Nor do I give it in mere pretence—I give it in reality, sincerely, disinterestedly, as your freehold possession forever.”

27-28. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I. Christ as Man had condescended to become less than the Father—He had taken upon Himself the form of a Servant, but now He was going back to take His own natural dignity again. We ought to rejoice in His gain! Though you may think it a loss not to have His corporeal Presence, yet would you like to call Him away from yonder harps that ring out His praises and the perfect love of the Father with whom He reigns supreme? Oh, no, blessed Master, stay where You are!

29-31. And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it is comes to pass, you might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the Prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go from here.

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DARKNESS BEFORE THE DAWN  
NO. 2477

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 9, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 1, 1886.

**“Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.” Song of Solomon 2:17.**

**THE spouse sings, “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away,” so the beloved of the Lord *may be in the dark*. It may be night with her who has a place in the heart of the Well-Beloved. A child of God, who is a child of light, may be, for a while, in darkness. First, darkness comparatively, as compared with the light he has sometimes enjoyed, for days are not always equally bright. Some days are bright with a clear sunshine, other days may be overcast. So the child of God may one day walk with full assurance of faith, in close fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, and at another time he may be questioning his interest in the Covenant of Grace and may be rather sighing than singing, rather mourning than rejoicing. The child of God may be, then, in comparative darkness.**

**Yes, and he may be in positive darkness. It may be very black with him and he may be obliged to cry, “I see no signs of returning day.” Sometimes, neither sun nor moon appears for a long season to cheer the Believer in the dark. This may arise partly through sickness of body. There are sicknesses of the body which, in a very peculiar way, touch the soul— exquisite pain may yet be attended with great brightness and joy—but there are certain other illnesses which influence us in another way. Terrible depressions come over us. We walk in darkness and see no light. I should not like to guess how heavy a true heart may sometimes become—sometimes it is necessary we are in heaviness through manifold trials. There is not only a necessity for the trials, but also for the heaviness which comes out of them. It is not always that a man can gather himself together and defy the fierce blasts and walk through fire and through water with heavenly equanimity. No, Brothers and Sisters, “a wounded spirit, who can bear?” And that wounded spirit may be the portion of some of the very fairest of the sons of God! Indeed, the Lord has some weakly, sickly sons who, nevertheless, are the very pick of His family. It is not always the strong ones by whom He sets the most store, but, sometimes, those that seem to be driven into a corner—whose days are spent in mourning—are among the most precious in His sight! Yes, the darkness of the child of God may be comparative darkness and it may, to a great extent, be positive darkness.**

**But yet it can only be temporary darkness. The same text which suggests night promises dawn—“Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away,” says the song of the spouse. Perhaps no text is more frequently upon my lips than is this one. I do not think that any passage of Scripture more often recurs to my heart when I am alone. And just now I feel that there is a gathering gloom over the Church and over the world. It seems as if night were coming on and such a night as makes one sigh and cry, “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.”**

**I am going to speak upon three things which are in our text. The first will be *our prospect*. We have a prospect that the day will break and the shadows flee away. Secondly, *our posture—*“until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.” Thirdly, *our petition—*“Turn, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of division.” We are content to wait if He will come to us. If gladdened with His Presence, the night shall seem short and we can well endure all that it brings! Let the prayer of our text be put up by any of you who are waiting in the darkness and may it be speedily answered in your happy experience!**

**I. First of all, let us consider OUR PROSPECT. Our prospect is that the day *will* break and that the shadows *will* flee away. We may read this passage in many ways and apply it to different cases.**

**Think, first, of *the child of God who is full of doubt*. He is afraid that, after all, his supposed conversion was not a true one, and that he has proved it to be false by his own misbehavior. He is afraid, I scarcely know of what, for so many fears crowd in upon him. He is crying to God to remove his doubts and to let him once again—**

***“Read his title clear***

***To mansions inthe ski es.”*His eyes are looking toward the Cross and somehow he has a hope, if not quite a persuasion, that he will find light in Christ, where so many others have found it. I would encourage that hope till it becomes a firm conviction and a full expectation! The day *will* break for you, dear mourner! The shadows *will* yet flee away. While I say that, I feel able to speak with great confidence, for my eyes, as they look round on this congregation, detect many Brothers and Sisters with whom I have conversed in the cloudy and dark day. We have prayed together, dear Friends—have we not? I have repeated in your hearing those precious promises which are the pillows of our hope, yet, at the time, it seemed as if you would never be cheered or comforted. Friends who lived with you grieved much to see you so sad. They could not understand how such as you who have lived so scrupulously as you believed to be right, should, nevertheless, come into sadness and despondency!**

**Well, you have come out of that state, have you not? I can almost catch the bright expression in your eyes as you flash back the response, “It is so, Sir! We can sing among the loudest, now. We can leap as a hart and the tongue that once was dumb can now sing praises to the Lord who delivered us.” The reason for this great change is that you clung to Christ even when it seemed to be no use to cling! You had a venturesome faith—when it seemed a risky thing even to believe, you believed—and you kept on believing! And now the day has dawned for you and the shadows have fled away. Well, so shall it be to all who are in the same predicament if they will but trust in the Lord and stay themselves upon our God! Though they walk in darkness and see no light, yet, by-and-by, the day shall break for them, also!**

**This expression is equally applicable when we come into some *personal sorrow not exactly of a spiritual kind*. I know that God’s children are not long without tribulation. As long as the wheat is on the threshing floor, it must expect to feel the flail. Perhaps you have had a bereavement, or you may have had losses in business, or crosses in your family, or you have been sorely afflicted in your own body. And now you are crying to God for deliverance out of your temporal trouble. That deliverance will surely come. “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” “I have been young,” said David, “and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken.” The Lord will yet light your candle and surround your path with brightness. Only patiently hope and quietly wait—and you shall yet see the salvation of the Lord. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” Mark that—you know that part of the verse is true, but so is the rest of it—“but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” Clutch at that, for it is equally true! “In the world you shall have tribulation.” You know that is true. “Be of good cheer,” says Christ, “I have overcome the world.” Therefore, expect that you, also, will overcome it through your conquering Lord! Yes, in the darkest of all human sorrows, there is the glad prospect that the day will break and the shadows will flee away!**

**This is the case again, I believe, on a grander scale with reference *to the depression of religion at the present time*. [1886—EO] Some of us are obliged to go sorrowing when we look upon the state of the Church and the world. We are not accustomed to take gloomy views of things, but we cannot help grieving over what we see. More and more it forces itself upon us that the old-fashioned Gospel is being either neglected or trampled in the dust! The old spirit, the old fire that once burned in the midst of the saints of God, is still there, but it burns very low at present. We need—I cannot say how much we need a revival of pure and undefiled religion in this our day! Will it come? Why should it not come? If we long for it, if we pray for it, if we believe for it, if we work for it and prepare for it, it will certainly come. The day *will* break and the shadows *will* flee away!**

**The mockers think that they have buried our Lord Jesus Christ. So, perhaps, they have, but He will have a resurrection. The cry is, “Who will roll away the stone for us?” The stone shall be rolled away and He, even the Christ in whom our fathers trusted, the Christ of Luther and of Calvin, of Whitefield and of Wesley—that same Christ shall be among us in the fullness and the glory of His power by the working of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of myriads of men! Let us never despair, but, on the contrary, let us brush away the tears from our eyes and begin to look for the light of the morning, for, “the morning comes,” and the day will break and the shadows will flee away!**

**Let me encourage any friends who have been laboring for Christ in any district which has seemed strikingly barren, where the stones of the field have seemed to break the plows. Still believe on, Beloved—that soil which appears most unfruitful will perhaps repay us after a while with a hundred-fold harvest! The prospect may be dark, but, perhaps, dear Friends, it is to be darker yet. We may have worked and seemed to work in vain. Possibly the vanity of all our working is yet to appear still more, but, for all that, “the morning comes.” “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.” We must not be in the least bit afraid even in the densest darkness, but, on the contrary, look for the coming blessing!**

**I believe that this is to be the case, also, *in this whole world*. It is still the time of darkness, it is still the hour of shadows. I am no prophet, nor the son of a Prophet, and I cannot foretell what is yet to happen in the earth. It may be that the darkness will deepen still more and that the shadows will multiply and increase—but the Lord will come! When He went up from Olivet, He sent two of His angels down to say, “You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven.” He is surely coming and though the date of His return is hidden from our sight, all the signs of the times look as if He might come very speedily! I was reading, the other day, what old Master William Bridge says on this subject—“If our Lord is coming at midnight, He certainly will come very soon, for it cannot be darker than it now is.”**

**That was written *two hundred years ago* and our Lord has not come, yet, and I might say much the same as Master Bridge did! Do not doubt as to Christ’s coming because it is delayed. A person lies dying and the report concerning him is, “Well, it does not look as if he could live many hours.” You call again and they say, “Well, he still survives, but it seems as if he would scarcely get through the night.” Do you go away and say, “Oh, he will not die, for I have expected, for several days, to hear that he has passed away”? Oh, no! But each time you hear the report, you feel, “Well, it is so much nearer the end.” And so is our Master’s coming! It is getting nearer every hour, so let us keep on expecting it. That glorious Advent shall end our weary waiting days! It shall end our conflicts with infidelity and priestcraft! It shall put an end to all our futile endeavors and when the Great Shepherd shall appear in His Glory, then shall every faithful undershepherd and all His flock appear with Him—and then shall the day break, and the shadows flee away!**

**As to the shadows fleeing what are those shadows that are to fly at His approach? The types and shadows of the Ceremonial Law were all finished when Christ appeared the first time. But many shadows still remain—the shadows of our doubts, the grim mysterious shadows of our fears, the shadows of sin, so black, so dense—the shadows of abounding unbelief—ten thousand shadows! When He comes, these shall all flee away, and with them shall go Heaven and earth— the Heaven and earth that now are, for what are these but shadows? All things that are unsubstantial shall pass away when He appears! When the day breaks, then shall everything but that which is eternal and invisible pass away! We are glad that it shall be so and we pray that soon the day may break and the shadows flee away. This, then, is our prospect.**

**II. Now I want to occupy a few minutes of your time in considering OUR POSTURE “until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.” We are here, like soldiers on guard, waiting for the dawn. It is night and the night is deepening— how shall we occupy ourselves until the day breaks and the shadows flee away?**

**Well, first, we will wait in the darkness with *patient endurance* as long as God appoints it. Whatever of shadow is yet to come, whatever of cold damp air and dews of the night is yet to fall upon us, we will bear it. Soldiers of the Cross, you must not wish to avoid these shadows! He who has called you to this service knew that it would be nighttime and He called you to night duty. And being put upon the night watch, stay at your post. It is not for any of us to say, “We will desert because it is so dark.” Has not the thought sometimes crossed your mind, “I am not succeeding—I will run away”? Have you not often felt, like Jonah, that you would go to Tarshish that you might escape from delivering your Master’s message? Oh, do not! The day will break and the shadows flee away—and until then, watch through the night and fear not the shadows! Play the man, remembering through what a sevenfold night your Master passed, when, in Gethsemane, He endured even to a bloody sweat for you! When, on the Cross, even His mid-day was midnight—what must have been the darkness over His spirit? He bore it—then *you* bear it. Let no thought of fear pass over your mind, or, if it does, let not your heart be troubled, but rise above your fear until the day breaks and the shadows flee away. Be of good courage, soldiers of Christ, and still wait on in patient endurance.**

**What are we to do, next, until the day breaks? Why, let there be *hopeful watching*. Keep your eyes towards the East and look for the first gray sign of the coming morning. “Watch!” Oh, how little is done of this kind of work! We scarcely watch as we ought against the devil, but how little do we watch for the coming of our Master! Look for every sign of His appearing and be always listening for the sound of His chariot wheels. Keep the candle burning in the window to let Him see that you are awake. Keep the door on the latch, that when He comes you may quickly open to Him. Hopefully watch until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.**

**Then, further, dear Friends, while we maintain patient endurance and hopeful watching, let us give each other mutual encouragement. Men who have been shipwrecked will give each other a hand and say, “Brother, perhaps we shall escape after all.” Now that it is midnight all around, let every Christian give his fellow soldier a grip of his hand. Courage, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord has not forgotten us! We are in the dark and cannot see Him, but He can see us and He knows all about us—maybe He will come walking on the stormy waters in the middle watch of the night when our little boat seems ready to be sunk beneath the waves by the boisterous wind! I seem, just now, as though I were a soldier in this great guardroom and as if we were sitting in these shadows and, perhaps, in the darkness, and seemed very much dispirited. And I would say to you, my comrades, “Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us cheer up. The Lord has appeared to one and another of us. He has given to some of us the light of His Countenance and He is coming back to welcome us all to Himself. Let us not be dismayed—our glorious Leader forgets not the weakest and feeblest of us, neither is any part of the battlefield beyond the reach of the great Captain’s eyes! He sees which way the struggle is going and He has innumerable reserves which He will bring up at the right time. I seem to hear the music of His horse’s hoofs even now. He is coming who shall turn the scale in the worst moment of the conflict, for the battle is the Lord’s and He will deliver the enemy into our hands! Let no man’s heart fail him because of yonder Goliath! The God who has raised up men to slay the lion and the bear will yet find a David and a smooth stone to kill this mighty giant. Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, be of good courage.”**

**What further should we do in the dark? Well, one of the best things to do in the dark is *to stand still and keep our place*. “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away,” let us keep our place and firmly maintain our position. A Brother who sat at the back of me, 20 years ago, dropped in, again, recently to hear me preach. And he said to me, after the service, that he had been in America and come over here again after 20 years, and he added, “It is the same old story, Spurgeon, as when I was here before—you are sticking to the same old Gospel” I replied, “Yes, and if you will come in 20 years’ time, if God spares me, I shall still be sticking to the same old Gospel, for I have nailed my colors to the mast and I do not mean to have anything to do with this new-fangled progressive theology.” To me, the Gospel came to perfection long ago in the Person of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and it can never go beyond that perfection! We preach nothing but that Gospel which has saved our own souls and saved the souls of the myriads who have gone to their eternal rest— and we do not intend preaching anything else until somebody can find us something better—and that will not be tomorrow, nor the day after, nor as long as the world stands! It is dark, very dark, so we just stay where we are, in steadfast confidence in the Lord who has placed us where we are! We are not going to plunge on in a reckless manner—we mean to look before we leap and as it is too dark to look, we will not leap, but will just abide here hard by the Cross, battling with every adversary of the Truth of God as long as we have a right hand to move in the name of the Almighty God, “until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.”**

**What else ought we to do? Keep up a careful separateness from the works of darkness that are going on all around us. If it seems dark to you, gather up your skirts, and gird up your loins! The more sin abounds in the world, the more ought the Church of God to seek after the strictest holiness. If ever there was an age that needed back, again, the sternest form of Puritanism, it is this age! If ever there was a time when we needed the old original stamp of Methodists, we need them now—a people separated to God, a people that have nothing to do but to please God and to save souls—a people that will not in any way bow themselves to the fashions of the time! For my part, I would like to see a George Fox come back among us, yes—Quaker as he was—to bear such a testimony as he did in the power of the Spirit of God against the evils of his time. God make us to feel that now, in the dark, we *cannot*** be as lenient as we might have been in brighter days towards the sin that surrounds us!

Are any of you tempted into “society,” so-called, and into the ways of that society? Every now and then those who read the papers get some little idea of what is going on in “society.” The stench that comes from “society” tells us what it must be like and makes us wish to stay clear of it! The awful revelations that were once before made which caused us to be sick with shame and sorrow, might be made again, for there is just the same foulness and filthiness beneath the surface of the supposed greater decency. O Christian people, if you could but know, as the most of you ought *not* to know, how bad this world is, you would not begin to talk about its wonderful improvements, or to question the doctrine of human depravity! We are going on, according to some teachers, by, “evolution,” into *something*—if I might predict what it is, I would say that it is into *devils* that many men are being evolved! They are going down, down, down, except where eternal Grace is begetting in the heart of men a higher and better and nobler nature which must bear its protest against the ignorance or hypocrisy which this day talks about—the improvements of our civilization and the progress that we are making towards God! “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away,” keep yourselves to your Lord and hear this voice sounding through the darkness—the voice of Wisdom that sees more than you see—“Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, said the Lord Almighty.”

“Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away,” lift your hands to Heaven and pledge yourselves to walk a separate pilgrim life until He comes before whose face Heaven and earth shall flee away!   
III. Now I close by noticing OUR PETITION—“Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.”   
I am not going to preach upon that part of our text, but only just urge you to turn it into prayer. We have to wait, Brothers and Sisters—we have to wait in the darkness, cheered, here and there, with the light from a golden lamp that glows with the Light of God. The world lies in darkness, but we are of God, little children, therefore this must be our prayer to our Well-Beloved, “*Come to us*.” “Turn to me, O my Beloved, for You have turned away from me, or from Your Church. Turn again, I beseech You. Pardon my lukewarmness, forgive my indifference. Turn to me again, my Beloved. O You Husband of my soul, if I have grieved You, and You have hidden Your face from me, turn again to me! Smile, for then shall the day break and the shadows flee away! Come to me, my Lord, visit me once again.” Put up that prayer, Beloved.   
The prayer of the spouse is in this poetic form—“*Come over the mountains of division.*” As we look out into the darkness, what little light there is appears to reveal to us Alp upon Alp, mountain upon mountain and our Beloved seems divided from us by all those hills. Now our prayer is that He would come over the top of them—we cannot go over the top of them to Him—but He can come over the top of them to us, if He thinks fit to do so. Like the hinds’ feet, this blessed Hind of the morning can come skipping over the hills with utmost speed to visit and to deliver us! Make this your prayer, “Great Master, sweet Beloved One, come over the mountains of division and come quickly, like a roe or a young hart! Come easily, come unexpectedly! As roes and harts let no man know when they will come, so come You to me.” I wish that, even while we are sitting here, our Divine Lord would come to our spirits with all His ravishing charms, so that we might cry, “Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.”   
Have you never felt an influence steal over you which has lifted you out of yourself and made you go as on burning wheels with axles hot with speed where before you had been sluggish and dull? Our Well-Beloved can come and visit us all of a sudden, without any trouble to Himself. It cost Him His life’s blood to come to earth to save us—it will cost Him nothing to come just now to bless us! Remember what He has already done, for, having done so much, He will not deny you the lesser blessing of coming to you. Are you saved by His Grace? Then do not think that He will refuse you fellowship with Himself!   
Pray for it now. Before we come to the Communion Table, pray for it and while you are sitting there, let this be your cry, “Come to me, my Beloved, over the hills of division! Come as a roe or a young hart.” And He *will* come to you. Put up your prayer in the sweet words we sang just now—   
*“When will You come to me, Lord?   
Ocome, myLord mostdear!   
Come near, come nearer, nearer still,   
I’m blest when You are near!   
When will You come to me, Lord?   
Until You do appear,   
I count each momentfor a day,   
Each minutefor a year.”*Oh, that this might be one of those happy seasons when you shall not be fed by the preacher’s talk, but by the Master revealing Himself to you! May God graciously grant it!   
I may be addressing some who long to find the Savior. This morning I got from a friend who came in to see me, an illustration which I will give to you. He told me—and oh, how he made my heart rejoice!—that six years ago he was, so the Apostle says, “going about to establish his own righteousness.” He is a man of reputation and when a friend sent him some of my sermons to read, he thought to himself, “What do I need these sermons for? I am as good as any man can be.” But he did read them and the friend asked him, “Have you read those sermons of Mr. Spurgeon’s that I sent you?” “Yes,” he replied, “I have, but I have got no good out of them.” “Why not?” “Why,” he said, “he has spoiled me! He has dashed my hopes to the ground. He has taken away my comfort and my joy. I thought myself as good as anybody living and he has made me feel as if I were rotten right through.” “Oh,” said his friend, “that medicine is working well! You must take some more of it.” But the more of the sermons he read, the more unhappy he became, the more he saw the hollowness of all his former hopes—and he came into a great darkness—ad the day did *not* break and the shadows did *not* flee away!   
But, all of a sudden, he was brought out into the light, by God’s Grace! As he told me the story, this morning, his eyes were wet and so were mine. This is how the Lord led him into peace. I wish the telling of it might bring the same blessing to some of you. He said, “I went with my friend to fish for salmon in Loch Awe. I threw a fly and as I threw it, a fish leaped up and took it in a moment.” “There,” said the friend to him, “that is what you have to do with Christ, what that fish did with your fly! I am sure I do not know whether the fly took the fish, or the fish took the fly—it was both, the bait took the fish—and the fish took the bait. Do just so with Christ and do not ask any questions. Leap up at Him, take Him in, lay hold of Him!” The man did so and at once he was saved! I wish that somebody else would do the same. I never ask you to answer the question whether it is Christ who takes you or you who take Christ, for both things will happen at the same moment. Will you have Him? Will you have Him? If you will have Him, He has you! If you are willing to have Christ, Christ has already made you willing in the day of His power! Throw yourself upon Christ, as the salmon opened his mouth and took in the bait, so you take Christ into your very soul!   
Writing to the Romans, Paul says, “The Word is near you, even in your mouth.” What is the thing to do with that which is in your mouth when you want to keep it? Why, swallow it, of course! Do so with Christ! Let Him go right down into your soul! Put Him into your mouth, as it were, while I am preaching. Accept Him, receive Him and He is yours directly. *Then* shall the day break and the shadows flee away and your Beloved shall have come to you over the mountains of division, never to leave you, but to abide with you forever! O blessed Spirit of God, grant all here Divine Grace to swallow Christ, now, for only You can grant them life that they may swallow! God bless you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
*EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
48.*

Verses 22-23. *And He said to His disciples, Therefore I say to you, Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat; neither for the body, what you shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.* If you are God’s servants, He will clothe you. There is no servitor of the Lord of Hosts who will have to go without his necessities and not one who belongs to His vast household, even though he is but a menial in God’s kitchen, who will ever be permitted to starve.

24-26. *Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them: how much more are you better than the fowls? And which of you, by worrying, can add to his stature one cubit? If you, then, are not able to do that thing which is least, why are you anxious for the rest?* How little you can do for yourself after all! Therefore, leave the whole with God—

*“Make you His service your delight,*

*He’ll make your needs His care.”*The best cure for the cares of this life is to care much to please God! If we loved Him better, we should love the world far less, and be less troubled about our portion in it.

27, 28. *Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say to you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of those. If, then, God so clothes the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?* What a title to address us—“O you of little faith!”—but, depend upon it, we deserve it when we are full of anxious care. Much care indicates little faith. When faith is strong, she casts all her care on Him who cares for us. Oh, that we could but be rid of that which, after all, is not our business, and give our whole mind, heart and soul to what *is* our business, namely, to please our Creator, our Redeemer, our Friend!

29, 30. *And seek not what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, neither be you of doubtful mind. For all those things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knows that you have need of these things.* Is not that a sweet word? “Your Father knows that you have need of these things.” There used to be a hymn which was sung a good deal at revival meetings. It had a very sweet refrain, “This my Father knows.” If you cannot, yourselves, understand your case, your Father knows all about it. If you cannot make other people comprehend it, yet your Father knows all that needs to be known. Whatever you really require, even for the present life, need not be any cause of anxiety to you, Believers, for “your Father knows that you have need of these things.” There is no need, therefore, for you to seek “what you shall eat, or what you shall drink.”

31, 32. *But rather seek you the Kingdom of God; and all those things shall be added to you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.* He gives others a good many things, but He will give you the Kingdom! Just as Abraham gave portions to the sons of Keturah and sent them away, but Isaac had the Covenant blessing, so, “it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.”

33. *Sell what you have, and give alms.* Not only give to the poor till you pinch yourself, but even pinch yourself to do it!   
33-35. *Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning.* Never be undressed, as it were, in a moral or spiritual sense—“Let your loins be girded about.” Never be in the dark, spiritually. Keep in the Light of God—let your lamp be always burning. Not only walk in the Light of God, but let your light shine before men.   
36. *And you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately.* Brothers and Sisters, whatever theory we hold about the future, may God grant that it may never prevent our looking for the coming of Christ as an event which may happen at any moment—and being on the watch for it as a matter the date of which we do not know! The practical essence of all Scriptural teaching upon that subject is just this, “You yourselves be like men that wait for their Lord, when He will return from the wedding.”   
37. *Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, shall find watching: verily I say to you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.* I will not attempt to fully explain this passage of Scripture in the few moments which I can give to it, but it is very wonderful. Our Lord has been here once and girded Himself to serve us, but is it not extraordinary that here is an intimation of a second girding of Himself that He may serve us? Oh, how fond is Christ of being the Servant of servants, ministering to those who delight to minister to Him! What an honor does the Captain of our salvation put upon the lowest soldiers in this war when He declares that if we are found faithful, He will gird Himself and come forth and serve us!   
38-40. *And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken into. Be you, therefore, ready also: for the Son of Man comes at an hour when you think not.* Perhaps He will not come when the modern “prophets” say that He will appear, but He will come when least of all He is expected. Therefore, expect the unexpected! Look for your Lord to come when the many go to sleep. Perhaps, while yet I am speaking, before this gathered assembly shall disperse, there may be heard the cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go out to meet Him!” Are our loins girded? Are our lamps burning? God bless His own truth to the effecting of both those ends!   
41-43. *Then Peter said to Him, Lord, speak You this parable to us, or even to all? And the lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his master, when he comes, shall find so doing.* Distributing the Bread of Life, giving milk to babes and meat to strong men—not behaving as if he were master, but acting only as a steward who distributes, not his own—but his Master’s stores. Oh, that we who are ministers of Christ may be always doing this! So shall we obtain the blessing promised to “that servant, whom his *master*, when he comes, shall find so doing.”

44, 45. *Of a truth I say to you, that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, My master delays his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunk.* First he becomes lordly. He acts as if he were master, beats his fellow servants. He is harsh and ungenerous and assumes great dignity and gives himself airs. Let him mind what he is doing, for his master will come and catch him usurping his place. The next danger is that he begins to enjoy himself, to be voluptuous, self-indulgent—“To eat and drink, and to be drunk.” He becomes intoxicated with pride! He is carried away with divers errors and, in making much of himself, he loses his head and acts like a fool.

46. *The master of that servant will come in a day when he looks not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.* Truly, our Lord uses very strong words! The Savior is not one of your effeminate preachers like those of modern times who seem as if the very word, “Hell,” would burn their lips, and who will not warn men to flee from the wrath to come! It is an unkind and heartless lack of humanity which prevents their being faithful to the souls of men. The great Lord, who is full of tenderness, does not hesitate to use the sternest figure and the most terrible language, simply because He does not consult His own feelings but aims at the highest good of those with whom He deals! This is a terrible word for us if we are unfaithful at the last—“He will cut him in two, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.” It is an awful thing that the unfaithful servant gets his portion with those who do not believe in Christ. The Lord preserve all of us from such a doom!

47, 48. *And that servant, which knew his master’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with a few stripes. For to whomever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* Under the shadow of such solemn texts as these, let us draw near to God in earnest prayer.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—810, 766.  
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PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Sermon #2478 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE BELIEVER’S GLAD PROSPECTS  
NO. 3323

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1912.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.” Solomon’s Song 2:17.**

WITHOUT a sentence of introduction, I invite you, Beloved, to see herein,  
I. A BLESSED SEASON HERE ANTICIPATED!—A time when the day shall break and the shadows shall flee away.  
It is not every man who can count upon such a time as that, for to some there is no prospect of the day breaking. They are now in the shade and that shade will grow darker and darker with them till, in the hour of death, their sun will go down forever in a tenfold night—a night not gladdened by a solitary star—a night that shall never have an ending—a night of glooms more terrible than imagination itself could picture! I fear there are some in this place for whom we might utter such forebodings! The world is dark enough to them, now, but they have no hope of the Lord as though it would be brightness to them. Conscience tells them— and if conscience is not enlightened enough to do so—the Word of God tells them that the day of the Lord shall be darkness and not light to them. But, to every soul in this house that believes in Jesus, there is the delightful anticipation of the hour spoken of in the text—when the day shall break and the shadows shall flee away!  
Let us take each expression and muse on it. “Until the day breaks.” In a certain sense the Christian is now in the light, for he is a child of light and he walks in the light. And he may walk in the light as God is in the light, and so have fellowship with the Father and feel that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses him from all sin. But Paul, in some pages, calls this present estate darkness. “For,” he says, “the night is far spent, the day is at hand,” meaning thereby this present state of life to the Believer, which is far spent, and the daylight, the glorious daylight of eternity, is near at hand!  
“The daybreak.” Why, this represents to the most of us, probably, the moment of death. To as many as shall be alive and remain at the coming of the Lord, it represents the coming of the Lord and the Glory of His people. “The daybreak!” It is the hour of joy. During the night the earth seems sad. She has covered herself with sackcloth, her eyes are full of the drops of the night. There is silence over the plains. The woods send not forth their grateful music. There is only heard the hooting of the owl, with, perhaps, now and then a stray note from the nightingale as though she remembered the day. Night is the time of the world’s gloom, but daybreak is the time of her festival! Then is her splendor abroad. Then— **“Morn, her rosy step in the eastern clime Advancing, sows the earth with orient pearl.”**Ten thousand winged songsters of the grove waking up from their slumber begin to pour forth incessant streams of music! Every creature, beholding the light of the sun, wakes itself up and is full of joy! Such will the daybreak be to us. This is not our time of fullest joy. We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened. We have trials without. We have conflicts within. The daybreak is coming when we who are not of the night, nor of darkness, though compelled to pass through it, shall emerge into our proper element—the Light of God—and our spirits shall bathe themselves in all that they can desire, being satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord! “I shall be satisfied,” says David, “when I awake in Your likeness.” We are looking for a time of ineffable delight! All the attempts that have ever been made to describe the joy and glory of Heaven have necessarily been failures—and if we were to attempt again, we should fall far below that which God has revealed to us by His Spirit—for eye has not seen, nor ear heard that which He has prepared for them that love Him! Thank God, our joy is coming nearer every time the tick of the clock is heard. Behold, on flying wings it comes! Every day of winter’s sorrow or of summer’s joy brings it nearer. We said last Sunday evening, “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed,” and we often sing—  
**“We nightly pitch our moving tent  
A day’s march nearer home.”**  
This is one of the choicest consolations of the present—that we are getting nearer to the daybreak!  
“The daybreak!” It is a summons to activity. The creatures waking up prepare themselves for their day’s work. All Nature is astir. She was lethargic before, as it were, frostbitten under the raven wing of night, but now that the bright beams of the sun have brought the light, they have also brought restoration to vitality! Now the workman girds up his loins and goes forth to his labor. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, those of us who are helped to do most for God on earth are not satisfied with what we can do. This seems to be a world of trying rather than of accomplishing. We are straining to be able to serve God. I feel myself constantly, if I can imagine such an experience, like the chick within the shell—chipping it, wanting to get out of it, doing all it can—no, not do all it can—but doing something and desiring to do more, feeling its circle to be circumscribed and itself to be cribbed, cabined and confined! But what a glorious thing it will be when the young eaglets hatch themselves, leave the nest and try their wings! Such is the happiness we are looking forward to at the daybreak—that we shall serve God day and night in His Temple without any weariness—that we shall serve Him without any sin! That we shall adore Him without any wandering thoughts! That we shall be dedicated to Him without anything that can stir the jealousy of His holy mind! We shall then move forward in the path of duty with as straight a persistency and as Divine a perseverance as the thunderbolt when it is launched from the hand of the Almighty! We shall neither turn to the right hand nor to the left. We shall be swift as seraphs and strong as cherubs in the course of service—and that service shall be to us the Heaven of our delight! Oh, we may well long for the daybreak, because it will help His servants to serve Him!  
“The daybreak!” Is it not, likewise, the time of clear discovery? At night we peep about. We spy out the forms of the mountains. We can trace, by the moonbeams, the course of the rivers, and we may know something, more or less according to the measure of our discernment, or the inferences we may draw of what there is round about us. Still, the night is the time of gloom. Nor can all the tapers and lamps that men kindle turn night into day! So here—this is the time of our ignorance. We know something of the Truth as God has taught us and, blessed be His name, it is such dear knowledge that we would not give it up for all the world! But still, we only see as in a glass darkly—we have not yet come to the face-to-face vision. We read like children spell at school—syllable by syllable—and we do not quite understand what we read. We are like a boy when he first begins to spell out his Horace—he does not comprehend the elegance of the style or the poetry of the language—but just spells it out and sees something of the literal meaning, but that is all that he can get. Ah, I suppose that the greatest Divine that ever lived did not know as much, before he died, as a child knows when he has been in Heaven five minutes! All that we are able to discover here seems to be little, indeed. We know in part, we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away with! The daybreak no sooner comes to the world than you discern everything in its natural hue and its just proportion! You see color where before everything was black! You perceive the beauty of the landscape, the mountain rises before you, the river rolls on mightily towards the sea—even the tiny flowers challenge your notice! You mark all on earth, for by the sun God has painted all the world with the colors of the rainbow! And oh, what a glorious discovery our admission into the next world will bring to us!— *“Then shall we see, and hear, and know  
All we desired or wished below!  
And every power find sweet employ  
In that eternal world of joy!”*

I often get confused over doctrines that puzzle me. I see this to be true, and that to be true, but how to reconcile the two, I know not. Then the thought of the daybreak comes in so comfortably. “What you know not now, you shall know hereafter.” Here it is not good for us to know all things. In some respects, it is the Glory of God to conceal Himself and He may well say to us—“I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” But there it will be the Glory of God to reveal Himself and it will also be to our benefit, our minds being then fortified and strengthened to receive what we could not comprehend here below! Perhaps the glare of the Divine Light, if it comes to us here, even though tempered by the Mediator, Himself, might be too much for these poor eyes of ours. All the Prophets, or nearly all of them, when they had visions from God, fell flat on their faces! John, himself, though he had leaned on Jesus’ bosom—when he saw the Master in Patmos, writes these very instructive words—“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.” Now, the Lord has work for us to do, but He does not want us to be always lying at His feet as dead! Consequently, He withholds from us the full radiance of His Glory. But there we shall be able to endure much! And there we shall be privileged to enjoy much—

*“These eyes shall see Him in that day—  
The Christ who died for me!  
And all my rising bones shall say,  
‘Lord, who is like unto Thee?’”*

So, you see, we look forward to a time of perfect joy, of wonderful activity and of full discovery.

What a blessing that we are able to look forward to this and to talk about it as a matter of certainty. “Until the day breaks.” Why, there are dear aged Brothers and Sisters here who, in the Providence of God, cannot be with us very long—and how are they accustomed to speak of their departure? I hear them speak constantly with holy confidence and not at all with any reluctance. There have been some people so foolish as not to like to be thought old! Some who have seemed to altogether regret that the gray hairs were apparent on their heads. But I do not find it so among the Lord’s people with whom I associate! I find them thankful that this life is not all their portion, blessing God that they do not expect to be here forever—and longing for evening to undress that they may rest with God, with holy expectation anticipating the blissful moment when the day shall break! And we who are younger need not think that because we still have strength in our loins, that we shall therefore live long. Oh, how many younger than ourselves have we seen taken away during the past year! Some of our fathers will outlive us—our grandparents will follow us to the tomb, for youth preserves not man! Well, we, too, will join with the reverend seigneurs and we will anticipate the daybreak and talk with them of it tonight!

The other expression of the text is also instructive—“Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.” What are these shadows? They are of many sorts. They abound. This is the valley of shadows. Surely every man walks in a vain shadow and disquiets himself in vain! Some shadows we have that are precious. There are the shadows of the ordinances—Baptism and of the Lord’s Supper. I speak of them with the highest reverence, yet they are but shadows in themselves. But we need them because we are in the shadow land. He that is immersed in water is not, therefore, buried with Christ—the burial with Christ is the reality, the burial in water is but the shadow! He that eats and drinks at the Table of the Master does not, therefore, eat His flesh and drink His blood—the bread and the wine, though they look substantial, are but the shadows. The real flesh and blood of Jesus—these are the inner substance—and only to faith is it given to feed upon these celestial viands! These things are only intended to last until the day breaks, for note, “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show forth the Lord’s death until He comes.” Then when He comes, the day breaks and the shadow, even that blessed shadow, must flee away!

Other shadows we have that we shall be more glad to lose —shadows of frightful things which haunt us—especially the timid, nervous and faint-hearted people of God. Some of the Lord’s people spend their lives in fighting shadows! They make troubles. They sit down and imagine disasters which cannot occur. They bind heavy burdens and put them upon their own shoulders—burdens which God never intended them to bear— and burdens which, in fact, do not exist! And some of them even create actual trouble by foolish anxiety to escape from an imaginary trouble! Well, poor trembler, poor Mr. Fearing, and you, Miss Much-afraid and Miss Despondency, the shadows will soon flee away! Though you generally go limping to Heaven with weak hands and feeble knees, and as many sighs as breaths, and as many tears as seconds, there is an end coming to all these and you shall be as merry as any of them by-and-by! You shall be as near the eternal Throne of God as the Apostles, themselves, and have as much of the Divine Love and enjoyment as the strongest Believers in Christ ever had! Be of good courage. Strive against those fears! They weaken you. They dishonor our Master! Repent of ever having indulged them, for they are wicked! Still, let this encourage you—they shall all flee away at the daybreak! Do not, therefore, dread dying when with that comes the daybreak! Expect it, even long for it, since then the shadows which oppress you from morn till night shall flee away!

So, too, those doubts and fears which are made of sterner stuff, the deeper shadows and heavier glooms, shall all flee away! There may be some men who never have a doubt about their acceptance in Christ, but I am afraid I cannot count myself as one of them. For the most part I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day. But sometimes when it comes to close heart-work and self-examination, I cannot give up Cowper’s hymn—

*“‘Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought!  
Do I love the Lord or no?  
Am I His, or am I not?  
If I love, why am I thus?  
Why this cold and lifeless frame?  
Hardly, sure, could they be worse  
Who have never known His name?”*

Not that it is of any use having such a hymn as that in the hymnbook, for you never ought to sing it! It is not a thing to sing, but to groan out all alone before our God. I think the most of us are compelled to do that sometimes. Well, blessed be God, at the daybreak, all these fears will be gone! We shall never be able, then, to doubt our interest in Christ because we shall be with Him where He is—and shall behold His Glory! Then we shall never have any fear lest after having preached to others we, ourselves, should be cast away. We shall not be afraid lest we should be shipwrecked, for though it may be but on boards and broken pieces, yet we shall then have come safely to land—all these fears will have vanished forever!

May not these shadows represent to some of us that daily sense of sin which comes upon us and drives us to the Cross? Oh, the somber shade which a tender conscience feels under a sense of sin! Some men have not any such tenderness. They can make a profession and be easy in living inconsistent lives. Not so a heart that lives near to Christ—the more pure it is, the more it mourns over its spots! If you are in the dark, you will not see the filth upon your garments, but the brighter the light the more you will see every spot—and the more you will mourn over it. I believe that the more sanctified a man becomes by the work of the Holy Spirit within, the more heavy the burden of sin becomes to him. It is not that he has more sin, but that he feels that he has more. And in the light of the love of Christ, which he enjoys in the secret places of communion, he sees more of the abomination of sin and, therefore, is more humbled under it. Oh, but it shall all flee away presently! They are without fault before the Throne of God! He shall present us, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! Oh, what a blessed presentation! At the daybreak, truly, the shadows will flee away!

Do you not think that the text might have a still more extensive meaning and take in everything here below? Things terrestrial, after all, are but shadows. The things which are seen are temporal—only the things which are not seen are eternal. The things which are seen, all these things which are round about us, are but shadowy things—they are passing before us and they will soon be gone like the dissolving view upon the sheet. But the eternal things that men think so shadowy and dreamy—these are the only realities, since they will last forever! Well, the shadows will flee away! That means this poor flesh-and-blood body full of sickness which declines as the shadow. That house, those lands. Oh, you rich men! your shadows will all flee away! If you are Believers you will not be sorry for that. And, oh, you poor people! Your one room, cold and cheerless, the toil of every day, the needle, the stitching long for little pay—all shadows and very dark shadows! And they seem very real to you now—well, they will soon be over—so soon! They will flee away and all be gone and—

*“Leaving all you loved below,  
Up to your Father you will go!”*

We will not tarry longer on these two causes, “Until the day breaks”— we expect a daybreak—“and the shadows flee away”—we expect that shadows will flee away. We know they will! We rejoice that they will! Here we sit, looking out into the future, not knowing what may befall us, but singing to our souls this song—“Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.”

But while the season of joyful release is anticipated, there is also, II. A PRAYER PRESENTED. “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.”  
Till Heaven shall come to us and we to Heaven, sweet Lord Jesus be with us! Let us have Your company. But a difficulty arises. There is so much between us and Christ to keep Him away. Hence the prayer, “Come, Lord, be like some hart or roe—like the chamois of the Alps that leaps from crag to crag—come over all these mountains of Bether and come to us when we cannot come to You.”  
Remember, Beloved, that our sins were once like these mountain of Bether. Christ has come over them. Our daily sins sometimes seem to our unbelief to be mountains of separation. Christ will come over these. He will bring us again unto the cleansing fountain! He will give us the kiss of reconciliation! He will imprint the seal of peace upon our foreheads. He will kiss us with the kisses of His lips and He will send us away rejoicing that He has come over the mountains.  
One great mountain that separates us from our Lord is our need of sight of Him. You know it is not easy to love one you never saw—to love one you have heard of, but have not seen at all. But faith gets over this difficulty with regard to Christ, for faith has a pictorial power—and it pictures Christ! Faith has a realizing power—and it grasps Christ. Faith has an appropriating power and it claims Christ! Faith has a power of wing that takes the spirit right away to Christ in holy imagination, sacred fancy and blessed meditation—and so it overcomes the difficulty! But still it is a difficulty and hence the delightful power and force of expression of the Apostle—“Whom, having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory.” The prayer is, then, “Oh, Savior, not only come over my sin, but come over this great difficulty that I never saw You, never heard Your voice and never touched Your hands! Yet come to me over these separating mountains and make Yourself real to my spirit every day I live.”  
Ah, Brothers and Sisters, there are many mountains. I shall not mention them all, but I will name one more—the mountain of our natural coldness, lethargy and indifference—and piled on the top of these are our cares and our worldliness! I wish I could keep my heart red hot for Christ, but everything seems chilled. You cannot even live in God’s service as I do, but in serving Christ, Himself, you get as Martha did—cumbered with much serving. Oh, that the heart were always on the mountain with Christ—no, I won’t say that—were it even in the garden, as long as it were but with Him—in Gethsemane, or on Tabor—it would matter little as long as we could stay with Him! But we have many things to do and many beings to think of more oftentimes than we need, and then we get away from Christ and we cannot get back as quickly as we want and so we have to sing with Dr. Watts—  
*“Our souls can neither fly, nor go  
To reach eternal joys.”*  
Well, then, He comes to us! He kindles a flame of sacred love and that kindles ours. Oh, great Lord, until the day breaks often come in this way to us! Until the shadows flee away, oh, come to our hearts again and again, leaping over the mountains and revealing Yourself to us!  
Here is a blessed thing to think of all the year round. Do not ask the Lord to take away the shadows. Do not ask that you may feel this world to be a bright place to your hearts, but turn your thoughts to this— “Lord, whether it is bright or not to my soul, come to me! Oh, come to me! Be near to me! Let me walk in the conscious enjoyment of Your daily Presence. To your will I leave everything else, only stay near to me!” Do you ask when may this prayer be used? I think it is a very delightful prayer every night when we go to bed. “Lord, until the day breaks and the shadows flee away literally in the morning, come and be with me.”— *“If in the night I wakeful lie,  
My soul with heavenly thoughts supply.”*If I toss to and fro on my bed, may I have to say, as Your Spouse did, “By night, upon my bed, I sought Him whom my soul loves”? May I cry with the Psalmist, “When I awake I am still with You”? I think you may put your head upon the pillow each night very delightfully with that as your prayer!  
Then you may pray this prayer whenever any trouble has come upon you. Now you may say, “Lord, I see the day has not broke with me yet. The shadows have not fled away. There is this heavy loss in business. There is that dear child ill. There is the wife sickening. There is this disease in my own body. But, Lord, until this trouble is removed, come near, come near and still nearer!” If there is one child in the family the mother cares most about, it is the one that is the most sickly. You are sitting here tonight and you are thinking about one of your children, but it is not about the one that is 21 and grown up—it is the little one you left in the cradle. The more helpless it is, the more thought you give it. And so does God consider you, poor helpless, troubled ones! Pray, then, as you are entering into the cloud, “Lord Jesus, abide with me in the thick and dark night, till the day breaks and the shadows flee away.”  
This prayer will do whenever the affairs of the Church of God or of the nation seem to be in a bad state. There are times with every Church when it does not prosper as we would desire. There are times in this nation when we see error very rife and true religion at a discount. Well, then, Christian, instead of your fretting yourself about the Ark of the Lord which you can no more keep right than Uzza could, say, “Lord, I would walk with You! I will say as Joshua did, ‘As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.’ Only come, be near to my heart, and keep my heart near to You.”  
And what a blessed petition this would be when we are coming to die! We feel within ourselves that the machinery of life must come to a stop. There are certain indications which mark that the last mortal strife is drawing near. Oh, now to bend the knee at the bedside, or if unable through weakness or faintness to do that, to stay one’s self upon the bed and say, “Until the day breaks, so now near to these poor failing eyes, till the shadows flee away and this poor, crumbling body is changed for Glory and Immortality, come, my Beloved, be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.” It were blessed to fall asleep in Jesus with that prayer upon one’s lips! Well, you are sure to die with it on your lips if you always live with it on your lips! If it is always in your heart, it will be in your heart at the last. So I commend it to you for daily use and for every special crisis. The Lord make it to be a blessing to your souls!  
Only, again I say, I wish with all my heart—it is my heart’s desire and prayer—that all of you may have a daybreak to look forward to! It is so sad a thing that so many live as if they were to always live here. They live as if they were to die like dogs and that would be as much an end of them as of the bull that is struck with the pole-axe in the shambles. But, as you will live forever, I must again remind you that there remains for you nothing but a fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation! Would you have a daybreak? Jesus Christ is the Sun! Trust Him! He has told us that he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. To believe is to trust. Now, leaving all your sins—it is time you left them! Now, abhorring all those things in which you once took delight—and you may well abhor them, for they are damnable! They are serpents—fair are their scales but deadly are their fangs! Leaving all these, come to Jesus! He died for sinners, for the very worst of sinners—and whoever trusts Him shall have everlasting life!  
Oh, that you just now might end your service of the devil and forthwith commence your service of the Lord Jesus! The Master grant it by the power of His Holy Spirit and His shall be the praise!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **REVELATION 7.**

Verse 1. And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. Observe that God has servants always ready for His work. There were winds to be restrained. “And I saw four angels”—mighty spiritual beings—who had power over the air. These winds were to be restrained until all God’s people were safely sealed and you may depend upon it that no calamity shall happen to destroy the people of God—they must first be saved. There shall be no deluge till there is the ark—there shall be no Romans to destroy Jerusalem till there is a little city in the mountains to which the disciples may flee. God will protect His own. The dead calm, the perfect quietude which prevailed while the angels restrained the winds is set forth in these words. The wind did not appear to blow on land, or sea, or tree—not a ripple broke the surface of the waters, not a leaf stirred on the bough—everything is quiet until God’s people are secured.

2, 3. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. See how other things are protected for the sake of God’s people? The earth and the sea and even the trees have a cordon of safety round about them while God’s people are being secured! When the Lord Jesus put to sea on the Galilean Lake, we read that there were with Him many other little boats—and when the calm came for His ship, they were in the calm, too. And so it is a good thing if you are not in the Church, yet to have some sort of connection with it—a great thing for the age to have the Church of God in it, for God will take care of a nation often for the sake of His people. As He would have spared Sodom had there been righteous men found in it, so does He spare nations for the sake of His saints.

4. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Now we are going to read their names. I hope you won’t say it is tiresome to read them. Remember He that wrote this Book is the Father of them, and children’s names are not wearisome to their own father! Remember, He that fills this Book bought them with His blood, and wore them upon His breastplate as the great High Priest of Israel bearing all these names upon His heart, engraved upon the palms of His hands. We need not be weary of hearing names which Christ has worn on His breast!

5-8. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand. Judah stands first and Benjamin stands last—they were joined together, but here they are as widely divided as they can be, yet they stand in an equal position— and the day shall come when first and last shall rejoin together in the equal blessing of the Most High. Where is Dan? Not mentioned here. See, there is nothing without mystery. We shall never understand all the things of God. It seemed simple enough to bless the 12 tribes, but yet there is one lacking.

9. After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. This is the great gathering of the Gentile multitude redeemed by blood, numbered by God, never to be numbered by men, being like the sand on the seashore, innumerable! Of all colors they shall be and they will look to us on earth if we could see them, to be a motley group. And if we heard them speak, it would seem a strange jargon. Many are the languages of earth, but one is the speech of Heaven! All hearts are alike in the Kingdom of the Most High, whatever the color of the skin. That entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem seems to me to be the pattern we have here before us, only this is the fulfillment of it. Here are the crowds that gathered about Him—the 12 disciples lead the way and here are the multitudes with the palms in their hands scattering them in the pathway of their King!

10. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb. In Jerusalem they cried Hosanna, which was, “Save, Lord,” but now they have risen a little higher, and they sing, “Salvation to our God.” It is the same melody but it is pitched to a loftier key and there are more to sing it. And they are not now conducting a prince to his throne but they are looking up to the King upon His throne, reigning there!

11. And all the angels stood round about the Throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the Throne on their faces, and worshipped God. Not some of the angels, nor many angels, nor even an innumerable company of angels, but ALL the angels—they shall all gather on that august occasion around the Throne of God and the Lamb!

12. Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might be unto our God forever and ever. Amen. What a deep, sonorous, Amen, that will be! What a mighty volume of sound! How full and rich, how hearty! Oh, that our ears may be there to hear it and our tongues to swell it!

13. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, Who are these which are arrayed in white robes and from where did they come? “And I said unto him, Sir, you know.” You see the question was put by an angel. As an answer, one of the elders answered. Whom did he answer? Why, John! And what John’s heart was inquiring. He was saying to himself, “Who are these?” And one of the elders was responsive to his heart’s inquiry and put the same inquiry into words on his behalf.

14-15. And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple: and He that sits on the Throne shall dwell among them. Shall “tabernacle over them,” that is the exact word, as though He were a pavilion, a canopy over them.

16-17. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. It looks almost as if they might have a tear in their eye when they first come there— certainly they shall never be sure of being without a tear till they have crossed the pearly threshold—but then He shall wipe away the very tear—there shall be no possibility of weeping there! May our eyes behold that sinless and sorrowless land and its Eternal Lord!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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THE LILY AMONG THORNS  
NO. 1525

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 29, 1880, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.” Song of Solomon 2:2.**

WE shall not enter into any profitless discussion this morning. We take it for granted that the Song of Solomon is a sacred marriage song between Christ and His Church and that it is the Lord Jesus who is here speaking of His Church and, indeed, of each individual member, saying, “As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.” I will not even enter into any study as to what particular flower is here intended by the word translated, “lily,” for it would be very difficult to select a plant from the Holy Land about which travelers and botanists would agree. The lily, which we should most naturally fix upon, is, as I have gathered from books on travel, not at present found in that country, though we may not, therefore, be sure that it was never there, or may not yet be discovered. Several other fair and beautiful forms, according to the fancies of various travelers, have been preferred to occupy the place of the plant intended by the original Hebrew, but none of them quite come up to the ideal suggested to an English reader by our translation.

I will for once take the liberty to clothe the Scripture in a Western dress, if necessary, and venture to do what Solomon would surely have done if his Song of Songs had been written in England. I shall assume that he means one of our own lilies—either the lily of the valley, or one of those more stately beauties, matchless for whiteness—which so gloriously adorn our gardens. Either will do and serve our purpose this morning. “As the lily among the thorns, so is My love among the daughters.” It is of small moment to be precise in botany so long as we get the spirit of the text. We seek practical usefulness and personal consolation and proceed at once in the pursuit, in the hope that many are taking root among us, now, newly transplanted from the world.

It is well that they should be rooted in a knowledge of their calling by Grace and what it includes. They ought to know, at the commencement, what a Christian is when he is truly a Christian; what he is expected to be; what the Lord means him to be and what the Lord Jesus regards him as really being! In that way they may make no mistakes, but may count the cost and know what it is that they have ventured upon. Thinking over this subject carefully and anxiously desiring to warn our new converts without alarming them, I could not think of any text from which I should be able, in the exposition of it, to better set forth the position, condition and character of a genuine Christian.

Jesus Himself knows best what His own bride is like—let us hear Him as He speaks in this matchless song! He knows best what His followers should be and well may we be content to take the words out of His own mouth when, in sweetest poetry, He tells us, “As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.” Join me then, my Brothers and Sisters, at this time, in considering how our Lord’s lilies grow! Concerning the Church of God, there are two points upon which I will enlarge. First, her relation to her Lord and secondly, her relation to the world.

I. First, I think my text very beautifully sets forth THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH AND OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL TO CHRIST. He styles her, “My love.” An exquisitely sweet name, as if His love had all gone forth of Him and had become embodied in her. The first point, then, of her relation to Christ is that she has His love. Think of it and let the blessed Truth of God dwell long and sweetly in your meditations! The Lord of life and glory, the Prince of the kings of the earth has such a loving heart that He must have an object upon which to spend His affections—and His people, chosen from among men, whom He calls His Church—these are they who are His “love,” the object of His supreme delight! “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.”

He looked on His people and He exclaimed, “as the Father has loved Me, even so have I loved you.” Every Believer, separated from mankind and called into the fellowship of Christ, is also the peculiar object of His love. Not in name only, but in deed and in truth does Jesus love each one of us who have believed on Him. You may, each one of you, say with the Apostle, “He loved me.” You may read it in any tense you please—He loved me; He loves me; He will love me, for He gave Himself for me. This shall be your song in Heaven, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory.” Let your hearts saturate themselves with this honeyed thought! Heaven lies hidden within it! It is the quintessence of bliss—Jesus loves me!

It is not in the power of words to set forth the charming nature of this fact. It is a very simple proposition, but the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of it surpass our knowledge. That such a poor, insignificant, unworthy being as I am should be the object of the eternal affection of the Son of God is an amazing wonder! Yet, wonderful as it is, it is a fact! To each one of His people, He says, this morning, by the Holy Spirit, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Each one of us may rejoice in the title under which our Lord addresses us—“My love.” This love is distinguishing love, for in its light one special object shines as a lily and the rest, “the daughters,” are as thorns. Love has fixed on its chosen object and, compared with the favored one, all others are as nothing. There is a love of Jesus which goes forth to all mankind, for “the Lord is good to all and His tender mercies are over all His works,” but there is a special and peculiar love which He bears to His own.

As a man loves his neighbors but still has a special affection for his wife, so is the Church Christ’s bride beloved above all the rest of mankind and every individual Believer the favored one of Heaven! The saint is united to Christ by a mystical union, a spiritual marriage bond and, above all others, Christ loves the souls espoused to Him. He said once, “I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me.” Thus He indicates that there is a specialty about His intercession.

We rejoice in the largeness and the width of Jesus’ love, but we do not, therefore, doubt its specialty. The sun shines on all things, but when it is focused upon one point, ah, then there is a heat about it of which you little dreamed! The love of Jesus is focused on those whom the Father has given Him! Upon you, my Brother or Sister, if, indeed, you are a believer in Jesus Christ, the Lord’s heart is set and He speaks of you in the words of the text as, “My love,” loved above all the daughters! Precious in His sight and honorable so that He will give men for you and people for your life.

Observe that this is a love which He openly avows. The Bridegroom speaks and says before all men, “As a lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.” He puts it upon record in that Book which is more widely scattered than any other, for He is not ashamed to have it published on the housetops! The love of Christ was, at first, hidden in His heart, but it soon revealed itself, for even of old His delights were with the sons of men and He bent His steps downward to this world in many forms before Bethlehem’s song was sung. And now, since the Incarnate God has loved and lived and died, He has unveiled His love in the most open form and astonished Heaven and earth thereby! On Calvary He set up an open proclamation, written in His own heart’s blood, that He loved His own even unto the end.

He bids His ministers proclaim it to the world’s end that many waters could not quench His love, neither could the floods drown it—and that neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord! He would have it known, for He is not ashamed to call His people, “the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” He declares it so that His adversaries may know it—that He has a people in whom His heart delights and these He will have and hold as His own when Heaven and earth shall pass away!

This love, wherever it has been revealed to its object, is reciprocated. If the Lord has really spoken home to your soul and said, “I have loved you,” your soul has gladly answered, “This is my Beloved and this is my Friend; yes, He is altogether lovely.” For what says the spouse in another place? “My Beloved is mine and I am His.” I am His beloved, but He is my beloved, too. By this, dear Hearer, shall you know whether this text belongs to you or not. What do you say when Jesus asks of you, “Do you love Me?” Is your heart warmed at the very mention of His name? If you can truly say with Peter, “Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You,” then rest assured you love Him because He first loved you. Doubt not the fact, but be well assured of it, that love in your heart towards Jesus is the certain and infallible pledge of His infinite, eternal and immutable love to you! If His name is on your heart, then be sure of this, that your name is on His breast and written on the palms of His hands. You are espoused to Him and the bands of the mystical wedlock shall never be snapped. This is the first point of the relation of the Church to her Lord—she is the object of His love.

Next, she bears His likeness. Notice the first verse of the chapter, wherein the Bridegroom speaks—“I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys.” He is the lily, but His beloved is like He, for He applies His own chosen emblem to her—“As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.” Notice that He is the lily and she is as the lily— that is to say, He has the beauty and she reflects it! She is comely in His comeliness which He puts upon her. If any soul has any such beauty as is described here, Christ has endowed that beloved soul with all its wealth of charms, for in ourselves we are deformed and defiled! What is the confession of this very spouse in the previous chapter? She says “I am black”— that is, the opposite of a lily. If she adds, “but comely,” it is because her Lord has made her comely. There is no Grace but what Grace has been given and if we are graceful it is because Christ has made us full of Grace. There is no beauty in any of us but what our Lord has worked in us.

Note, too, that He who gave the beauty is the first to see it. While they are unknown to the world, Jesus knows His own. Long before anybody else sees any virtue or any praise in us, Jesus descries it and is pleased with it. He is quick to say, “Behold, he prays,” or, “Behold, he repents.” He is the first to say, “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.” Love’s eyes are quick and her ears are open. Love covers a multitude of faults, but it discovers a multitude of beauties. Can it be, O my Soul? Can it be that Christ has made you comely in His comeliness? Has He shed a beauty upon you and does He, Himself, look complacently upon it? He whose taste is exquisite and whose voice is the Truth of God—who never calls that beautiful which is not beautiful—can He see a beauty in your sighs and tears, in your desires after holiness, in your poor attempts to aid His cause, in your prayers and in your songs and in your heart’s love towards Him—can He see a beauty in these? Yes, assuredly He can, or He would not speak as He does in this text!

Let His condescending discernment have all honor for this generous appreciation of us. Let us bless and love Him because He deigns to think so highly of us who owe every thing to Him. “You are,” He says, “My love, as the lily.” It is evident that the Lord Jesus takes delight in this beauty which He has put upon His people. He values it at so great a rate that He counts all rival beauties to be but as thorns. He looks upon the court of an earthly monarch and sees my lords and ladies, but makes small account of them compared with His poor saints! If in that court He spies out one that loves Him, one who wears a coronet and prays, He marks that one and counts Him or her, “as the lily among thorns.” There is a wealthy household, honored and famous among the old county families, but in it there is no lover of the Savior except one and she, perhaps, is a little maid whose service is among the pots, yet shall she be as the wings of a dove covered with silver. “As the lily among thorns” shall she be!

All the kingdoms of the earth are but thorns to the Lord Jesus compared with His Church. Be they Roman, German, French, or English—all empires with all their splendors are mere spines and thorns upon the common bramble bushes and thorn coverts—the haunts of wild and noxious creatures in the view of the King of kings! But His Church and those that make up the body of the faithful are as lilies in His discerning eyes! He delights in them! He finds a sweet content in gazing on them! So you see the Lord has given to His people His likeness and that likeness He looks upon and loves. Bringing out still further the relationship between Christ and His Church, I want you to notice that her position has drawn out His love. “As the lily,” He says, “ among thorns, so is My love.”

He spied her out among the thorns! She was at first no better than a thorn itself—His Grace, alone, made her to differ from the briars about her! But as soon as He had put His life and His Grace into her, though she dwelt among the ungodly, she became as the lily and He spied her out! The thorn thicket could not hide His beloved! Christ’s eye towards His people is so quick because it is cleared by love. There may, at this time, be in a Popish convent one truly seeking Jesus in spirit and in truth. He spies out the Believer among the rest who trust in themselves and calls her His love among thorns! There may be, at this moment, in the most godless haunt in London a poor, trembling heart that loves Jesus in secret—the Lord knows that heart and it is to Him as a lily among thorns!

You, perhaps, are the only serious working man in the shop in which you earn your daily bread and the whole band hold you in derision. You may hardly know, yourself, whether you are really a Christian, for you are sometimes staggered about your own condition—and yet the enemies of Christ have made up their minds as to whose you are and treat you as one of the disciples of the Nazarene! Be of good courage, your Lord discerns you and knows you better than you know yourself! Such is the quickness of His eyes that your difficult and perilous position only quickens His discernment and He regards you with the more attention. The thorns cannot hide you, thickly as they cluster around you—in your loneliness you are not alone—the Crucified is with you!

“As the lily among thorns” wears, also, another meaning. Dr. Thompson writes of a certain lily, “It grows among thorns and I have sadly lacerated my hands in extricating it from them. Nothing can be in higher contrast than the luxuriant, velvety softness of this lily and the withered, tangled hedge of thorns about it.” Ah, Beloved, you know who it was that, in gathering your soul and mine, lacerated not His hands only, but His feet and His head and His side and His heart—yes and His inmost soul! He spied us out and said, “Yonder lily is Mine and I will have it,” but the thorns were a terrible barrier—our sins had gathered round about us and the wrath of God most sharply stopped the way. Jesus pressed through all that we might be His and now when He takes us to Himself, He does not forget the thorns which girded His brow and tore His flesh for our sakes. This, then, is a part of our relationship to Christ, that we cost Him very dearly. He saw us where we were and He came to our deliverance. And now, even as Pharaoh’s daughter called the young child’s name, Moses, “Because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water,” so does Jesus call His chosen, “the lily among thorns,” because such she was when He came to her rescue. Never will He forget Calvary and its thorns—nor should His saints allow that memory to fade.

Yet once more I think many a child of God may regard himself as still being a lily among thorns because of his afflictions. Certainly the Church is so and she is thereby kept for Christ’s own. If thorns made it hard for Him to reach us for our salvation, there is another kind of thorn which makes it hard for any enemy to come at us for our harm. Our trials and tribulations, which we would gladly escape from, often act as a spiritual protection—they hedge us about and ward off many a devouring foe. Sharp as they are, they serve as a fence and a defense. Many a time, dear child of God, you would have been an exposed lily, to be plucked by any ruthless hand, if it had not been that God had placed you in such circumstances that you were shut up unto Himself. Sick saints and poor saints and persecuted saints are fair lilies enclosed by their pains and needs and bonds that they may be for Christ, alone.

I look on John Bunyan in prison writing his, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” and I cannot help feeling that it was a great blessing for us all that such a lily was shut up among the thorns that it might shed its fragrance in that famous book and thereby perfume the Church for ages! You that are kept from roaming by sickness or by family trials need not regret these things, for perhaps they are the means of making you more completely your Lord’s. How charmingly Madame Guyon wrote when she was immured in a dungeon. Her wing was closely bound, but her song was full of liberty, for she felt that the bolts and bars only shut her in with her Beloved and what is that but liberty? She sang—

*“A little bird I am,  
Shut from the fields of air.  
And in my cage I sit and sing  
To Him who placed me there.  
Well pleased a prisoner to be,  
Because, my God, it pleases Thee.  
Nought have I else to do,  
I sing the whole day long.  
And He whom most I love to please  
Does listen to my song.  
He caught and bound my wandering wing, But still He bends to hear me sing.”*

“As the lily among thorns,” she lived in prison shut in with her Lord and since the world was quite shut out, she was in that respect a gainer! O to have one’s heart made as “a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” So let my soul be, yes, so let it be even if the enclosure can only be accomplished by a dense growth of trials and grief!

May every pain that comes and casts us on our bed and lays us aside from public usefulness; may every sorrow which arises out of our business and weans us from the world; may every adversary that assails us with bitter, taunting words, only thicken the thorn hedge which encases us from all the world and constrains us to be chaste lilies set apart for the Well-Beloved! Enough upon this point, I think, only let me entreat all of you who have lately come to know the Lord to think much of your relationship to Him. It is the way by which you will be supported under the responsibilities of your relationship to the world. If you know that you are His and that He loves you, you will be strong to bear all burdens. Nothing will daunt you if you are sure that He is for you, that His whole heart is true to you, that He loves you especially and has set you apart unto Himself that you may be one with Him forever!

Dwell much, in your meditations, upon what this text and other Scriptures teach of the relationship of the renewed heart to Christ and know Him of whom you are so well known. May the Holy Spirit teach us all this lesson so that it may be learned by our hearts.

II. But now, secondly, our text is full of instruction as to THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHURCH AND EACH INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER TO THE WORLD—“The lily among thorns.” First, then, she has incomparable beauty. As compared and contrasted with all else, she is as the lily to the thorn thicket. Did not our Lord say of the natural lilies—“Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these”? And when I think of Christ’s lilies, adorned in His own righteousness and bearing His own image, I feel that I may repeat my Master’s words and say with emphasis, “Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these!”

In Christ’s esteem, His Church bears the bell for beauty. She is the fairest among women. She is not to be compared—she has to be contrasted with the rest of mankind. Our Lord means that if you take worldlings at their best and in their bravest attire—in their pomp and glory and parade—they are but as thorns in contrast with His Church. Though the Church may seem to be little and poor and despised, yet she is better than all the princes and kingdoms and glories of the earth! He means that true Christians are infinitely superior to ungodly men. These ungodly men may make a fair show of virtue and they may have much prudence and wit and count themselves wise and great, but Jesus calls all unconverted ones, “thorns,” while His own believing ones He compares to “lilies.”

The thorns are worthless. They flourish and spread and cumber the ground, but they yield no fruit and only grow to be cut down for the oven. Alas, such is man by nature, at his best. As for the lily, it is a thing of beauty and a joy forever. It lives shedding sweet perfume and when it is gathered, its loveliness adorns the chamber to which it is taken. So does the saint bless his generation while here and when he is taken away he is regarded with pleasure even in Heaven above as one of the flowers of God! He will, before long, be transplanted from among the thorns to the garden enclosed beyond the river, where the King delights to dwell, for such a flower is far too fair to be left forever amid tangled briars! There are, among worldly people, some who are very fair to look upon in many respects—philanthropic, kind and upright—they have many virtues. But since these virtues have no bearings towards God and no reference to Christ, He counts the bearers of them to be but thorns!

What virtue can there be in him whose principle in life is disregard of his Maker and disbelief in his Savior? He is an avowed rebel and yet would be commended by the Lord whom he rejects? How can it be? Acts done from other motives than those of obedience to God or love to Christ are poor things. There may be a great inward difference between actions which outwardly are the same. The apple of Nature has never the flavor of the pomegranate of Grace! It may seem, even, to excel the fruit of Grace, but it is not so. Two babies before us may appear alike as they seem to sleep side by side, but the child of Nature, however finely dressed, is not the living child and the Lord will not acknowledge the dead thing as belonging to His family! Ah, you that are struggling after holiness for Christ’s sake—you that are seeking after virtue in the power of the Holy Spirit— you have the beauty of the lily, while all else are still to Christ but as a thicket of thorns.

Yes, and let me say that I am sorry to add—a real Christian is as superior, even, to a professing Christian as a lily is to thorns! I know Churches in which there are many who make a profession, but, ah me, it is a pity that they should, for their life does not adorn their doctrine! Their temper is not consistent with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They live like worldlings, to amass money, or to carry on business, or to enjoy good eating and drinking, or to dress and go to parties. They are as much for this world as if they were never renewed and it is to be feared they never were! It will often grieve those who really love the Lord to see how mere professors pretend to do what saints labor to perform.

Saints are mimicked—I almost said mocked and mimicked—by empty professors and this is a standing source of sorrow. Their cold words often vex the zealous heart and pierce it as with thorns. When you are full of zeal, their lack of consecration almost kindles indignation in the minds of those who are willing to give their last penny—yes, and their last breath for their Master’s honor! Do not, however, be at all astonished, for it must be so. He who is full of the Grace of God will always be as the lily among thorns, even in the professing church! Do not marvel, young Brother, if older professors dampen your ardor and count your warm love to be a mere fanaticism! God give you Grace to keep up your first love and even to advance upon it, though the thorny ones wound and hinder you. May you be distinguished above your fellow professors, for I fear that unless it is so, your life will be a poor one. This, then, is the relationship of the Church to the world and of Christians to the world—that they are as much superior to the unregenerate in moral and spiritual beauty as the lily is to the thorns among which it finds itself.

Secondly, in the comparison of the saint to the lily we remark that he has, like the lily, a surpassing excellence. I point not to its beauty, just now, but to its intrinsic excellence. The thorn is a fruit of the curse—it springs up because of sin. “Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth unto you.” Not so the lily—it is a fair type of the blessing which makes rich without the sorrow of carking care. The thorn is the mark of wrath and the lily is the symbol of Divine Providence. A true Believer is a blessing, a tree whose leaves heal and whose fruit feeds. A genuine Christian is a living Gospel, an embodiment of goodwill towards men. Did not the old Covenant blessing run, “In you and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed”? I cannot refrain from quoting a metrical meditation of one who loved the Song of Solomon and drank into its spirit. He says of the Church, she is—

*“A radiant thing, where all is gloomy else, Florescent where all else is barrenness.  
A blossom in the desert, that proclaims  
Man is no friendless outcast, hopeless doomed To traverse scenes of wickedness and grief, But, pilgrim as he is, has One who plans,  
Not only to protect but cheer his way!  
Oh, ever testifying desert flower,  
Still holding forth the story of God’s love, How amazing it is that busy throngs  
Pause not to look on you!  
That few reflect  
On the strange fact of your existence still, A lily among thorns—a life in death,  
Distinct from, yet in contact with the world; Burning, yet unconsumed; though cumbered, free With glorious liberty!”*

Yes, the Church is a blessing, a blessing abiding and scattering its delights in the midst of the curse—and each particular Believer is, in his measure, a blessing, too, “as the lily among thorns.”

A true Christian knows not how to harm his fellow men. He is like the lily which stings no one and yet he lives among those who are full of sharpness. He aims to please and not to provoke and yet he lives among those whose existence is a standing menace. The thorn tears and lacerates—it is all armed from its root to its topmost branch, defying all comers. But there stands the lily—smiling, not defying—charming and not harming! Such is the real Christian—holy, harmless, full of love, gentleness and tenderness. Therein lies his excellence. The thorn pierces, but the lily soothes. The very sight of it gives pleasure. Who would not stop and turn aside to see a lily among thorns and think he read a promise from his God to comfort him amid distress? Such is a true Christian! He is a consolation in his family, a comfort in his neighborhood, an ornament to his profession and a benediction to his age.

He is all tenderness and gentleness and yet it may be he lives among the envious, the malicious and the profane. He is a lily among thorns. The thorn says, “Keep away! No one shall touch me with impunity.” The lily cries, “I come to you. I shed my soul abroad to please you.” The sweet odors of the lily of the valley are well known. Perhaps no plant has so strong a savor about it of intense and exquisite sweetness as that lily of the valley which is found in Palestine. Such is the sanctified Believer. There is a secret something about him, a hallowed savor which goes out from his life, so that his graciousness is discovered, for Grace, like its Lord, “cannot be hid.” Even if the regenerate man is not known as a professor, yet does he reveal himself by the holiness of his life—“his speech betrays him.”

When I was resting in the south I wandered by the side of a flowing stream, gathering handfuls of maiden-hair fern from the verdant bank— and as I walked along I was conscious of a most delicious fragrance all around me. I cast my eye downward and I saw blue eyes looking up from among the grass at my feet. The violets had hidden themselves from sight, but they had betrayed themselves by their delicious scent. So does a Christian reveal his hidden life. His tone and temper and manners speak of his royal lineage, if, indeed, the Spirit of God is in him. Such are the people of God—they court no observation, but are like that modest flower of which the poet says—

*“She never affects  
The public walk, nor gaze of midday sun.*

***She to no state nor dignity aspires,  
But silent and alone puts on her suit  
And sheds a lasting perfume, but for which We had not known there was a thing so sweet Hidden in the gloomy shade.”***

I want you, dear Christian people, to be just like this—to have about you a surpassing wealth of blessing and an unrivalled sweetness of influence by which you shall be known of all men! Is it so with you, or are you as rough and stern and repellant as a thorn thicket? Are you as selfish and as quarrelsome as the unregenerate? Or do you shed yourself away in sweet odors of self-denying kindness in your families and among your neighbors? If you do, then does Jesus say of you, “As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.”

The last point with regard to our relationship to the world is that the Church and many individual Christians are called to endure singular trials which make them feel, “as the lily among thorns.” That lovely flower seems out of place in such company, does it not? Christ said, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep among sheep”—no, no, that is my mistake—“as sheep among wolves.” It is a very blessed thing to be as sheep among sheep—to lie down with them under the shadow of the great rock and feed with them in green pastures under the Shepherd’s eyes. This is our privilege and we ought to value it greatly and unite with the Church and frequent its ordinances. But even then we shall, some of us, have to go home to an ungodly family, or to go out into the world to win our bread and then we shall be as sheep among wolves.

Grow in the Church and you will be lilies in the garden, but you cannot always live in the Tabernacle and so you will have to go back to the ungodly world and there you will be lilies among thorns. The lily startles you if you find it in such a position. Often you come upon one of God’s elect ones in a most unexpected manner and are as much amazed as if an angel crossed your path! This is the wonder of the lily among thorns. You are making your way over a wild heath and come to a tangled thorn thicket through which you must force your way. As you are walking through the dense mass, rending and tearing your garments, suddenly you stand still as one who has seen a vision of angels, for there, among the most rugged brambles, a lily lifts its lovely form and smiles upon you!

You feel like Moses at the back of the desert when he saw the bush which burned with fire and yet was not consumed! So have you met in a back slum where blasphemy abounded, a beauteous child of God, whom all recognized as such and you have felt amazed! So have you, in a wealthy family full of worldliness and vanity, come upon a humble man or patient woman living unto Christ and you have asked how came this Grace to this house? So, too, in a foreign land, where all bowed down to crucifixes and image, you have casually met with a confessor who has stood his ground among idolaters, declaring for his God, not by his speech so much as by his holy walk! The surprise has been great. Expect many such surprises!

The Lord has a people where you look not for them. Think not that all His lilies are in His garden! There are lilies among thorns and He knows their whereabouts. Many saints reside in families where they will never be appreciated any more than the lily is appreciated by the thorns. This is painful, for the sympathy of our fellows is a great comfort. Lilies of the valley love to grow in clusters and saints love holy company and yet, in some cases it must not be—they must live alone. Nor need we think that this loneliness is unrelieved, for God goes out of the track of men and He visits those whom His own servants are passing by. The poet says*—*

*“Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”*

But the poet forgot that God is in the wilderness and the solitary place and the sweetness of lonely flowers is His! He who planted the lily among thorns sees its beauty! It is God’s flower and does it waste its sweetness because no human nostril smells it? It were blasphemous to count that wasted which is reserved for the great King!

The Lord understands the incense of Nature better than we do and as He walks abroad He rejoices in His works. Grace struggling in loneliness is very choice in God’s esteem. If man sees you not, O lonely Believer, you may nevertheless sing, “You, God, see me.” The flower which blooms for God alone has a special honor put upon it and so has the saint whose quiet life is all for Jesus. If you are unappreciated by those around you, do not, therefore, be distressed, for you are honorable in the sight of God!

The lily is altogether unassisted, too, by its surroundings—“the lily among thorns” borrows nothing from the growth which gathers about it. A genuine Christian is quite unhelped by ungodly men. And what is worse, he is cumbered by them. Yet through Divine Grace he lives and grows! You know how the good seed could not grow because of the thorns which sprang up and choked it, but here is a good seed, a choice bulb, which flourishes where you could not have looked for it to do so! God can make His people live and blossom even among the thorns where the ungodly, by their evil influences, would choke and destroy them. Happy it is when the gracious one can overtop the thorn thicket which would check his growth and make his influence to be known and felt above the grossness of surrounding sin.

We would not do justice to this text if we failed to see in it a reminder of the persecution to which many of the best of God’s people are subjected. They live all their lives like the lily among thorns. Some of you, dear Friends, are in this condition. You can hardly speak a word but what it is picked up and made mischief of. You cannot perform an action but what it is twisted and motives imputed to you which you know not of. Nowadays persecutors cannot drag men to the stake, but the old trial of cruel mocking is still continued—in some cases it rages even more fiercely than ever. God’s people have been a persecuted people in all times and you only fare as they fare. Bear well the burden common to all the chosen! Make no great wonder of it—this bitter trial has happened to many more before— and you may well rejoice that you are now in fellowship with Apostles and Prophets and honorable men of all ages!

The lily among thorns should rejoice that it is a lily and not a thorn— and when it is wounded it should consider it a matter of course and bloom on. But why does the Lord put His lilies among thorns? It is because He works transformations, singular transformations, by their means. He can make a lily grow among thorns till the thorns grow into lilies! Remember how it is written, “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.” He can set a Christian in a godless family till first one and, then, another shall feel the Divine power and shall say, “We will go with you, for we perceive that God is with you.” It cannot happen in Nature, but it does happen perpetually in Grace—that the sweet perfume of the lily Believer, shed abroad upon the thorn thicket of the ungodly—turns it into a garden of lilies!

Such holy work among ungodly people is the truest and best “FLOWER MISSION.” They do well who give flowers to cheer the poor in their dreary habitations, but they do better, still, who are, themselves, flowers in the places where they live! Be lilies, my dear Brothers and Sisters—preach by your actions! Preach by your kindness and by your love! Do this and I feel quite sure that your influence will be a power for good. If the Holy Spirit helps all of you to stand among your associates as lilies among the thorns, the day will come when thorns will die out and lilies will spring up on every side! Then sin will be banished and Grace will abound!

An Australian gentleman told me yesterday that in his colony the arum lily abounds as much as weeds do with us. When will this happen spiritually on our side of the globe? Ah, when? Blessed Lord, when will You remove the curse? When will You bring the better days? These are ill times when the thorns grow thicker and more sharp than ever—protect Your lilies, increase their number, preserve their snowy whiteness and delight Yourself in them for Jesus’ sake, Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON  
DEAR READERS—Having purchased and paid for the ground for the Girls’ Orphanage, I am now anxious to proceed with the undertaking. The first block of buildings will consist of the houses for 250 girls with schools above them. I have not yet obtained a contract, but I have reason to believe that the land, with drainage, etc., will cost £8,000. Of this I have promises to the amount of £3,000. I now commit this new enterprise to the guardian care of the Lord of Heaven and earth, hoping that He will so prosper it that the first stone may be laid on my birthday, June 19th .  
Yours for the Orphans’ sake,

*C. H. SPURGEON* Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #1120 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE APPLE TREE IN THE WOODS  
NO. 1120

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JULY 6, 1873, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“As the apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my Beloved among the sons.”  
Song of Solomon 2:3.**

BY the apple tree would probably be intended by the oriental writer either the citron, or the pomegranate, or the orange. I suppose he did not refer to the apple tree of our gardens, for it would scarcely be known to him. The word would not, however, be properly rendered if we confined it to any of the three fruit trees we have mentioned, or if we excluded our own apple from it, for the term apple comprehends all large round fruit not enclosed in a shell. And so we may, without making any mistake, think of the apple tree of our own English orchards and the metaphor will stand good, except that the shadow of our apple tree at home is hardly so excellent a retreat from the sun as the shadow of the other trees included under the term.

Our own apple tree will suffice us, however, and we shall not need to enter into any minute distinctions, or to carry you away to Palestine. We can sit at home in England and can say with great propriety, if we love the Lord Jesus Christ, “As the apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my Beloved among the sons.” The point of the metaphor is this. There are many trees of the forest and they all have their uses, but when one is hungry, faint and thirsty, the forest trees yield no succor, and we must look elsewhere. They yield shelter, but not refreshing nutriment. If, however, in the midst of the woods one discovers an apple tree, he there finds the refreshment which he needs, his thirst is alleviated and his hunger removed.

Even so the Church here means to say that there are many things in the world which yield us a kind of satisfaction—many men, many truths, many institutions, many earthly comforts—but there are none which yield us the full solace which the soul requires. There are none which can give to the heart the spiritual food for which it hungers. Jesus Christ, alone, supplies the needs of the sons of men. As the apple tree is the exception to the forest trees in bearing its fruit. As it stands on that account in contrast to the trees of the woods, so does Jesus our Beloved contrast with all others and transcendently excel them—

*“An apple tree in simple beauty stands,  
And waves its juicy treasure gracefully,  
Among the barren trees which eroded the woods, Of lofty form, but destitute of fruit.  
So Jesus, ‘midst the failing sons of men  
Bears for my use the fruits of covenant love, And fills my heart with rare delight and rest.”*

Wandering, as I have been, during the last few days, up and down in the New Forest, the only real forest of our country, and finding rest in its vast solitudes, often has this text occurred to me and therefore I can do no other than speak of it to you—“As the apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my Beloved among the sons.” We shall at the outset speak of the tree which the fainting soul most desires. We shall then remark that it is no small wonder that the needy one finds an apple tree in so singular a position. And, thirdly, we shall note her very natural conduct when she found so desirable a tree in such a position—she sat down under its shadow with great delight and feasted upon the delicious fruit.

I. First, then, our text speaks of THE TREE WHICH THE FAINTING SOUL MOST DESIRES. Imagine yourself upon some sultry day in autumn as a wanderer in the leafy lanes of a great forest. The grand cathedral aisles reach before you to lengths immeasurable, or huge domes of foliage rise above you like a second sky. Imagine yourself roaming amidst the ferns and brakes, trampling on the briars and hollies, or sitting down on mossy banks and knolls soft with layers of leaves. Suppose, also, that you are hungry and thirsty and that no rippling streams offer their cooling floods while you are so far away from human ears that, hungry though you might be even to death, there would be no eyes to see you and consequently no hands outstretched for your help.

In such a plight it needs no imagination to conceive you as glancing to the trees, your only companions, and silently appealing to them for aid. Some of them look as if their bowing branches would sympathize if they could, others grotesquely grin at you and the most of them sternly refuse you succor by their solemn silence. You will ask in vain of oak, or ash, or elm. Suppose you appeal to yonder stately tree which is the greatest of them all, the king of the forest, unequalled in greatness or girth? Admire its stupendous limbs, its gnarled roots, its bossy bark, the vast area beneath its boughs. You look up at it and think what a puny creature you are and how brief has been your life compared with its duration. You try to contemplate the storms which have swept over it and the suns which have shone upon it.

Great, however, as it is, it cannot help you. If it were a thousand times higher and its topmost boughs swept the stars, yet it could minister no aid to you. This is a fit picture of the attempt to find consolation in systems of religion which are recommended to you because they are greatly followed. Here is a religion which has been patronized by kings and nobles for centuries—a religion which has the support of the great and fashionable at the present hour—will not this content you? Is it not enough to belong to the same religion as the majority, especially when that majority includes the aristocrats of the land? Is not the religion of the people the voice of God? What more do you need? Why should you be singular?

Alas, the great tree is not the fruit-bearing tree. The true Christian, believing in Jesus Christ with all his heart, counts it no desirable thing to be found in the broad road where the many go, for he remembers that his Master spoke of it as leading to destruction. Majorities are nothing to him, for he remembers that, “strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it.” He does not reckon that the greatness of the company will make right wrong, or overawe the Judge of All, or make eternal punishment one whit the less intolerable. We desire not the way of the multitude—the way of the Crucified we delight to follow. It is not the mightiest tree of the forest that we look to with hope, but to the Lord Jesus, our Beloved, who is the apple tree among the trees of the woods!

His fruit is sweet to our taste. He is the way, the truth, and the life to us. His Person is most dear to us and His teachings are the food of our spirits. Happy are you who dare to be singular with Christ! Blessed are you who have found the narrow way which leads unto eternal life! Blessed are you because you are not carried away with the strong current and fashion of the age, but have heard the voice that says, “Be not conformed to this world, but be you transformed by the renewing of your minds.” Wisdom tells the hungry man to prefer the solitary apple tree to whole groves of the largest oaks or beeches. And wisdom given from above has brought you, O Believer in Jesus, to prefer your Redeemer to all the great ones of the earth.

Suppose that in your wanderings to and fro you come upon another tree which is said to be the oldest in the forest. We, all of us, have a veneration for age. Antiquity has many charms. I scarcely know if antiquity and novelty should run a race for popular favor, which might win. Nowadays we are pestered by a class of men who would gladly fascinate our nation to error by the charms of antiquity. They will tell us that a certain ceremony, though no trace of it is to be found in Scripture, must be venerable because practiced in the fourth century. And they imagine that worship in buildings which were founded by Saxons and garnished by Normans must be peculiarly acceptable with God! To be ancient—is it not a great advantage? As cleanliness is next to godliness, surely antiquity must he next to orthodoxy!

Yet if there is no Scripture to warrant it, an ancient ceremony is only an ancient farce! There are some things which are so old as to be rotten, eaten of worms and fit only to be put away. Many things called ancient are but clever counterfeits, or when they are true they are but the bones and caresses of that which once was good when life filled it with energy and power. There is an “old way which wicked men have trod,” as well as a good old way in which the righteous walk. We cannot be certain that a thing is right because it is old, for Satan is old, and sin is old, and death is old, and Hell is old—yet none of these things are right and desirable on that account.

No, Jesus Christ our Lord, since the day in which we have known Him by faith, has quieted our conscience, has calmed our fears, has given us joy and peace through believing. And we are not to be seduced from Him by all the antiquated falsehoods which may weave their spells around us. Old even to decay may be the trees in which other travelers delight, but as for us, we choose the tree of heavenly fruit—the apple tree is our choice, Jesus is our Beloved. Ritualists may glory in their fourth century doctrines, their fathers, their councils and their ancient customs. The Bible is primitive enough for us! The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is venerable

enough for us! We are content with Him and need no more. To us the main thing is to find food for our souls, the bread that never perishes, the fruit which will quench our desperate thirst. We have found it in the Savior and from the Savior we will not depart.

It may be that in the midst of the forest, while you are hungry and thirsty, you come upon a strangely beautiful tree. Its proportions are exact and as you gaze upon it from a distance you exclaim—“How wonderful are the works of God!” And you begin to think of those trees of the Lord which are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He has planted. You stand under it and look up among the majestic boughs and the spreading branches and you again admire the beauty of Nature as it comes from the hand of the Most High. But beauty can never satisfy hunger and when a man is dying of thirst it is vain to talk to him of symmetry and taste. He needs food. This reminds us that nowadays there are some who try to satisfy the souls of men with beauty. Look at their processions—who would not be charmed with their varied costumes, their spangled banners, their gilded crosses and their melodious hymns?

Listen to their choir—is not the singing perfection? If you want a concert on Sunday and do not like to attend a theater, you can find it in the cathedral and in many a parish Church. If you want to have your senses gratified and cannot conscientiously attend an opera on Sunday, you can have ears and eyes gratified at Church, yes and the nose as well in some places—and these amusements they mistake for religious exercises! Compared with the plainness of worship which we follow, our casting out of everything like symbol, our abhorrence of everything that would take away the mind from God Himself and fix it upon secondary objects—compared with all this their worship is enchanting, indeed, to the carnal mind—and we do not wonder that those who are led by taste should follow after it.

But oh, if a man once hungers after the bread of Heaven, his taste for finery will be reduced to a very secondary position as a governing power of his mind. If once the soul craves after God, after peace, pardon, Truth, reconciliation, holiness—it will seek the Lord Jesus, the Apple Tree—and forget the other trees, however shapely they may be. “These bear no fruit for me,” says the hungry soul. The awakened conscience listens to the chant as it is echoed among the massive pillars and watches the smoke as it rises like a cloud among the arches of the roof, and he cries, “What are chants and smoke to me? I need a Savior!” He sees the procession and after he has gazed upon it he says, “What are these mummeries to me? I need washing in the blood of Christ.”

As the incense smokes to Heaven he says to himself, “O for the incense of the Savior’s merit! What are these gums of Araby to me if they should burn all day long?” He turns away, sick and faint in heart, from all the gew-gaws and outward trappings of modern Popery and he cries, “O God, You are a Spirit, and they that worship You must worship You in spirit and in truth. I need You, O my God! I need spiritual life within myself that I may commune with You! And where can I find it but in my Savior? He gives it to me! He is the only fruit-bearing tree among the trees of the woods.”

We will pursue our investigations in the forest and while we are doing so we shall come upon some very wonderful trees. I have seen, just lately, instances in which branches are curiously interlaced with one another. The beech sends forth a long drooping bough and lest it should not be able to support itself, another bough strikes up from below to buttress it, or descends from above and clasps it and the boughs actually grow into one another. Strange things may be observed in the undisturbed woods which are not to be seen in our hedgerow trees, or discerned in our gardens. Trees have odd habits of their own and grow marvelously if left to their own sweet wills.

I have stood under them and said, “How can this be? This is singular, indeed! How could they grow like this? What wondrous interlacing, intertwining, gnarling and knotting!” Yes, but if a man were hungry and thirsty, he would not be satisfied with curiosities. So is it with some preaching that I know of. If you regard it from the standpoint of literary excellence you confess that it is wonderful. There are great orators and deep thinkers to be found to whom I would not presume to hold a candle—whose performances are really wonderful. I have felt, after I have heard their essays, like the Primitive Methodist who went to dinner with the squire and then pronounced the blessing afterwards—“Lord, we thank you that we do not have such a good dinner as this every day, for it is too rich to agree with us.” I have felt just like that after hearing the fine oration, though, mark you, I did not remember a bit of it after it was over and my heart was none the better.

How many sermons are published nowadays, as well as preached, which are full of what is called thought? By the cant word, “thought,” is generally meant contradicting the plain meaning of Scripture and starting new notions. A man who preaches plainly what God reveals is said to be an echo of the Puritans, a dealer in platitudes, a repeater at second-hand or exploded dogmas. But to find out some new lie every week to tell your people, to shake their faith in Inspiration every time you open your mouth—and make them believe that there is nothing certain, but that everything is a mere matter of opinion—that is “thought and culture” in these days. And there are in certain dissenting pulpits the most miserable specimens of this school and in the pews a number of their silly admirers.

Brothers and Sisters, some of us are too old-fashioned ever to be led astray in that way, and what is more, we have such an awful appetite—we are possessed of such a dreadful hunger, and such insatiable thirst that we dare not go away from the Apple Tree—because we need to be always eating. We dare not go away from Jesus Christ, because we are always needing pardon, always needing peace, always needing fresh life. And provided we can retain our hold on Jesus we are not particular about the way in which some of these wonderful trees twist their boughs. We do not feel concerned about the marvels of modern thought, or the resurrection of ancient errors—

*“Should all the forms that men devise,*

***Assault my soul with treacherous art,  
I’d call them vanities and lies,  
And bind the Gospel to my heart.  
For if we search the globe around,  
Yes, search from Britain to Japan,  
There shall be no religion found,  
So just to God, so safe to man.”***

But as we are wandering in the forest and are still hungry I hear someone saying, “Ah, here is the place for food. You need not boast of your Apple Tree—the ground is covered with meat beneath this noble tree.” I look up—it is autumn time—and I see a huge tree loaded with beech nuts which fall from it like rain. “Here is the place for food.” Was that a human voice I heard? No, it was the grunts of a herd of swine! See how content they are—how happy—how they are munching the meat as it falls from the trees. Yonder is a grove of oaks, all shedding their acorns—and how delighted the swine are! How they fatten upon the spoil! “Will you not come here?” they seem to say, as they munch in comfort! “Will you not come here? Do not tell us about trees which bear no fruit—there is surely fruit enough here.”

Even thus I hear a voice from the Exchange—“Here are the trees which bear us golden apples! Come here and be filled.” I hear it from those who cater to public amusements—“Here are the fruits which can delight the soul! Here is the place to spend a happy day.” And so I hear it from the gay followers of vice—“This dalliance, this dance, this flowing bowl, this sweet-sounding viol, these are real joys.” Yes, to you, to you who choose them! Beech nuts and acorns are good enough for swine. To you who can find comfort, solid comfort, in the gain of merchandise, or in the pleasures of sin, or in the delights of pomp, these things are good enough! But a man, a God-made man, a man into whom God has put a new heart—not a swine’s heart, but a man’s heart—needs apples, not acorns—needs spiritual food!

He needs food for an immortal Nature and there is no such food to be found short of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He, and He only, is the Apple Tree among the trees of the woods! I might enlarge, but I will not. I will simply say what every child of God here knows that the Lord Jesus Christ has given to us, ever since we found Him, everything we have needed. When we came to Him we were worn out with faintness, we were hungry to get rid of our sins, but we are now rid of them, every one of them. We went up to His Cross and as we saw Him hanging on it, the strings which bound our burden to our shoulders began to crack. Our load rolled off into His sepulcher and we have never seen it since. We have half fancied we have felt it again, but we never have, for if our sins are searched for they cannot be found! No, they shall not be, says the Lord.

You remember when you first came to that precious tree where the Savior died? There you discovered that your sin was blotted out and that you were accepted in the Beloved. And there you were made to be forevermore an heir of Heaven! Oh, the lusciousness of the fruit which you tasted, then! Oh, the delightful quiet of that shadow under which you sat that day! Blessed be His name! You had searched among the other trees, but you found no fruit there. You tried to rest in the shadow of other boughs, but you never rested till on that blood-stained tree of the Cross you saw your sins put away and your salvation secured! And then you rested and were satisfied. But the Lord Jesus Christ has not only satisfied us as to the past, see what He has done for us as to the present!

My dear Hearers, there are some of you who have never known, yet, what it is to be perfectly happy. I do not call it being perfectly happy to be full of excitement, laughter and apparent joy—and then to go home in the evening and sit down and feel disgusted with it all. That is the froth of fancy and not the true wine of joy. But to be perfectly happy is to be able to think about all things on earth and all things in Heaven, and yet to say, “I lack nothing! There is nothing I desire, nothing I pine after! I am saved! I am a child of God—the eternal God is my own Father! I am on my way to His own glorious house. If death should strike me now it would not matter, or if I am spared for another 50 years it will make no difference to me, for all is well and could not be better! If there are crosses in my lot, they are God-sent crosses. If I have troubles, they work my lasting good. If I lose, I am a gainer by my losses. If I have all things, I see God in all things. And if I have nothing, yet I see all things in my God. Nothing more can I desire. Christ is all and Christ is mine and, therefore, I have all things.”

Now, that is the position of the Christian this day. He sits down under the shadow of Christ and Christ’s fruit is sweet to him. Let me ask you, can you imagine any other place where such peace of mind or such happiness can be enjoyed? Why, I know sick people who are far more happy in their sickness than worldlings are in their health! And I know poor men who are infinitely more at peace and more content than rich men who have not the Savior. Jesus Christ, alone, satisfies us for the past and delights us for the present. And then as to the future. The man who has found Christ looks forward to it not merely with complacency, not simply without a dread, but with a joyous expectancy and hope! Those things which make others tremble make us glad.

There is such a thing as dying—thank God, there is! Who wants to live here always? That narrow stream which separates this country from the better land must be forded by each of us. Who would have it otherwise? Instead of being afraid to cross it, we have sometimes said—

*“O Lord of Hosts, divide the waves,*

*And land us now in Heaven.”*  
The judgment? The Christian quails not at the thought. Who shall lay anything to his charge? The coming of the Lord? The Believer fears it not, no, it is his grandest hope! Eternity and its never-ending cycles? He dreads it not, for it is to him the climax of his joy that it is to be everlasting. O, happy people who have Christ! Happy souls who rest in Jesus! They may say what none others can—“As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons.”

Dear Hearer, is He your Beloved? Can you claim Him as your own? If you can, then I am sure you will bear witness, as the text does, to the satisfying power of the Savior and declare with Ralph Erskine—

*“What fool soever disagrees,  
My sweet experience proves  
That Jesus is the tree of trees  
Among a thousand groves.”*

II. The spouse spoke of the tree which she most desired—THE WONDER WAS THAT SHE FOUND IT. It was an apple tree, but it was not in a garden, a fruit tree but not in a vineyard—it was “among the trees of the woods.” Who would know of so great a rarity as an apple tree in a forest if he were not first told of it? So Jesus Christ, at this present day, is not known to all mankind. It is a most unhappy thought that probably the majority of the human race have not heard of the Savior at all—and a very large proportion have never heard of Him except through misrepresentations. Only a small minority of our fellow men know anything about the Savior—

*“What millions never knew the Lord!  
What millions hate Him when He’s known.”*

Even in our own country you will not find it a difficult thing to meet with persons who are totally ignorant of Christ. Try it and you shall find in country towns and in hamlets men grown up who could not give you an answer to this question—“How is it that the death of Jesus saves the soul?” No, they do not even know the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners! “Well,” you say, “we know the rural districts are ignorant.” Yes, but they are far superior in light to parts of London. You can readily find children in our streets, and what is worse, artisans in our workshops, to whom the bare name of Jesus may be known, but anything like the doctrine of His substitutionary Atonement is a thing of which they have not heard.

Living in the light they abide in darkness! Amid a thousand lamps they see not. One of the problems which may most surprise us is the existence of such dense ignorance in persons who live in intimate connection with instructed people. If you want the grossest ignorance, probably you would not find it in Pekin or Timbuktu, but in London or New York. Where the greatest light is, there the shadows are deepest. Men nearest to the Church are often furthest from God. You cannot easily find an apple tree in a great forest. If you were put down in the middle of a forest and told there was an apple tree there, you might wander for many a day before you discovered it—and often go over your own footsteps, lost in endless mazes—and you may not find the object of your search.

And so, though there is a Savior, men have not found the Savior—and there may even be souls here present who long for that which Jesus is able to give and yet have not discovered Him. You know all about Him in the letter of His Word but you cannot find Him spiritually. And I hear you cry, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him.” I know I am speaking to some such. You have been going up and down for months with your prayers and your tears and your good works. You have been trying to do all you can to save yourselves, but you find your own actions to be barren trees and you know that there is an apple tree somewhere, but you cannot find it. Ah, poor Soul, you are like the Ethiopian eunuch, when he was asked if he understood what he read, he gave the answer, “How can I, unless some man should guide me?”

Do you not wonder that the spouse found her apple tree among the trees of the woods? The fact is, none ever find it except they are led there! And none can lead a soul to that Apple Tree but the eternal Spirit of God. He can make use of His ministers and He does. And therefore, Brothers in the ministry, let us always be preaching about this Apple Tree. Let us preach up Jesus Christ, let us make tracks to the Tree of Life! Whatever we do not preach, let us preach Jesus Christ! I have found, wherever I have been during the last month, that though there might not be a road to this place or that, there was sure to be a London road.

Now, if your sermon does not happen to have the doctrine of Election, or the doctrine of Final Perseverance in it, let it always have Christ in it. Have a road to London, a road to Christ, in every sermon. Still, the most plain preaching will require the Spirit of God to go with it, or else the soul will hear about this glorious tree and about the sweetness of the fruit, but will never find the shadow—and will never eat the dainty apples. Have you come to Christ, dear Brothers and Sisters? Then give God the glory for it! Jesus led you. His Spirit guided you. Praise and bless His holy name. Now, is it not a strange place for an apple tree to be found in—in a forest? We seldom hear of such a thing. An apple tree should grow in a garden. How should it be found in a forest?

And is it not a strange thing that a Savior should be found for us among men—not among angels? You shall search for a Savior among “the helmed cherubim and worded seraphim” as long as you will, but there is none there. The Savior is found in a manger at Bethlehem, in a carpenter’s shop at Nazareth. Among the poor and needy is He seen while He sojourns among the sons of men. As I was turning this text over in my mind, I thought, “Ah, and what strange trees this tree grew among, for there it stands with a gallows tree on either side, and two thieves hanging upon them. “He was numbered with the transgressors.”—

*“Not among you, O you cedars,  
Not among you, O mighty oaks,  
But among the bushes of the desert,  
Among the trees accursed was Jesus found!”*

“He made His grave with the wicked.”—  
*“As in some sere and unproductive wood  
One lovely, fruit-producing apple tree,*

*Bright contrast to the ruined thousands round; So in this populous but vicious world  
O You Desire of nations, did You stand.”*

Now, there is something very sweet about this, because a forest is the very place where we most love to find Christ growing. If I had come, the other day, upon an apple tree in the forest and it had happened to be the time of ripe fruit, I should have felt no compunction of conscience in taking whatever I was able to reach, for a tree growing in the forest is free to all comers. Should there be a hungry one beneath its bough, he need not say, “May I?” when his month waters at the golden fruit! He need not say, “It would be stealing. I am unfit to take it. I am unworthy of it.” Man, if there is an apple tree in the forest, no man can keep it for himself or

deny your right to it, for each wanderer has a right to what fruit he can gather! The animals have rights of pasturage. And the birds have rights of nesting. And you have rights of feeding. Pluck away, Man, and eat to your full!

The shadows and the fruits of forest trees are free to all who need them. This ought to delight any seeking soul here this morning. Jesus Christ is not hedged about in the Scriptures, as some theologians would desire to guard Him from coming souls. The Lord has planted no protection of thorns and hollies by saying, “You must bring with you preparations for Grace. You must feel this and feel the other, and only then may you dare to come to Christ.” It is a gross error to tell a man to do something and be something before he believes in Jesus. No! There He stands with no hedge about Him and whoever will, may partake freely! If you hear the Gospel call, your reply to it should be—

*“Just as I am, Your love unknown  
Has broken every barrier down.  
Now to rely on You alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come.”*

Christ has no barriers around Him to keep you from Him. If there are any they are of your own making—  
*“None are excluded but those  
Who themselves exclude  
Welcome the learned and polite,  
The ignorant and rude.”*  
Whoever shall come shall be welcome to this priceless Apple Tree! There is some comfort, therefore, in thinking that He grows among the trees of the woods.  
III. It was little wonder that when the spouse, all hungry and faint, did come upon this apple tree in the forest SHE ACTED AS SHE DID. Straightway she sat down under its shadow with great delight. And its fruit was sweet unto her taste. She looked up at it—that was the first thing she did and she perceived that it met her double need. The sun was hot, there was the shadow. She was faint, there was the fruit. Now, see how Jesus meets all the needs of all who come to Him? God’s anger, like the hot noon-day sun, falls on me—how can I escape it? There is no escape from the anger of God except by an Interposer.  
What is a shadow? Is it not caused by the interposition of the bough, or the rock, or whatever it may be which comes between us and the sun? If we sit under a tree in the shadow, it is because the tree receives the heat and so we escape from it. Jesus Christ’s great office is the Interposer, the Mediator, the Substitute, the Atonement, the Sacrifice—and when we hide beneath Him we are screened. God’s wrath cannot come on us because it has come upon Him on our behalf—  
*“When Christ my Screen is interposed  
Between the sun and me  
My joyful heart and lips unclosed,  
Adore the glorious Tree.”*  
That is a beautiful picture in Solomon’s Song where the king is said to ride in his chariot of love. He takes his spouse with him and they ride together in his palanquin, and it has over it a canopy. Did you ever notice what it is made of? It is said, “The covering thereof was of purple,” for truly the only interposition between us and the sun of God’s wrath is the purple canopy of the atoning blood! Is it not delightful to sit down beneath the scarlet canopy of the Savior’s blood and feel, “God cannot smite me— He has smitten His Son. He cannot demand payment a second time. If Jesus suffered in my place, how can God make me suffer, again, for my sin? Where were the justice of the Most High to punish an Immaculate Substitute and then punish men for whom that Substitute endured His wrath?” This is the cool, calm, holy shadow under which we abide!  
But then, the spouse also found that she was thirsty and that the fruit of the tree exactly met her case. Our inner life needs sustenance and food. Now, in the Lord Jesus is life and the bread of life. He is that Bread which came down from Heaven, of which if a man eats he shall live forever. O, to get a heart full of Christ, to get a whole Christ into one’s inmost soul, to have Him abide in you—this is bliss! Then your soul feels, “It is enough—I have all things, for I have Jesus.” Let us, therefore, seek at this time, and especially this afternoon in our meditations—and when we come to the communion table this evening—to abide under the shadow of Jesus and there to be found abundantly eating of His fruit.  
One thing more is to be noted—the spouse, when she had begun to enjoy the provision and the shade, and had sat down under it as if she intended to say, “I never mean to leave this place. In this delicious shadow I mean to repose forever,” then she also began to tell of it to others. In the text she describes Christ as the Apple Tree and gives her reason for so calling Him—“I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.” Experience must be the ground upon which we found our descriptions. If a preacher wants to preach with power, let him tell what he has felt, tasted and handled. It is of little use to say Christ is precious, unless you can add, “I have found Him so.” Therefore the Church brings in her own experience—“Sweet shade! I there sat down as one at home and there regaled my soul with most delicious fare.” She could not hold her tongue about her Beloved! She must speak! She could not retain the secret of this Apple Tree and say to herself, “Others may go to it, and so perhaps when I go another time there may be nothing left for myself.” No, she spread the news. She set it down in black and white in the Inspired Volume for an everlasting testimony that there is an Apple Tree among the trees of the woods of which she had eaten—so that others might eat of it, too—and enjoy the same sweetness for themselves. This morning every renewed heart desires that every other heart should know the Savior. I can speak well of my Lord and Master. I do not know that I can say anything better of Him than most of His people can, for the experience of the saints is much alike. But I can say this, if there is happiness beneath the sky, Jesus can give it to you! If there is peace and rest to a jaded soul, Jesus can give it you!  
If there is a delight, a brimming delight, an overflowing delight, if there is that which can make the eyes sparkle and the pulse to beat right merrily—and the blood to leap in the veins—it is when Jesus Christ is consciously ours and we are resting in Him. I am sure, if there were an apple tree in any forest and it were once found out, everybody would be taken to see it, it would be such an attraction! There would be many paths to it and everybody who had been in the forest and seen it would tell his neighbors. Now, I beseech you, who have found the Savior, to be telling others what you know about Him and try to lead others to look at Him. You cannot make them feed upon Him, but God can, and if you can lead them to the Tree, who knows but God will give them spiritual hunger and will lead them to feed as you have fed.  
O you silent Christians, you silent Christians, who neither by your tongue, nor your pen, nor by any other way, ever tell about Christ, I do not know what to make of you! I wonder the seats you sit on do not push you off and speak instead of you, and that the stones of the street do not cry out against you as you pass over them. Why, what can you be made of, to be saved from going down to Hell and not want others to be saved, too? Shame on you! Shame on me, also, whenever I am silent about such a blessed salvation, such a Divine redemption. I would gladly set your tongues going about this blessed Apple Tree among the trees of the woods! There is nothing about which you can speak so freely without fear of exaggeration. All the world has been talking about the Shah of Persia. I wish they would talk half as much about the Christ of God! All the good you will ever get out of the Shah you may see with your eyes shut. But the benefit that will come from the King of Heaven to your own souls and ten thousands of other souls is unlimited! Cry the Savior up, Beloved! Set Him on a high throne! Give Him the best of your thoughts, the best of your words, the best of your actions! Give Him of your time and your substance. He deserves to have honor above all the sons of men, for He is the best of all.  
As the apple tree to the hungry man excels all other trees, so does Jesus excel all other loves. Let us give Him, today, our hearts’ warmest love and praise Him forever and forever. God grant it, for His name’s sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 23. Isaiah 12.  
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UNDER THE APPLE TREE  
NO. 3249

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 11, 1911.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.”  
Solomon’s Song 2:3.**

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #1120, Volume 19— THE APPLE TREE IN THE WOODS  
—Read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

CHRIST known should be Christ used. The spouse knew her Beloved to be like a fruit-bearing tree and at once she sat down under His shadow and fed upon His fruit. It is a pity that we know so much about Christ and yet enjoy Him so little. May our experience keep pace with our knowledge and may that experience be composed of a practical using of our Lord. Jesus casts a shadow, let us sit under it. Jesus yields fruit, let us taste the sweetness of it. Depend upon it that the way to learn more is to use what you know and, moreover, the way to learn a Truth of God thoroughly is to learn it experimentally. You know a Doctrine beyond all fear of contradiction when you have proved it for yourself by personal test and trial. The bride in the Song as good as says, “I am certain that my Beloved casts a shadow, for I have sat under it, and I am persuaded that He bears sweet fruit, for I have tasted of it.” The best way of demonstrating the power of Christ to save is to trust in Him and be, yourself, saved by Him—and of all those who are sure of the Divinity of our holy faith, there are none so certain as those who feel its Divine Power upon themselves! You may reason yourself into a belief of the Gospel and you may, by further reasoning, keep yourself orthodox—but a personal trial and an inward knowing of the Truth are incomparably the best evidences. If Jesus is as an apple tree among the trees of the woods, do not stay away from Him, but sit under His shadow and taste His fruit! He is a Savior—do not believe that fact and yet remain unsaved. As far as Christ is known to you, so far make use of Him! Is not this sound common sense?

We would further remark that we are at liberty to make every possible use of Christ. Shadow and fruit may both be enjoyed. Christ, in His Infinite condescension exists for needy souls. Oh, let us say it over again! It is a bold word, but it is true—as Christ Jesus, our Lord exists for the benefit of His people! A Savior only exists to save. A physician lives to heal. The Good Shepherd lives, yes, dies for His sheep! Our Lord Jesus Christ has wrapped us about His heart—we are intimately interwoven with all His offices, with all His honors, with all His traits of Character, with all that He has done and with all that He has yet to do! The sinners’ Friend lives for sinners and sinners may have Him and use Him to the uttermost! He is as free to us as the air we breathe! What are fountains for but that the thirsty may drink? What is the harbor for but that stormtossed ships may there find refuge? What is Christ for, but that poor guilty ones like ourselves may come to Him and look and live—and afterwards may have all our needs supplied out of His fullness?

We have thus the door set open for us and we pray that the Holy Spirit may help us to enter in while we notice in the text two things which we pray that you may enjoy to the fullest. First, the heart’s rest in Christ—“I sat down under His shadow with great delight.” And secondly, the heart’s refreshment in Christ—“His fruit was sweet to my taste.”

I. To begin with, we have here THE HEART’S REST IN CHRIST. To set this forth, let us notice the character of the person who uttered this sentence. She who said, “I sat down under His shadow with great delight,” was one who had known before what weary travel meant and, therefore, valued rest. The man who has never labored knows nothing of the sweetness of repose. The loafer who has eaten bread he never earned, from whose brow there never oozed a drop of honest sweat does not deserve rest—and knows not what it is. It is to the laboring man that rest is sweet! And when at last we come, toil-worn with many miles of weary plodding, to a shaded place where we may comfortably “sit down”—then are we filled with delight!

The spouse had been seeking her Beloved, and in looking for Him she had asked where she was likely to find Him. “Tell me,” she says, “O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon.” He told her to go and seek Him by the footsteps of the flock. She did go her way, but after awhile she came to this resolve—“I will sit down under His shadow.” Many of you have been sorely wearied with going your way to find peace. Some of you tried ceremonies and multiplied them, and the priest came to your help, but he mocked your hearts’ distress. Others of you sought by various systems of thought to come to an anchorage. But tossed from billow to billow, you found no rest upon the seething sea of speculation. More of you tried by your good works to go in rest to your consciences. You multiplied your prayers, you poured out floods of tears. You hoped by alms-giving and by the like that some merit might accrue to you and that your heart might feel acceptance with God, and so have rest. You toiled and toiled, like the men that were in the vessel with Jonah when they rowed hard to bring their ship to land, but could not, for the sea worked and was tempestuous. There was no escape for you that way and so you were driven to another way—even to rest in Jesus! My heart looks back to the time when I was under a sense of sin and sought with all my soul to find peace, but could not discover it, high or low, in any place beneath the sky! Yet when—

*“I saw One hanging on a tree”* —  
as the Substitute for sin, then my heart sat down under His shadow with great delight! My heart reasoned thus with herself—Did Jesus suffer in my place? Then I shall not suffer! Did He bear my sin? Then I do not bear it! Did God accept His Son as my Substitute? Then He will never smite me! Was Jesus acceptable with God as my Sacrifice? Then what contents the Lord may well enough content me, so I will go no further, but “sit down under His shadow,” and enjoy a delightful rest!

She who said, “I sat down under His shadow with great delight,” could appreciate shade, for she had been sunburned. This was her exclamation, “Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me.” She knew what heat meant, what the burning sun meant and, therefore, shade was pleasant to her. You know nothing about the deliciousness of shade till you travel in a thoroughly hot country—then you are delighted with it! Did you ever feel the heat of Divine Wrath? Did the great Sun—that Sun without variableness or shadow of a turning—ever dart His hottest rays upon you—the rays of His holiness and justice? Did you cower down beneath the scorching beams of that great Light of God and say, “We are consumed by Your anger”? If you have ever felt that, you have found it a very blessed thing to come under the shadow of Christ’s atoning Sacrifice! A shadow, you know, is cast by a body coming between us and the light and heat—and our Lord’s most blessed body has come between us and the scorching sun of Divine Justice, so that we sit under the shadow of His mediation with great delight!

And now, if any other sun begins to scorch us, we fly to our Lord. If domestic troubles, or business cares, or Satanic temptations, or inward corruptions oppress us, we hasten to Jesus’ shadow to hide under Him and there “sit down” in the cool refreshment with great delight! The interposition of our blessed Lord is the cause of our inward quiet. The sun cannot scorch me, for it scorched Him. My troubles need not trouble me, for He has taken my troubles and I have left them in His hands. “I sat down under His shadow.”

Mark well these two things concerning the spouse. She knew what it was to be weary and she knew what it was to be sunburned—and just in proportion as you, also, know these two things, your valuation of Christ will rise! You who have never lingered under the wrath of God have never prized the Savior! Water is of small value in this land of brooks and rivers, and so you commonly sprinkle the roads with it. But I guarantee you that if you were making a day’s march over burning sand, a cup of cold water would be worth a king’s ransom! And so to thirsty souls Christ is precious, but to none beside!

Now, when the spouse was sitting down, restful and delighted, she was overshadowed. She says, “I sat down under His shadow.” I do not know a more delightful state of mind than to feel quite overshadowed by our Beloved Lord. Here is my black sin, but there is His precious blood overshadowing my sin and hiding it forever! Here is my condition by nature, an enemy to God, but He who reconciled me to God by His blood has overshadowed that, also, so that I forget that I was once an enemy in the joy of being now a friend! I am very weak, but He is strong and His strength overshadows my feebleness. I am very poor, but He has all riches and His riches overshadow my poverty. I am most unworthy, but He is so worthy that if I use His name, I shall receive as much as if I were worthy! His worthiness overshadows my unworthiness! It is very precious to put the truth the other way and say—If there is anything good in me, it is not good when I compare myself with Him, for His goodness quite eclipses and overshadows it! Can I say that I love Him? So I do, but I hardly dare call it love, for His love overshadows it. Did I suppose that I served Him? So I would, but my poor service is not worth mentioning in comparison with what He has done for me! Did I think I had any degree of holiness? I must not deny that His Spirit works in me—but when I think of His immaculate life and all His Divine perfections, where am I? What am I? Have you not sometimes felt this? Have you not been so overshadowed and hidden under your Lord that you became as nothing? I know what it is to feel that if I die in a workhouse, is does not matter as long as my Lord is glorified. Mortals may cast out my name as evil, if they like, but what does it matter since His dear name shall one day be printed in stars across the sky? Let Him overshadow me—I delight that it should be so!

The spouse tells us that when she became quite overshadowed, then she felt great delight. Great “I” never has great delight, for it cannot bear to acknowledge a greater than itself, but the humble Believer finds his delight in being overshadowed by His Lord! In the shade of Jesus we have more delight than in any fancied light of our own. The spouse had great delight. I trust that you Christian people have great delight. But if not, you ought to ask yourselves whether you really are the people of God. I like to see a cheerful countenance—yes, and to hear of raptures in the hearts of those who are God’s saints. There are people who seem to think that religion and gloom are married and must never be divorced. Pull down the blinds on Sunday and darken the rooms! If you have a garden or a rose in bloom, try to forget that there are such beauties—are you not to serve God as dolorously as you can? Put your book under your arm and crawl to your place of worship in as mournful a manner as if you were being marched to the whipping-post! Act thus if you will, but give me that religion which cheers my heart, fires my soul and fills me with enthusiasm and delight—for that is likely to be the religion of Heaven—and it agrees with the experience of the Inspired Song!

Although I trust that we know what delight means, I question if we have enough of it to describe ourselves as sitting down in the enjoyment of it. Do you give yourselves enough time to sit at Jesus’ feet? There is the place of delight! Do you abide in it? Sit down under His shadow. “I have no leisure,” cries one. Try and make a little. Steal it from your sleep if you cannot get it anywhere else. Grant leisure to your heart. It would be a great pity if a man never spent five minutes with his wife but was forced to be always hard at work. Why, that is slavery, is it not? Shall we not, then, have time to commune with our Best-Beloved? Surely, somehow or other, we can squeeze out a little season in which we shall have nothing else to do but to sit down under His shadow with great delight! When I take my Bible and need to feed on it for myself, I generally get to thinking about preaching upon the text and what I should say to you from it. This will not do! I must get away from that and forget that there is a Tabernacle, that I may sit personally at Jesus’ feet! And, oh, there is an intense delight in being overshadowed by Him! He is near you and you know it. His dear Presence is as certainly with you as if you could see Him, for His influence surrounds you! Often have I felt as if Jesus leaned over me, as a friend might look over my shoulder. Although no cool shade comes over your brow, yet you may as much feel His shadow as if it did, for your heart grows calm—and if you have been wearied with the family, or troubled with the Church, or vexed with yourself—you come down from the chamber where you have seen your Lord and you feel braced for the battle of life—ready for its troubles and its temptations because you have seen the Lord!

“I sat down,” she said, “under His shadow with great delight.” How great that delight was she could not tell, but she sat down as one overpowered with it, needing to sit still under the load of bliss! I do not like to talk much about the secret delights of Christians because there are always some around us who do not understand our meaning. But I will venture to say this much—if worldlings could but even guess what are the secret joys of Believers, they would give their eyes to share them with us! We have troubles and we admit it. We expect to have them, but we have joys which are frequently excessive. We would not like that others should be witnesses of the delight which now and then tosses our soul into a very tempest of joy. You know what it means, do you not? When you have been quite alone with the heavenly Bridegroom, you wanted to tell the angels of the sweet love of Christ to you, a poor unworthy one! You even wished to teach the golden harps fresh music, for seraphs know not the heights and depths of Grace as you know them.

The spouse had great delight—and we know that she had for this one reason—she did not forget it. This verse and the whole Song is a remembrance of what she had enjoyed. She says, “I sat down under His shadow.” It may have been a month, it may have been years ago, but she had not forgotten it! The joys of fellowship with God are written in marble. “Engraved as in eternal brass” are memories of communion with Christ Jesus! “Above fourteen years ago,” says the Apostle, “I knew a man.”Ah, it was worth remembering all those years! He had not told his delight, but he had kept it stored up. He says, “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knows,” so great had his delights been! When we look back, we forget birthdays, holidays and bonfire-nights which we have spent after the manner of men, but we readily recall our times of fellowship with the Well-Beloved! We have known our Tabors, our times of transfiguration-fellowship and, like Peter, we remember when we were “with Him in the holy mount.” Our head has leaned upon the Master’s bosom and we can never forget the intense delight! Nor will we fail to put on record for the good of others the joys with which we have been indulged.

Now I leave this first part of the subject, only noticing how beautifully natural it is. There was a tree and she sat down under the shadow. There was nothing strained, nothing formal. So ought true piety always be consistent with common sense, with that which seems most fitting, most comely, most wise and most natural. There is Christ, we may enjoy Him—let us not despise the privilege!

II. The second part of our subject is THE HEART’S REFRESHMENT IN CHRIST. “His fruit was sweet to my taste.” Here I will not enlarge, but give you thoughts in brief which you can beat out afterwards.

She did not feast upon the fruit of the tree till first she was under the shadow of it. There is no knowing the excellent things of Christ till you trust Him. Not a single sweet apple shall fall to the lot of those who are outside the shadow. Come and trust Christ—and then all that there is in Christ shall be enjoyed by you. O unbelievers, what blessings you miss! If you will but sit down under His shadow, you shall have all things. But if you will not, neither shall any good thing of Christ’s be yours.

But as soon as she was under the shadow, then the fruit was all hers. “I sat down under His shadow,” she says, and then, “His fruit was sweet to my taste.” Do you believe in Jesus, Friend? Then Jesus Christ Himself is yours! And if you own the tree, you may as well eat the fruit. Since He Himself becomes yours altogether, then His redemption and the pardon that comes of it, His living power, His mighty intercession, the glories of His Second Advent and all that belong to Him are made over to you for your personal and present use and enjoyment! All things are yours since Christ is yours! Only mind that you imitate the spouse—when she found that the fruit was hers, she ate it. Copy her closely in this. It is a great fault in many Believers that they do not appropriate the promises and feed on them. Do not err as they do! Under the shadow, you have a right to eat the fruit. Deny not yourselves the sacred entertainment.

Now it would appear, as we read the text, that she obtained this fruit without effort. The proverb says, “He who would gain the fruit must climb the tree.” But she did not climb, for she says, “I sat down under His shadow.” I suppose the fruit dropped down to her. I know that it is so with us. We no longer spend our money for that which is not bread, and our labor for that which satisfies not—we sit under our Lord’s shadow and we eat that which is good—and our soul delights itself in sweetness. Come, Christian, enter into the calm rest of faith by sitting down beneath the Cross and you shall be fed even to the fullest!

The spouse rested while feasting— she sat and ate. So, O true Believer, rest while you are feeding upon Christ. The spouse says, “I sat and I ate.” Had she not told us, in the former Chapter, that the King sat at His table? See how like the Church is to her Lord and the Believer to his Savior! We also sit down and we eat, even as the King does. Right royally are we entertained. His joy is in us and His peace keeps our hearts and minds!

Further, notice that as the spouse fed upon this fruit, she had a relish for it. It is not every palate that likes every fruit. Never dispute with other people about tastes of any sort, for agreement is not possible. That dainty which to one person is the most delicious, is to another nauseous. And if there were a competition as to which fruit is preferable to all the rest, there would probably be almost as many opinions as there are fruits! But blessed is he who has a relish for Christ Jesus! Dear Hearer, is He sweet to you? Then He is yours! There never was a heart that relished Christ but what Christ belonged to that heart! If you have been feeding on Him and He is sweet to you, go on feasting, for He who gave you a relish gives you Himself to satisfy your appetite!

What are the fruits which come from Christ? Are they not peace with God, renewal of heart, joy in the Holy Spirit, love to the brethren? Are they not regeneration, justification, sanctification, adoption and all the blessings of the Covenant of Grace? And are they not each and all sweet to our taste? As we have fed upon them, have we not said, “Yes, these things are pleasant, indeed. There are none like them—let us live upon them forevermore.” Now sit down, sit down and feed. It seems a strange thing that we should have to persuade people to do that, but in the spiritual world, things are very different from what they are in the natural. In the case of most men, if you put a roast before them and a knife and fork, they do not need many arguments to persuade them to fall to! But I will tell you when they will not do it, and that is when they are full! And I will also tell you when they will do it, and that is when they are hungry. Even so, if your soul is weary after Christ the Savior, you will feed on Him. But if not, it is useless for me to preach to you, or bid you come. However, you who are there, sitting under His shadow, may hear Him utter these words, “Eat, O Friend. Drink, yes, drink abundantly.” You cannot have too much of these good things—the more of Christ, the better the Christian!

We know that the spouse feasted herself right heartily with this food from the Tree of Life, for in later days, she wanted more. Will you kindly read on in the 4thverse? The verse which contains our text describes, as it were, her first love to her Lord, her country love, her rustic love. She went to the woods and she found Him there like an apple tree and she enjoyed Him as one relishes a ripe apple in the country. But she grew in Grace—she learned more of her Lord and she found that her BestBeloved was King. I should not wonder but what she learned the Doctrine of the Second Advent, for then she began to sing, “He brought me to the banqueting house,” as much as to say—He did not merely let me know Him out in the fields as the Christ in His humiliation, but He brought me into the royal palace and, since He is a King, He brought forth a banner with His own brave escutcheon and He waved it over me while I was sitting at the table—and the motto of that banner was LOVE.

She grew very full of this. It was such a grand thing to find a great Savior, a triumphant Savior, an exalted Savior—but it was too much for her and she became sick of soul with the excessive glory of what she had learned. And do you see what her heart craves for? She longs for her first simple joys, those countrified delights. “Comfort me with apples,” she says. Nothing but the old joys will revive her! Did you ever feel like that? I have been satiated with delight in the love of Christ as a glorious, exalted Savior when I have seen Him riding on His white horse and going forth conquering and to conquer. I have been overwhelmed when I have beheld Him in the midst of the Throne of God with all the brilliant assembly of angels and archangels adoring Him. And my thoughts have gone forward to the day when He shall descend with all the pomp of God—and make all kings and princes shrink into nothingness before the Infinite Majesty of His Glory! Then I have felt as though I must fall at His feet as dead at the sight of Him and I have needed somebody to come and tell me over again the old, old story of how He died in order that I might be saved! His Throne overpowers me! Let me gather fruit from His Cross! Bring me apples from “the tree” again. I am awe-struck while in the palace! Let me get away to the woods again. Give me an apple plucked from the tree, such as I have given out to boys and girls in His family, such an apple as this, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Or this, “This Man receives sinners.” Give me a promise from the basket of the Covenant! Give me the simplicity of Christ—let me be a child and feast on apples, again, if Jesus is the apple tree! I would gladly go back to Christ on the tree in my place, Christ overshadowing me, Christ feeding me. This is the happiest state to live in! Lord, give us these apples evermore!

You remember the old story we told years ago of Jack the huckster, who used to sing—  
*“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-all.”*

Those who knew him were astonished at his constant composure. They had a world of doubts and fears and so they asked him why he never doubted. “Well,” he said, “I can’t doubt but what I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all, for I know that, and feel it every day. But why should I doubt that Jesus Christ is my All-in-All, for He says He is?” “Oh,” said his questioner, “I have my ups and downs.” “I don’t,” said Jack, “I can never go up, for I am a poor sinner and nothing at all. And I cannot go down, for Jesus Christ is my All-in-All.” He wanted to join the Church, and they said he must tell his experience. He said, “All my experience is that I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all, and Jesus Christ, is my Allin-All.” “Well,” they said, “when you come before the Church Meeting, the minister may ask you questions.” “I can’t help it,” said Jack, “all I know I will tell you. And this is all I know—

*‘I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All.’”*  
He was admitted into the Church and continued with the brethren, walking in holiness. But that was still all his experience and you could not get

him beyond it. “Why,” said one Brother, “I sometimes feel so full of Grace, I feel so advanced in sanctification, that I begin to be very happy.” “I never do,” said Jack. “I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all.” “But then,” said the other, “I go down again and think I am not saved because I am not as sanctified as I used to be.” “But I never doubt my salvation,” said Jack, “because Jesus Christ is my All-in-All and He never alters.” That simple story is grandly instructive, for it sets forth a plain man’s faith in a plain salvation. It is the likeness of a soul under the apple tree resting in the shade and feasting on the fruit!

Now, at this time, I want you to think of Jesus, not as a Prince, but as an apple tree! And when you have done this, I pray you to sit down under His shadow. It is not much to do. Any child, when it is hot, can sit down in a shadow. I want you, next, to feed on Jesus. Any simpleton can eat apples when they are ripe upon the tree. Come and take Christ, then. You who never came before, come now! Come and welcome! You who have came often and have entered into the palace, and are reclining at the banqueting table—you lords and peers of Christianity—come to the common woods and to the common apple tree, where poor saints are shaded and fed. You had better come under the apple tree like poor sinners such as I am, and be once more shaded with branches and comforted with apples, or else you may faint beneath the palace glories! The best of saints are never better than when they eat their first fare and are comforted with the apples which were their first Gospel feast!

The Lord Himself bring forth His own sweet fruit to you. Amen. EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **GALATIANS 5.**

Verse 1. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. “You are not under the Law, but under Grace. Do not subject yourselves, therefore, to legal principles. Do not live as if you were working for wages and were earning your own salvation. Do not submit yourselves to the ritual and commandments of man which would rob you of your liberty in many ways. But having once become free men, never again wear the chain of a slave—‘Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.’ Because you are the seed of Isaac, who was born according to the promise, you are not the children of the bondwoman—you are not Ishmaelites—therefore, as you were born free, as Christ has made you free by virtue of your new birth, stand fast in that glorious liberty.”

2, 3. Behold I Paul say unto you, that if you are circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole Law. If you begin being saved by the Law, you must go through with it. You cannot take the principle of Law and the principle of Grace and blend those two together. They are like oil and water—they will never mix. If salvation is of works, it is not of Grace! And if it is of Grace, it is not of works! You cannot go upon the two contrary principles of merit and of favor.

4. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whoever of you are justified by the Law; you are fallen from Grace. You have turned aside from it. You are not standing with one foot upon Grace, and one foot upon the Law, but you have gone right away from Grace. You must cleave to one or the other. If you take the Law to be your hope, you must keep to it—and the end will be that you will die in despair.

5, 6. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by  
faith. [See Sermon #1228, Volume 21—SALVATION BY FAITH AND THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] For in Jesus  
Christ neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith  
which works by love. [See Sermons #1553, Volume 26—FAITH WORKING BY LOVE and #1750, Volume 29—THE LUTHER SERMON AT EXETER HALL—Read/download both sermons, free of

charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is not any rite and it is not the neglect of any rite which can produce righteousness. It is as easy to trust in your non-observance of a ceremony as to trust in the ceremony, itself, and it will be quite as delusive. It is faith in Christ that brings righteousness— the “faith which works by love.”

7. You did run well; who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth? “You Galatians seemed to receive the Gospel very readily and to be very earnest in obeying it. What has caused you to turn aside to the old legal righteousness? You are very changeable, very fickle. You seemed very energetic in running the Christian race—whatever has got in your way? ‘Who did hinder you?’ Somebody or other must have done so.”

8. This persuasion comes not from Him that calls you. “It does not come from God. He called you to faith in His dear Son and to all those virtues and Graces which naturally spring from the root of faith. Somebody else has called you aside, some false shepherd who is but a wolf in sheep’s clothing—and who would destroy you if he could.”

9. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. One false doctrine very soon sours all your belief—the whole lump is leavened with it. If you have a wrong ground of confidence, you are altogether wrong.

10. I have confidence in you through the Lord, that you will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubles you shall bear His judgment, whoever he is. Depend upon it, every man who troubles a Church with false doctrine is amenable to the High Court above! And, sooner or later, he may expect even a temporal judgment here below.

11. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offense of the Cross ceased. [See Sermon #2594, Volume 44—  
“THE OFFENSE OF THE CROSS”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] “The offense of the Cross” is that it sets up faith as the Infinite Merit of Christ’s Atonement and knocks down all confidence in outward ritual and ceremonies. Paul says that if he had preached the flesh-pleasing doctrines of men, he would not have been persecuted—and the fact that he was persecuted was a proof that he was standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free!

12. I would they were even cut themselves off which trouble you. Excommunicated and put out of the Church? No, it would be better if they were even dead rather than that they should live to spread such evil in a Christian Church! Sometimes when we think of the interests of immortal souls, we are apt to grow indignant, and rightly so, towards willfully false teachers!

13. For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only do not use liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. Do not let liberty become license. Do not say, “I may do this or that, and therefore I will do it because it pleases me.” You are not to do anything because it pleases you, but you are to do everything because it pleases God! When a man is no longer a slave to sin, or self, or Satan, let him begin to serve his brethren—“By love serve one another.”

14. For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The legal spirit is all for expansion—it multiplies its commands and lays down its ritual for this and that, and the other. But the Gospel spirit is all for condensation. It has condensed the whole Law into a single word, that is, “love.”

15. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you are not consumed by one another. This man finds fault. The other must have his own way. A third is for something quite new. A fourth is for nothing but what is antique. And so they fall to squabbling and quarrelling.

16. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Be obedient to that great principle of the Spirit which goes with the Doctrine of Grace and salvation by faith, and then you will not be obedient to that lusting of the flesh which is in you by nature.

17. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary, the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would. You are pulled about by two contrary forces—you are dragged downward by the flesh—and you are drawn upward by the Spirit.

18. But if you are led of the Spirit you are not under the Law. The Spirit never brings the soul into bondage! The terrors and the fears which come of legal slavery are not the work of the Spirit of God. Where He works, holiness is delight and the service of God is a continual joy. Oh, that we may be thus led of the Spirit!

19. Now the works of the flesh are manifest. They are clear, plain, selfcondemned.  
19-21. Which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, envying, murder, drunkenness, reveling and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Observe that the Gospel gives no toleration to sin. Some people tell us that the Doctrine of Faith is not practical, but they know better although they say that. They have only to observe those who are actuated by the principle of faith and they will find them abounding in good works—while the men who are swayed by the principle of Law talk a great deal about works, but have little enough of them in practice! The Gospel denounces sin, yes, and kills it! It gives us the force with which we fight against it and overcome it.  
22, 23. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, [See Sermons #1582, Volume 27—

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT—JOY and #1782, Volume 30—THE FIRST FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT— Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] peace, longsuf

fering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no Law. Either human or Divine—everybody is agreed that these things are all good.

24. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affection and lusts. Condemned it to die, nailed it up to the Cross and kept it in a dying, mortifying posture.

25. If we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit. If our spiritual life is the result of a Divine work, let our actions be in harmony with it— “If we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit.”

26. Let us not be desirous of vainglory. We call it glory, but it is vainglory. It is marred by vanity if it arises from anything done by us. Glory for you or for me because of anything that we can do is too absurd an idea to be entertained for a moment! “Let us not be desirous of vainglory”—

26. Provoking one another. For whenever a man is proud, and blustering, and vainglorious, he is sure to provoke somebody or other—and then they who are so provoked fall into another sin—the sin of—

26. Envying one another. O Brothers and Sisters, let us try to get over all this and reach out to that blessed state of love which will bring us peace and joy in the Holy Spirit!

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THE GAZELLES AND THE DEER  
NO. 1463A

WRITTEN AT MENTONE  
BY C. H. SPURGEON.  
“By the gazelles, and by the deer of the field.”  
Solomon’s Song 2:7.

THE spouse was in the full enjoyment of fellowship with her Beloved. Her joy was so great as almost to overpower her and yet so nearly does fear tread upon the heels of joy, she was filled with dread lest her bliss should come to an end. She feared lest others should disturb her Lord, for if He were grieved, she would be grieved, also, and if He departed, the banquet of her delight would be over. She was afraid even of her friends, the daughters of Jerusalem. She knew that the best can interrupt fellowship as well as the worst and, therefore, she entreated even Zion’s daughters not to sin against Zion’s King. Had they awakened her Beloved and broken His sacred peace, she would not have found a recompense in their company, but would rather have regarded them with scorn for having robbed her of her chief delight.

The entreaty which she used is a choice specimen of Oriental poetry— she charges them, not as we should prosaically do, by everything that is sacred and true—but “by the gazelles, and by the deer of the field.” So far as we understand her meaning we will endeavor to profit by it during our brief meditation. It touches one of the most mysterious points of the secret life of the Believer and we shall much need the guidance of the Holy Spirit while we endeavor to open up its meaning. “The gazelles and the deer of the field” are creatures of great BEAUTY. Who can gaze upon them as they wander among the ferns without an inward admiration?

Now, since nothing can be more lovely than communion with Jesus, the spouse exhorts the daughters of Jerusalem, by all the loveliest objects in Nature, to refrain from disturbing it. No one would wish to drive away the gazelle, but would feast his eyes upon it and yet its graceful elegance can never be compared with that beauty of holiness, that comeliness of Grace which is to be seen in fellowship with Jesus! It is beautiful from both sides! It is a lovely display of condescension for our beloved Lord to reveal Himself to us and, on the other hand, it is a charming manifestation of every admirable virtue for a Believer to enter into fellowship with his Lord. He who would disturb such mutual communion must be devoid of spiritual taste and blind to all which is most worthy of admiration.

As one delights to see the red deer in the open glades of the forest and counts them the finest ornaments of the scene, so do men whose eyes are opened rejoice in the saints whose high communion with Heaven renders them beings of superior mold to common mortals. A soul in communion with its God is the admiration of angels! Was ever a lovelier sight seen than Jesus at the table with the beloved disciple leaning on His bosom? Is not Mary sitting at our Master’s feet a picture worthy of the choicest art? Do nothing, then, O you who joy in things of beauty, to mar the fellowship in which the rarest beauty dwells! Neither by worldly care, nor sin, nor trifling, make even the slightest stir which might break the Beloved’s repose. His restful Presence is Heaven below and the best foretaste of Heaven above—in it we find everything that is pure, lovely and of good report. It is good and only good! Why, then, O daughters of Jerusalem, should you stir up our Beloved and cause His adorable excellence to be hidden from us? Rather join with us in preserving a joy so fair, a bliss so comely!

The next thought suggested by—“by the gazelles, and by the deer of the field”—is that of TENDER INNOCENCE. These gentle creatures are so harmless, so defenseless, so timid, that he must have a soulless soul who would do them harm or cause them fright. By all, then, that is tender, the spouse beseeches her friends not to disturb her Beloved. He is so good, so kind, so holy, harmless and undefiled that the most indifferent ought to be ashamed to molest His rest! About Him there is nothing to provoke offense and everything to forbid it. He is a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off His hair. He hid not His face from shame and spitting. Being reviled, He reviled not again, but in His death agonies He prayed for His enemies.

Who, then, could find cause for offense in Him? Do not His wounds ward off the blows which might be challenged had He been of another character? Who will wish to vex the Lamb of God? Go elsewhere, you hunters! “The Gazelle of the morning” has already sweat great drops of blood falling to the ground! When dogs compassed Him and the assembly of the wicked enclosed Him, He felt the full of grief—will you afflict Him again? In fellowship with Jesus there is a tenderness which ought to disarm all opposition and even command respectful deference! A soul communing with the Son of God challenges no enmity! The world may rise against proselyting zeal, or defiant controversy, or ostentatious ceremonialism—for these have prominence and power and are fair game for martial spirits—but fellowship is quiet, retiring, unobtrusive, harmless.

The saints who most abound in it are of a tender spirit, fearful to offend, non-resistant and patient—surely it would be a superfluity of cruelty to wish to deprive them of their unselfish happiness which deprives no hearer a drop of pleasure and costs no eye a tear! Rather let even those who are most indifferent to religion pay a generous respect to those who find their delight in it. Though the worldling may care nothing for the love which overpowers the Believer’s ravished spirit, let him tread with reverent care when he passes the closet of devotion, or hears a stray note from the song of meditative gratitude.

Rough men have paused when they have suddenly come upon a fair gazelle grazing in a secluded spot—they are so charmed at the sight of such tender loveliness, they have scarcely dared to move a foot lest they should alarm the gentle animal! And some such feeling may well forbid the harsh criticism or the vulgar laugh when even the infidel beholds a sincere heart in conversation with its Lord. As for those of us who know the blessedness of fellowship with Jesus, it behooves us to be doubly jealous of our words and deeds, lest in a single instance we offend one of the Redeemer’s little ones and cause him to lose, even for an hour, his delight in the Lord! How often are Christians careless about this, till at the sight of some professors the more spiritual may well take alarm and cry out in anguish, “I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and by the deer of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, till He pleases.”

A third thought most certainly had place in the mind of the anxious spouse. She meant to entreat and persuade her friends to silence by everything which sets forth LOVE. The lilies and the gazelles have always been sacred to love. The poet of the Canticles had elsewhere used the symbol of the text to set forth married love. “Let her be as the loving gazelle and pleasant doe” (Prov. 5:19). If ever there was true love in all this selfish world, it is the love of Jesus, first, and next the love of His people. As for His love, it passes the love of women—many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it. And as for the love of the Church, He who best knows it says, “How fair is your love, My Sister, My Spouse! How much better is your love than wine! And the smell of your ointment than all spices!”

If love, therefore, may plead immunity from war and ask to have its quietude respected, the spouse used a good argument when she pleaded, “by the gazelles and by the deer of the field,” that her royal Bridegroom’s rest of love might not be invaded. If you love, or are loved, or wish to be loved, have a reverent regard for those who commune with Jesus, for their souls take their fill of love—and to drive them from their bliss would be inexcusable barbarity! O you who have any hearts to feel for others, do not cause the bitterest sorrow by depriving a sanctified soul of the sweetest of delights! Draw not near here with idle tales, or wanton speech, or empty mirth—the place where you stand is holy ground—for surely God is in that place where a heart, enamored of the altogether Lovely One, delights itself in the Lord!

O that all Believers were so anxious to retain the enjoyment of Divine love that they would warn off every intruder, whoever he might be! The daughters of Jerusalem were welcome to visit the spouse at fitting times. She, on another occasion, bade them carry a message for her to her Beloved One and gave them a full description of His surpassing charms. But when her Lord was with her at the banquet, she only asked of them that they would not come between her and the sunshine of His Presence. Nor do we wonder at her jealous fear, for we have had a sip of those sweets which she had tasted and we would sooner lose all else than lose the luxury of Divine Love! It is such joy as cannot be imagined by those who have never partaken of it! It is such joy as can never be rivaled even in the Paradise above, if in that place there is any other joy than that which springs from Divine Love! Let none, then, deprive us of its continued enjoyment. By the sanctities of true love let every friendly mind assist us to preserve the hallowed quiet so essential to communion with our Lord.

Once more, upon the very surface of the figure lies the idea of delicate sensitiveness. The gazelles and the deer of the field soon disappear if anything disturbs them. In this respect they represent the speediness with which the Beloved departs when He is annoyed by sin. He is as a deer or

a young gazelle for this quality, among many others, that while He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills, He also soon withdraws Himself. The Lord our God is a jealous God. In proportion to the fire of love is the heat of jealousy and, therefore, our Lord Jesus will not brook a wandering affection in those greatly beloved ones to whom He manifests Himself.

It needs constant watchfulness to maintain constant fellowship. Hence the spouse entreats and beseeches those who came near her not to give offense to her Lord. They might do this unwittingly, hence she warns them. They might do it in wanton carelessness, hence she “charges” them. She would have them speak softly and move gently, lest He should be disturbed. Should we not feel the same anxiety that nothing in our families, or in any of our relations or connections should be tolerated by us so as to envelope us in the wrong and grieve our Lord? Should we not especially watch every thought of our mind, desire of our heart, word of our tongue and deed of our hand lest any of these should offend Him and break our rapturous communion?

If we would be favored above others we must be more on our guard than others are. He who becomes “a man greatly beloved” must keep his heart with sevenfold diligence, for to whom much is given, of him much will be required. Kings will bear from common subjects behavior which could not be endured in favorites. That which might cause but slight pain from an enemy, will sorely wound if it comes from a friend. Therefore the favored spouse may well use, in her entreaty, the name of the most tenderly susceptible of love’s favorites and plead, “by the gazelles, and by the deer of the field.”

Dear Friend, do you know what communion with Jesus means? If so, imitate the spouse whenever you are in the enjoyment of it. Be jealous of yourself and all around you, that the Well-Beloved may not be vexed. Aim at the maintenance of life-long communion. Remember how, for centuries, Enoch walked with God—our lives are but a span compared with his— why should we not always come up from the wilderness leaning on our Beloved? The Holy Spirit has almighty power. Let us ask and receive, that our joy may be full! If you do not understand this precious secret, may the Lord reveal it to you even now. You must first receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior, or you can never know Him as your Bridegroom. Faith must trust Him before love can embrace Him.

You must be brought to be washed, or you can never be brought to be banqueted. Pant after the Redeemer as the deer pants after the water brooks and when you have drank of the Water of Life, then shall you be as a gazelle let loose! Then, too, your feet shall be like deer’s’ feet and you shall be set upon your high places. When this shall have been made your own by experience, you shall understand the text and shall also breathe the prayer of another verse of the same song—“Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a gazelle or young stag upon the mountains of spices.”

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THE DEJECTED LOVER  
NO. 3485

[The original title of this sermon is THE DISCONSOLATE LOVER.]  
A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1915. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves: I sought Him, but I found Him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loves: I sought Him but I found Him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw you Him whom my soul loves? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves: I held Him, and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.” Song of Solomon 3:1-4.**

How exquisitely pleasant is communion with our Lord Jesus Christ! And how supremely favored are those who enjoy it! Holy Scripture exhausts every earthly figure to delineate its sacred charms, its ineffable delights! Yes, Inspiration, itself, exhausts its metaphors without compassing its mystery, because it is impossible for human language to express the sweetness of His Grace, or the solace of our acquaintance with Him. In just so much as it is sweet to know that fellowship, so is it sad not to know or to experience it. But alas, how frequently is this communion unfelt and unproved!

I. THE BRIDEGROOM WAS MISSED.  
In addressing this large assembly, I can but think a considerable number of the Lord’s people are in the condition of the spouse. You do not at present enjoy access to Christ, or sweet communion with Him. It may do you good to consider the things that remain to you, though this fellowship is suspended, for let it be remembered that it is not upon communion with Christ our life depends. Our salvation stands in the knowledge of Him, not in communion with Him. We are made safe by what He has done, not by what we feel. Not our enjoyments, but His sufferings we must lay as the solid foundation of our hope!  
There remains to us, dear Friends (for I confess to be sometimes in the same state)—though there are no privileged token of our love to Christ, nor any palpable enjoyment of His love to us—there remains at this hour the positive conviction and the open confession that we do love Him. Four times, I think, does this benighted spouse cry, “Him whom my soul loves.” She cannot see Him, but she cherishes a tender affection for Him.

She does not enjoy His Presence just now, but her heart cleaves to Him and appreciates His excellence. What though she may have been idle and slothful, or though her spirit may be heavy and hazy, one thing she knows—she does love her Lord—about that there can be no mistake! Publicly in the streets, in the hearing of the watchmen, before the ministers and messengers of the Gospel, she does not blush to say, “Him whom my soul loves.” So it was with Peter. When he had much to regret, much to reprove himself for, he could say, “Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You.” In like manner can you not vouch for your sincerity when there is reason enough to challenge your propriety? You feel guilty of a carelessness or a cowardice that might reflect on your gratitude, but you cannot admit a wantonness or a willfulness that could extinguish your love! My faithless heart, you would gladly tell Him, has merited Your rebuke, but Your infinite discernment can bear witness to the kindling of my desires. Do not believe my actions, but believe my inmost soul! Judge me not by the utterances of my recant lips, rather look upon the throbbing of my penitent heart. You, O Jesus Christ, are He whom my soul loves!

Though the spouse does not just now enjoy communion with Christ, she knows its sweetness and she feels uneasy until she partakes of it again. As the needle cannot stop until it points to the pole, so she trembles until her soul rests in personal communion with Jesus! Next best to present fellowship is to hunger and thirst after it. And you note, too, in this case and all the cases of every true Believer in Jesus, not only is love constant and desire after Christ earnest, but there remains sufficient strength to resolutely seek for Him. You may not as yet have your desire accomplished, yet your heart is buoyed up with hope and you are saying, “I must seek Him.” You are not like the traveler across the desert who at last loses all heart, gives up all effort and perishes on the sand for lack of water. No, you feel an inward impulse stronger than any outward discouragements and, though faint, you are still pursuing! What if you have sought Him and not found Him? Yet will you seek Him again till you do find Him, for Divine Grace stimulates you and urges you forward. As the spark flies upwards towards the sun, so the newborn nature of the Christian seeks and soars after Christ. It is not simply unhappy without Him, but it is restless and resolute to discover Him! It would break through every law of Nature to establish this Law of Grace. The new nature seeks the source from which it came—it pines and pants to meet with Him and talk to Him in whom are all its life, strength and joy!

Do you not feel this desire after Jesus, though you are complaining of dullness, deadness and worldliness? Is there not some such indescribable yearning in your breast for a communion which you well understand, but do not now enjoy? I know not how you lost the fellowship, my Brother, which you so grievously miss. There are many ways in which this may come about. You and I often lose the sweetness of communion with Christ, I doubt not, through unbelief. We think so lightly of unbelief, as though it were an infirmity and not a sin, whereas of all evils, it is the chief! What can be more displeasing to the tender heart of Jesus than ungenerous thoughts concerning Him? When last you were repining and reflecting that He had forgotten you, you quickly lost that hallowed calm and that sweet confidence which you knew before. Could you wonder at it? How could He walk with you while you were casting into His ear a foul suspicion against His truthfulness and His love? Faith is the hand which holds the Savior and will not let Him go! Unbelief opens the door and bids Him go. How shall He tarry when we will not believe in Him? Do you tell Him to His face that He is not true and trustworthy, yet expect to lean your head upon His bosom? How can you expect this? Perhaps, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you have been too busy with the world, and yet I know some with their hands full of business, and their heads full of enterprise, who have constant communion with Christ! But perhaps you have let the world steal in upon your heart. All the water in the sea, as I have often told you, does not frighten the mariner, but that little drop of water in the hold, which betokens a leak in the ship, gives him great distress! You might have an empire to govern and yet never lose fellowship with Jesus, but with nothing more than your little family to manage, you may lose Him if you let the cravings and the covetousness of the world, its fashions or its ambitions, get inside your heart! Keep that chamber clear for Christ. Let your heart be the marriage bed and keep it chaste for Him who is your Husband and your Lord! Or possibly, dear Brothers and Sisters, you have been negligent in the use of private prayer—and what can shut the windows through which Jesus looks as soon as laxness or slackness in supplication? Unless you are much upon your knees, you cannot expect to have your head much upon His bosom! The appointed place of audience is the Mercy Seat. If you refuse to resort there, how can you look for Christ to grant you another audience chamber? Is it reasonable that He should alter His fixed institutions to suit your foolish negligence? Go then, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you would renew your fellowship, go again to your closet and there pray unto the Lord your God, and make your supplication unto Him!

In many other ways the Christian may lose his fellowship with Christ . Especially by the indulgence of some known sin, by harboring resentment or cherishing a bitter spirit against a Brother, by shutting the eye to some Gospel Truth, by dissembling convictions in deference to the company you keep or the society in which you move, by not coming out from the world, or mingling too much with the ungodly. It may suffice to refer to these evils without enlarging upon them. When you miss the fellowship, there is little comfort in accounting for the way you lost it! Your heart is rather craving its restoration. “Tell me how I may find Him whom my soul loves, for I desire to renew my fellowship with Him.”

Come then, Beloved, with hearts humbled on account of past sin, and yet encouraged with the assurance that He who received us at the first is willing to receive us still—let us go to Him anew. We were all over foul and vile then. If we are the same, now, we will return unto Him—if it is in a bad a plight, yet let it be with as good a plea! Come to Jesus, as once you did come to Him, though, perhaps, you have known the Master lo, these many years! The same words will suit your case—

*“Just as I am without one plea,  
But that Your blood was shed for me,  
And that You bid me come to Thee,  
Oh, Lamb of God, I come.”*

While our text conducts us onward to the successful restoration of communion, it glances also at—  
II. UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS TO FIND THE BELOVED ONE.  
Of how many of us might it be said that with a lazy attitude and a listless wish, we have yawned after a gift for which we might have vehemently yearned. “By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves.” As it were on her bed of sloth and idleness, she dreamed of a happiness she was far from enjoying. But we shall never get the privilege of close communion with Christ by merely wishing for it! What though now and then, with a hectic flush upon our cheeks, we exclaim, “Would to God I were like Christ! Oh that I lived nearer to Him! I am not satisfied with what I know—I desire to know more!” This is no symptom of health. Does the idler ever prosper? He who lies in bed and will not sow by reason of the cold, where is his harvest? What pearls come into the hands of the merchantman who says, “A little more sleep and a little more slumber”? And do you think the pearl of pearls, the pearl wherewith none other in the universe can compare, the highest privilege which the Eternal King ever bestowed on His own courtiers—do you think that this, the most distinguished favor He ever confers upon the darlings of His heart, this intimate fellowship with Jesus—do you think He will communicate that to you while you are tossing on your bed in indolence which is the bane of virtue and the nurse of folly? It was not because she sought Him by night that she did not find Him, for Jesus is often found by His people in the dark. When no rays of light, no gleams of comfort can steal over our senses, still if we seek Jesus with our whole heart, though to our own apprehension we grope about like blind men, we shall find Him, to the joy of our spirits! It was not the night that prevented her finding Him—it was the bed—her laziness, her lethargy and her sloth. Shake yourself from the dust and believe!—  
*“Avoid the idle life!  
Flee, flee from doing naught!  
For never was there idle brain  
But bred an idle thought.”*  
No longer to the insidious temptation which is so apt to beset us all. The Lord deliver us from the lukewarmness of the Church of Laodicea, lest He should spew us out of His mouth! When she sought Him thus, she could not find Him. No marvel, you will think, for your own experience has taught you that such disappointment is the invariable rule.  
With no better success did she seek Him when afterwards she went about in a self-sufficient spirit. I may be wrong in my conjecture, but to me the words, “I will rise, now,” sound a little like dependence upon her own exertions. “I will rise, now,” has not half so grateful a ring about it, nor is it half so graceful, as, “Draw me, we will run after You.” This confiding rather than that confidence seems to be the impression which becomes the saint when cold and crushed, he keenly feels how desolate he is. Arise, did I say, shake off dull sloth? Ah, then ‘tis easier said than done! “Awake, my soul,” is a poor invocation compared with, “Oh, Sun of Righteousness, arise!” Or, “Make haste, my Beloved,” or “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” Beware, my Brothers and Sisters, of seeking after Christ in a legal spirit. Beware of going to Calvary as though you were going to Sinai. In coming to Christ, no merit of your own can recommend you—so in longing for Him to appear to you again, no strivings of your own can avail you. Let His rich Grace be your poor plea! Your best way of suing is to say—  
*“Oh, for this no strength have I,  
My strength is at Your feet to lie.”*  
Once again, in trusting in the scrupulous using of the means, the bride seems to have thoroughly relied upon attaining her end. Lest I should seem too censorious of her conduct, allow me to say that my criticism of the text is bent on taking and applying the rebukes to ourselves. Do you not notice, however, how sure she seems of finding Him if she goes about the city in the streets and in the broadways and if she meets the watchmen and inquires of them? But it does not appear that the fitness of the places to seek, or the persons to enquire of, were of much use. She went down one street and another, as we may resort to the street of private prayer, a narrow and little-frequented way, and she said, “I shall find Him there.” But after she had walked through it, she said, “He is not here. My chamber is not a palace as it used to be. No more is it the privy closet of the King of Kings, the audience chamber royal” So she saw a wider way, and she said, “I will walk down here,” as we may go to the Prayer Meeting. “What blessed hours I have often enjoyed there,” she said. “I shall find Him in that highway, I feel sure,” but after traversing all its length she said—  
*“I go where others go, but find not Jesus there.”*then she quotes, “I will go into the broad places where the preaching of the Gospel is to be heard. I will go with the throng where God speaks through His servants,” but service after service, and sermon after sermon were like clouds without rain, and wells without water! Others were refreshed, but she, trusting in the means, came away without a blessing. So, Brothers and Sisters, you may traverse every street in the city, you may even come to that street paved with gold—the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper—or you may go down Water Street, where in the ordinance of Baptism, the Lord often reveals His death and burial unto His people, but after having traversed both these streets you shall be compelled to say, “Though I love the means, they are a weariness to me when Jesus is not revealed to me in them.”  
What a difference there is between our preaching at one time and our preaching at another! How often do I bless God in the evening for that which I groaned over in the morning, when my spirit has been bowed, my tongue tied, and I could not preach as I would! It is a grand thing for the minister to be humbled in the sight of his hearers, when you discern that it is not the man in whom the power is vested, but it is his God whose might you cannot resist! My fear often is that your smiles may provoke His frowns and He may withhold His blessing from me because you attribute to some genius of mine an influence which His Spirit, alone, could exert. When I was only a lad, a stripling fresh from the country, you said when there were conversions, “How God helps him!” I am jealous of you, now, lest you should not say the same thing! God will take away His blessing when you refrain from offering Him the praise! If you once ascribe what is done in any degree whatever to the creature, or to any power that he has, you will excite the jealousy of his Lord! Remember the lessons that the spouse was taught. Means and ordinances are just what God likes to make them. Even Divine institutions are beggarly elements when He forsakes them. They can be nothing better than matters of duty and they may be very far from being matters of privilege. When He wills it, He can make His ministers do exploits. The least of all His servants shall be mighty as David was when He slew the giant, Goliath, with only the sling and stone. We are nothing of ourselves. The hand that moves the instrument is everything. If you would come to Christ, or seek after Christ, looking too much to the means, you will have to return again with the mournful cry, “I sought Him, but I found Him not.” Such, then, are the unsuccessful efforts to regain communion with Christ.  
III. WE FIND THE SUCCESSFUL HERE SET SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE UNSUCCESSFUL.  
We shall now hold her up as an example which you will do well to imitate. With what constancy she sought this communion! She began at the dead of night, as indeed it is never too late to seek renewed fellowship. Yet she sought on. The streets were lonely and it was a strange place for a woman to be at such a strange time, but she was too earnest in seeking to be abashed by such circumstances. The watchmen met her, and they were astonished, as well they might, how she came to be there at that hour. But she sought on—she would never rest until she had found Him. Believer, if you would have fellowship with Christ, you must be in continual quest after it! Your soul must get a craving for the one thing, and that such a craving as nothing but that one thing can satisfy. I would my own soul were like Anacreon’s harp, only in a better sense. You know he said, though he wished to sing of Cadmus, his harp would sing of love, alone. Oh, that we might sing of the love of Jesus and of His love, alone! Then it would not be long before our fellowship with Him would be renewed!  
And as she sought Jesus continually, she neglected no means that seemed, to her, right and promising. Though I have warned you against trusting in what are called the means of Grace, I had not the slightest intention of undervaluing, much less of disclaiming them. We cannot rationally expect the Lord to reveal Himself other than in the way of His own appointment. He may sometimes do so and He likes to surprise us with His Grace, but we have no right to expect it. Abraham’s servant followed closely his master’s injunctions. And when he blessed the Lord God of his master, Abraham, who had not left his master destitute of His mercy and His truth, he testified, “I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master’s brethren.” It is in the way appointed that God does most commonly deign to meet with us! I do not expect that those of you who every time there is half a shower of rain, stay at home, will be very well fed, nor those of you who neglect the Monday Prayer Meeting on any trivial excuse! There are a goodly number of you who do so—you cannot expect that you will grow in Grace if you forsake the assembling of yourselves together. Those of you who when the brethren join together in earnest prayer, cannot be present, must not marvel, if, like Thomas, you are not there when Jesus appears. You have good cause to be full of doubts and fears when your fellow disciples are full of joy and love. Use the means! Use all the means, I entreat you. Who knows how great and rich a blessing, obedience in even the least of the Lord’s commands may bring to our souls! It is a blessed thing to walk tenderly and scrupulously observe the statutes of the Lord—to be afraid of leaving anything undone which is commanded, or of doing anything that is forbidden—lest in the omission or the commission we should by some means or other vex a jealous God and provoke Him to keep back from us much that we might have enjoyed through the means of His own appointment!  
But the chief beauty of the whole story is that the spouse did not stop with the means of Grace. She had applied to the watchmen on the walls, but better still for her, the watchmen had found her. The expression is remarkable, because it is expressive of much that we have often proven. You know, sometimes, what it is to be found by the watchmen on the walls. You come here with a trouble of which nobody knows anything and the watchman discovers you. In the description of your case he finds you. It often happens that the very thing you were talking of by the way, the watchman relates to you. You perceive that you cannot hide. How strange it seems to you! Is not this a token of the Father’s love that He guides the watchman to discover you in your midnight wanderings where you are unknown to any but your God, and thought you would be unrecognized by anyone? Yes, but even then you know, I hope, how to pass by the watchman. She asked, “Saw you Him, whom my soul loves?” Why did they not answer? Perhaps because they were blind and never did see themselves. Alas, that some watchmen on the walls have need to watch for their own souls rather than for the souls of others! Still, not the best of the watchmen there could console her with a smile of Jesus’ face. We can tell you what we have felt and proved of His love. We can, sometimes, when the Lord helps us, tell you how His people are ravished with His smiles, but a smile of His face, it is for Himself to give—and none but Himself can bestow it! It were not possible for Him to send that secondhand. You must go directly to Him. Yet see what honor God puts upon His servants, because she says it was but a little after she passed them— you must go beyond the minister a little, but a little! The Lord helps His servants to bring you to the verge of fellowship. We know it is all of the Lord, unto Him be all the glory! Still, He chooses, in the use of means, to make it but a little between the earnest, spiritual exercise of outward means and the supply of the inward spiritual Grace! “It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves.”  
Thus far, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, have I led you. Now I want you to go a little further. Away beyond the Church, away in advance of the bread and wine spread out for our mutual repast, a little beyond all these. It is not these that will satisfy your craving. A feast of bread and wine would never gratify this longing of your spirit! You need Jesus! The minister cannot satisfy you—you need Jesus! You have got to this point of desire—you need Christ and nothing but Christ! Go on then, dear Brothers and Sisters, and to attain your objective I can propose nothing better than the simple method I proposed to you just now. Go to Him as you did at first! Forget the past, except to remember with penitence your sin and to anticipate in the future, the Grace that welcomed you as a stranger. You know the love and mercy that are in His heart—unworthy as you are, cast yourself at His feet—and you may have the love of your espousals given back to you! You may once again cross the Jordan of doubt and fear, and enter into the Canaan of your blessed inheritance, enjoying rapt and rich fellowship with Him!  
If you do see Him, be sure you lay hold of Him. He Himself loves to be embraced. Let your love lay hold of His love, for His love is laying hold of you! Hold Him fast. Dismiss all ungrateful thoughts, for they will fill your hands so that you cannot hold Him. Divest yourself of all cares for a while and now, with an empty hand, just lay hold of His righteousness and strength!  
And when you get the Gift you long for, I charge you tell your brothers and sisters! Bring Him to your mother’s house. There are some in your mother’s house sorely sick with weary apprehensions and dreary misgivings—tell them that you have seen your Beloved! It will cheer their spirits. Tell them the same news that made good old Jacob’s eyes overflow with tears of joy! Tell them Jesus is still alive! Tell them that Jesus yet sits upon the Throne of God! Tell them that He is still full of love to His chosen ones—and I think their desponding souls will straightaway revive and they, with you, will feast on Free Grace and dying love!  
Well, dear Friends, I shall occupy no more time in talking to you, for we need to devote the rest of our time at the Communion Table, to calm and quiet musings. I have conducted you as far as I can. Surely there is no need to excite Christians to that which is sweet to them! Yet I beseech you let no sense of unworthiness keep you back, for you always were unworthy! As such Christ loved you at first. Neither let any consciousness of backsliding keep you back. “As a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so do you depart from Me,” says the Lord by the mouth of His servant. And yet He says, “Return, return.” I do not know of any figure more striking! None that involves more bitter reproach, yet for all that, He bids her come back! Though you are thus guilty, and have been unfaithful to your loving Husband, still He bids you come back, and assures you of a welcome! That hymn may suit the backsliders as well as the unconverted sinners—  
*“Let not conscience make you linger,  
Nor of fitness fondly dream.”*  
Oh, how sad it makes my heart when I think of some of you to whom this is all an idle tale! All this discourse is arrant nonsense in the judgment of some of you. Our faith must seem to you strangely credulous. Our views must seem to you altogether visionary! Howbeit, there is a land that you have never seen, a life that you have never felt, a truth that has never dawned on your understanding. These things that are so real to us are strange to you—still, it is more strange and more strangely sad to me that you should be without God, without Christ, without hope in the world! We are pleased to greet you in this sanctuary, though we can well imagine that the sight and sound are foreign to you as would be the other side of a sea you have never crossed. You may be led to ask, “What is it? What does it mean? Is there another and a better life? Are there other and brighter joys than we have ever tasted? Do these Christians have comforts that I know not of? Have they a love which I have not? I would I knew the same!”  
Ah! thoughtless, heedless sinner! Be you a high caste or a low caste sinner, know this, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, bled on the Cross and died for such as you are! Whoever believes in Him shall never perish, but have everlasting life. Trust in Him and you are saved! This is the love which won our hearts. Oh, may it win yours! The things of which we have been speaking do but spring from that simple fact that He loved us and gave Himself for us. The way in which we learned the mystery of His love is as open to you as it was to us. This was the way. We put our trust in Him. We knew we were not worthy of Him, but we did trust Him. Through His Grace we did, without introduction or preparation, draw near to Him and cast ourselves on His mercy. May you do the same! Let there not be an hour’s delay, for the days are flying—the years are flying. Your grave is very close—within a few days you may be carried there. Fly at once to Him who bids you trust Him! God help you to do this, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **1 PETER 2.**

Verses 1, 2. Therefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking. As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby. Have we not constantly declared that our faith, if true, is always practical? Here, again, we have the precepts of God’s Word. Here we are told that there is much for us to lay aside, as if it were natural to us in every case, and must, therefore, be carefully laid aside. “Malice”—we are all inclined to return evil for evil—the Christian must not do so. “All guile”—everything like craft and cunning—this is unbecoming in a Christian. “Hypocrisy”— seeming to be what we are not—all sorts of mere seeming we must lay aside. “And envy”—how easy it is for us to envy one man his wealth, or another his health, or another his talents—but “all envy” the Christian must have done with! “And evil speaking”—it is painful to reflect how much of evil speaking there is among persons who we still hope are good people. They are very fond of repeating stories to the disadvantage of their fellow Christians. Now, whether you are the author of it or not, do not be the retailer of it, for we are here told to lay aside all evil speaking. But then the religion of Jesus Christ does not consist in negatives! It is not merely what we are to lay aside—there is something to be taken up. We are told that as we are born-again, we are to consider ourselves as newborn babes, and are to desire the unadulterated milk of God’s Word, that we may grow thereby. It is not enough to be alive—we should desire to grow. To be saved is a great blessing—we ought not, however, to be contented with being barely saved—we should seek after the Graces of the Spirit and the excellent work of God within us.

3. If so you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Have you tasted this? Oh, search yourselves and see, and if you have, then prove it by the laying aside of the evil, and the thirsting after the good!

4, 5. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The priesthood among Believers does not belong to here and there, one, but to the whole company of Believers. As many as love the Savior are priests and kings unto God—and they should regard their whole life as the exercise of this priesthood. When we assert that no place is holy above another, we do not thereby desecrate any place, but rather consecrate all places. We believe every day to be holy, every hour to be holy, every place and occupation to be holy to holy men, and we should so live as to evermore exercise this consecrated priesthood.

6-8. Therefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, who believe, He is precious: but unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. Of whom we can only say, with Augustine, “Oh, the depth,” and leave that mystery to be explained to us hereafter.

9, 10. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. How good it is to look back to the hole of the pit whence we were dug! What if today the Sovereign Grace of God has made us royal priests, yet let us remember that in past times we were not a people, “But are now the people of God.” “Which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” Yes, I think no exercise will be more profitable by way of expressing our gratitude than the remembering what we used to be before the hand of God was laid upon us in love! For if all of us did not run to an excess of riot in our outward lives, yet some of us did. And others who were kept from gross outward sins had, nevertheless, a very sink of corruption within our nature. We felt that when the Spirit of God convinced us of sin we could truly say—

*“Depths of mercy, could there be,  
Mercy yet reserved for me?”*

And having obtained mercy, we will never cease to bless the name of God!  
11-14. Dearly Beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. Christians should be good citizens. Though in one respect they are not citizens of this world, yet as they find themselves in it, they should seek the good of those among whom they dwell and be patterns of order.  
15-17. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Even if they are beggars, they are men—honor them. There is God’s image, though marred and defiled, in every man—and because he is a man, honor him—pity him. Look down upon him never with contempt, but always feel that there is an immortal spark, even within that mass of filth. If the man is cast into all manner of beggary and wickedness, “Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King.” The same verse that says, “Honor the King,” however, says, “Honor all men,” and while we, therefore, have due respect to rank, yet a man is a man for all that, and we must “Honor all men.”  
18-20. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. I have known some that could not do that, however. If they were only spoken to very gently, they were immediately in a tiff. “But if, when you do well, you bear it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” Here is something more than human nature can bear. Now Grace comes in to help. “This is acceptable with God.”  
21. For even hereunto were you called. Called, you see, to be buffeted when you don’t deserve it.  
21-23. Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. Herein is he a pattern of patience to all His people.  
24-25. Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness. By whose stripes you were healed, for you were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. [The original title of this sermon is THE DISCONSOLATE LOVER.]  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1134 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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PAVED WITH LOVE  
NO. 1134

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 28, 1873, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.” Song of Solomon 3:10.**

THIS portion of the Song describes the royal bridegroom as traveling up from the wilderness in an eastern palanquin, attended by his bodyguard and by those who bear torches and burn perfumes. We have a description of the sumptuous chariot-bed in which this great monarch traveled, describing it as being made of cedar, with pillars of silver, a bottom of gold, curtains of purple, and within it a patterned floor, with pavement, not of precious stones, but of priceless love. Metaphor is suddenly dropped in this last item and the result is a complicated, but very expressive form of speech. Some regard the expression as signifying a pavement of stone, engraved with hieroglyphic emblems of love which made up the floor of this traveling chariot. But this would surely be very uncomfortable and unusual, and therefore others have explained the passage as referring to choice embroidery and dainty carpets, woven with cost and care, with which the interior of the traveling chair was lined.

Into such embroidery sentences of love poetry may have been worked. Needlework was probably the material of which it was composed—skillful fingers would therein set forth emblems and symbols of love. As the spouse in the second chapter sings, “His banner over me was love,” probably alluding to some love word upon the banner, probably tokens of love were carved or embroidered, as the case may have been, upon the interior of the chariot, so that “the midst thereof was paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.” We need not, however, tarry long over the metaphor, but endeavor to profit by its teaching.

This palanquin or traveling chariot in which the king is carried represents the Covenant of Grace, the plan of salvation and, in fact, the whole system by which the Lord Jesus comes down in mercy among men, and by which He bears His people along with Himself through the wilderness of this world, onward to the rest which He has prepared for them. It is, in a word, the mediatorial work of Jesus. The ark was carried through the wilderness preceded by the pillar of cloud and fire, as the symbol of the Divine Presence in mercy, and here we have a somewhat similar representation of the great King of Grace, borne in regal splendor through the world and bearing His elect spouse with Him.

May it be ours to be made to ride like Jeshurun, upon the high places of the earth in happy fellowship with Him whose goings forth were of old, even from everlasting.  
I. I shall beg you to notice, first, this morning, THE GROWTH WHICH

IS INDICATED HERE AS TO OUR VIEWS OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE. The description advances step by step, each sentence mentioning an additional and far-enhanced preciousness. Thus do those who study the work of salvation prize it more and more. At the first glance the sweet singer who speaks in this song perceived that the chariot was made of cedar, a costly wood. A closer view revealed “the silver pillars, beauteous to behold.” Further observation showed “the bottom all of burnished gold.” From cedar to silver, and from silver to gold we have a clear advance as to precious material.

On looking again, the observer remarks “the top of princely purple,” which is yet more precious as the type of imperial dignity and the token of that effectual Atonement which was worked out by the bloody stream of Calvary. The blood, which dyed that purple canopy, is much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire. And then, though one would think there could be no advance beyond the precious blood, the song proceeds yet one step further, for we find that “the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.” Beloved, the whole way of salvation was devised by the Lord Jesus Christ! It is all His own planning and all His own carrying out. Therefore the Song says, “King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.”

Jesus is the sole Author and Finisher of our faith—salvation is His from first to last—every part of the Covenant reveals His master hand. This is the glory of the whole and this, the believing eye perceives at the very first glance, and is thereby made glad. But further knowledge reveals other bright and glorious facts. And as the matter is considered, wonder and gratitude increase. Let us, then, take a brief survey of this glorious Gospel chariot, that wondrous thing—Jehovah’s Covenant of Grace.

The first item is that it is made of “the wood of Lebanon.” The finest wood upon the earth was that of the cedar, and the finest cedars were those which grew upon the Lebanon range. The Lebanon cedars, indeed, appear to have possessed qualities not found in the common cedar with which we are acquainted. That which was reckoned the best wood is used as the token of the super excellence of the Covenant of Grace. Cedar, moreover, was not only the most costly wood, and most esteemed, but it is one of the most lasting. London says that it is particularly valued for its durability—fit type of that “Covenant ordered in all things and sure,” of which not one jot or tittle shall ever fail. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Word on which we trust shall abide forever.

In addition to its other excellencies, cedar wood exhales a sweet perfume, so that a chariot of cedar would not only be very lasting but very delightful to ride in, even as at this day we joy in God’s salvation and are filled with peace through believing. When we look at the Covenant of Salvation, at the very first glimpse of it we see that there is none like it. Many schemes have been imagined and preached up as ways of salvation, but not one of them can be likened to the method of Atonement by blood, reconciliation through a substitutionary Sacrifice, redemption by the Incarnate God—salvation all of Grace from first to last!

When this is compared to a chariot, no timber less noble than the sweet-scented fir, cut from the monarch of Israel’s royal forest, could worthily set it forth. Lies and vanity make up all other plans, but this is royal Truth. Other ways of salvation have been tried, but they have soon proved to be failures. The worm of human depravity has eaten into the choicest wood that was ever felled in the forests of human merit. Decay has seized upon all the goodly oaks of unaided human endeavors. Rottenness has devoured all carnal boasts, but the cedar wood of our hope in Jesus has shown no sign of crumbling to decay and it never will. There is, in the Atonement made by Christ, a perpetuity of prevalence. It has paid for sin and will pay to the very end of time, so that whoever confides in it has a hope which will not deceive him.

I dare await the test of a long and afflicted life, or of a sudden and painful death—for the ground of my hope is undisturbed by outward circumstances. Like the cedar, it is adapted to abide all weathers. As surely as the Body of the Lord saw no corruption, so surely shall my hope never turn to despair—and even if it is buried it shall rise again. What consolation such a hope affords us! And for this reason, as perfume comes forth from cedar wood, so do fragrant comforts come pouring forth from the salvation which Jesus Christ has worked out for us. It is a pleasant, as well as a safe thing, to rest in what Christ has done. Our joy is greatest when our faith in Him is most simple—the bare cedar wood is most fragrant. We derive from every part of His work some joy, every part of it smells most sweetly. He is all happiness, all consolation, all bliss to us—and when our spirit casts itself in perfect simplicity upon Him it breathes a perfumed atmosphere, delicious and reviving.

If such is the first and lowest item in the description of the chariot, what will the richer portions be? We will now look more closely at the royal chariot and note well the four pillars which support the canopy. And as we gaze we find that they are of’ silver—something more precious than cedar, for the salvation of Jesus grows upon us and unto us, who believe, He is more and more precious. There are some pictures so well painted that you may examine them with a magnifying glass and instead of detecting defects you will perceive yet greater beauties—so may you examine the work of our blessed Lord microscopically, if you choose, and the more you look the more you will marvel! He is so really glorious, so intrinsically precious, so infinitely to be admired!

And what are these pillars, do you think, which support the canopy and add such beauty to the chariot? What are they but Divine holiness and infinite purity? Silver is constantly used in Scripture as the type of that which is precious and pure—“As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” And O Beloved, how holy the Gospel is! The Lord’s Word is very pure in itself, and very purifying for those who receive it. Wherever the true Gospel is preached it promotes holiness and in so doing acts according to its nature, creating its like. There is not a doctrine of the

Gospel which is not according to godliness, none of its blessings make provision for the flesh, none of its precepts encourage sin, none of its promises wink at iniquity.

The spirit of the Gospel is always the spirit of holiness. It wages determined war against the lusts of the flesh and consequently the Gospel is abhorred by the unclean. It lays the axe at the root of sin and like a fire devours all evil. As for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, is He not Immaculate Holiness? If you would see Holiness embodied, where can you look but to the Person of our Well-Beloved Master? Where are His imperfections? Can you find a flaw either in His language or in His actions, in Himself or in the Spirit that moved Him? Is He not altogether perfect? Look, then, at the Gospel, the way of salvation and the Covenant of Grace, and you shall see holiness conspicuous everywhere, but especially when you come to deal with the center of the Gospel, the great atoning Sacrifice.

Four silver pillars hold up this crimson canopy. The blood-red Propitiation covers us from the wrath of God, and the holiness of God holds up this interposing medium. He is not unrighteous to forget the blood of the Atonement. Because He is a just God, He is now the Savior of those who are sheltered beneath the reconciling blood of Calvary. The Lord could not forgive sin till first the honor of His Law had been vindicated. And that being done, the same honor requires that the Atonement should be respected and the believing sinner saved. When we see Christ upon the Cross we learn how God’s inflexible Justice, like unbending pillars of pure silver, holds up aloft the crimson shelter of vicarious death, beneath which the saints are secure.

Even to save His own elect, Jehovah would not mar His integrity, nor suffer His Great White Throne to be stained with injustice. He is no respecter of persons and when sitting on the Throne of Judgment, even His own chosen, whom He loves with everlasting love, must be treated with the same impartiality as His enemies. This He has effected by accepting His Son in their place and exacting from Him those penalties which were due from them, but might be justly received at the hands of their federal Head. There is no injustice in the salvation of the Believer. There is not even an abatement of the claims of just retribution—all is done openly— and so as to challenge the most severe examination. Conspicuously before the eyes of all, the silver pillars of purity bear up the sacred Atonement. Is not this a matter for superlative delight?

But we look more closely and discern what would not have been perceived at a distance—“the bottom” of the chariot bed “is of gold”—the most precious metal of all. This is to indicate that the foundations of salvation are imperishable and unchangeably precious. The bottom of Grace is laid in the Immutable purpose and unchanging decree of God—and in the everlasting, undiminished, unchangeable love of God towards His dear Son—and to those who are in Him. Blessed be God for a salvation which will not yield under pressure, or fail us in our hour of peril! It is no base metal, but gold tried in the fire. I cannot understand those who think that God loves His people one day and hates them the next! That though He knew what they would be, and knew that they would fall into sin, yet He resolved to take them to Himself as His children for a little while, and then afterwards to disinherit them.

God forbid I should ever understand a doctrine so dishonoring to the Lord who changes not! My own love to my children makes me feel that they must be my children as long as they live and I live. And surely God’s children must and shall be His children while God Himself shall live and His people shall exist. Beloved, the bottom on which we rest as saved sinners is not the shifting foundation of our own feelings, works, prayers or resolves. If our salvation depended upon our good behavior, we might as well build on the clouds and pile up bubbles as our cornerstones! Yes, and if it rested upon our own unaided faith—if there were no guarantee of Grace to keep that faith alive, but all rested on the exercise of faith by us—it were better never to have had a hope of salvation, at all, than to have had such a wretched, unsubstantial mockery—certain to end before long in fatal disappointment.

You and I have not so learned Christ. We have left the miry clay for the solid rock. God has made an eternal purpose concerning His people and that will never be changed. Infinite Love ordained their salvation and will never reverse its decree, though day and night should cease. Infinite power guarantees the fulfillment of the Divine purpose and what can stand against Omnipotence? A complete Atonement has already been made and it will never lose its efficacy—therefore those for whom it was worked out must be saved.

There is, moreover, an indwelling Spirit who has come into God’s people to abide with them forever, according to the Covenant promise, “I will dwell in them, and I will walk in them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Our spiritual life does not hang on a thread, as it would do if it were in our own keeping, but it depends upon Jesus, for has He not said, “Because I live you shall live also”? Nothing can be more secure than the salvation of the soul that believes in Jesus, for it rests in God alone. Of the chariot of salvation we may say with quaint Ralph Erskine—

*“Its bottom is a groundwork sure  
Of pure and solid gold,  
From bankrupt beggary to secure,  
From falling through to uphold.”*

Let us view the royal canopy of the chariot—“the covering thereof is of purple.” As the king and his bride traveled they needed to be screened from the sun’s baleful rays. Lo, over the head of the spouse hangs a regal covering of purple. Look up, my Soul, and see what interposes between your God and you! He must smite you, for you are a sinner. But you are covered and sheltered, and are living happily. What is it that shields you? What, indeed, but the atoning blood!—

*“Ah, who can view that purple covering  
And turn away unmoved, insensible?  
Who can discern it, and forget that day  
When impious greetings shouted forth disdain, When, crowned with thorns, the Man of sorrows stood In purple robes of cruel mockery?  
Despised, rejected, yet a King indeed,*

*Whom they shall see hereafter on His Throne.”*The Atonement shelters us—never was a soul injured by the rays of God’s Justice when hidden beneath this purple—and never shall there be. There is no repose for the conscience anywhere else, but there is perfect repose here.

I often hear theories about what Christ did which remind me of Dr. Duncan’s description of Robertson, of Brighton—“Robertson believed that Christ did something or other, which somehow or other had some connection or other with salvation.” This may suit others, but is of no sort of use to me! I feel that if Christ did not actually and literally die as my Substitute, the Just for the unjust, I am not saved and never can be at rest in my heart again. I renounce all preaching whatever if Substitution is not the leading feature of my theme, for there is nothing worth preaching when that is gone. I regard that doctrine as the fundamental Truth of the Gospel, which, denied, you have slain the Gospel and which, cast into the background, you have covered the Gospel with a cloud.

That Jesus Christ was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. That though He was just, He was treated as a sinner, and in our place suffered the wrath of God due to us—this is the kernel and vital heart of the Gospel! Conscience tells every man that God must punish sin. Its voice, more or less loudly, always proclaims that sin must be punished. This is no arbitrary arrangement. It is inevitable. Sin and suffering have a natural relationship. If God is just, sin must bring evil consequences upon the man who commits it and until conscience understands that this evil was borne by Christ, that He suffered what ought to have been suffered by the sinner and that He was justly a Substitute because He was the head and Adam of those for whom He died—until, I say, the conscience knows this, it cannot find rest!

Get under the blood-red canopy and then you are at peace, but not till then. Therefore you find that whenever God revealed Himself to His people, the most apparent thing was always the blood. Abel must bring a bleeding lamb and Noah a slaughtered beast. When the King feasted with His chosen in Egypt, the blood adorned the lintel and the two side-posts of every house wherein He revealed His saving power. When He marched through the wilderness, one of the coverings of His tabernacle was made of rams’ skins dyed red. And all within and around the holy courts, themselves, were perpetual sprinklings of blood, for almost all things were, under the Law, purified by blood. The voice of the Law was always proclaiming what the Gospel proclaims, too, that, “without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.”

Our Savior’s life must end in blood upon the tree. And before that closing scene—His last feast of love, His communion with His disciples—had for its most conspicuous provision the cup of red wine in which His blood was symbolized. Every time He sets forth, visibly, His communion with His people here below the wine must be poured forth. God cannot and will not reveal Himself to man except through the medium of the perfect satisfaction by the pouring out of the life of the Substitute in the place of the sinner. “The covering thereof is of purple.” Oh, it is not for these lips to tell how precious that purple is! It is not possible, even, for this heart to know how precious is the blood of the Son of God, the vital blood which out of love to us He poured out freely for our redemption. Sit at your ease, my Brothers and Sisters, in the blood of salvation, rejoicing as you look upward, and let no doubts, fears, mistrusts, nor suspicions vex you, for beneath the blood-red canopy you are secure!

There is yet one more step—we rise from the blood to the love which caused it to flow and we read of the royal chariot—“The midst thereof was paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.” Not merely the bottom covered with it, but, as in a carriage, the whole vehicle lined with something soft to sit upon, and lean upon. So the whole Covenant of Grace is, within, garnished and beautified and made delightful to the Believer’s soul by the sweet love of God in Christ. The Covenant is love in its secret places, all love, unalloyed love, invisible love, nothing else but love. When one comes to know most of the Covenant and admires the wisdom, the power, the purity, the eternity of all that God has done, yet the most striking characteristic of it to the advanced Christian is the love, the mighty love of God, by which he is brought by Jesus Christ into eternal salvation! You have crowned me with loving kindness. You have loved my soul out of the Pit! You have loved me and given Yourself for me. Your love has redeemed me with a price most precious. Your love has made me what I am. Your love carries on the work and Your love will complete it, and present me to You in its own perfect image, for “the midst of it is paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.”

The point we have proved is this, that everything in the study of the Gospel grows upon you. I earnestly exhort you, therefore, to meditate much in the Scriptures, to consider much the Person and Character of your Lord, to meditate full often upon His beauties and upon all the work which He has done on your behalf. Do not be satisfied with a superficial survey, as many Christians are. These are not the days of contemplation as the old Puritan times were—we are too apt to be superficial. But remember that while there are nuggets of gold upon the very surface of Scripture, yet the most valuable mines of gold are far down and you must dig into them. Pray God that you may be well taught in the things of Christ.

There are some sciences in which you can master all that is worth knowing in a short time and the further you go in the study the more you perceive that nothing is very certain, and you soon get weary of it. But the science of Christ Crucified grows upon you. You get more assured of the facts of it and more intensely delighted in them. I exhort you, therefore, to sit constantly at the Master’s feet with Mary, and I pray that each one of us may know, by following on to know the Lord, what are “the heights and depths, and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge.”

II. We shall now NOTE THE POSITION FROM WHICH THE LOVE MENTIONED IN OUR TEXT IS BEST SEEN. “The midst thereof is paved with love.” It is not, therefore, to be seen from the outside. The mere outsider understands nothing of the love of God to His people as displayed in the

Covenant of Grace. I am certain that there are many of you here present who have heard the Gospel for years and yet no more know the sweetness of it than the floor I am standing upon. A man may pass the door of the London Tavern or the Mansion House for years and yet have no notion of the banquets within, for these are indoors, and you must enter to partake of them.

Savory vapors floating from the festive board may awaken a transient imagination, but no more. The cock on the dunghill turned over the diamond and, according to the fable, remarked that he cared very little for it—he would sooner have found a grain of barley. And so many hear of the sweetness of true religion, but they have not the taste or the ability to perceive its sweetness. Oh, unregenerate Hearer, you will never know how sweet the Gospel is—it is impossible you should while you remain in the state you now are in! But I tell you, if you could get half a glimpse of the joy which even the poorest Christian has, you would never rest content until you enjoyed it, too. If men have said concerning Naples, “See Naples and die,” because of its beauty, I might say to you it were worthwhile dying a thousand deaths to get a glimpse of Christ! When once your faith has perceived His beauty you will wonder how you could have been satisfied to be blinded so long.

What must it be to be forgiven all your sins and to know it? What must it be never to be afraid of death, to be able to look forward to departing from this world as a thing to be longed for, and not to be dreaded? What must it be to be able to look up and say, “God is my Father, and I feel that I am His child”? What must be the joy and bliss of having familiar communion with God so that you are called His friends, as Abraham was of old? I wish I could set your mouths watering after these things! If you had but a little taste of them you would long for more! But until the Lord shall grant you that taste, all we can say of the love of Christ will have no charm for you. The love which lines the chariot of salvation is not to be known by those who remain outside. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant.”

And so note, next, that when the Christian, himself, stands apart from his Lord and judges by outward appearances, he cannot perceive, as once he did, the loving kindness of the Lord. Providence grows dark as a winter’s day. The tried Believer cries, “My wife has been taken from me! My property is melting away, my business fades. I am sick in body and weary in soul. I cannot see a trace of the love of God to me in all this.” Brother, the description in the Song does not say that the chariot is plated with love on the outside, but it is paved with love within, “in the midst of it.” Oh that you had faith to believe that the heart and real core of every Providence is love! The exterior of it may be as a thorn hedge, but sweet fruit ripens within. “Oh,” you say, “but I have looked at the Bible lately, and as I have glanced over its once-cheering promises they appear to smile at me no more. Some of the words grate very harshly on my ears and almost condemn me.”

I do not wonder, for although I can, at this moment, see love in the very outside of Scripture, yet there are times when I cannot—when I can only feel as if every text thundered at me—and out of God’s own mouth came heavy sentences against me. Beloved, it does not say, I repeat it, that the exterior part of this palanquin was adorned with self-apparent love, but that love was in the midst. If you stand examining the exterior of Providence and the mere letter of the Word, and begin to judge and try your God, I should not wonder if little enough of love should be conspicuous to you! Look into the heart of God and read what He has written there. When faith takes a step upward and mounts to the inside of the chariot of Grace, she finds that it is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem.

Come and sit side by side with Jesus in His chariot of Grace, His bed of rest. Come and recline with Him in hallowed fellowship. There is room enough for you and strength enough to bear your weight. Come, now, and be carried with Him who carried your cross. Sit down with Him, who on His hands, and on His side, bears the memorials of His dying love to you. What Company you have and what royal accommodation is provided for you! I think I sit in the chariot with the Beloved, now, and I begin to look around me. I catch a glimpse of the purple above my head and remember the unspeakable Love which bled and died for sinners! I look at the silver pillars which support the covering and how Infinite Holiness stands fast, and in love to me secures my perfection! I place my foot on the golden floor of the chariot and know that Divine power is pledged by love to preserve and bear me through. I see above me, and around me, and beneath me, nothing but love—the free, unbounded love of God!

Now, Beloved, indulge yourselves with a glance around you for a minute. Look back to old eternity. Let your eyes peer through the mists which hide that ancient age before the ages began! What do you see there but love, “according to His eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus or ever the earth was”? Look a little closer. See the Garden of Eden and the Fall—what strikes your eyes there, but love? The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head. Look to the Cross and at God Incarnate here below! Behold Jesus living in suffering and dying in shame! Here Love comes to her climax and lays bare all her matchless charms. Look to the time of your own life. Was not Love present at your birth, perfuming your first breath? Were you not nursed in love, cradled in love and swaddled in love? Have you not, since then, even in your sinfulness, been loved with an exceedingly great and wondrous love?

Did not Love turn your heart of stone into flesh? Has not Love dwelt in you since then, even to this day? Have not even your trials been sent in love? Blind Unbelief called it severity. Look, now, as Jesus sits at your side and say, was it not the wisest form of love that smote you and made you cry out in bitterness? Oh, I do remember at this day nothing in the dealings of God to me but love! I sat down last night, as this text charmed my spirit, and tried to think over my whole life, if, perhaps, I might light upon some unkindness of my God to me. But my solemn witness is that from the first day my life began to beat, from the first hour I knew anything of the Lord whatever, all His dealings have been love, love, love, love, love, love alone—nothing else but love!

Of my life I can and must say, “the midst thereof has been paved with love.” Look at the patterned pavement of love beneath your feet for a moment. Can’t you see the Father’s love—that golden mass of uncreated love—for the Father, Himself, loves you! Look at Jesus’ love, another diamond pavement beneath your feet! Jesus loved you to the death with a love that many waters could not quench, nor floods drown! Look at the love of the Spirit, too. Equally precious is the tender affection of the loving Comforter. Think how the Holy Spirit has borne with you, has striven with you and endured your ill manners in the wilderness, and blessed you still! Look at those delightful embroideries from the Divine needle—the precious promises. A thousand promises there are, but they are all love. Look down and see how all the attributes of God are engaged for you—and they are all in league with Love.

Look, then, at all the Providences of God towards you, at all the exercises of His Grace in your heart, and you will see many and strange colors of varied beauty, all blending in one wondrous pattern of deep, unsearchable love! I cannot talk this morning, my tongue fails me, but I feel the love of Jesus in my own soul and I pray that you may feel it in yours. This one thing be assured of, that as it was in the beginning, it is now and ever shall be, love, love, love, right on, forever and forever. The Lord who has begun to love you will never cease from doing so. The midst of the Covenant of Grace is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem.

III. I want you to notice THE PECULIAR POSITION OF THE PAVEMENT OF LOVE DESCRIBED IN THE TEXT. It is “in the midst” of the chariot and only from the midst is it to be seen. It is in the midst of it and, therefore, Jesus rides upon it and His espoused ones ride upon it. It is a very simple thought, but it richly deserves to be beaten out a little. Jesus is represented here as the King in the chariot. And as the chariot is lined with love, we are taught that Jesus dwells in love. Where is He now? Among the thrones and principalities above, but He still abides in love. Love brought Him down from Heaven to earth. Love conducted Him in all His weary journeys over the acres of Palestine. Love led Him to the garden, the death-sweat and the Cross. And equally, at this hour, does Love attend Him. He loves in Heaven as He loved below.

Whatever He is doing, whatever He is feeling, whatever He is saying we know this one thing about Him—He dwells in love to us. He is in His chariot and all around Him in that chariot is Love. The chariot was a royal one and as the king rode along he was reigning, but he was reigning in love, and so it is with Jesus. All things are in His hands and He governs all things in love to His people. Heavenly principalities serve Him and angels are His willing messengers. But there is no power which Jesus has which He does not wield in love to us. Has His power seemed, sometimes, to be exercised harshly? It is not so—it cannot be so! He reigns in love. Our Joseph is lord over all Egypt and since Joseph loves His Brethren, the good of all the land of Egypt is theirs. Jesus rules all the world for His people’s benefit—all things are theirs, whether things present or things to come— all are theirs. Jesus reigns in love. And Jesus rests in love.

This chariot was a place for the traveler to rest in. He reclined as he was carried along. Nothing gives Jesus such rest as His love for His people. It is His solace and His joy. It is almost inconceivable by us that Jesus should derive joy from the fact that He loves us, but it is so. That text in Zephaniah which we read on Monday evening comes, again, to our recollection—“He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” It is a joy to Christ to love His people! His own heart finds a joy in their joy, a Heaven in their Heaven! To see them saved is bliss to Him! Oh, how glad we ought to be of this! Jesus rests in love.

But as the traveler rested, he also proceeded on his way. The bearers carried the palanquin from place to place and the traveler made progress, but always with the same surroundings within his curtained bed. So Jesus, in all His glorious matching, in everything He does or is to do, still marches on in love. Read the Book of Revelation and think of the trumpets and the falling stars, and the opened vials full of judgments, and you may well tremble—but then fall back upon the Doctrine of the Scriptures, and say, “These are the goings forth of my Lord the King, but He always rides in a chariot which is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. So let Him come with earthquake and with flame, if so He chooses. Let Him come. Let Him even loose destroying angels to smite the earth and let the whole world, before His coming, rock and reel and all men’s hopes depart like visions of the night—I will not fear, for I am sure that He cannot come except in love to me. No judgment can bear wrath to His people! No overturning can overturn their hopes! No rod of iron can shatter their bliss! This is surely a thought which should make your spirit glad!

Now notice that as Jesus rides in this chariot, so do you, O Believer, and at this moment your standing is upon love. You stand up in this palanquin upon love. You are accepted in the Beloved. You are not judged according to the Law, but you are judged according to Grace. You are not judged at the Judgment Seat by what you have done, but according to His abounding mercy. Recline, this morning, in the love of God! Ah, take your rest in it! As the rich man tries to find solace in his riches, and the strong man in his strength, and the great man in his fame, so stretch yourselves and lie at ease upon this glorious bed of almighty love!

And, Beloved, take care that when you labor to make progress, you make it in the power and energy of His love. Do not strive after virtue and Grace by the Law, for you will never get them. The chariot in which you rest is also the chariot in which you are to be carried forward towards perfection. Grow in Grace, but keep to the Cross. Cling to the love of God in Christ Jesus, for that always keeps you safe. You sleep in it. You wake in it. You eat and you drink in it. Wherever you are, Love surrounds you. It is in the atmosphere you breathe. It is to be found in every place, wherever you roam. You are never out of the Love which is in the midst of the chariot. These are things not to be talked of so much as to be thought over. Carry them home, and if you have leisure this afternoon, try to

mark, learn and inwardly digest this precious truth—“The midst thereof is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem.”

IV. To close, DWELL ON THAT LOVE itself just for a moment. Remember it is special love. It is not love for all men. There is some consolation in universal benevolence, but here we go deeper and rejoice in love for the daughters of Jerusalem. There is an electing, discriminating, distinguishing love which is settled upon a chosen people—a love which goes forth to none beside, but only to them. And it is this love which is the true resting place of the saint. It is love undeserved, for what daughter of Jerusalem ever deserved that our glorious King should fall in love with her? It is a love, therefore, which is a theme for eternal wonder.

Why did You love me, Redeemer? Why did You make a Covenant of Grace with me and line that Covenant with Immutable Love? This Love is everlasting and eternal. It never had a beginning, it never will have an end. Simply as I have stated the Truth, it is a nut with Heaven for its kernel. You were always loved, O Believer, and you always shall be, come what may! It is Love unrivalled, for never was there such affection as that which Christ has for His chosen. Love unexampled, to which none of us shall ever reach. We should seek to love as God has loved us, but to the infinite, the boundless degree, we shall never arrive. There is no love like the Love of God in Christ. It is love which to us has become this day our brightest thought, our truest comfort and our most potent incentive.

Law rules the slaves of this world, but Love rules the freemen of the world to come. The ungodly, if they do right after a fashion, do it from fear of punishment or hope of reward. But the true-born children of God find in the love of Christ their sole motive—they are obedient not because they are afraid of being lost—they know they never shall be! Not because they hope to get to Heaven by their good works—they have Heaven already by the works of Another guaranteed to them by the promise of God! They serve God out of pure gratitude for what they have received, rejoicing as they work in the service of One they love so well!

Beloved, may the love of God be shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit this morning, and all the days of your lives! And O that many who have never tasted of that love may be made to long for it, that they may be made alive by it, and unto God shall be the Glory! Amen and Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Song of Solomon 3; 1 John 5.  
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #2485 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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LOVE’S VIGILANCE REWARDED  
NO. 2485

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 4, 1896.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 7, 1877.

**“Scarcely had I passed by them, when I found Him whom my soul loves.**

**I held Him and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him to my mother’s house and into the chamber of her that conceived me.” Song of Solomon 3:4.**

WHEN I look upon this great assembly of people, I think to myself— there will be many here to whom these chapters that we have read out of Solomon’s Song will seem very strange. Of course they will, for they are meant for the inner circle of Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ! This sacred Canticle is almost the central Book of the Bible. It seems to stand like the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden of Eden, in the very center of the Paradise of God. You must know Christ and love Christ, or else many of the expressions in this Book will seem to you but as an idle tale.

The subject on which I am about to speak will be very much of the same character. Outsiders will not be able to follow me, but then we are coming to the Communion Table so I must, for a while, forget the unsaved among my hearers, and think only of those who do know the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him. To my mind, it is a very melancholy thought that there should be any who do not know the sweetest thing in all the world, the best and happiest thing beneath the stars—the joy of having Christ in their heart as the hope of Glory! While I may seem to forget you, dear Friends, for a while, I cannot really help remembering you all the time and it is the earnest desire of my heart that while I am speaking of some of those delights which are enjoyed only by the people of God, you may begin to long for them—and I remind you that when you truly long for them, you may rest assured that you may have them! Around the garden of the Lord there is no wall so high as to keep out one real seeking and trusting soul—and in the wall, itself, there is a gate that always stands ajar—no—that is always wide open to the earnest seeker.

I am not going to try so much to preach a sermon as to talk out freely from my heart some of those delightful experiences which belong to the children of God. I want this service to be a time not of carving meat, but of eating it—not of spreading tables, but of sitting at them and feasting to the full on the bounteous provisions that our Lord has prepared for us.

I. First, before we actually come to our text, we may notice THREE PRELIMINARY STEPS IN THE SPOUSE’S PROGRESS.

The first one is implied in the words, “I love Him.” She refers to her Beloved under the title of, “Him whom my soul loves.” Can you, dear Friend, give the Lord Jesus that title? If He were to come here just now as He came to the Lake of Galilee and pass along these crowded ranks and say to each one of us, “Do you love Me?” what would be your answer? I am glad that I speak to many whose answer would be, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” I can at this moment think of many reasons why I should love the Christ of Calvary, but I cannot think of one reason why I should not love Him. If I turn to what I read about Him in this blessed Book, it all makes me love Him. If I recall what I have experienced of His Grace in my heart, it all makes me love Him. When I think of what He is, what He did and what He is doing, and what He will yet do—it all makes me love Him! I am inclined to say to my heart, “Never beat again if you do not beat true to Him.” It were better for me that I had never been born than that I should not love One who is, in Himself, so inconceivably lovely—Who is, indeed, perfection’s self!

Yet there is one reason that rises above all others why you and I should love the Lord Jesus Christ. It is this, “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” It used to be said by the old metaphysicians that it was impossible for love not to be returned in some measure or other. I do not think that statement is universally true, but I hope it is true concerning our Lord’s love to us and our heart’s love to Him. If He has loved us with an everlasting love. If He loved us even when we were His enemies and loved us so as to take upon Himself our nature—if this dear Son of God loved us so that He became Man for our sakes and, being found in fashion as a Man, humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross—oh, then, we must love Him in return! We would be worse than the beasts that perish if, conscious of such love as this, we did not feel that it melted us and that, being melted, our soul did not bow down in love to Him, alone! Can you stand at the foot of the Cross and not kiss the feet of Him who was wounded for your transgressions? Can you see Him dead and taken down from the Cross—and not wish to wrap Him in your fine linen—and bring your sweet spices to embalm His precious body? Can you see Him risen from the grave, and not call Him, “Rabboni,” and long, as Mary did, to hold Him by the feet? Can you, by faith, see Him in our assemblies saying, “Peace be to you,” and not feel that you delight in Him in your inmost soul? It cannot be! Surely, it cannot be! We must and will say, and we feel that we may appeal to the Searcher of all hearts while we say it, “I love Him, I do love Him because He first loved me.”

Then, in the spouse’s progress, there came another step, “ I sought Him.” Notice how the chapter begins—“By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves,” for love cannot bear to be at a distance from the Loved One. Love longs for communion, love will do anything to get at the object of its affection. Where there is true love to Jesus Christ, we cannot bear to be away from Him and since we must be so, from His Presence, for a while—till the day breaks and the shadows flee away—we long to be with Him in heart and to feel that He is also with us in spirit according to His promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”

“I sought Him.” Can you put your finger on that sentence and say, “That is true, too”? Have you been seeking Him this Sabbath? Are you coming to His table, tonight, seeking Him? Were you at the Saturday night Prayer Meeting, or at this morning’s early gathering, seeking Him with His people? Or, in your private devotions, did you make a point of crying, “Lord, let me meet with You, let me find You”? If not, begin now! Seek Him with your whole heart! Let your soul breathe out its burning desires after Him.

“I sought Him.” He is not far from any of us. You sought Him once, when you were burdened with your sin, and then you found Him. He cast that sin of yours into the depths of the sea. Come and seek Him, again, and your fears, your doubts, your distresses of mind shall be buried in the same deep grave!

So the spouse sings of her Beloved, “I sought Him.”  
Then comes in a little minor or mournful music, for the next clause is, “I sought Him, but I found Him not.” The spouse is so sad about it that she tells of her woe twice, “I sought Him, but I found Him not.” Do you know that experience? I hope you are not realizing it at this time, but many of us have known what it is. If we have been indulging in any sin, of course we could not find Him, then! If we have been cold-hearted, like the spouse who sought Him on her bed—like she, we have not found Him. We have had to rise, we have had to stir ourselves up to lay hold of Him, or else we have not found Him. You have known what it is to go to the public service of the sanctuary, where others have been fed, yet you have had to come away and say, “There has not been a morsel for me.” Have you not ever turned to the Bible and to private prayer—and still you have had to say, “I sought Him, but I found Him not”? This is a very sad experience, but if it makes you sad, it will be good for you. Our Lord Jesus Christ would not have us think little of His company and, sometimes, it is only as we miss it that we begin to appreciate the sweetness of it! If we always had high days and holidays, we might not be so thankful when our gala days come round.  
I have even known some of Christ’s people get so pleased with the joy of His company that they have almost forgotten Him in the joy! If a husband gave his wife gold rings and ornaments and she was so gratified with the presents that she took but little note of him, but only prized the jewels that he gave her, I can well understand what would be the jealousy of his heart. It may be that this is why your Lord hides His face, for you never know His value so much as when the darkness deepens and the Star of Bethlehem shines not. When real soul-hunger comes on and the Bread of Heaven is not there. When you feel the pangs of the thirst of the spirit and you are like Hagar in the wilderness and cannot find the well of water, then will your Lord teach you His true value! And when you really know Him and know Him better than you formerly knew Him, then you shall no longer have to sigh, “I sought Him, but I found Him not,” but you shall change your dolorous ditty for the cheerful language of the text, “It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves.”  
So I have brought you back to the text. These are the three steps by which we have ascended to the holy gate—first, “I love Him.” Next, “I sought Him.” And then, “I found Him not.”  
II. Secondly, inside the text there are THREE FURTHER STEPS—“I found Him,” “I held Him,” “I brought Him into my mother’s house and into the chamber of her that conceived me.”  
This is the first of the second series of steps, “I found Him.” I do not wish to stand here and speak for myself, alone, but I want, Beloved, that you should, each one of you, also say, “I love Him,” “I sought Him” and now “I have found Him.” Notice what the spouse said, “I found Him.” She was not satisfied with finding anything else—“I found Him.” If she had found her nearest and dearest friend. If the mother of whom she speaks had met her, it would not have sufficed. She had said, “I love Him, I sought Him,” and she must be able to add, “I found Him.” Nothing but Christ consciously enjoyed can satisfy the craving of a loving heart which once sets out to seek the King in His beauty!  
The city watchmen found the spouse and she spoke to them. She enquired of them, “Saw you Him whom my soul loves?” She did not sit down and say to any of them, “O watchman of the night, your company cheers me! The streets are lonely and dangerous, but if you are near, I feel perfectly safe and I will be content to stay a while with you.” No, but she leaves the watchmen and goes along the streets until she finds Him whom her soul loves! I have known some who love the Lord to be very happy while the preacher is proclaiming the Truth of God to them, but they have stopped with the preacher and have gone no further. This will never do, dear Friends! Do not be content to abide with us who are only watchmen, but go beyond us and seek till you find our Master! I would groan in heart, indeed, if any of you believed simply because of my words, as if it were my words, alone, that led you to believe, or if you should look merely to me for anything you need for your soul. In myself I am nothing and I have nothing—I only watch that if I can, I may lead you to my Lord, whose shoelaces I am not worthy to unloose.  
O you who love Christ, go beyond the means of Grace! Go beyond ordinances, go beyond preachers, go beyond even the Bible, itself, into an actual possession of the living Christ! Labor after a conscious enjoyment of Jesus, Himself, till you can say with the spouse, “I found Him whom my soul loves.” It is good to find sound doctrine, for it is very scarce, nowadays. It is good to learn the practical precepts of the Gospel. It is good to be in the society of the saints, but if you put any of these in the place of communion with your Lord, Himself, you do ill! Never be content till you can say, “I found Him.” Dear Souls, did you ever find Him? Have you yet found Him? If you have not, keep on seeking, keep on praying till at last you can say, “Eureka! I have found Him whom my soul loves. Jesus is, indeed, mine!”  
What is meant by the words, “I found Him”? Well, I think a soul may say, “I found Him,” in the sense employed in the text when, first of all, it has a clear view of His Person. My Beloved is Divine and Human, the Son of God and yet the Son of Man. My Beloved died, yet He is alive again. My Beloved was on earth, but He is now in Heaven and He will shortly come again. I want thus to find Him, myself, and I want each one of you to do the same. Picture Him on Calvary, see Him risen from the dead. Try, if you can, not so much by imagination as by faith, to behold Him as He now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, where harps unnumbered tune His praise! Yet, even there, He bears the wounds He received for us here below. How resplendent shine the nail-prints! The marks of His death on earth are the Glory of His Person above—  
*“This is the Man, the exalted Man,  
Whom we unseen adore.  
But when our eyes behold His face,  
Our hearts shall love Him more!”*  
Let your soul picture Him so plainly that you can seem to see Him, for this will be a part of your finding Him.  
But that will not be enough. You must then get to know that He is present with you. We cannot see Him, but yet He that walks amidst the golden candlesticks is, in spirit, in this House of Prayer at this moment. My Master, You are here. There is no empty seat at the table left to be filled by You, nor do we expect to see You walking among us in Your calm majesty, clothed with Your seamless garment down to Your feet. And we do not need to see You. Our faith realizes You quite as well as sight could do and we bless You that You hear us as we speak to You. You are invisible, yet assuredly present—You are looking into our faces, You are delighting in us as objects of Your redeeming love. You do especially remember that You died for us and, as a mother gazes upon the babe for whom she has endured so much, or as a shepherd looks upon the sheep that he has brought back from its long wanderings, so are You now looking upon each one of Your loved ones. If, dear Friends, you can get that thought fully into your minds—that Christ is really here in our midst—you can then, each one, begin to say, “I have found Him.”  
But you need more than that, namely, to feel that He loves you, loves you as if there were nobody else for Him to love! Loves you even as the Father loves Him. That is a daring thing to say and I would never have said it if He had not first uttered it. But He says, “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.” Can you comprehend how each one of the blessed Trinity loves each of the others and especially how the Father loves the Son? Even so does Jesus Christ love you, my believing Brother, my believing Sister! Note that He loves you—it is not only that He did love you and died for you, but He still loves you! He says to you, individually, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.” Look at the nail-print—that is His memorial, His forget-me-not and, by it He says to you—  
*“Forget you I will not, I cannot, your name Engraved on My heart does forever remain! The palms of My hands while I look on I see The wounds I received when suffering for thee.”*  
Now, have you found Him? If you have pictured Him in your mind’s eye. If you are certain of His Presence with you and then, above all, if you are fully assured of His love, you can say, “I have found Him.”  
If you can, in truth, say that, I hope there will come with it this one other thing, namely, an exceedingly great joy. I cannot speak to you as I would wish—my words cannot express the joy of heart which I feel in knowing that I have found Him—that He is with me and that He has loved me with an everlasting love! I shall never understand, even in Heaven, why the Lord Jesus should ever have loved me. I can say to Jesus what David said in his lamentation over Jonathan, “Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.” There is no love like it and why was it fixed upon me? Have you never felt that you could go in, like David, and sit before the Lord and say, “Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me to this point?” Yet wonderful as it is, it is true—Jesus loves you, loves you, now, at this very moment! Do you not rejoice in it? I assure you that in the least drop of the love of Christ, when it is consciously realized, there is more sweetness than there would be in all Heaven without it! Talk of bursting barns, overflowing wine-vats and riches treasured up—these give but a poor solace to the heart! But the love of Jesus, this is another word for Heaven! And it is a marvel that even while we are here below we should be permitted to enjoy a bliss beyond what the angels know, for—  
*“Never did angels taste above  
Redeeming Grace and dying love,”*  
but that joy is ours if we can truly say, “I have found Him.”  
If you have come as far as that—and if you have not, may God help you to this point right speedily—come to the Table of your Lord! You are, indeed, His children, so you have a right to come. Hear the King’s invitation, “Eat, O Friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.” These joys are not merely for some of the Lord’s people but for all His saints! Then, stand not back, but come and feast on the rich provision of Divine Love!  
Now we come to the second step. The spouse says, “I held Him.” This is a deeper experience than the former one. “I held Him,” means more than, “I found Him.” Sometimes Jesus comes to His children and manifests Himself very sweetly to them, but they behave in an unseemly manner and soon He is gone. I have known Him reveal Himself to His people most delightfully, but they have grown cold, wayward, foolish— and He has been obliged to go away from them. When you get to the top of the mountain, it needs great Grace to stay there! I do not find it difficult to get into communion with Christ, but I confess that I do not find it so easy to maintain that communion. So that, if you have found Him, do as the spouse says that she did, “I held Him.”  
How are we to hold Christ? Well, first, let us hold Him by our heart’s resolve. If now we have Him near us, let us lovingly look Him in the face and say, “My Lord, my sweet, blessed Lord, how can I let You go? My All in All, my heart’s Lord and King, how can I let You go? Abide with me, go not from me.” Hold Him by your love’s resolve and it shall be as chains of gold to fasten Him to you! Say to Him, “My Lord, will You go away from me? See how happy You have made me. A glimpse of Your love has made me so blest that I do not envy the angels before Your Throne! Will You take that joy away from me by taking Yourself away? Why did You give me a taste of Your love if You do not mean to give me more? This little has but made me dislike all things else—You have spoiled me, now, for all my former joy! O tarry with me, my Master, else am I unhappy, indeed!”  
Further say to Him, “Lord, if You go, Your chosen one will be unsafe! There is a wolf prowling about—what will Your poor lamb do without You, O mighty Shepherd? There are cruel adversaries all around seeking my harm—how can I live without You? Will You deliver your turtledove over to the cruel fowler who seeks to slay her? Be that far from You, O Lord! Therefore, abide with me.” Tell Him how you will sorrow if He goes

away— *“‘Tis paradise if You are here,*

*If you depart, ‘tis Hell.”*  
“Nothing can revive my spirit if You are gone from me. Oh, stay with me, stay with me, I beseech You, most blessed Lord!” As long as you can find arguments for His staying, Christ does not want to go from you. His delights are with the sons of men and He is happy in the society of those whom He has purchased with His precious blood! Keep on giving your reasons why He should remain with you and so hold Him. Be bold enough to even say to Him, “I will not let You go.” Get Jacob’s boldness when he said to the Angel of the Covenant, “I will not let You go unless You bless me.” But go even beyond that—do not put in any, “unless,” at all, but say, “I will not let You go, for I cannot be blest if You are gone from me.”

Further, Brothers and Sisters, hold Him by making Him your All in All. He will never go away if you treat Him as He should be treated. Yield up everything to Him! Be obedient to Him. Be willing to suffer for Him. Grieve not His Holy Spirit. Crown Him, extol Him, magnify Him, keep on singing His praises for so will you hold Him! Renounce all else for Him, for He sees that you truly love Him when you count all things but dross for His dear sake. He says, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness.” Those were the days when some of you could accept a father’s frown for the sake of Christ’s love! When you could have given up your job and all your prospects in life to follow Jesus! It was then that He delighted in you and, in proportion as you break your idols, put away your sins and keep your heart chaste and pure for Him, alone, you shall abide in His love! Yes, and you shall get deeper and deeper into it till what was a stream up to your ankles shall soon be chest deep and, by-and-by, shall be waters to swim in!

Christ and you cannot fully agree unless you walk as He would have you walk, in careful holiness and earnest service for Him. “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” And is there anything in this vile world that is fit to stand in rivalry with Him? Is there any gain, is there any joy, is there any beauty that can be compared with His gain, His joy, His beauty? Let each of us cry, “Christ for me! Go, harlot-world! Come not near even the outside of my door. Go, for my heart is with my Lord and He is my soul’s chief treasure!” If you will talk like that, you will hold Him fast till you have your heart’s desire and bring Him to your mother’s house!

Hold Him, too, by a simple faith. That is a wonderful hold-fast. Say to Him, “My Lord, I have now found You and I rejoice in You, but still, if You hide Your face from me, I will still believe in You. If I never see a smile from You, again, till I see You on Your Throne, yet will I not doubt You, for my heart is fixed, not so much upon the realization of Your Presence, as upon Yourself and Your finished work. Though You slay me, yet will I trust in You.” Ah, then He will not go away from you—you can hold Him in that way! But if you begin to put your trust in enjoyments of His Presence instead of in Him, alone, it may be that He will take Himself away from you in order to bring you back to your old moorings, so that, as a sinner, you may trust the sinner’s Savior and trust in Him, alone!

One word more before we leave this point. The only way to hold Christ is to hold Him by His own power. I smiled to myself as I read my text and tried to make it all my own—“I held Him and would not let Him go.” I thought to myself, the spouse said of her Bridegroom that she would not let Him go—and shall I ever say to my Lord that I will not let Him go? He is the King of Kings, the Omnipotent Jehovah—can I hold Him? He is the mighty God and yet a poor puny worm like myself says, “I would not let Him go”? Can it be really so? Well, the Holy Spirit says that it is, for He guided the pen of the writer of this Song when he wrote, “I held Him and would not let Him go.” Think of poor Jacob, who, when the Angel did but touch him, felt his sinews shrink, directly, yet he said, “I will not let You go.” And I, a poor trembling creature, may hold the Omnipotent, Himself, and say to Him, “I will not let You go.”

How is that wonder to be accomplished? I will tell you. If Omnipotence helps you to hold Omnipotence, why, then, the deed is done! If Christ and not you, alone, holds Christ, then Christ is held, indeed, for shall He vanquish His own self? No, Master, You could slay death and break the old serpent’s head, but You cannot conquer Yourself! And if You are in me, I can hold You, for it is not I, but You in me, that holds Yourself and will not let You go! This is the power which enables us, with the Apostle, to say, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The next step is described in the words, “ I brought Him.” With this we finish. “I brought Him into my mother’s house and into the chamber of her that conceived me.” And where, I pray you, Beloved, is our mother’s house? I do not believe in any reverence for mere material buildings, but I have great reverence for the true Church of the Living God. The Church is the House of God and the mother of our souls. It was under the ministry of the Word that most of us were born to God. It was in the assembly of the saints that we heard the message which first of all quickened us into newness of life and we may well be content to call the Church of Christ our mother, since our elder Brother—you know His name—when one said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brethren stand outside, desiring to speak with You,” pointing to His disciples, answered, “Behold, My mother, and My brethren. For whoever shall do the will of My Father which is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.” Surely, where Jesus chooses to call the assembly of the faithful by the sacred name of mother, we may rightly do the same!

And we love the Church, which is our mother. I do hope that all the members of this Church love the whole Church of God and also have a special affection for that particular part of it in which they were born for God. It would be unnatural—and Grace is never unnatural, though it is supernatural—it would be unnatural not to love the place where we were born into the heavenly family! I do not know and never shall know on earth the man who was the means of my conversion. I may know him when I get to Heaven, but if he is still living anywhere in this world, God bless him! And I know that many of you would say the same of the outward instrument which was used as the means of blessing to you—and you will say the same, will you not, of all the brotherhood of which some of us are but the spokesmen and representatives? We love the Church of God! Well, then, whenever we find our Beloved, we have to hold Him and not let Him go. And then to bring Him down to the house of our mother and to the chamber of her that conceived us.

How can you bring Christ to His Church? Partly, you can bring Him by your spirit. There is a wonderful power about a man’s spirit, even though he does not speak a word. Silent worshippers can contribute very greatly to the communion of saints. I know some brethren—I will not say that any of them are now here—but I have known some brethren whose very faces dispirit and discourage one whose every movement seems to make one feel anything but spiritual. But I know others of whom I can truly say that it is always pleasant to me to shake their hands and to have a look from their eyes. I know that they have been with Jesus, for there is the very air of saintliness about them. I do not mean sanctimoniousness—that is a very different thing! In the old pictures, the painters used to put a halo round the head of a saint—a most absurd idea, but I believe that there is a real spiritual halo continually surrounding the man who walks with God.

If you, dear Friend, have really found Christ and bring Him with you into the assembly, you will not be the man who will criticize and find fault, and quarrel with your neighbor because he does not give you enough room in the pew. You will not be the person to pick holes in other people’s coats, but you will be very considerate of others. As for yourself, anything will do for you, and anywhere will do for you, for you have seen the Beloved! You want other people to get as much good as they can. You are no longer selfish—how can you be, when you have found Him whom your soul loves? And now your poor Brother need not be very choice in the selection of his words—if he will only talk about Jesus, you will be quite satisfied! If his accents should be a little broken, you will not mind that. So long as you feel that he wishes to extol your Lord, that will be enough for you!

So, in this manner you will, in spirit, bring the Beloved to your mother’s house, to the chamber of her that conceived you.  
But, dear Friend, it will also be a happy thing if you are able to talk about your Lord, for then you can bring Him to the Church with your words. Those of us who are called to preach the Word have often to cry to the Lord to help us to bring Christ into the assembly by our words— though, indeed, the words of any human language are but a poor conveyance for the Christ of God! Oh, let the King, my blessed Master, ride in the chariot of angelic song and not in the lumbering wagon of my poor sermons! I long to see Him flying on the wings of the wind and not in the car of my feeble language! Yet has He come to you many a time that way and you have been glad. Let Him come as He will, if He will but come, it is our delight to bring Him into our mother’s house, into the chamber of her that conceived us!  
Therefore, dear Friends, each one of you, in turn, as you are able, talk to your brother and to your sister and say, “I have found Him whom my soul loves.” You know that when Samson killed the lion, he said nothing about it. It would have been a great feat for anyone else to boast of, but Samson could kill a lion any day, so he did not think much of doing that. But when he later found a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion, he took some of it and began to eat—and carried a portion of it to his father and mother. So, if ever you find sweetness and preciousness in Christ, the true Strong One, be sure that you carry a handful of the honey to your friends and give portions to those for whom otherwise nothing might be prepared!  
Thus hold Christ fast and bring Him to your mother’s house by your spirit and by your words.  
But if, alas, you feel that you cannot speak for Christ, then, Beloved, bring Him by your prayers. Do pray, especially at these communion seasons, that the King, Himself, will come near and feast His saints. Ask Him not only to bless you, but to bless all His saints, for you are persuaded that they all love Him better than you do and that they all want Him as much as you do—and that they will all praise Him even more than you do if He will but come and manifest Himself to them! In this way, each one of you, as you come to the House of Prayer and to the place of fellowship, will be a real benefit to our spiritual force and we shall seem to get nearer and nearer to our Master as the house fills with loving worshippers who have found Him, and held Him, and brought Him here.  
Now may we find all this to be especially true as we gather around the Table! The Lord be with you all, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**SOLOMON’S SONG 2; 3:1-5.**

Here we have a dialogue of love between the Lord Jesus and His people.  
Song of Solomon 2:1. I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys. Among all flowers, there is none that can be compared with Him— **“White is His soul, from blemish free,  
Red with the blood He shed for me.”**  
2. As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters. The child of God cannot long be mistaken for a worldling. The lily rises up above its thorny companions, but everybody knows that it is not a thorn—and quickly do the eyes of the Lord Jesus discern His people wherever they may be found. You, dear Friend, may, perhaps, come of a graceless family, or you may live in a house where God is all but unknown—yet Christ always knows His pure lilies, even if they grow among the cruel piercing thorns.  
3. As the apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. You who love the Lord Jesus know what this verse means. He is a great variety of delights to you—food for your soul, a shadow for your head in the day of the sun’s burning heat. When you are near Him, the sun does not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. There is no shadow like Christ’s shadow, and no fruit like His fruit!  
4. He brought me to the banqueting house. That, I trust, He will do again as He has often done before, both while we are hearing His Word and when we approach His Table—“He brought me to the banqueting house.”—  
4. And His banner over me was love. Not the fiery ensign of war, but the peaceful banner of love! You have had enough of the world, Beloved, during the past six days—you will again have enough of it in the six days yet to come—but just now let Love’s royal banner wave over you and give your thoughts entirely to Him who has loved you with an everlasting love, and sealed His love to you by the blood that streamed from His pierced heart.  
5. Sustain me with cakes of raisins, comfort me with apples: for I am lovesick. The love of Christ shed abroad in our heart sometimes quite overpowers it. It is very possible to be so delighted, so full of joy with a sense of the love of Jesus, that one feels unable to bear any more of it! Oh, for more of this blessed sickness! “It is a strange thing,” says one, “this love of Christ”—  
*“For, oh, when whole, it makes me sick,  
When sick, it makes me whole!”*

6, 7. His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me. I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field. Those lovely, but timid creatures that are so easily scared away—

7. That you stir not up, nor awake my Love, till He please. O you carking cares, keep away from us! You distractions that are so apt to arise in our crowded assembly, you aches and pains that come in and make the body drag down the spirit, keep away from us for a while!

8. The voice of my Beloved! The spouse knows it at once! Her ears are so trained that she recognizes it as soon as she hears it. Jesus said that His sheep follow Him, for they know His voice. And He added, “A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.”

8. Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. “I thought my sins would keep Him back, for they seemed like great mountains—how could He come to me? But, ‘behold,’ He makes nothing of those barriers! ‘He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.’”

9. My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, He stands behind our wall, He looks forth at the windows, showing Himself through the lattice. When we observe the ordinances, aright, they are like latticed windows—we cannot see our Lord through them as clearly as we would like, but still, we do see Him and we are thankful for these windows until we get up yonder, where we shall see Him face to face!

10-13. My Beloved spoke and said to me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away. No matter what the weather is outside, it may be spring within. If your hearts have been frost-bound and barren, may they now begin to thaw at the approach of Jesus! Many of us have asked for His company and believe that He will be here—and when He comes, He will make our souls rejoice! They shall be as watered gardens when the spring returns.

14. O My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see your countenance, let Me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is comely. Christ calls you out, you hidden ones! You who are half ashamed to be seen, He bids you come to Him! Come away from your doubts and your fears, your halting and your hesitating—it is Jesus who calls you—therefore come to Him at once!

15. Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes. Drive away every sin that would keep Christ away. Ask for His Grace to subdue every wandering thought that He may be with you in undisturbed communion.

16, 17. My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

Song of Solomon 3:1-5. By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves: I sought Him, but I found Him not. I will rise, now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broadways I will seek Him whom my soul loves: I sought Him, but I found Him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw you Him whom my soul loves? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves: I held Him and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my Love, till He please.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307an unlimited number of places at once. In fact, it can only be in one place.

Where that place is we know from Scripture, for He sits at the right hand of God, waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. Unless you are to suppose that the Humanity of Christ is something altogether different from ours, it cannot be here and there and everywhere. To suppose that it is a different Humanity from ours is to deny that He is Incarnate in our nature. Our Lord Jesus told His disciples that He would go away and He has gone away. He ascended into Heaven, bearing Humanity up to the Throne of God. “He is not here, for He is risen.” Remember, also, that because the Lord Jesus is absent corporeally, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter is with us, for Jesus especially said, “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.”

Those who believe that Christ’s flesh and blood are, or can be present on earth, deny the Presence of the Holy Spirit, for the Scripture is plain enough upon that point—that the bodily absence of our Lord is the cause and condition of the Presence of the Comforter. If Jesus still dwells corporeally upon the earth, then the Spirit of God is not upon the earth. Many other most serious errors follow from the supposition that the Humanity of the Redeemer is present anywhere except at the right hand of God, even the Father. It is an imagination which lies at the basis of the sacramental system—and thousands are greatly enamored of it.

No word of mine this morning is intended to have the remotest connection with any sacramental presence of the corporeal Nature of our Lord. Our mind has a far other matter before it. Let us, therefore, having guarded ourselves so as not to be misunderstood, proceed to speak of another Presence of our blessed Lord. The fact is that Christ Jesus, the Lord, is present in His Church by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is this day the Representative of Christ in the midst of the Church, and it is in the power and the energy of the Holy Spirit that Christ is with us always, and will be even to the end of the world.

As God, Jesus is everywhere. As Man, He is only in Heaven. As God and Man in one Person—Mediator and Head of the Church—He is present with us by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, whom the Father has sent in His name. It is by the working of the Spirit of God that Christ’s Presence in the Church is manifested—and we are to expect no other presence than that. We have the spiritual Divine Presence of the second Person of the blessed Trinity, and the Presence of Christ Jesus, also, in the power of His representative on earth, the Holy Spirit. This Presence, not a bodily but a spiritual Presence, is the Glory of the Church of God. When she is without it she is shorn of her strength—when she possesses it, all good things ensue!

Brethren, if a Church is without the Spirit of God in it, it may have a name to live, but it is dead, and, you know, that after death there follows corruption—corruption which breeds foulness and disease. Hence, those Churches which have turned aside unto error have not only lost all power to do good, but they have become obnoxious and the causes of great evil in the midst of the world. If any professing Church abides not in Christ it is cast forth as a branch and is withered. And while it is decaying, it is injurious and there is need for the world’s welfare that it is utterly destroyed. We must have Christ in the Church, or the body which was meant to be the medium of the greatest good becomes the source of the grossest evil.

Let the Spirit of God be in the Church, and there is power given to all her ministries—whether they are ministries of public testimony in the preaching of the Word, or ministries of holy love among the Brethren, or ministries of individual earnestness to the outside world—they will all be clothed with energy in the fullness of the power of the Lord Jesus. Then her ordinances become truly profitable! Then Baptism is burial with the Lord, and the sacred Supper is a feast of love! Then the communion of the Brethren in their solemn prayer and praise becomes deep and joyful, and their whole life and walk are bright with the glow of Heaven!

In the Presence of the Lord, the graces of the saints are developed, the Church grows rich in all spiritual gifts—her warfare becomes victorious and her continual worship sweet as the incense of the golden censor. What the moon is to the night, or the sun to the day, or the Nile to Egypt, or the dew to the tender herb, or the soul to the human frame—that is the Presence of Jesus to His Church! Give us the Spirit of God and we will ask no endowments from the State, nor sigh for the prestige of princely patronage. Endow us, O God, with the Holy Spirit and we have all we need! The poverty of the members, their need of learning, their need of rank—all these shall be as nothing. The Holy Spirit can make amends for all deficiencies and clothe His poor and obscure people with an energy at which the world shall tremble!

This made the Apostolic Church mighty! She had the Holy Spirit outpoured upon her—the lack of this made the medieval ages dark as midnight, for men contended about words and letters and forgot the Spirit. The return of this inestimable blessing has given us every true revival! The working of the Eternal Spirit, the Presence of Christ in the midst of His people, is the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing beneath His wings. This has been our confidence, as a Church, these 18 years, and if we are yet to see greater and better things, we must still rely on this same strength—the Divine Presence of Jesus Christ by the wonder-working Spirit. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord.”

It becomes, then, the great desire of every earnest Christian who loves the Church of God that Christ should be in the Church, and that by His Spirit He should work wonders there. I have selected this text with the view of stirring up the spiritual-minded among you to seek so great a blessing! Let me endeavor, in opening up this blessed text, to show the means and the course of action necessary if we would see the Church revived by her Lord’s Presence.

I. And first, we learn from the text that before we can bring the WellBeloved into our mother’s house, the Church, WE MUST FIND HIM PERSONALLY FOR OURSELVES. We begin with that. “It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves.” How can we bring into the chamber of the Church Him whom we have not yet met with? How can we communicate Grace to others instrumentally, unless, first of all, we have received it into our own hearts?

I am not now about to speak of the need of conversion—we all know that no spiritual act can be performed until we become spiritual men—I am now speaking about something higher than bare conversion. If we would bless the Church, we must ourselves occupy a higher platform than that of being merely saved—we must be Believers walking in fellowship with Christ—and having, in that respect, found Him whom our soul loves. There are many Believers who have only just enough Grace to enable us to hope that they are alive! They have no strength with which to work for God’s cause. They have not an arm to lend to the help of others—neither can they even see that which would comfort others for they are blind, and cannot see afar off. They need all their sight and all their strength, for themselves.

Those who are to bring the Well-Beloved into our mother’s house must be of another kind. They must get beyond the feebleness which is full of doubting and fearing, into the assurance which grasps the Savior and the fellowship which lives in daily communion with Him. I know there are some such in this Church and I would single them out, and speak to them thus—“Brothers and Sisters, if you would bring Christ into the Church which you love, then, first of all, your inmost soul must so love Christ that you cannot live without His company. This must be your cry—‘Have you seen Him whom my soul loves?’ And this must be the goal of your aspirations: ‘I have found Him whom my soul loves.’ It must not be talk, it must be soul-love. It must not be a profession of affection for Jesus, but the inmost heart of our being must be moved by His name.”

The words are very strong, “Him whom my soul loves,” as if though the spouse might love the daughters of Jerusalem, might love the watchmen of the city, might love them all in their place—yet her soul’s love, the essence of her love—her deepest, fondest, purest and most real love, was all for Him. Are there not such hearts here—virgin minds in whom Christ is first, last, midst, Chief, and All in All? Oh, if there are, you are the men, you are the women, who, finding your Beloved, can bring Him into the Church! May God multiply your number and may each of you have compassion on the languishing Church of this chill age and labor to restore to her the glory which has faded from her brow! Pray for Laodicea in her lukewarmness, and Sardis in her spiritual death! But you will only prevail in proportion as your inmost soul loves the Redeemer and abides in His love. These ardent lovers of Jesus must diligently seek Him!

The chapter before us says that the spouse sought Him, sought Him on her bed, sought Him in the streets, sought Him in the broadways, sought Him, at last, at the lips of the watchmen—sought Him everywhere where He was likely to be found. We must enjoy the perpetual fellowship of Jesus. We who love Him in our souls cannot rest until we know that He is with us. I fear that with some of us our sins have grieved Him and He has taken Himself to the far-off “mountains of myrrh and hills of frankincense.”

It may be our lax living, our neglect of prayer or some other fault has taken from us the light of His Countenance. Let us resolve this morning that there shall be no rest for our souls until once again He has returned to us in the fullness of His manifested love to abide in our hearts. Seek Him, Brother! Seek Him, Sister! He is not far from any of you, but do seek Him with an intense longing for Him. For until you do you are not the one to bring Him into the assembly of the Brethren. Labor to bring Jesus into the chambers of the Church, but first, be sure that you have Him yourself, or your zeal will be hypocrisy.

In seeking our Lord we must use all ministries. The spouse enquired of the watchmen. We are not to despise God’s servants for He is usually pleased to bless us through them, and it would be ungrateful, both to Him and to them to pass them by as useless. But, while we use the ministries, we must go beyond them. The spouse did not find her Lord through the watchmen, but she says, “it was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves.” I charge you, my dear Hearers, never rest content with listening to me! Do not imagine that hearing the Truth of God preached simply and earnestly will, of itself, be a blessing to your souls. Far, far beyond the servant, pass to the Master! Be this the longing of each heart, each Lord’s Day, “Lord, give me fellowship with Yourself.”

True, we are led to see Jesus sometimes, and I hope often, through listening to the Truth of God proclaimed, but, O Lord, it is no outer-court worship that will satisfy us! We need to come into the Holy of Holies and stand at the Mercy Seat itself. It is no seeing You afar off and hearing about You that will content our spirits—we must draw near unto You and behold You as the world cannot. Like Simeon we must take You into our arms or we cannot say that we have seen God’s salvation. Like John we must lean our heads upon Your bosom or we cannot rest. Your Apostles are well enough. Your Prophets well enough. Your Evangelists well enough. But oh, we feel constrained to go beyond them all, for we thirst after fellowship with You, our Savior! Those who feel thus will bless the Church, but only such.

Note that we must search to the very utmost till we find our Beloved. The Christian must leave no stone unturned till he gets back his fellowship with Christ. If any sin obstructs the way it must be rigorously given up. If there is any neglected duty it must be earnestly discharged. If there is any higher walk of Grace which is necessary to continuous fellowship, we must ascend it, fearing no Hill of Difficulty. We must not say, “there is a lion in the way”—if there are lions we must slay them. If the way is rough we must tread it—we must go on hands and knees if we cannot run—but we must reach fellowship with Jesus! We must have Christ or pine till we do. We must make sacrifices and we must endure penalties, but to Christ we must come, for we are feeble when we are absent from Him and quite incapable of rendering any great service to the Church till once and for all we can say, “I found Him. I held Him, and would not let Him go.”

O dear Brothers and Sisters, I know there are some of you who can enter into what I mean, but I would to God there were many more to whom the first thought of life was Christ Jesus! Oh, for more Enochs— men who walk with God, whose habitual spirit is that of close communion with Jesus, meditating upon Him, yes, more than that—sympathizing with Him, drinking into His spirit, changed into His likeness, living over, again, His life—because He is in them the monarch of their souls! O that we had a chosen band of elect spirits of this race, for surely the whole Church would be revived through their influence! God, even our own God, would bless us and we should see bright, halcyon days dawning for the bride of Christ.

Here, then, is the first point—we must find the Lord Jesus for ourselves or we cannot bring Him into our mother’s house. I would beg every Believer here to ask himself a few questions, such as these—“Am I walking in constant fellowship with Christ? If I am not, why not? Is it that I am worldly? Is it that I am proud, or indolent, or envious, or careless? Am I indulging myself in any sin? Is there anything whatever that divides me from Christ, my Lord?” Let this be the resolution of every one of the Lord’s people—“From this time forth I will seek unto the Lord my Savior and I will not be satisfied until I can say, ‘I am coming up from the wilderness leaning upon the Beloved.’”

II. This brings us to the second point of the subject. If we would be a blessing to the Church and have already found Christ, WE MUST TAKE CARE TO RETAIN HIM. “I found Him whom my soul loves: I held Him, and would not let Him go.” From this I learn that in order to be of great use to the Church of God it is necessary for those who commune with Christ to continue in that communion. How comparatively easy it is to climb to the top of Pisgah. It needs but a little effort—many bold and gracious spirits are fully equal to it. But to stay there! To abide in that mountain—this is the difficulty. To come to Christ and to sit down at His feet is a simple enough thing for Believers, and many of us have attained to it. But to sit, day after day, at the Master’s feet is quite another matter!

Oh, could I always be as I sometimes am! Could I not only rise above but remain there! But, alas, our spiritual nature is too much like this weather—it is balmy today, one would think that spring or summer had come—but perhaps to-night we may be chilled with frost and tomorrow drenched with rain! Ah, how fickle are our spirits. We are walking with Christ, rejoicing, leaping for joy—and soon the cold frosts of worldliness come over us and we depart from Him. You will never be strong to impart great blessings to others till you cease to wander and learn the meaning of that text: “Abide in Me.” Note well it is not, “Look at Me,” nor, “Come near to Me and then go away from Me.” No, but it is, “Abide in Me.” The branch does not leave the vine and then leap back again to the stock—you never saw a living branch of the vine roaming into the corners of the vineyard, or rambling over the wall—it abides in connection with the parent stem at all times, and even so should it be with the Christian.

Mark that according to the text, it is very apparent that Jesus will go away if He is not held. “I held Him, and would not let Him go,” as if He would have gone if He had not been firmly retained. When He met with Jacob that night at the Jabbok, He said, “Let Me go.” He would not go without Jacob’s letting Him, but He would have gone if Jacob had loosed his hold. The Patriarch replied, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” This is one of Christ’s ways and manners—it is one of the peculiarities of His Character. When He walked to Emmaus with the two disciples, “He made as if He would have gone further.” They might have known it was none other than the Angel of the Covenant by that very habit! He would have gone further, but they constrained Him, saying, “Abide with us for the day is far spent.”

If you are willing to lose Christ’s company He is never intrusive. He will go away from you and leave you till you know His value and begin to pine for Him. “I will go,” He says, “and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early.” He will go unless you hold Him. But note, next, He is very willing to be held! Who could hold Him if He were not? He is the Omnipotent Savior, and if He willed to withdraw He could do so—let us hold Him with all our might! But, mark His condescension—when His spouse said, “I held Him, and would not let Him go,” He did not go. He could not go for His love held Him as well as her hands. Christ is willing to be held! He loves that sacred violence which takes Him by force—that holy diligence which leaves not a gap open by which He may escape—but shuts every door, bars every bolt, and says, “I have You now and I will take care that if I lose You it shall be through no fault of mine.”

Jesus is willing enough to be retained by hearts which are full of His love. And, Brothers and Sisters, whenever you have Christ, please remember that you are able to hold Him. She who held Him in the Song was no stronger than you are! She was but a feeble woman, poorly fed under the Old Testament dispensation! You have drunk the new wine of the New Covenant, and you are stronger than she. You can hold Him and He will not be able to go from you. “How,” say you, “shall I be able to hold Him?” Oh, have you grasped Him? Is He with you? Now, then, hold Him fast by your faith! Trust Him implicitly! Rest in Him for every day’s cares, for every moment’s! Walk by faith and He will walk with you! Hold Him, also, with the grasp of love. Let your whole heart go out towards Him. Embrace Him with the arms of mighty affection. Enchain Him with ardent admiration. Lay hold upon Him by faith and clasp Him with love.

Be also much in prayer. Prayer casts a chain about Him. He never leaves the heart that prays. There is a sweet perfume about prayer that always attracts the Lord. Wherever He perceives it rising up to Heaven there will He be. Hold Him, too, by your obedience to Him. Never quarrel with Him. Let Him have His way. He will stop in any house where He can be master—He will stay nowhere where some other will lords it over His. Watch His Words—be careful to obey them all. Be very tender in your conduct so that nothing grieves Him. Show Him that you are ready to suffer for His sake. I believe where there is a prayerful, careful, holy, loving and believing walk towards Jesus, the fellowship of the saint with his Lord will not be broken, but it may continue for months and years.

There is no reason, except in ourselves, why fellowship with Jesus should not continue throughout an entire life and oh, if it did, it would make earth into Heaven and lift us up to the condition of angels, if not beyond them! And we should be the men and women who would bring Christ into the Church and through the Church into the world! The Church would be blessed and God would be glorified, and souls would be saved if there were some among us who thus held Him and would not let Him go!

I need to call your attention to one thought before I leave this, and that is, the spouse says, “I held Him.” Now, a great many persons in the world are holding their creed, and if it is a correct one I hope they will hold it! But that is the main business of their religious life—they do nothing else but hold this doctrine or that. Hold it, Brothers and Sisters, hold it—it would be a pity if you should let it go if it is the Truth of God—but still it is more important to hold your Lord! Certain others are engrossed in holding of Scriptural ordinances, and saying, “I hold this and I hold that.” Well, hold them Brothers and Sisters, if they are God’s ordinances do not let them go. But, after all, if there is anything I hold above all else, I hold Him! Is not that the best grip a soul ever gets, when she lays hold of Christ? “I held Him, and would not let Him go.”

Ah, Lord, I may be mistaken about doctrine, but I am not mistaken about You! I may, perhaps, be staggered in my belief of some dogma which I thought was the Truth of God, but I am not staggered about You! You are the Son of God made flesh for me! You are all my salvation and all my desire—I rest on You only, without a shadow of mixture of any other hope—and I love You supremely, desiring to honor You and to obey You in life and until death. I hold You, You Covenant Angel, and I will not let You go! Dear Friends! Make this the mark of your life, that you hold Him and will not let Him go! You will then be the kind of men to bless the Church by leading the Well-Beloved into her chambers, if you know how to abide in Him yourselves.

III. It appears from the text that after the spouse had thus found Christ for herself and held Him, SHE BROUGHT HIM INTO THE CHURCH—“I brought Him to my mother’s house.” We ought lovingly to remember the Church of God. By the Holy Spirit we were begotten unto newness of life, but it was in the Church, and through the preaching of the Word, there, that we were brought into the light of life. We owe our conversion, the most of us, to some earnest teacher of the Truth in the Church of God, or to some of those godly works which were written by Christian men.

Through the Church’s instrumentality the Bible, itself, has been preserved to us, and by her the Gospel has been preached to every age. She is our mother and we love her. I know that many of you, dear Friends, the members of this Church, love the Church, and you can say, “If I forget you, let my right hand forget her cunning.” When you are away from this place and cannot mix in our solemn assemblies, your heart mourns like one in banishment. Have not I heard you cry, “Zion, Zion, our holy and beautiful house, where we have worshipped our God, the house which is built of living stones, among whom Christ Himself is the cornerstone, even Your Church, O Jesus! Would God I were in her midst again and could once more unite my praises with those that dwell within her”?

Yes, and because we love our mother’s house and the chamber of her that conceived us, we desire to bring Christ into the Church more and more. Did I hear a harsh but honest voice exclaim, “But I find much fault with the Church”? Brother, if you love her, you will go backward and cast a mantle over all. But, suppose your candor is compelled to see faults in her? Then there is so much the more need of her Lord’s Presence in her to cure those faults! The more sickly she is, the more she needs Him to be her Strength and her Physician. I say, therefore, to you, dear Friend, above all others, seek to bring Christ into an imperfect Church, and a weak Church, and an erring Church that she may become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might!

I have shown you by whom it must be—by those who have found Him and who hold Him. And now we will mention the methods by which our blessed Lord can be brought into His Church. The saints can bring Him in by their testimony. I hope that Christ is often here when I have borne testimony to you of His power to save, of His atoning blood—of His exaltation in Heaven, of the perfection of His Character—and of His willingness to save. Many a Lord’s Day His name has been like ointment poured forth in this place. Is there any subject that so delights you as that which touches upon Christ? Is not that the rarest string in all the harp of Scriptural Truth? Well, every true minister, by bearing witness for Christ, helps to bring Him into the Church.

But others can do it by their prayers. There is a mysterious efficacy in the prayers of men who dwell near to God. Even if they were compelled to their beds and did nothing but pray, they would pour benedictions upon the Church. We need our dear sick friends to get well and come among us at once in full health, but I do not know, I do not know—they may be of more service to the Church where they are! “You that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give Him no rest day nor night till He establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” Now, if there were not some saints kept awake at night by sickness to pray, we should not so fully realize that Word, “Give Him no rest day nor night.” Some of those dear ones, whose faces we miss from among us, keep up the perpetual ministry of intercession! Their incense of prayer goes up at all hours!

When the most of us are rightly enough at sleep they are compelled to wake and therefore are led to pray. How many blessings come down upon the Church of God through the prayers of His feeble saints it is not possible for us to tell. But I believe if all of us were to set apart a special time for praying and pleading with Christ that He would come into His Church, we should not be long before we saw a wonderful effect resulting from those pleadings. Wrestling prayers bring Christ into the innermost chambers of the Church of God! Let us try the power of prayer. And, there is no doubt, dear Brothers and Sisters, that Christ is often brought into the Church by the example of those eminent saints who abide in Christ.

You know what I mean. There is a very manner and air about some Christian men and women which honors Christ and benefits His people. They may not be gifted in speech, but their very spirit speaks! They are so gentle, loving, tender, earnest, truthful, upright, gracious. Their paths, like the paths of God, Himself, drop fatness. They are the anointed of the Lord, and you perceive it. Perhaps you could not say that this virtue or that is very prominent, but it is the altogether—it is their life at home, their life in public, their Church life, their private life—their entire conduct makes you see that the Holy Spirit is in them! And when they come into the Church they bring the Spirit of God with them and are thus a great means of blessing to all with whom they associate. I do pray, Brethren, that in some way or other, each one of us may try to bring Jesus Christ into the midst of His own people.

I am afraid there are some who, on the contrary, are driving Him away—Church members that, instead of blessing the Church—are a curse to it. I see a great heap before me—a vast heap that God has gathered through my instrumentality—but the winnowing fan is going and the chaff is flying! Are you, dear Friends, among the chaff or the wheat? Are you seed for the sower, or fuel for the unquenchable flames? Oh, live near to Christ! Live in Christ! May Christ live in you! Then will you enrich the Church of God. But if you do not, but only make a profession of love with your lips, what shall I say to you? I mourn over you. Take heed of living a weak life—a life without God in it—a life without Christ in it—a life which a Pharisee might live. Seek to live the life of a true-born child of God, lest you hinder the Church’s usefulness and deprive her of her Lord’s Presence.

IV. This leads me to the last point, which is this, TO CHARGE THE CHURCH THAT SHE BE CAREFUL NOT TO DISTURB THE LORD’S REPOSE. If we have been enabled, by Divine Grace, to bring the Lord into the chambers of our mother’s house—“I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my Love, till He pleases.”

Observe, then, that the Lord Jesus, in His Church, is not indifferent to the conduct of His people. We are not to suppose that because the sin of all God’s elect is pardoned, therefore it is of small consequence how they live. By no means! The Master of this great House is not blind nor deaf. Neither is He a Person who is utterly careless as to how the House is managed! On the contrary, as God is a jealous God, so is Christ a jealous Husband to His Church! He will not tolerate in her what He would tolerate in the world. She lies near His heart and she must be chaste to Him.

What a solemn work the Lord did in the early Church. That story of Ananias and Sapphira—it is often used most properly to illustrate the danger of lying—but that is not the point of the narrative. Ananias and Sapphira were members of the Church at Jerusalem and they lied not unto men, which would have been sin enough, but in lying to the Church officers they lied unto God—and the result was their sudden death. Now, you are not to suppose that this was a solitary case. Wherever there is a true Church of God, the judgments of God are always going on in it. I speak now not only what I have read, but what I have known and seen with my eyes. What I am as sure of as I am sure of any fact in history.

The Apostle Paul, speaking of the same in his day, said that in a certain Church there was so much sin that many were weak and sickly among them, and many slept—that is to say there was great sickness in the Church—and many died. Judgments are begun in the House of God and are always going on there. I have seen men in the Church who have walked at a distance from God who have been visited with severe chastisements. I have seen others who have been of hot and proud spirits who have been terribly humbled. And I have seen some arrogantly touch God’s Ark and the doom of Uzzah has befallen them. I have seen it and know it! And so it always will be.

The Lord Jesus Christ is looking around His Church—if He sees anything evil in it, He will do one of two things. Either He will go right away from His Church because the evil is tolerated there, and He will leave that Church to be like Laodicea—to go on from bad to worse till it becomes no Church at all—or else He will come and He will trim the lamp, or to use the figure of the 15th of John—He will prune the branch and with His knife will cut off this member and the other and cast them into the fire! While, as for the rest, He will cut them till they bleed again, because they are fruit-bearing members, but they have too much wood and He wants them to bring forth more fruit. It is not a trifling matter to be in the Church of God!

God’s fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem. “His fan is in His hand and He shall thoroughly purge”—what? The world? O no, “His floor,” the Church. And then, again, “He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He shall purify”—what? The heathen nations! No, “the sons of Levi”—His own people! So, you see, Christ is not indifferent to what is going on in the Church, and it is necessary that when He comes to the Church to take His repose and solace Himself there, we should not stir Him up nor awake Him till He pleases. Many things will drive our Lord away and these shall have our closing words.

Dear fellow members of this Church, may we each one be more watchful lest the Bridegroom should withdraw from us! He will go away if we grow proud. If we are boastful and say, “There is a reason why God should bless us,” and should begin to speak as a bully towards weaker Brethren, the Lord will let us know that, “not unto us, not unto us, but unto His name shall be all the glory.” Again, if there is a lack of love among us, the Lord of Love will be offended. The Holy Dove loves not scenes of strife—He frequents the calm still waters of brotherly love. There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore, where Brethren dwelt together in unity. If any of you have half a hard thought towards another, get rid of it! If there is the beginnings of anything like jealousy, quench the sparks!

“Leave off strife,” says Solomon, “before it is meddled with,” as if he said, “End it before you begin it,” which, though it seems strangely paradoxical, is most wise advice. “Little children love one another.” “Walk in love as Christ also has loved us.” May discord be far from us. Notice the beautiful imagery of the text. “I charge you by the roes and the hinds of the field.” In ancient times gazelles were often tamed and were the favorite companions of Eastern ladies. The gazelle might be standing near its mistress, fixing its loving eyes upon her—but if a stranger clapped his hands it would hasten away. The roes and hinds, “of the field,” are even more jealous things—a sound will startle them. Even the breath of the hunter tainting the gale puts them to speedy flight. Even thus is it with Jesus! A little thing, a very little thing, will drive Him from us and it may be many a day before our repentance shall be able to find Him again. He has suffered so much from sin that He cannot endure the approach of it! His pure and holy soul abhors the least taint of iniquity.

Let us gather from the text that there are some things in the true Church which give our Lord rest. He is represented here as though He slept in the Church, “That you stir not up, nor awake my Love, till He pleases.” Wherever He sees true repentance, real faith, holy consecration, purity of life, chastity of love—there Christ rests. I believe He finds no sweeter happiness, even in Heaven, than the happiness of accepting His people’s prayers and praises. Our love is very sweet to Him. Our deeds of gratitude are very precious. The broken alabaster boxes of self-sacrifices done for Him are very fair in His esteem. He finds no rest in the world, He never did. But He finds sweet rest on the bosoms of His faithful ones. He loves to come into a pure Church and there to say, “I am at home. I will declare Your name unto My Brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise You.”

Let us be very watchful, too, against all impurity. Anything like uncleanness in a Christian will soon send the Master away from the Church. You know what it was that brought the evil upon the house of Eli. It was because his sons made themselves vile even at the tabernacle door. The young people in that case were the immediate cause of the mischief, but it was the fault of the elder ones that they restrained them not. Watch against all evil passions and corrupt desires. Be holy even as your Father which is in Heaven is holy. And then, again, a lack of prayer will send Him away. There are members of some Churches who never come to the Prayer Meetings, and I should be afraid that their private prayers cannot be any too earnest.

Of course we speak not of those who have a good excuse. But there are some who habitually and willfully neglect the assembling of themselves together—these are worthy of condemnation. Oh, let us continue a prayerful Church as we have up to now been, otherwise the Master may say, “They do not value the blessing, for they will not even ask for it. They evidently do not care about My Spirit, for they will not meet together and cry for Him.” Do not grieve Him by any such negligence of prayer! So, too, we may grieve the Spirit by worldliness. If any of you who are rich get to imitate the fashions of the world and act as worldlings do, you cannot expect the Lord to bless us. You are Achans in the camp if such is the case. And if you who are poor get to be envious of others and speak harshly of others to whom God has given more substance than to you— that will grieve the Lord. You know how the children of Israel in the wilderness provoked Him, and their provocation mostly took the form of murmuring. They complained of this and of that—if they had the manna they wanted flesh—and if they had water gushing from the Rock they must have more.

I pray you by the heart of mercies that is in Christ Jesus! By all the compassion He has manifested towards us! By the high love He deserves of us since He laid down His life for us! By your allegiance to Him as your King! By your trust in Him as your Savior and by your love to Him as the Bridegroom of your souls—“stir not up, nor awake my Love till He pleases.” Let me ask you to be more in prayer. Let me pray you to live nearer to Him. Let me entreat you, for the Church’s sake, and for the world’s sake to be more thoroughly Christ’s than you ever have been and may the power of the Holy Spirit enable you in this!

I do not fear lest I should lose that which I have worked, for God will establish the work of our hands upon us. But yet I do put up to Him daily the prayer that this Church may not be found, in years to come, to be a building of wood and hay and stubble that shall be consumed in the fire of heresy or discord, or some other testing flame which God may suffer to come upon it. But oh, may you, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, be gold and silver, and precious stones that the workman at the last, saved himself, may not have to suffer loss, nor the Master be dishonored in the eyes of men! May you stand as a sparkling pile of precious gems, inhabited by the eternal Spirit, to the praise and the glory of His Grace, in which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. Amen.

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THE ROYAL PAIR IN THEIR GLORIOUS CHARIOT  
NO. 482

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 30, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Who is this that comes out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? Behold his bed, which is Solomon’s; three score valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man has his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold,the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O you daughters of Zion and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day   
of his espousals and in the day the gladness of his heart.”   
[Song 3:6-11](tw://bible.*?id=22.3.6-22.3.11|_AUTODETECT_|)***.**

GREAT princes in the east are in the habit of traveling in splendid palanquins, which are at the same time chariots and beds. The person reclines within, screened by curtains from public view. A bodyguard protects the equipage from robbers, and blazing torches light up the path along which the travelers proceed. King Solomon, in this Song, describes the Church of Christ and Christ Himself, as travailing through the world in such a palanquin. The day is coming when both our Divine Lord and His chosen bride shall be revealed in glory before the eyes of all men. The present age is the period of concealment—the mystical Solomon and his Beloved Solyma are both on earth, but they are unseen of men. Like the ark of old, they dwell within curtains—only the anointed priests of God can discern their beauties and even these gaze rather by faith than by sight.

“Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” is certainly true, for Jesus is here. But equally correct is that word of Peter, “Whom having not seen, you love. In whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” He is here in the reality, power, and influence of His Presence, but He is not here as to the visibility of His kingdom and Person. We wait with our loins girt about, and with patience of hope, until the revelation of Jesus Christ. The portion of the blessed Canticle now before us is, we think, descriptive of the progress of the hidden Christ through the world.

He has been borne along, in very Truth, but He Himself has been so little perceived of men, that they even ask the question, “Who is this that comes out of the wilderness?” He is not now manifested openly to men. If any should say, “Lo here!” or “Lo there! This is Christ!” believe them not, for Christ is not as yet seen. When He does come, He shall be as perceptible as the lightning’s flash, which every man’s eye discerns without the need of an instructor. So, also, with His true Church. She, also, is hidden like her Lord, and though her hands, her feet, or her face may sometimes be seen, yet the whole elect body has never yet been beheld. If any say, “Lo, here is the Church of Christ!” or “Lo there!” Believe them not, for it is a fact that there is no corporation of men of which we can say exclusively or even universally, “Lo, this is the Church of Christ.”

There are tares growing with the wheat in the best guarded field, and on the other hand, no one enclosure contains all the wheat. The true Church of Christ is scattered here and there. It is found among all denominations, and there is not one denomination of which you can say, “This, only, is the Church of Christ, or all its members belong to the body of Christ’s spouse.” Just now the mystical bride is in a certain sense as invisible as her Husband. Behold, then, the betrothed ones carried through the world in the sumptuous chariot of which we have to speak this morning.

I must now claim your attention while I notice, first, the glory of the progress of Christ through the world, as described in the sixth verse. Secondly, the security of Christ’s cause, as represented in the seventh and eighth. Thirdly, the superlative excellence of it, as described in the ninth and tenth verses. And lastly, our joyful duties with regard to it, as openly declared in the eleventh verse.

I. First, then, THE MAGNIFICENT PROGRESS, THE GLORIOUS ONGOING OF THE CHURCH AND HER LORD THROUGH THE WORLD. “Who is this that comes out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?” The equipage excites the attention of the onlooker. His curiosity is raised and he asks, “Who is this?” Now, in the first progress of the Christian Church, in her very earliest days, there were persons who marveled greatly. And though they set down the wonders of the day of Pentecost to drunkenness, yet “they were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, What does this mean?”

In after years, many a heathen philosopher said, “What is this new power which is breaking the idols in pieces, changing old customs, making even thrones unsafe—what is this?” By-and-by, in the age of the Reformation, there were scowled monks, cardinals in their red hats, and bishops and princes and emperors, who all said, “What is this? What strange doctrine has come to light?” In the times of the modern reformation, a century ago, when God was pleased to revive His Church through the instrumentality of Whitfield and his Brothers, there were many who said, “What is this new enthusiasm, this Methodism? Where did it come from, and what power is this which it wields?”

And, doubtless, whenever God shall be pleased to bring forth His Church in power, and to make her mighty among the sons of men, the ignorance of men will be discovered breaking forth in wonder, for they will say, “Who is this?” Spiritual religion is as much a novelty now as in the day when Grecian sages scoffed at it on Mars’ Hill. The true Church of God is a stranger and a pilgrim still—an alien and a foreigner in every land, a speckled bird, a dove in the midst of ravens, a lily among thorns.

The ignorance of men concerning spiritual things is not, however, caused by the darkness of the things themselves, for Christ and His Church are the great lights of the world. When great personages traveled in their palanquins, and more especially in marriage processions, they were attended by a number of persons who, at night, carried high up in the air burning cressets which gave forth a blaze of light. Sometimes these lights were simply torches carried in the hands of running footmen. At other times they were a sort of iron basket lifted high into the air, upon poles, from which went up a pillar of smoke and flame.

Our text says, “Who is this that comes out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke?” This is a beautiful illustration of the fact that wherever Christ and His cause are carried, light is a sure accompaniment. Into whatever region the Gospel may journey, her every herald is a flash of light, her every minister a flaming fire. God makes His Churches the golden candlesticks, and says unto His children, “You are the lights of the world.” This is as certain as ever God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light over the old creation. So does He say, whenever His Church advances, “Let there be light,” and there is light. Dens of darkness, where the bats of superstition had folded their wings and hung themselves up for perpetual ease, have been disturbed by the glare of these Divine flames.

The innermost caverns of superstition and sin, once black with a darkness which might be felt, have been visited with a light above the brightness of the sun. “The people which sat in darkness have seen a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light has sprung up.” Thus says the Lord unto the nation where His kingdom comes, “Arise, shine, for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you!” Bear the Church of Christ to the South Seas. Carry Christ and His spouse in His palanquin to the Caffre, the Hottentot, or the Eskimo, and everywhere the night of death is ended and the morning with its glorious dawn has come. Lift high your lamps, you servants of our Lord! Lift high the Cross of the Redeemer. For in Him is light, and the light is the life of men.

But you will tell me that our text rather speaks of “ pillars of smoke,” than of sparkling lamps. Brethren, the smoke is but the effect of the flame and even the pillar of smoke is luminous. What is the smoke that has attended the Church? What but the deaths of her martyrs, the sufferings of her confessors, the patient endurance of her valiant sons? Wherever she goes, the thick smoke of her suffering goes up to Heaven. “We are always delivered unto death,” said the Apostle. The cause of the Truth of God involves a perpetual sacrifice. Her smoke ascends forever. Black smoke, I say, it is in the eye of man, but unto God it is a sweet-smelling savor. Never did fat of rams, or the fat of kidneys of fed beasts smell so sweetly before the Most High as the faith, the love, the courage, which has ascended up to Heaven from the dauntless heroes of the Church in past

ages when at the stake they have been faithful even unto death.

Suffering, grief, and woe are the lot of the spouse of the despised and rejected Savior—but all these are as things of nothing—if thereby she may scatter that terrible blackness which blinds the face of man, and makes him a stranger to his God.

It often happens that oriental monarchs of immense possessions are not content with burning common coals in these cressets, but frequently consume sandalwood and other woods which give forth a delightful smell. Or else, if they use ordinary coals, they sprinkle upon them frankincense and myrrh so that a delicious perfume is spread on all sides. In the olden times they also went to great expense in obtaining drugs, which the merchants collected from all parts of the earth, and these were carefully compounded into the renowned “powders of the merchants,” which yielded a delicious variety of delicate perfumes, not to be produced by any particular aromatic essence.

Our inspired poet describes the traveling procession of the royal pair, and fails not to dwell upon the delightful perfume of myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant, “which make the wilderness smell as a garden of roses.” Wherever the Church of Christ proceeds, though her pathway is a desert, though she marches through a howling wilderness, she scatters the richest perfume. The pages of history were only worthy to be blotted in oblivion were it not for the sweet odors which the Church has left upon it. Look at all past ages and the track of the Church is still redolent with all the richest fragrance of human virtue and Divine Grace.

Wherever the Church advances she makes manifest the savor of the knowledge of Christ in every place! Men believe in Jesus, and unto the Lord, faith has all the fragrance of myrrh. They love Jesus. And love in the esteem of Heaven is better than frankincense. Loving Christ they endeavor to be like He is, till patience, humility, brotherly kindness, truthfulness, and all things that are honest, lovely and of good repute, like “powders of the merchant,” are spread abroad throughout the whole earth. Tell me where the Church is not, and I will tell you where sin reigns. Tell me where Christ and His Church are carried and I will tell you where you shall find every virtue that can adorn humanity, and every excellence that can magnify the excellence of the Grace of God.

If you would find an antidote for the deadly exhalations which lurk among this world’s deserts of sin. If you would destroy the foul pestilence which reigns in the darkness of heathenism, of Popery, and of infidelity, cry unto the Mighty One—“Arise, You unknown traveler, arise and bid Your servants carry You into the midst of all this misery and death! The light of Your flaming torches shall scatter the darkness, and the burning of Your precious perfumes shall say unto evil—‘Fold your wings!’ And unto the pestilence of sin—‘Get you back unto your den!’ ”

Among the ten wonders which Jewish tradition ascribes to the temple, we find that the rain never extinguished the fire of the wood which was laid in order upon the altar, nor did the wind ever conquer the pillar of smoke so as to disperse or bend it. Verily it is so with the Church of God as she comes out of the wilderness—who shall quench her flaming lamp, or stay the incense of her golden censers? Ride on, Great Prince, and bear Your spouse with You in Your majestic chariot, till You have lit the world with Your Divine light and has made it a temple filled with a cloud of incense of sweet smell to the nostrils of Jehovah.

II. We have, secondly, to notice THE SECURITY OF CHRIST’S CHURCH AT ALL TIMES. Of course when traveling through a wilderness, a royal procession was always in danger of attack. Arabs prowled around. Wandering Bedouins were always prepared to fall upon the caravan. And more especially was this the case with a marriage procession, because then the robbers might expect to obtain many jewels, or, if not, a heavy ransom for the redemption of the bride or bridegroom by their friends.

What shall I say of the attacks which have been made upon the Church of Christ and upon Christ, Himself? They have been incessant. When one form of evil has been routed, another has presented itself. Evil teems with children. The frogs and lice of Egypt were not more numerous than the enemies of the Lord’s anointed and His bride. Every day produces new battles. These attacks arise from all quarters. Sometimes from the world, and sometimes, alas, from even professed members of the Church! Adversaries lurk everywhere, and until the Church and her Lord shall be revealed in the splendor of the Millennium, having left the wilderness forever, we must expect to find her molested on every side.

My dear Brethren, we know that Christ’s cause in the world is always safe because of Divine protection, and because the legions of God’s angels keep watch and ward over the saints. But we have something more tangible than this. Our gracious God has been pleased to commit unto men the ministry of Christ. “Unto the angels has He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.” The Lord ordains that chosen men should be the protectors of His Church—not that they have any power as of themselves to do anything—but He girds the weak with strength and makes the feeble mighty. So then, men, even the sons of men, stand in array around the traveling palanquin of Christ, to guard both the bridegroom and the bride.

Read the 7th and 8th verses carefully and you will notice that there are enough swordsmen. “Threescore valiant men are about it.” There are always enough men chosen of God to guard the Church. Poor Unbelief holds up her hands and cries—“Ah, the good men are all dead! Zion is under a cloud. The Lord has taken away the great men. We have no valiant defenders of the faith, none such as this crisis may require!” Ah, Unbelief, let the Lord say unto you as he did unto Elijah—“Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal.” There shall be just as many warriors as the crisis shall require.

We do not know where the men are to come from, but the Lord will provide. There may be sitting in the Sunday school today a child who shall one day shake this nation from one end to the other. There may be even here, unknown, obscure and unobserved, the man whom God will make strong to rebuke the infamous infidelity of our age. We know not where the anointing rests. We, in our folly, would anoint Eliab or Abinadab—but God has chosen David, the shepherd boy, and He will bring him forth and teach him how to hurl the stone at Goliath’s brow. Tremble not, neither

be afraid! God who makes man, and makes man’s mouth, will find the sixty men when the sixty shall be needed. “The Lord gave the Word, great was the company of them that published it.” The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

Observe that these warriors are men of the right mettle. “Yes,” says poor trembling Little-Faith, “we have hosts of men, but they are not like the Great-Hearts of old. They have not the qualifications which the age requires.” Ah, but remember, about the bed of Solomon there are “threescore valiant men.” And glory be unto my Master, while I may not flatter the ministry, I must not dishonor Him by believing that He has left His Church without valiant defenders! There are Luthers still living who bid defiance to all adversaries. There are men, still, who can say, “We count not our lives dear unto us that we may finish our course with joy and fulfill the ministry which the Lord has delivered unto us.”

Fear not. You may not at present know the valor of the Lord’s bodyguard, but when the Church’s battle grows hotter than just now, suddenly there shall be seen a champion stalking to the front of the battle, and men shall say, “Who is this? How he wields that battleaxe! How he splits the armor of his foes! See how he piles them in heaps on heaps, and mounts that hill of slaughtered enemies to smite a greater foe! Who is this?” And the answer shall be, “This is a man whom God has found. The world knew not of him, but God has trained him in the camps of Dan and now the Spirit moves him to smite the Philistines.

“Ah,” I think I hear you say, “but though there may be so many men and men of the right sort, I am afraid they are not in the right place.” Look again at the text. It is written—“Threescore valiant men are ABOUT IT.” That is, there are some on that side, and some on this, some before, and some behind. They are all round the traveling chariot of Christ. “I wish there might be one in our parish,” says one. Pray for him, and He who has promised to send you all good things may yet send him to you. “Pray you the Lord of the harvest that He may send forth laborers into His harvest.” It is singular how God sometimes raises a mighty man—in this denomination, then in that—and then in the other.

Suppose any body of Christians should try to monopolize all the valiant men themselves—why, they could not do it, because every side of the royal bed must be guarded—and in his own place each man is set for the defense of the Gospel. The Church is compassed about with mighty men, who are under God to do great exploits. If the Lord guides the flight of sparrows, surely He knows how to dispose His ministers. Let the Church be well content to let them occupy their posts until the wilderness is past, and the glory shall be revealed. The Church often makes mistakes and thinks she can make ministers, or at least choose their position. She can do no such thing. God sends the valiant man.

All you can do is to recognize his valor, and accept him as your champion. Beyond that you cannot go. This is God’s work, not man’s. A minister made by men—made valiant by human strength—had better betake himself at once ignominiously to his tent, for his disgrace will be certain. God who sends the men, knows where to put them, so that they may stand round about the bed and leave no corner unprotected.

Notice that these men are all well armed. The text says expressly, “They all hold swords.” What swords are these? Every valiant man in Christ’s Israel holds the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. A man who is a good specialist in Scripture will usually be a good Divine. He who draws from the treasury of the written Word will find his spoken word to be fruitful in profit to the people of God. If we use carnal reason. If we rely upon refinement, argument, eloquence—or any other form of the wisdom of man—we shall soon find our enemies will defeat us. But to ply the Word right and left. To give Gospel cuts and strokes such as the devil, himself, cannot ward off—this is to overcome the world through the Word of God.

Besides this, here is an opportunity for you all to carry swords—every valiant man in God’s Israel carries the sword of prayer—which is comparable to those huge two-handed swords of olden times, which the soldier lifted up and brought down with such tremendous force, as to cleave a man in half! Prayer is a weapon which no man can effectually resist. If you know how to use it, bring it down upon your enemy’s head and woe unto him! I would to God that in this Church there were found many of these valiant men of Israel! Indeed, would God all the Lord’s servants were Prophets, that it might be said of all of you that you hold swords. Your holy lives can be swords with which to smite your enemies. The tongues with which you speak of Christ lovingly, tenderly, persuasively—these may be weapons against our common enemy.

Oh, that when we hear the muster roll at last, it may be said of every Church member that he held a sword! Do not tremble, you timid ones, for the ark of the Lord. Neither let your fears promote your unbelief—God knows full well how to give the right weapons to the right men—and His Church shall be secure even to the end. Further, my Brethren, these men are not only well armed but are well trained. They are all expert in war— men who have endured temptations themselves. Men whose souls have been exercised, men who have slain both the lion and the bear, and are men of war from their youth. Christian ministers, especially, should be no novices—but both in the school of temptation, and in some school of the Prophets, they should be disciplined for fight. May there be such found here!

I look out daily for such among you as are taught of God, and much of my time is spent with our young soldiers to make them expert in war. O that the Lord would hear my prayers, and bless our college with men and means, and above all with His Spirit! Fools are not the men for this age. We want a sound knowledge of doctrine, practical power in preaching, and a thorough insight into the human heart. And where these by earnest prayer can be found in a man, and further developed by careful teaching, we are bound to give our aid. Such men should be looked after, and no pains should be spared to bring them forth. In fact, dear Friends, you ought to think it a high honor to be allowed to help in putting such men into working order.

Oh, how I groan to get my friends to feel the importance of sending out trained young ministers! I give my time and my substance cheerfully, but when will the Christian Church help in this matter as it should? Further,

these men were not only well trained but you will see that they were always ready. Each man has his sword upon his thigh, ready to be drawn. I know some nominal ministers who seem to me to carry no sword at all. They keep a sheath, a very handsome sheath, with a hilt at the top, and a stick inside. What is the good of such men? We want men to have swords in their sheaths—men who can speak with power and have the demonstration of the Spirit and the power thereof resting upon them. Such men should wear their swords where they are to be got at, so that when the adversary comes they may dash at him at once.

Rejoice, O daughter of Zion, your Lord has not left you, even at this day, without some such men! Observe also that these men were watchful, for “they had their sword on their thigh because of fear in the night.” They never sleep, but watch always for the Church’s interest. Pray that the Lord may raise up many such, who night and day, with tears, shall watch for the souls of men and against the enemies of our Israel. Dear Friends, some of you may at times be alarmed when you hear of attacks made upon the Bible. At one time it was thought that science would prove that the human race could not be one. And Moses was terribly abused by some who said it was not possible that all of us could have come of one pair.

That battle was fought, and you hear nothing of it now. It is over. Learning and argument in the hand of God have routed those antagonists. Then they pelted us with shells and bones of lizards. Geology threatened to dig our graves. But we have lived all through that struggle and we have found geology to be a great blessing, for it has shed a new light on the first chapter of Genesis and made us understand a great deal better what it meant. Another Amalekite advances to combat. This time it is with figures and numbers. We are to be speared with arithmetic and slain with algebra! And what will be the result of it? Why, it will do the Bible a world of good, for we shall understand it better.

I thank God whenever the Bible is attacked. For all those who know the times and seasons begin to study just that part of Scripture more carefully, and then we get a clearer light shed upon it, and we find ourselves more confirmed than ever that this is the very Truth of God and that God has revealed it to us. “Well but who will take this matter up?” I do not know, and I do not particularly care. But I know my Master has His threescore valiant men round about His bed and that each man has his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. Never mind what the battle may be, the end of it will be for God’s glory, and there shall be progress with the chariot of Christ through that which seemed as if it must overthrow it. Cast aside your fears! Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Zion! Your Lord is with you in the traveling chariot, and the threescore valiant men are watching against your foes.

III. Meanwhile, reposing in peace, let us notice THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS CHARIOT IN WHICH JESUS RIDES. It is not difficult to convey to persons the most unacquainted with Eastern manners and customs, an idea of what this palanquin is. It is a sort of large sedan in which one or two persons may recline with ease. Of course, this palanquin could not be made of gold or silver, because then it would be too heavy for carriage. It must be made of wood. Therefore King Solomon made a bed, or chariot, or palanquin, of the wood of Lebanon.

Then there needs to be four pillars supporting the covering and the curtains. The pillars are of silver. The bottom of it should be something massive, in order to sustain the weight of the person. The bottom is of gold. The canopy on the top is a covering of purple. Since to lie on gold would be very unpleasant, it is covered with delicate, daintily worked carpets. And so we have the bottom paved, or rather carpeted, with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. Some delicate devices of needlework adorn the bottom of this bed-chariot in which the king and his spouse recline during their journey.

The doctrines of the Gospel are comparable, for their antiquity, for their sweet fragrance, for their incorruptibility, to the wood of Lebanon. The Gospel of Christ never decays. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Not one single Truth of God bears any sign of rot. And to those souls that are enlightened from above, the Gospel gives forth a fragrance far richer than the wood of Lebanon—

*“No beams of cedar or of fir,*

*Can with Your precious truth compare.”*  
I rejoice to know concerning you as a Church, that the more you understand the Doctrines of Grace the better you love them. You are confirmed in the present faith, and well you may be, for our doctrine is worthy of your confidence.

We are not afraid that any Truth which Christ has uttered should be tried by the most stringent criticism, for not one single stone of all the bulwarks of Gospel doctrine can ever be removed out of its place. When cedars of Lebanon have yielded to the worm, even then shall the Truth of God, as it is in Jesus, remain the same. As for the silver pillars which bear up the canopy, to what should I liken them but to the attributes of God which support and guarantee the efficiency of the great Atonement of Christ beneath which we are sheltered. There is the silver pillar of God’s justice. He cannot, He will not smite the soul that hides beneath the Cross of Christ. If Christ has paid the debt, how is it possible that God should visit again, a second time, the iniquity of His people, first on their Surety, and then again on themselves?

Then stands the next, the solid pillar of his power. “They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands, My Father which gave them Me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” Then on the other side is the pillar of His love, a silver pillar indeed, bright and sparkling to the eye. Love unchanging and eternal, strong as the power, and fast as the justice which bear up the canopy on the other side. And here on this side stands immutability, another column upon which the Atonement rests. If God could change, then might He cast away His blood-bought. But, “because I am God and change not, therefore you sons of Jacob rejoice.”

As for the covering of the chariot, it is of purple. I need not tell you where it was dyed. No Tyrian hues are mingled here. Look up, Christian, and delight yourself in that blood-red canopy which shelters you from the sun by day, and from the moon by night! From Hell and Heaven, from time, and from eternity, are you secured by this covering which is of purple. Oh, tempting theme to dilate upon the precious and glorious doctrine of Atonement! Whenever our adversaries assail the Church, whatever may be the apparent object of their animosity, their real one is always the same—a desperate hatred of the great Truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself—not imputing their trespasses unto them. Well, as they hate it, let us love it. And under it let us take our greatest delight.

As for the bottom of this palanquin, which is of gold—may not this represent the eternal purpose and counsel of God—that purpose which He formed in Himself before the earth was? Pure was the decree of God— holy, wise, just—for His own glory, and most true. And as the precious things of the temple were all of gold, well may the basis of eternal love, an immutable and unchangeable decree, be compared to much fine gold. I do not know, Brothers and Sisters, how it is with you, but I find it most pleasant to have as the basis of my hope, the firm decree of God. Atonement covers me, I know, but still on this I must rest—Jehovah wills it, God decrees it—He has said it, and it must be done. He has commanded and it stands fast. Oh, that golden sovereignty, whereon is written—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the Apostle plainly tells us that this is the basis on which even the silver pillars rest, “for He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as He has chosen us in Him from before the foundation of the world.” Then, to make this all soft and pleasant to recline upon, here is carpeting of needlework. Soft cushions of love on which to rest. There is a double meaning here, for both the bride and bridegroom find rest in love. Our Lord finds rest in the love of His people. “Here will I dwell forever.” They do, as it were, make these carpets of needlework in their love and affection for Him, and in their trust and confidence in Him. And here He rests.

On the other hand, our Beloved spent His life to work for us our bed of rest, so that we must translate it, “love of,” as well as love for the daughters of Jerusalem.” We rest in Christ’s love. He rests in our love. Come, I need not explain further, Brothers and Sisters. Take your rest now to the full. You are married unto Christ. You are one with Him. You are betrothed unto Him in faithfulness, embraced in the arms of His affection. Fear not the noise of archers. The “threescore valiant men” protect you, and the King, Himself, embraces you. Now solace yourself with Him. Take your full of His sweet society and say unto Him from the bottom of your heart, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine.”

Leave fighting for the evidences to the valiant men who can do it. As for you, you daughters of Jerusalem, rest upon your Lord’s bosom. Leave conflict to the men ordained to fight, the men expert in war. As for you, be you expert in communion! Understand the motions of Jesus’ heart. Look unto the luster of His loving eyes. Behold His beauties. Be ravished with His Divine affection to you. And now let your soul be satisfied with favor, and be full of the loving kindness of the Lord!

IV. We close, then, by noticing THE DUTY OF EVERY BELIEVING HEART newest in connection with the subject. Let every Believer, while he recognizes himself as part of the Church inside the palanquin, yet look upon himself personally as one of the daughters of Zion, and let us each go forth this morning to meet King Solomon. It is not King David—King David is the type of Christ up to the time of His crucifixion—“despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief,” and yet King of the Jews. King Solomon is the type of Christ ever since the day when—

*“They brought His chariot from above,  
To bear Him to His Throne,”*  
and, with sound of trumpet, conducted Him to His Father above.

Now it is King Solomon. King Solomon for wealth, for wisdom, for dignity, for honor, for peace. He is the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and therefore is He King Solomon going forth. Get up from your beds of sloth! Rise from your chambers of ease! Go forth, go forth to pray, to labor, to suffer! Go forth to live in purity, leaving Babylon behind! Go forth to walk with Him alone, leaving even your kinfolk and acquaintances if they will not follow with you. Why tarry at home when the King is abroad? “Behold the Bridegroom comes, come forth to meet Him,” and behold King Solomon.

Today let your eyes rest upon Him. Let your eyes behold the head that today is crowned with glory, wearing many crowns. Behold, too, His hands which once were pierced, but are now grasping the scepter. Look to His girdle where swing the keys of Heaven, and death, and Hell. Look to His feet, once pierced with iron, but now set upon the dragon’s head. Behold His legs, like fine brass, as if they glowed in a furnace. Look at His heart, that bosom which heaves with love to you, and when you have surveyed Him from head to foot exclaim, “Yes, He is the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely.” Does sin prevail? Behold King Solomon! Have doubts and fears arisen? Behold King Jesus!

Are you troubled and does your enemy annoy you? Look up to Him. Behold King Solomon! I pray you remember the light in which you are to behold Him. Do not think that Christ has lost His former power. Behold Him as He was at Pentecost, with the crown wherewith His mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals. Oh, how glorious was our Lord when the Church crowned Him with her zeal, and the arrows went abroad and three thousand fell slain by His right hand to be made alive by the breath of His mouth! Oh, how these early saints crowned Him, when they brought of their substance and laid it at the Apostle’s feet! Neither did any man consider that all he had was his own. They crowned Him with their heart’s purest love. The Church had on her brow her bridal wreath, and her Husband wore His nuptial crown. Behold Him today as wearing that crown still, for He is the same Christ! Now go forth to meet Him and labor for Him and love Him as the first saints did.

Forget not that His mother is to crown Him soon in the day of His espousals. He is our Brother as well as our Husband, and the Church is His mother as well as ours. Oh, she is to crown Him soon! The day of His espousals draws near. Hark! I hear the trumpet sound! Jesus comes, and His feet stand upon Mount Olivet! Kings and princes lick the dust before

Him. He gathers sheaves of scepters beneath His arms even as the mower gathers wheat with the sickle. He treads on principalities and powers, the young lion and the dragon does He trample under foot. And now His saints cry, “Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.” The long expected One is come, and His mother crowns Him in the day of His espousals! Courage, poor heart, courage! Go forth and see King Solomon today as He is to be, and remember—

*“It does not yet appear  
How great we shall be made;  
But when we see our Savior here,  
We shall be like our Head.”*

When we look on Him, let us rejoice that this is to be our glory. We are to put off this sackcloth and put on scarlet and fine linen. The dust is to be wiped from our brow and the sweat from our face. The shackles are to be taken from our wrists, and the fetters from our legs. And we are to be emancipated, ennobled, glorified, made partners with Christ in all His splendor, and taught to reign with Him world without end!

But there are some here that I can hardly call the daughters of Jerusalem, yet they are always round about Zion’s gate. Oh, there are many of you who are always listening to our voice, and joining in our hymns, and yet you have never seen our Master! Go forth—leave your sinful pleasures, and leave your self-righteousness, too—go forth and behold King Solomon. Look to Jesus, Sinner, bleeding on the Cross, and as you look, love and trust. And I know that as soon as you have seen Him and trusted Him, you will have a crown to put upon His head. It will be the day of your espousal unto Him and you will crown Him with such a crown!

You will decorate that crown with jewels dug from the secret mine of your deepest heart, and having made this crown, you will put it on His head and fall down before Him and sing —

*“All hail the power of Jesus’ name,  
Let angels prostrate fall;  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown Him Lord of all.”*

Well, then, we will lay aside every fear and continue all the day gazing upon our matchless Christ, adoring Him, exalting Him and having fellowship with Him. For all is well. His traveling chariot is always safe and soon will He step out of it with His bride at His right hand. And the world shall be astonished to behold the beauties of the royal pair when He shall be exalted and they that are with Him, before the Presence of His Father and all the holy angels!

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CHRIST’S ESTIMATE OF HIS PEOPLE  
NO. 282

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 23, 1859, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“How fair is your love, My sister, My spouse! How much better is your love than wine! And the smell of your ointments than all spices! Your lips, O My spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under**

**your tongue and the smell of your  
garments is like the smell of Lebanon.”  
Song of Solomon 4:10, 11.**

I shall not, this morning, attempt to prove that the Song of Solomon has a spiritual meaning. I am sure it has. It has been frequently said and, I believe, has commonly been thought, that this song was originally written by Solomon upon his marriage with Pharaoh’s daughter. Now I am as sure as I am of my own existence, that this is one of the grossest mistakes that ever was committed. There is nothing about Pharaoh’s daughter in it. It is, first of all, improbable that it was written of her. And in the next place I will go further and affirm that it is impossible that it could have been written by Solomon in honor of her. If you look all through the song you will find that this is so.

In the beginning she is compared to a shepherdess. Now all shepherds are abominations to the Egyptians—do you think, therefore, that Solomon would compare an Egyptian princess to the very thing which she despised? In the next place, all the scenery is in the land of Canaan, none of it in Egypt. And besides that, all the places that Solomon speaks of, such as Engedi, Lebanon, Amana and Damascus, were all out of the way. Not one of them would have been passed in coming out of Egypt into Jerusalem and very probably the Egyptian princess did not even know there were such places at all, so that if Solomon had wished to praise her he would not have compared her eyes to the fish-ponds of Heshbon, but would have spoken of the sweet waters of the Nile. Besides, it could not have been Pharaoh’s daughter. Did Pharaoh’s daughter ever keep sheep?—and yet the person who is represented here did.

Did the watchman ever follow her about the streets and try to take her veil away from her? Solomon would have shown them something if they had. Therefore, that is impossible. In one place, Solomon compares her to a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariot. Now, horses were, among the Israelites, common things. And what would Pharaoh’s daughter have said, if Solomon had compared her to a company of horses? She might have well looked him in the face and said, “Have you not some better comparison for me than my father’s horses?” It is very unlikely that Solomon perpetrated that folly. It is improbable, therefore and we may almost say,

impossible, that it could be Pharaoh’s daughter. She never came from Lebanon and from the top of Amana—most probably she never heard of those places, or, if she heard of them, she could not have come from them, for she came from Egypt.

The fact is, that this book has been a puzzle to many men for the simple reason that it was not written for them at all. Learned men and wise men find this a stone on which they are broken to powder, just because it was not written for them. Men who are disposed to laugh at Scripture find here an opportunity to exercise their profane wit, just because the book is not written for them. This book was called by the Jews, “the Holiest of Holies.” It was thought to be such a Sacred book that they never allowed anyone to read it till he was thirty years of age. Many a Christian who reads it cannot understand it. And as good Joseph Irons says, “This dwarfish age is not likely to esteem this book as it ought to be esteemed. Only those who have lived near Jesus have drunk out of His cup, have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood—only those who know the fullness of the word ‘communion,’ can sit down to this book with delight and pleasure. And to such men these words are as wafers made with honey— manna—angels’ food. Every sentence is like gold and every word is like much fine gold.”

The true Believer who has lived near his Master will find this book to be a mass, not of gold merely, for all God’s Word is that, but a mass of diamonds sparkling with brightness and all things you can conceive are not to be compared with it for its matchless worth. If I must prefer one book above another, I would prefer some books of the Bible for doctrine, some for experience, some for example, some for teaching—but let me prefer this book above all others for fellowship and communion. When the Christian is nearest to Heaven, this is the book he takes with him. There are times when he would leave even the Psalms behind, when standing on the borders of Canaan, when he is in the land of Beulah and he is just crossing the stream and can almost see his Beloved through the rifts of the storm-cloud—then it is he can begin to sing Solomon’s Song. This is about the only book he could sing in Heaven, but for the most part, he could sing this through, these still praising Him who is his everlasting lover and friend.

With these preliminary remarks, let us go at once to the text. I have said that this is Jesus speaking to His Church. Now when the Church praises Jesus, you do not wonder, for He deserves all she can say of Him and ten thousand times more. When she uses such large expressions concerning His loveliness, you feel that she falls far short of her mighty theme. She does but demean Him by her comparisons, for she can but compare the greater with the less and the beautiful and the eternal, with that which is mutable and transient.

But to hear Christ turn round upon His Church and seem to say to her, “You have praised Me, I will praise you. You think much of Me, I think quite as much of you. You use great expressions for Me, I will use just the same for you. You say My love is better than wine, so is yours to Me. You tell Me all My garments smell of myrrh, so do yours. You say My word is sweeter than honey to your lips, so is yours to Mine. All that you can say of Me, I say it to you. I see Myself in your eyes, I can see My own beauty in you. And whatever belongs to Me, belongs to you. Therefore, O My love, I will sing back the song—you have sung it to your Beloved and I will sing it to My Beloved. You have sung it to your Ishi, I will sing it to My Hephzibah, you have sung it to your Husband, I will sing it to My sister, My spouse.”

Now note how sweetly the Lord Jesus sings to His spouse, First, He praises her love—“How fair is your love, My sister, My spouse! How much better is your love than wine!” Next He praises her graces—“The smell of your ointments is much better than all spices.” Then He praises her words—“Your lips, O My spouse, drop as the honeycomb.” Then He praises her thoughts, the things that do not come out of her mouth, but lie under her tongue—“Honey and milk are under your tongue.” Then He finishes by praising her works, “The smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon.”

I. Begin at the beginning then—Christ first PRAISES HIS PEOPLE’S LOVE. Do you love God, my Hearer? Do you love Jesus? If not, stand back! These things have nothing to do with you—if you love not Christ, you have neither part nor lot in the matter. You are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. But can you say as Peter did, when his Master asked him thrice—“Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” Can you say, “Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You. And You know, O my Lord, that my grief is that I do not love You more. I pant to have my little love increased, that my heart may be eaten up with love—that zeal of love to You may completely consume me”? Hearken then, to what the Lord Jesus says to you tonight, by His Holy Spirit, from this song!

Your love, poor, feeble and cold though it is, is very precious unto the Lord Jesus—in fact it is so precious, that He Himself cannot tell how precious it is. He does not say how precious, but He says, “how fair.” This is an expression that men use when they do not know how to describe anything. They lift up their hands, they put in a note of exclamation and they say, “How fair! How precious! How much better is your love than wine!” The fact is that Jesus values our love at such a price, that the Holy Spirit, when He dictated this Song of Solomon, could not see any word in all the human language that was large enough to set forth Christ’s estimation of our love.

Have you ever thought of Christ’s love to you till your heart has been melted—while your Beloved spoke to you till the tears have run down your eyes and you have believed you could do as Mary Magdalene did—could kiss His feet and wash them with your tears and wipe them with the hairs of your head? Now can you believe it? Just what you think of Christ’s love, Christ thinks of yours. You value His love and you are right in so doing. But I am afraid that still you undervalue it. He values your love, if I may so speak—He sets a far higher estimate upon it than you do His. He thinks very much of little, He estimates it not by its strength, but by its

sincerity. “Ah,” He says, “He does love Me, he does love Me, I know he does. He sins, he disobeys Me, but still I know he loves Me—his heart is true, he does not love Me as I deserve—but still he loves Me.”

Jesus Christ is delighted with the thought that His people love Him. This cheers and gladdens Him. Just as the thought of His love gladdens us, so the thought of our love gladdens Him. Notice how He puts it—He says, “How much better is your love than wine!” Now wine, when used in Scripture, frequently signifies two things—a great luxury and a great refreshment. Wine is a luxury, especially it is so in this country and even in the East, where there was more of it, good wine was still a dainty thing. Now Jesus Christ looks upon His people’s love as being a luxury to Him. And I will show you that He does. When He sat at the feast of Simon the Pharisee, I have no doubt there were sparkling wine cups on the table and many rich dainties were there. But Jesus Christ did not care for the wine, nor for the banquet. What did He care for, then? That poor woman’s love was much better to Him than wine.

He could say to Simon the Pharisee, if He had chosen, “Simon, put away your wine cups, take away your dainties. This is My feast, the feast of My people’s love.” I told you also that wine was used as an emblem of refreshment. Now, our Savior has often been refreshed by His people’s love. “No,” says one, “that cannot be.” Yes! You remember once He was weary and thirsty and sat upon the well of Samaria? He needed wine then, indeed, to refresh Him, but He could not get so much as a drop of water. He spoke to a woman whom He had loved from before all worlds—He put new life into her—and she at once desired to give Him drink. But she ran away first to tell the Samaritans what she had heard. Now the Savior was so delighted at her wishing to do good, that when His disciples came, they expected to find Him fainting, for He had walked many a weary mile that day. When they saw Him, though, they said, “Where did He get meat?” And Jesus said, “I have meat to eat that you know not of.”

It was that woman’s love that had fed Him. He had broken her heart, He had won her to Himself and when He saw the tears roll from her eyes and knew that her heart was set upon Him, His spirits all revived and His poor flagging strength grew strong. It was this that encouraged Him. No, I will go farther—when Christ went to His Cross there was one thing that cheered Him even in the agonies of death—it was the thought of His people’s love. Are we not told by the Apostle Paul in the Hebrews, that our blessed and Divine Husband, the Lord Jesus, “for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame?” What was that joy? Why, the joy that He should see His seed and that seed should love Him and that He should have His love written in their hearts, in remembrance of His dying pains and agonies.

Jesus was cheered, even in His death agonies, by the thought of the love of His people. When the bulls of Bashan roared upon Him and the dogs bayed Him. When the sun was put out in darkness, when His Father’s hand was heavy upon Him—when the legions of Hell compassed Him, when the pangs of body and the tortures of spirit all beset him—it was this that cheered Him, “My people, they are dear to Me, for them I stretch these bleeding hands. For them shall this heart be pierced, and oh, how they will love Me, how they will love Me on earth! How they will love Me spiritually in Paradise!” This was the wine the Savior had to drink—this was the cup of His delightful joy that made Him bear all these pains without a murmuring. And this was the meaning of these words of Jesus—“How much better is your love than wine!”

Pause here, my Soul, to contemplate a moment and let your joy rest awhile. Jesus Christ has banquets in Heaven such as we have never yet tasted—and yet He does not feed there. He has wines in Heaven richer far than all the grapes of Eshcol could produce, but where dose He seek His wine? In our hearts, my Friends, in our hearts. Not all the love of angels, nor all the joys of Paradise are so dear to Him as the love of His poor people, sprinkled with sin and compassed with infirmity. Is not that a thought! I may preach about it, but I can only speak it to you—read it, mark it, learn it and inwardly digest it. And oh, if you saw Him standing here tonight and looking into your eyes and saying to you personally—“You love Me, I know that you love Me, your love is to Me better far than wine”—would you not fall at His feet and say, “Lord, is my love so sweet to You? Then shame upon me that I should give You so little of it.” And then you would break out into the Song of Krishnu, which we sung this morning—

*“O now, my Soul, forget no more  
The Lord who all the misery bore,  
Nor Him forget who left His throne,  
And for your life gave up His own.”*

This is the first point—the love of the Believer is sweet to Christ. II. Do not imagine, however, that Christ despises our faith, or our hope, or our patience, or our humility. All these GRACES are precious to Him and they are described in the next sentence under the title of ointment. The working of these graces, their exercise and development, are compared to the smell of ointment. Now both wine and ointment were used in the sacrifice of the Jews—sweet smelling myrrh and spices were used in meat offerings and drink offerings before the Lord. “But,” said Jesus Christ to His Church, “all these offerings of wine and all that burning of incense is nothing to Me compared to your graces. Your love is My wine, your virtues are My sweet smelling ointments.”  
For now you have a little faith, but oh, how little it is. You seem to have got just enough faith to know how unbelieving you are. You have got love, but somehow you have only got love enough to let you know how little you love Him. You have some humility, but you have only enough humility to discover you are very proud—you have some zeal for Christ, but you have only zeal enough to make you chide yourself that you are so cold. You have some hope, but you have only hope enough to lead you to see how despairing and desponding you often are. You have some patience, but you have only patience enough to teach you how often you murmur when you ought not.  
“I confess,” you say, “that all my graces are a stench in my own nostrils and all the good things I trust I have, I cannot look upon them with any pride or self-congratulation. I must bury myself in dust and ashes. And even those things, I can but weep over them, for they are so marred by my own evil nature.” But now then, the very things that you and I very properly weep over, Christ delights in. He loves all these. The smell may seem to be but very faint and feeble, yet Jesus observes it. Jesus smells it, Jesus loves it and Jesus approves it. Yes, Believer, when you are on your sick bed and are suffering with patience. When you go about your humble way to do good by stealth. When you distribute of your alms to the poor. When you lift up your thankful eyes to Heaven. When you draw near to God with humble prayer, when you make confession of your sin to Him—all these acts are like the smell of ointment to Him, the smell of a sweet savor and He is gratified and pleased.  
O Jesus, this is condescension indeed, to be pleased with such poor things as we have! Oh this is love, it proves Your love to us, that You can make so much out of so little and esteem so highly that which is of such little worth! Have you ever known a little child when he feels love in his heart, go into the garden or the field and bring you a little flower? It may be but a little buttercup or a daisy, a great thing to him, perhaps, but a trifle to you— worthless in fact—you have taken it and you have smiled and have felt happy because it was a token of your child’s love. So Jesus esteems your graces, they are His gift to you. Mark, first of all, they are very poor things in themselves—till He esteems them as tokens of your love and He rejoices in them and declares they are as sweet to Him as all the spices of Arabia and all the rich odors of the merchant. This is the second thing.  
III. Now we come to the third, “Your lips, O My spouse, drop as the honeycomb.” Christ’s people are not a dumb people. They were once, but they TALK now. I do not believe a Christian can keep the secret that God gives him if he were to try. It would burst his lips open to get out. When God puts grace into your heart you may try to hide it, but hide it you cannot. It will be like fire in the bones and will be sure to find its way out. Now the Church is a talking Church, a preaching Church, and a praising Church. She has got lips and every Believer will find he must use his lips in the service of Christ.  
Now it is but a poor, poor matter that any of us can speak. When we are most eloquent in our Master’s praise, how far our praises fall beneath His worth! When we are most earnest in prayer, how powerless is our wrestling compared with the great blessing that we seek to obtain! When our song is loudest and it begins to be something akin to the chorus of the angels, even then how marred it is with the discord of our unbelief and of our worldliness! But Jesus Christ does not find any fault in what the Church speaks. He says, “No, your lips, O My spouse, drop as the honeycomb.” You know the honey that drops out of the honeycomb is the best—it is called the lifehoney. So the words that drop from the Christian’s lips are the very words of his life, his life-honey and they ought to be sweet to everyone. They are as sweet to the taste of the Lord Jesus as the drops of the honeycomb.  
A little caution to some of you that talk too much. Some of you do not let your words drop as the honeycomb—they gush out as a great stream that sweeps everything before it, so that others could not thrust in a word edgeways. No, not if it were squeezed together and sharpened at one end could it get in. They must talk, their tongue seems set on a hinge, like a pendulum, forever going on—swing, swing, swing! Now Christ does not admire that. He says of His Church in His commending, her lips “drop as the honeycomb.” Now a honeycomb, when it drops, does not drop so much even as the drops that fall from the eaves of houses. For the honey is thick and rich and therefore it takes some time. One drop hangs for a time. Then comes another and then another and not all come in quick succession.  
Now when people are often talking a great deal, it is poor and thin and good for nothing. But when they have something good to say, it drops by slow degrees like the honey from the honeycomb. Mark, I do not want you to say one good word less. They are those other words, those awkward ones. Oh that we could leave them out! I am as guilty of this myself, I fear, as many others. If we could talk half as much, it would be, perhaps, twice as good. And if we were to say only a tenth of what we do, perhaps we should be ten times better. He is a wise man that knows how to speak well, but he is a great deal wiser man that knows how to hold his tongue. The lips of the true Church, the lips of the true Believer, drop like the honeycomb, with rich words, rich thoughts, rich prayers, rich praises.  
“Oh,” says one, “but I am sure my lips do not drop like that when in prayer. Sometimes, even, I cannot get on at all and when I am singing I cannot put my heart into it and when I am trying to instruct others, I feel I am so ignorant that I know nothing myself.” That is your estimate—I am glad you are so humble as to think that. But Christ does not think so. “Ah,” He says, “that man would preach if he could. That man would honor Me better if he could.” And He does not measure what we do, but what we want to do. And so it is that He reckons that our lips drop like the honeycomb. What is sweeter in the world than honey from the honeycomb? But whatever may be the sweetest thing to the world, the words of the Christian are the sweetest things to Christ.  
Sometimes Believers are privileged to sit down together and they begin to talk about what Jesus said and what He suffered for them here below. They begin to speak of His exceeding glories and His boundless and matchless love. They begin to tell one another what they have tasted and handled of the good Word of Life and their hearts begin to burn within them when they speak of these things. Do you know that Jesus is in that room, smiling? Jesus is there and He is saying to His own soul, “It is good to be here, the lips of these, My Brethren, drop as the honeycomb and their words are sweet to Me.” At another time the Christian is alone in his chamber and he talks with his God in a few broken words and with many sighs, many tears and many groans. Little does he think that Jesus Christ is there, saying to such an one, “Your lips, O My Beloved, drop with honey like the honeycomb.”  
And now Christians will you not talk much about Jesus? Will you not speak often of Him? Will you not give your tongue more continually to prayer and praise and speech that ministers to edifying, when you have such a Listener as Jesus, such an Auditor who stoops from Heaven to hear you and who values every word you speak to Him? Oh, it is a sweet thing to preach when the people listen to catch every word. I would give in if I had to preach to an inattentive audience. And yet I do not know. Plato, we are told, was once listening to an orator and when all the people had gone away but Plato, the orator went on with all his might. Being asked why he proceeded, he replied that Plato was sufficient audience for any man.  
And surely if in preaching, or in praying, all the world should find fault and all the world should run from it, Jesus is enough to be the Hearer for any man! And if He is satisfied—if He says our words are sweeter than the honeycomb, we will not stop. All the devils in Hell shall not stop us. We could continue to preach, and praise and pray, while immortality endures. If this is honey, then the honey shall drop. If Christ prizes it, we set His opinion against all the opinion in the world. He knows better than any others. He is the best judge, for He is the last and final Judge—we will go on talking of Him, while He goes on to say our lips drop as the honeycomb.  
“But,” says one, “if I were to try to talk about Jesus Christ, I do not know what I should say.” If you wanted any honey and nobody would bring it to you, I suppose the best way, if you were in the country, would be to keep some bees, would it not? It would be very well for you Christian people if you kept bees. “Well,” says one, “I suppose our thoughts are to be the bees. We are always to be looking about for good thoughts and flying on to the flowers where they are to be found—by reading, by meditation and by prayer—we are to send bees out of the hive.” Certainly, if you do not read your Bibles you will have no honey, because you have no bees. But when you read your Bibles and study those precious texts, it is like bees settling on flowers and sucking the sweetness out of them.  
There are many other books, though the Bible is the chief one, that you may read with great advantage—over which your thoughts may be busied as bees among flowers. And then you must attend the means of grace continually—you must listen often to the preaching of the Word. And if you hear a minister who is a plant of the Lord’s right hand and you listen—in what you hear, you will be like bees sucking sweetness out of flowers and your lips will be like the honeycomb. But some people have nothing in their heads and they are never likely to have, for they are so wise that they cannot learn and they are such fools that they will never teach. Some waste the time they have. Now I would have my people read much the Word of God and study it and then read such books as shall illustrate it.  
I will tell you where I have been sipping a bit just lately and I have often sipped much from—it is this book of Solomon’s Song. It is a favorite book of mine. And there is a sweet little book of Joseph Irons’, called “Nymphas,” a blank verse explanation of it. If any of you have that little book, set your bees to work on it and if you do not suck honey out of it I am very much mistaken. Then let the bees bring the honey to the hive of your memory and let it be added to the stores of your mind. And in this way you will get rich in precious things, so that when you speak, the saints will be edified, your prayers will be full of marrow and fatness and your praises will have something in them, because you have sent your bees well abroad and therefore your lips will drop as the honeycomb.  
IV. This brings us to the next topic—“Honey and milk are under your tongue.” I find it necessary when I preach to keep a good stock of words under my tongue as well as those that are on it. It is a curious operation of the mind in the man who continually preaches. It sometimes happens while I am speaking to you that I am thinking about what I am going to say at the close of my sermon and when I am thinking about people downstairs or in the gallery and how I shall hit Mr. So-and-So, I am still talking right on, speaking with all my heart on the subject on which I am addressing you. It is because by continually preaching we get into the habit of keeping words under our tongue as well as those that are on the top and sometimes we find it necessary to keep those words under our tongue altogether and not let them come further.  
Very often I have got a simile just ready to come out and I have thought, “Ah, that is one of your laughable similes, take that back.” I am obliged to change it for something else. If I

id that a little oftener. perhaps it would be better, but I cannot do it. I have sometimes a whole host of them under my tongue and I am obliged to keep them back. “Honey and milk are under your tongue.” That is not the only meaning.  
The Christian is to have words ready to come out by-and-by. You know the hypocrite has words upon his tongue. We speak about solemn sounds upon a thoughtless tongue, but the Christian has God’s Words first under the tongue. There they lie. They come from his heart. They do not come from the top of his tongue—they are not superficial service work, but they come from under the tongue—down deep—things that he feels and matters that he knows. Nor is this the only meaning. The things that are under the tongue are thoughts that have never yet been expressed. They do not get to the top of the tongue, but lie there half formed and are ready to come out. But either because they cannot come out, or we have not time to let them out, there they remain and never come into actual words.  
Now Jesus Christ thinks very much even of these. He says, “Honey and milk are under your tongue.” And Christian meditation and Christian contemplation are to Christ like honey for sweetness and like milk for nourishment. Honey and milk are two things with which the land of Canaan was said to flow. And so the heart of a Christian flows with milk and honey, like the land which God gave to His ancient people. “Well,” says one, “I cannot find that my heart is like that. If I do sit down and think of Jesus, my thoughts turn upon the glories of His Person and the excellency of His office. But oh, Sir, my thoughts are such dull, cold, useless things—they do not feed me or delight me.”  
Ah, but you see, Christ does not estimate them as you do. He feeds on them—they are like honey to Him and though you think little of your own thoughts and are right in so doing, yet, remember, such is the love of Jesus, such is His abundant condescension and compassion, that the very least things that you have He values at a great price. The words you are not speaking—the words you cannot utter, the groans you cannot bring out— these the Holy Spirit utters for you and these Jesus treasures up as choice and peculiarly precious things. “Honey and milk are under your tongue.”  
V. And then, last of all, “the smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon.” The odoriferous herbs that grew on the side of Lebanon delighted the traveler and, perhaps, here is an allusion to the peculiarly sweet smell of the cedar wood. Now, the garments of a Christian are two-fold—the garment of imputed righteousness and the garment of inwrought sanctification. I think the allusion here is to the second. The garments of a Christian are his EVERYDAY ACTIONS—the things that he wears upon him wherever he goes. Now these smell very sweet to the Lord Jesus. And here let us speak to some of you present who manifestly are not God’s children—for you smell of the garlic of Egypt rather than of the cedar of Lebanon. And there are some professors and, perhaps some now present, whose smell is anything but like that of Lebanon.  
Take heed, you that do not live up to your profession. You have sad evidences within that you have not possession. If you can dishonor Christ’s holy Gospel by living in sin, tremble—lest when He shall come in the terror of judgment, He should cry, “Depart, you cursed. I never knew you.” But if you are humble lovers of Christ and really have your hearts set upon Him, your daily actions are observed by Him and the smell of it is to Him as sweet as the smell of Lebanon. What should you think if Jesus should meet you at the close of the day and say to you, “I am pleased with your works of today”? I know you would reply, “Lord, I have done nothing for You.” You would say like those at the Last Day, “Lord, when did we see we You hungry and feed You? When did we see You thirsty and give you drink?”  
You would begin to deny that you had done any good thing. He would say, “Ah, when you were under the fig tree I saw you. When you were at your bedside in prayer I heard you. I saw you when the tempter came and you said, ‘Get you gone, Satan.’ I saw you give your alms to one of My poor sick children. I heard you speak a good word to the little child and teach him the name of Jesus. I heard you groan when swearing polluted your ears. I heard your sigh when you saw the iniquity of this great city. I was there when your hands were busy, I saw that you were not an eye-servant or a man-pleaser, but that in singleness of purpose you did serve God in doing your daily business. I saw you, when the day was ended, give yourself to God again. I have marked you mourning over the sins you have committed and I tell you I am pleased with you.” “The smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon.”  
And, again, I hear you say, “But, Lord, I was angry, I was proud,” and He says, “But I have covered up this, I have cast it into the depths of the sea. I have blotted it all out with My blood. I can see no ill in you. You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you.” What would you do then? Would you not at once fall down at His feet and say, “Lord, I never knew love like this. I have heard that love covers a multitude of sins, but I never knew a love so broad as to cover all mine. And then to declare that You can see no sin in me at all—ah, that is love!” It may melt our hearts and make us seek to be holy, that we might not grieve Christ—make us labor to be diligent in His service, that we might not dishonor Him.  
I dare say some of you think when ministers preach or go about to do their pastoral duty, that of course Christ is very much pleased with them. “Ah,” says Mary, “I am only a poor servant girl. I have to get up in the morning and light the fire, lay out the breakfast things, dust the parlor, make the pies and puddings for dinner and clear away the things again and wash them up—I have to do everything there is to do in the house—Christ cannot be pleased with this.” Why Mary, you can serve Christ as much in making beds, as I can in making sermons! And you can be as much a true servant of Christ in dusting a room as I can in administering discipline in a Church.  
Do not think for a single moment that you cannot serve Christ. Our religion is to be an everyday religion—a religion for the kitchen as well as for the parlor—a religion for the rolling pin and the jack-towel, quite as much as for the pulpit stairs and the Bible—a religion that we can take with us wherever we go. And there is such a thing as glorifying Christ in all the common actions of life. “Servants be obedient to your masters, not only to those who are good and gentle, but to the mean.” You men of business, you need not think that when you are measuring your ribbons, or weighing out your pounds of sugar, or when you are selling, or buying, or going to market and such like, that you cannot be serving Christ.  
Why a builder can serve Christ in putting his bricks together and you can serve Christ in whatever you are called to do with your hands, if you do it as unto the Lord and not unto men. I remember Mr. Jay once said that if a shoeblack were a Christian, he could serve Christ in blacking shoes. He ought to black them, he said, better than anyone else in the parish. And then people would say, “Ah, this Christian shoeblack, he is conscientious. He won’t send the boots away with the heels half done, but will do them thoroughly.” And so ought you. You can say of every article you sell and of everything you do, “I turned that out of my hands in such a manner that it shall defy competition. The man has got his money’s worth. He cannot say I am a rogue or a cheat. There are tricks in many trades, but I will not have anything to do with them. Many get money fast by adulteration in trade, but I will not do it, I would sooner be poor than do it.”  
Why, the world says, “there is a sermon in that grocer’s window—look, you don’t see him telling lies to puff his goods—there is a sermon there.” People say as they pass by, “It is a godly man that keeps that shop, he cannot bring his conscience down to do what others do. If you go there, you will be well treated and you will come out of his shop and say, I have spent my money well and I am glad that I have dealt with a Christian man.” Depend upon it, you will be as good preachers in your shops as I shall be in my pulpit, if you do that. Depend upon it, there is a way of serving Christ in this manner—and this is to comfort you and cheer you—upon all the actions of your daily life the Lord Jesus looks down from Heaven and says, “The smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon.”  
I know you can hardly believe that Jesus Christ takes notice of such little things as that, but He does. You say, “Oh, but they are too trifling.” But don’t you know the God that wings an angel guides a sparrow? Don’t you know, “the very hairs of your head are all numbered”? God not only wings the whirlwind and gives an edge to the lightning flash, but He guides the chaff from the hand of the winnower and steers the grain of dust in the evening gale. Do not think anything too little for you. He observes the mighty orbs as they whirl through space, but He notices you, too, as you go about your business. And those little cups of cold water you give to His people—those little services you do for His Church—those self-denials that you make for His honor and those conscientious scruples which you foster and which will not allow you to act as the world acts—all these He observes and He says, “The smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon.”  
And now to conclude, what shall we say to this? I was reading sometime ago, an article in a newspaper, very much in my praise. And you know, it makes me sad, so sad that I could cry, if ever I see anything praising me. It breaks my heart. I feel I do not deserve it. And then I say, “Now I must try and be better so that I may deserve it. If the world abuses me, I am a match for that—I begin to like it. It may fire all its big guns at me, I will not return a solitary shot—but just store them up and grow rich upon the old iron. All the abuse it likes to heap upon me I can stand. But when a man praises me, I feel it is a poor thing I have done, sad that he praises me for what I do not deserve. This crushes me down and I say I must set to work and deserve this.  
I must preach better. I must be more earnest, more diligent in my Master’s service. Now, will not this text produce just the same effect on you? When the Lord comes to you and begins saying, “You are not so humble, nor so prayerful, nor so believing as you ought to be.” You say, “I do not care about this whipping.” But when He comes and begins to praise you and tells you, “Your lips drop as the honeycomb,” that all your actions “smell of myrrh” and that your love is “better than wine” and that the thoughts under your tongue are better to Him than “wine and milk,” what will you say? Oh, Lord, I cannot say You are mistaken, for You are infallible. But if I might say such a thing, if I dared so think You are mistaken, I should say, “You are mistaken about me.”  
But Lord, I cannot think You are mistaken—it must be true. Still, Lord, I do not deserve it. I am conscious I do not and I never can deserve it—still if You will help me, I will strive to be worthy of Your praise in some feeble measure. I will seek to live up to those high encomiums which You have passed upon me. If You say, “My love is better than wine.” Lord, I will seek to love You better, that the wine may be richer and stronger. If You say, my graces are like the smell of ointment, Lord, I will try to increase them, so as to have many great pots filled with them.  
And if my words drop as the honeycomb, Lord, there shall be more of them and I will try to make them better, so that You may think more of such honey. And if You declare that the thoughts under my tongue are to You like honey and milk, then, Lord, I will seek to have more of those Divine thoughts. And if my daily actions are to You as the smell of Lebanon, Lord, I will seek to be more holy, to live nearer to You. I will ask for grace, that my actions may be really what You say they are.  
You that love not God, I can weep over you, for you have nothing to do with this text. It is a frightful thing that you should be shut out of such praise as this—may Christ bring you in! You must first be brought to feel you are nothing. You must then be led to feel that Christ is everything and then, after that, you shall understand this text and these words will be spoken to you.  
[Owing to the accidental absence of the Reporter, we are unable to publish last Sunday Morning’s Sermon and we have substituted a discourse, up to now unpublished, preached on a former occasion.]

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1957 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Son 4.12

THE LORD’S OWN VIEW OF HIS CHURCH AND PEOPLE  
NO. 1957

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

**“A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”  
Song of Solomon 4:12.**

WE understand this sacred love song to be a Canticle of Communion between the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. He is the Bridegroom and she the bride. Solomon furnishes the figure, as some think, and his Solyma is with him, but the type is dimly seen, it is the antitype which shines forth as the sun to the view of all spiritual minds.

At the very outset of the present discourse it is necessary, for the sake of the less instructed, to say what the Church is. A Church is a congregation of faithful men—that is to say, of men who are Believers in the Lord Jesus, men in whom the Holy Spirit has created faith in Christ—and the new nature of which faith is the sure index. The one Church of Jesus Christ is made up of all Believers throughout all time. Just as any one Church is made up of faithful men, so is the one Church of Christ made up of all faithful churches in all lands—and of all faithful men in all ages.

The Church was viewed as one in the purpose of God before the world was. The Eternal Father chose to Himself a people and gave them over to His SON, that they might be His portion forever and ever. This is the Church of which we read—“Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.” This is “the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood.” This is the Church with which the marriage supper shall be celebrated when the Well-Beloved shall come to take His own unto Himself forever. While we, at this time, speak of the Church as a whole, it will be quite correct for each individual Believer to take home to himself any truth, whether doctrinal, experimental, or practical, which we treat of as the heritage of the Church. Each saint may say, “This belongs to me.” That which belongs to the redeemed family belongs to each member of that family. That which is true of light is true of each beam. That which is true of water is true of each drop and that which is true of the Church as a whole is true of each member of that mystical body.

The love of the Lord Jesus is to His Church as a body—and it is the same to each Believer as a member of that body. That which is true of the whole number is true of the units which make it up. He who invites a company to a feast virtually invites each person of the company. Jesus loves each one of His people with that same love with which He loves the whole of His people, insomuch that if you, my Brothers and Sisters, are Christ’s beloved and if you were the only persons that were ever born into the world—and all His love were yours—He would not, then, love you one atom more than He loves you now! The love of Jesus is dispersed, but not divided! It flows to all with the same force with which it flows to one. To redeem a single soul, our Ransom had to lay down His life and He loves each one with such a love that He did lay down His life for each one, as much as if there had not been another to redeem. We shall not be presumptuous if we enjoy all the love of Jesus of which we are capable, enjoying and appropriating the words of love to ourselves as if they were meant for us, alone. The invitation of the Bridegroom in this Song gives a permit to the largest faith and to the most daring enjoyment. “Eat, O friends; yes, drink abundantly, O beloved.”

I shall call your attention to four things, with as much brevity and earnestness as possible. Come, gracious Spirit, and lead us into the sweetness of them!

I. The first is, THE NEARNESS OF KIN OF THE CHURCH TO CHRIST AND CHRIST TO THE CHURCH. He calls her in the text, “My Sister, My Spouse.” As if He could not express His near and dear relationship to her by any one term, He employs the two. “My Sister”—that is, one by birth, partaker of the same nature. “My Spouse”—that is, one in love, joined by sacred ties of affection that never can be snapped. “My Sister” by birth. “My Spouse” by choice. “My Sister” in communion. “My Spouse” in absolute union with Myself. I want you who love the Savior to get a full hold of this thought of near and dear kinship under this head. Oh, how near akin Christ is to all His people!

But first, try to realize the Person of Christ. I am not going to speak to you at this time of a doctrine, or a mere historical fact that has vanished into the dim past. No, we speak of a real Person. Jesus Christ is. As Man and as God in the perfection of His Nature, He still exists! He dwells at the right hand of God at this moment and though He cannot be here in His corporeal Person, yet He is everywhere by His spiritual Presence, which is still more real. Do not spirit Him away! Believe that He truly is and that He truly is here—as much here and as really here as He was at Jerusalem when He sat at the head of the table and entertained the 12 at the last supper. Jesus is a real Man, a real Christ—remember that.

Then let this further Truth of God be equally realized, that He has so taken upon Himself our human nature that He may correctly call His Church His Sister. He has become so truly Man in His Incarnation, that He is not ashamed to call us Brothers and Sisters. He calls us so because we are so! No, He is not a deified man any more than He is a humanized God. He is perfectly God, but He is also perfectly Man—and Man such as we are, touched with the feeling, not only of our attainments, but of our infirmities. Not only trusting in all points as we do, but tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin. He was, when He was here, evidently Man and eminently Man—and He now so remembers all that He passed through while here below that He remains in perfect sympathy with us at this very moment! Change of place has made no change of heart in Him. He, in His Glory, is the same Jesus as in His humiliation!

No man is so fully a man as Jesus Christ. If you speak of any other man, something or other narrows his manhood. You think of Milton as a poet and an Englishman, rather than as a man. You think of Cromwell rather as a warrior, than as a man. Either his office, his work, his nationality, or his peculiar character strikes you in many a man rather than his manhood. But Jesus is the Man, the model Man—in all His deeds and words. Man to the fullness of manhood in its purest and truest state. The second Adam is, par excellence, Man!

We may not think of Him as one among a vast number who may be distantly akin to us, as all men are akin to one another by descent, but the Lord comes near to each individual. He takes each one of His believing people by the hand and says, “My Brother, My Sister.” In our text He salutes the whole Church as “My Sister.” He says this with tender emphasis. The love between brothers, if those brothers are what they should be, is very strong and peculiarly disinterested and admirable. A brother is born for adversity. A true brother is one upon whom you can rely in time of need. One heart in two bodies is the realization of true brotherhood. Such is, emphatically, the relationship of the Redeeming Lord to each Believer! He is your Brother. “The man is next of kin to us.” You may have the joy of saying, “I know that my near Kinsman lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” Happy man who, without presumption, can feel the ties of kinship with the Son of Man and can sing with the poet of the sanctuary—

*“Jesus, our Kinsman and our God,  
Arrayed in majesty and blood.  
You are our life; our souls in Thee  
Possess a full felicity.”*

As we have already observed, the first term, “Sister,” implies kinship of nature, but the second term, “My Spouse,” indicates another kinship— dearer, and, in some respects, nearer—a kinship undertaken of choice, but, once undertaken, irrevocable and everlasting! This kinship amounts to unity insomuch that the spouse loses her name, loses her identity and, to a high degree, is merged in the greater personality to which she is united. Such is our union to Christ if, indeed, we are His, that nothing can so well set it forth as marriage union. He loves us so much that He has taken us up into Himself by the absorption of love! We may henceforth forego our name, for, “this is the name by which she shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness.” Wonderful that the very name which belongs to our Lord Jesus—and one of the most majestic of His names— should yet be used as the name of His Church! The Lord Jesus Christ’s name is now named upon her and she is permitted to make use of His name whenever she draws near to the Throne of the heavenly Grace in prayer. “In His name”—this is to be her great plea whenever she intercedes with Heaven! She speaks in the name which is above every name, the name at which angels bow!

The Bridegroom calls His Church, “My Sister, My Spouse.” Now come, renewed heart, you that have learned to trust your Savior, see how near, how dear you are to Him! If He says, “My Sister, My Spouse,” answer to Him, “My Brother, my Husband.” If He is not strange to you, oh, be not cold to Him! Think not of Him as of some great one to whom you may not approach. Have you in your memory that great text, “It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call me Ishi (my Husband), and shall call me no more Baali, (my Lord). For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth and they shall no more be remembered by their name.” We now feel no dreadful lordship. Though He is Master and Lord, yet it is such a loving lordship which He exercises towards us that we rejoice in it! We hear a voice full of music, saying, “He is your Lord. Worship Him.” But His commandments are not grievous! His yoke is easy and His burden is light!

When we bow before Him, it is not because we fear with servile trembling, but because we rejoice and love! We rejoice in His rule and reign. Perfect love has cast out fear. We live in such joyful fellowship with Him as a sister has with a brother, or a wife with a husband! Be not backward towards your own Betrothed. Be not stiff and cold. Set not a boundary around the mountain, for it is not Sinai—there are no boundaries to the hill of Zion! Hang not up a curtain, for He has rent the veil! Think not of Him as though He were far divided from you—He is exceedingly near you and has taken you up unto Himself, to be one with Him forever—

*“Lost in astonishment I see  
Jesus, Your boundless love to me!  
With angels I, Your Grace adore  
And long to love and praise You more.  
Since You will take me for Your bride,  
Oh, keep me, Savior, near Your side!  
I would gladly give You all my heart,  
Nor ever from my Lord depart.”*

I do not know how to preach upon this subject. Who can? Is it a subject for exposition in a mixed assembly? If it were, who could compass it? I beg you, O Believers, to sit in your pews and let holy thought occupy you—let this choice subject saturate your willing minds! If you are true Believers, if you have been born again, if you are really looking to Christ, alone, for salvation, He has brought you into a condition of the utmost conceivable nearness with Himself. He has participated in your nature and He has made you a partaker of His Nature and, in so many words He says, “I will betroth you unto Me forever. Yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, in judgement, in lovingkindness and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord.”

Can you grasp it? It will make your heart dance for joy if you can! Never did a more joyful thought illuminate a human mind. One with Jesus! By eternal union, one with Jesus! Is not this heavenly? There can be no divorce between Christ and His Church, for thus it is written, “The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away.” He will have nothing to do with putting away! Having espoused us, He declares the thing done. “I am married unto you, says the Lord.” He has taken our nature and made us “partakers of the Divine Nature.” And after He has done that, who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? Neither height, nor depth, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come shall ever be able to effect a breakup of this most complete, perfect, mystical union between Christ and His people!

Again I pray the Holy Spirit to make every Believer feel this and then we shall go home from this house glad in spirit! My heart will be as a wedding feast and the joy-bells of my soul will ring out the words—

*“White and ruddy is my Beloved  
All His heavenly beauties shine!  
Nature can’t produce an object,  
So glorious, so Divine!  
He has wholly  
Won my soul to realms above.  
Such as find You, find such sweetness  
Deep, mysterious and unknown—  
Far above all worldly pleasures,  
If they were to meet in one!  
My Beloved,  
O’er the mountains hasten away.”*

II. To a second thought I would call your attention. See in the text THE SECURITY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN CONSEQUENCE OF BEING WHAT THEY ARE. “A garden enclosed is My Sister, My Spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” We are not only like a garden, but an enclosed garden. If the garden were not enclosed, the wild boar out of the woods would destroy the vines and uproot the flowers! But infinite mercy has made the Church of God an enclosure into which no invader may dare enter. “For I, says the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the Glory in the midst of her.” Is she a spring? Are her secret thoughts, loves and desires like cool streams of water? Then the Bridegroom calls her, “a spring shut up.” Otherwise, every beast that passed by might foul her waters and every stranger might quaff her streams. She is a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, like some choice cool spring in Solomon’s private garden around the house of the forest of Lebanon—a fountain which he reserved for his own drinking, by placing the royal seal upon it and locking it up by secret means, known only to himself. Legend has it that there were fountains which none knew of but Solomon—and he had so shut them up that with his ring he touched a secret spring, a door opened—and living waters leaped out to fill his jeweled cup. No one but Solomon knew the secret charm by which he set flowing the pent-up stream of which no lips drank but his own! Now, God’s people are as much shut up, preserved and kept from danger by the care of Christ, as the springs in Solomon’s garden were reserved expressly for himself.

Beloved, this is a cheering thought for all Believers, that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself! He has taken measures to preserve all His chosen from all those who would defile and destroy them. He walled them round about with His Divine decree of old, saying, “This people have I chosen for Myself.” He then issued His command that none should injure them, saying, “Touch not My anointed and do My Prophets no harm.” He sets a hedge about them in Providence so that nothing shall by any means harm them. He has shut them up from the enemy and sealed them up for perpetual preservation. The wandering Bedouins in the East plunder the open fields, but a king’s garden, enclosed and protected, is safe from their ravages.

So are the saints enclosed from all invading powers. Especially has the Lord walled them about with Grace! While angels keep watch and ward around this sacred garden to drive off the powers of darkness, the invincible Grace of God is always like a wall about the plants of the Lord’s right hand planting so that neither sin nor the world shall be able to uproot them! You are a garden, and a garden is a tender thing, soon destroyed. But the Lord, who planted you, has seen to your protection and provision! A garden in the East is a very needy place. One day’s burning sun might suffice to wither all its verdure, but the Lord has declared of His Church, “The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.” “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” A garden is a dependent thing, requiring perpetual care from the gardener and that care the Church of God shall have, for it is written, “He cares for you.” Jesus says, “My Father is the Gardener”—and surely that is enough!

In a garden, weeds spring up and, alas, in the Church and in our hearts, the weeds of sin are plentiful. But there is One who will take care to pluck up evil growth and cut away all rank shoots, that none of the precious plants may be choked or overgrown. In all ways every single plant, however feeble, shall be tended with all-sufficient skill!

It is very precious to see how the Lord lays Himself out to preserve His own Beloved. We are too dear to Him to let us perish. Yet, O tender plant, you are often afraid! Did you say, the other day, that He had left you? How can this be? Do you know at what a price He bought you? Leave you? Will the husband forget his beloved spouse? And will the Husband of your soul forget you? Let not the thought tarry with you for a moment, for it is dishonoring to your Lord’s love! “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you.” You are as safe as Jesus, for on His heart He bears your name! You are as safe as He is, for on the arm of His strength He wears your name, as the High Priest wore the names of the tribes upon his shoulder, as well as upon his breastplate. “I give unto My sheep,” Jesus says, “eternal life. And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”

I want you to enjoy a sense of this security. I will not preach upon it much, but I will ask you to believe it and to rejoice in it. Are you really in Christ? If so, who is to pluck you from His hands? Are you really trusting Him? How can He fail you? Have you been begotten, again, into the Divine family? How can that new life be quenched? Do not let anything drive from your mind a sense of your security in Christ! I hear somebody say that this might lead men to carnal security. Far from it—the security of the Spirit is a death-blow to the security of the flesh! I tell you, Sirs, that it is most necessary that you should not believe in Jesus Christ half way, as some do who trust the Lord to put away the sin of the past, but cannot trust for the future! I believe in Him to put away all my sins that ever shall be, as well as all the sins that have been.

To believe in Him only to obliterate the years of former sin is but a limping half-way faith! Believe in Him for all the years that shall be. What does He say? “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Do you believe in Him to give you life for a little time, so that you venture to take a quarter’s ticket of membership? I am glad that you believe even so much, but why limit His power? Believe in the Lord Jesus for the whole of life, yes, for eternity! “According to your faith be it unto you.” Do you believe in Him to give you a sip of the Living Water to stay your thirst for a while? Believe in Him a great deal more than that and accept Him as quenching your thirst forever! For, “you are complete in Him.” “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.”

I look upon this sense of security in a Christian as being the mainspring of unselfish virtue. What is that perpetual anxiety to save yourself? What is that daily hungering and perpetual thirsting? It is only a spiritualized selfishness. Only when a man is really saved does he forget self. When I know that I am saved, I am able to glorify God! The thought of saving myself by anything that I shall do, or be, or feel—I hurl to the winds, for I am already saved as a Believer in Christ! Now is there scope for virtue. Now is there an opportunity to love God and to love one’s fellow men from a pure, unselfish motive! A man is drowning, the ship is going down from under him—he is not a likely man to be looking after the interests of those about him. Once let him grasp an oar in the lifeboat and he is the man to be the savior of others. I want you to be out of the wreck and in the lifeboat, that you may be a hearty worker for the salvation of the perishing! I want you to get out of that, “if,” “perhaps,” “perchance,” “maybe,” into certainty and full assurance—for then your undivided zeal will go for the Glory of God!

“We know that we have passed from death unto life,” says the Apostle, speaking in the name of the saints in his day. And when you once know this, then you will rejoice to proclaim life to those around you. When you are assured that you are not only a garden, but an enclosed garden, not only a spring, but a spring shut up and a fountain sealed against all adversaries—then you will give all your strength to Him who has thus secured you! A happy and holy security in Christ will put spirit into you and cause you to do exploits. For the love you bear His name, you will be ready to live to this sole end—to magnify and glorify the Lord Jesus, whose you are, and whom you serve!

I leave the thought, but I pray the Holy Spirit to breathe over His people a delicious sense of perfect security in Christ Jesus.  
III. Thirdly, THE MOST STRIKING IDEA OF THE TEXT IS THAT OF SEPARATION—“A garden enclosed is My Sister, My Spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” A garden is a plot of ground separated from the common waste for a special purpose and such is the Church. The Church is a separate and distinct thing from the world. I suppose there is such a thing as “the Christian world,” but I do not know what it is, or where it can be found. It must be a singular mixture. I know what is meant by a worldly Christian and I suppose the Christian world must be an aggregate of worldly Christians. But the Church of Christ is not of the world! “You are not of the world,” says Christ, “even as I am not of the world.” Great attempts have been made of late to make the Church receive the world and wherever it has succeeded it has come to this result—the world has swallowed up the Church. It must be so. The greater is sure to swamp the lesser. They say, “Do not let us draw any hard and fast lines. A great many good people attend our services who may not be quite decided, but still, their opinion should be consulted and their vote should be taken upon the choice of a minister. And, of course, there should be entertainments and amusements in which they can assist.”  
The theory seems to be that it is well to have a broad gangway from the Church to the world—if this is carried out, the result will be that the nominal Church will use that gangway to go over to the world, but it will not be used in the other direction! It is thought by some that it would, perhaps, be better to have no distinct Church at all! If the world will not come up to the Church, let the Church go down to the world—that seems to be the theory. Let the Israelites dwell with the Canaanites and become one happy family! Such a blending does not appear to have been anticipated by our Lord in the chapter which was read just now—I mean the 15th Chapter of John. Read verses 18 and nineteen—“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”  
Did Jesus ever say—“Try to make an alliance with the world and, in all things, be conformed to its ways”? Nothing could have been further from our Lord’s mind! Oh, that we could see more of holy separation—more dissent from ungodliness, more nonconformity to the world! This is “the dissidence of Dissent” that I care for—far more than I do for party names and the political strife which is engendered by them.  
Let us, however, take heed that our separateness from the world is of the same kind as our Lord’s. We are not to adopt a peculiar dress, or a singular mode of speech, or shut ourselves out from society. He did not do so! He was a man of the people, mixing with them for their good. He was seen at a wedding feast, aiding the festivities. He even ate bread in a Pharisee’s house, among captious enemies! He neither wore phylacteries, nor enlarged the borders of His garments, nor sought a secluded cell, nor exhibited any eccentricity of manner. He was separate from sinners only because He was holy and harmless—and they were not. He dwelt among us, for He was of us. No man was more a man than He and yet He was not of the world, neither could you count Him among them. He was neither Pharisee, nor Sadducee, nor Scribe. But, at the same time, none could justly confuse Him with publicans and sinners. Those who reviled Him for consorting with these last, did, by that very reviling, admit that He was a very different person from those with whom they went. We want all members of the Church of Christ to be, manifestly and obviously, distinct persons, as much as if they were of a separate race, even when they are seen mingling with the people around them!  
We are not to cut ourselves off from our neighbors by pretense and contempt. God forbid! Our avoiding of pretension, our naturalness, simplicity, sincerity and amiability of character should constitute a distinction. Through Christians being what they seem to be, they should become remarkable in an age of pretenders! Their care for the welfare of others, their anxiety to do good, their forgiveness of injuries, their gentleness of manner—all these should distinguish them far more than they could be distinguished by a particular mode of dress or by any outward signs. I long to see Christian people become more distinct from the world than ever because I am persuaded that until they are, the Church will never become such a power for blessing men as her Lord intended her to be.  
It is for the world’s good that there should be no alliance between the Church and the world by way of compromise, even to a shade! See what came to pass when the Church and the world became one in Noah’s day— when “the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair,” and were joined with them. Then came the deluge. Another deluge, more desolating, even, than the former, will come if ever the Church forgets her high calling and enters into confederacy with the world.  
The Church is to be a garden, walled, taken out of the common and made a separate and select plot of ground. She is to be a spring shut up and a fountain sealed, no longer open to the fowl of the air and the beasts of the field. Saints are to be separate from the rest of men, even as Abraham was when he said to the sons of Seth, “I am a stranger and a sojourner with you.”  
Come now, My dear Friends, are you of this sort? Are you foreigners in a country not your own? You are not Christians, remember, if you are not so! “Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.” That is the Lord’s own word to you. Did not He, Himself, suffer outside the gate that you might go forth unto Him outside the camp? Are you at one with the rest of mankind? Could anybody live with you and never see that any alteration had taken place in you? Would they think that you were just the same as any other man? Then, by your fruits you shall be known. If there is no difference of life between you and the world, the text does not address you as the “Sister” and the “Spouse” of Christ! Those who are such are enclosed from the world and shut up for Christ. “I wish I were more so,” cries one. So do I, my Friend, and may you and I practically prove the sincerity of that desire by a growing separateness from the world!  
IV. Lastly, I think THE TEXT BEARS EVEN MORE FORCIBLY ANOTHER IDEA, NAMELY, THAT OF RESERVATION. The Church of God is “a garden enclosed.” What for? Why, that nobody may come into that garden to eat the fruit, but the Lord, Himself. It is “a spring shut up,” that no one may drink of the stream but the Lord Jesus. I beg you to consider this for a few minutes and then practically to remember it all your lives. A Church exists only for the Lord Jesus to accomplish His ends and purposes among the sons of men! Never may this be forgotten. May the Spirit of God daily sanctify us unto the Lord to be a peculiar people! I am persuaded that if any Church desires to be much honored of the Lord in these days, both as to internal happiness and external usefulness, it will find that the nearest way to its desire is to be wholly consecrated to the Lord.  
The Church is not formed to be a social club to produce society for itself! It is not to be a political association to be a power in politics! Nor is it to be a religious confederacy promoting its own opinions! It is a body created of the Lord to answer His own ends and purposes—and it exists for nothing else! The heavenly Bridegroom says to His Church, “Forget, also, your own people and your father’s house; so shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for He is your Lord; and worship you Him.” Churches which fail in their high vocation shall be cast forth as salt that has lost its savor! If we do not live for the Lord, we are dead while we live. If we do not bring glory to His name, we cannot justify our existence. If we are not as a garden enclosed for Jesus, we are mere bits of waste land. If we are not fountains sealed for Jesus, we are mere brooks in the valley and shall soon run dry!  
“But,” cries one, “are we not to seek the good of our fellow men?” Assuredly we are to do so for Christ’s sake! “Are we not to seek to help on sanitary, educational, purifying processes and the like?” Yes, so far as all can be done for His sake. We are to be the Lord’s servants for the blessing of the world and we may do anything which He would have done. In such a garden as the text speaks of, every plant bears flowers for its Owner, every tree yields fruit for Him. I pray God that this Church, whether it carries on its Orphan Houses, or its College, or its Colportage, or whatever else it does, may do it all for Christ! Keep this thought to the front as a Church and people. You are not to bear fruit for the markets, but fruit for the Master’s table! You are not to do good that you may have honor as an industrious and energetic community, but that glory may be given to Jesus, to whom you belong! “All for Jesus” is to be our motto!  
No one among us may dare to live unto himself, even in the refined way in which many are doing it—who even try to win souls that they may have the credit of being zealous and successful. We may so far degenerate as even to attempt to glorify Christ that we may have the credit of glorifying Him. It will not do. We must be truly, thoroughly, really living for Jesus! We must be an enclosed garden, reserved, shut up for Him. O Brothers and Sisters, your life is to be a stream that flows for the refreshment of Him who poured out His life for you! You are to let Him drink of the deep fountains of your heart, but no one else may rival Jesus there. You are a spring shut up, a fountain sealed for Jesus, for Jesus only and that altogether and always! Should self come forward, or personal advantage, you are to bid them be gone. They must have no admission here! This garden is strictly private. Trespassers beware!  
Should the world, the flesh, or the devil leap over the wall and stoop down to drink of the crystal fountain of your being, you are to chase them away lest their leprous lips should defile this spring and prevent the King from drinking there again. Our whole being is to be a fountain sealed for Jesus Christ alone! All for Jesus—body for Jesus, mind for Jesus, spirit for Jesus, eyes for Jesus, mouth for Jesus, hands for Jesus, feet for Jesus, ALL for Jesus! The wall must wholly enclose the garden, for a gap anywhere will admit an intruder everywhere. If one part of our being is left under the dominion of sin, it will show its power everywhere. The spring must be sealed at the very source, that every drop may be for Jesus throughout the whole of its course. Our first thoughts, desires and wishes must be His—and then all our words and deeds. We must be “wholly reserved for Christ that died, surrendered to the Crucified.”  
Brothers and Sisters, do we belong to Jesus? Does He know the walks of our garden and the secret springs of our nature? Here is an evidence by which you may judge whether Jesus fully possesses you. Is there anything, my Brothers and Sisters, that ever stirs you like the name of Jesus? I remember, some years ago, when I was very weary, faint and heart-sore. I was vexed with the question as to whether all was right between my Lord and my heart. I went into an obscure country Meeting House where a Brother who preached did me a great service. There was not much in the preaching, itself, but it was all about Jesus Christ and I found myself, within a few minutes, weeping freely. The Gospel had found out the secret fountains of my being and set them flowing! The name of Jesus acted on me like a charm. Yes, I thought, my Lord knows how to get at my heart as nobody else does!  
Depend upon it, He must have been there before! I was quite sure that my Lord had the key that could open the sealed fountain of my being, for I was stirred to the innermost depth of my soul. Then I knew that He was no stranger to me! There is a secret drawer inside my soul that nobody can ever open except Jesus. He made that drawer and knows the secret spring which shuts and opens it. My Lord and my Lord, only, can play upon the strings of my heart as a minstrel on his harp and, therefore, I know that I belong to Him!  
Beloved, I am sure that many of you can thus assure yourselves of your interest in Christ. He holds the clue of the maze of your soul and can enter the sacred chamber of your spirit. Can He not? Do you ever feel so happy as when He is near? Why, you love the very place where His honor dwells! It happens at times that you are sick and sorry—and begin to doubt your interest in Christ. But if anybody begins extolling the Savior, you are ready to cry out with delight! Oh how I love to hear Him praised! It sets My heart dancing. I cry with Herbert, “Oh, for a well-tuned harp!” for I want to make music, too! When Jesus is set forth in all His glories and beauties, you can hardly contain yourself—you want to be singing His high praises. No wonder that the Methodist cries, “Bless the Lord!” You, who are very proper and quiet, half wish that you had courage enough to shout, “Hallelujah!” You may freely do so if you like!  
Well now, if the Lord Jesus Christ holds the reins of your soul at that rate, I feel persuaded that you are His. If His name awakens the echoes of your whole being as nothing else does, then it must be because there are certain secrets between you and Him which no one else can know. My heart is often like the captive king who sat pining in a lonely tower with nothing to relieve his sadness as he remembered his native land, his vacant palace, and the malice of the enemy who kept him in exile. Nothing awakened him from his dreamy melancholy. Many were the voices within and without the castle, but they were nothing to him. The serenade of troubadours only mocked his misery. But one day a tender voice thrilled him. He listened to the verse of a song. It was even as life from the dead! None knew the next verse but himself. See what effect that sonnet has had on the monarch! His eyes, how they sparkled! His whole frame, how it is reanimated! He sang in response. With what rapture he pours forth the song! He is a fine singer, surely! We did not know that the King had such a voice. How charmed he is as a third stanza is sung by the minstrel below! And why? Because it is Blondel, his friend, who has, at last, found him and thus salutes him. They knew, but nobody else in the world knew that song!  
Even thus, the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. My Lord knows what it is that can move me and my heart melts when He speaks! My heart has a song which it sings to her Beloved and He has a song for me. I feel that I must be His, for nobody stirs my soul as He does.  
Dear Friends, if you know that this is so, be happy in His love! See to it that you live wholly to Him and for Him. As you have a good hope that He is altogether yours, be altogether His! Honor Him in your families and honor Him in the outside world! Serve the Lord wherever you are, whether you are most found in the kitchen, the parlor, the workshop, the street, or the field! Make it your delight that you are reserved unto Him. Acknowledge that the vows of the Lord are upon you. You are His Sister and His Spouse—give Him love in both forms—find in Him, Brother and Bridegroom. You are His enclosed garden, His spring shut up, His fountain sealed—then yield your all to Him, both of fruit and flow, of work of hand and warmth of heart! Be yours the honor, the bliss of being altogether your Lord’s.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 15.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—663, 658.

DEAR FRIENDS—I have issued this sermon rather than the discourse of last Lord’s-Day because I am greatly occupied by preparing for the Conference of the ministers who have been educated in our College. They come together on Monday, the 18th, and spend the week in holy convocation. Will my sermon readers pray that the Lord may be with us? On Wednesday evening, April 20th, is the annual Supper for the College, when friends are accustomed to largely aid our funds. Will not some who cannot be present, nevertheless cheer me by sending aid?

*C. H. SPURGEON,*Beulah Hill,  
Upper Norwood

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A SECRET AND YET NO SECRET  
NO. 431

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 26, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” “A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters and streams from Lebanon.”  
Song of Solomon 4:12, 15.**

OBSERVE the sweet titles with which Christ, the Husband, addresses His Church the bride. “My sister,” one near to Me by ties of nature. My next of kin, born of the same mother, partaker of the same sympathies. My spouse, nearest and dearest, united to Me by the most tender bands of love—My sweet companion, part of My own Self. My sister, by My Incarnation, which makes Me bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh. My spouse, by heavenly betrothal in which I have espoused you unto Myself in righteousness. My sister, whom I knew of old and over whom I watched from her earliest infancy. My spouse, taken from among the daughters,

embraced by arms of love and affianced unto Me forever.

See, my Brethren, how true is it that our royal kinsman is not ashamed of us, for He dwells with manifest delight upon this twofold relationship. Be not, O Beloved, slow to return the hallowed flame of His love. We have the word “My” twice in our version. As if Christ dwelt with rapture on His possession of His Church. “His delights were with the sons of men,” because those sons of men were His. He, the Shepherd, sought the sheep, because they were His sheep. He lit the candle and swept the house, because it was His money that was lost. He has gone about “to seek and to save that which was lost,” because that which was lost was His long before it was lost to itself or lost to Him.

The Church is the exclusive portion of her Lord’s—none else may claim a partnership, or pretend to share her love. Jesus, Your Church delights to have it so! Let every believing soul drink solace out of these wells. Soul, Christ is near to you in ties of relationship! Christ is dear to you in bonds of marriage union and you are dear to Him. Behold, He grasps both of your hands with both His own, saying, “My sister, My spouse.” Mark the two sacred holdfasts by which your Lord gets such a double hold of you that He neither can, nor will, ever let you go. Do you say in your heart this morning, “My Brother, my Husband?” Seek to be near to Him in nature— to be like your Brother, an eon of God. And to be near to Him in fellowship—that you may know Him and have fellowship with Him, being conformable unto His death.

Leaving this porch of cedar, let us enter the palace. Observe the contrast which the two verses present to us. I think that the Spirit of God intends that the verses should be understood as we intend to use them this morning. But even if we should be mistaken as to the precise interpretation of the passage in its connection, we shall not err in enlisting so beautiful a string of metaphors in the service of the Truth of God.

You know, Beloved, there are two works of the Holy Spirit within us. The first is when He puts into us the living waters. The next is when He enables us to pour forth streams of the same living waters in our daily life.

Our blessed Lord expressed what we mean, when on that great day of the feast, He cried, saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spoke He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive.”

The Spirit of God first implants in us the new nature. This is His work—to regenerate us, to put into us the new principle, the life of God in Christ. Then next, He gives us power to send forth that life in gracious emanations of holiness of life, of devoutness of communion with God, of likeness to Christ, of conformity to His image. The streams are as much of the Holy Spirit as the fountain itself. He digs the well and He afterwards, with heavenly rain, fills the pools. He first of all makes the stream in the desert to flow from the flinty rock, and afterwards, out of His infinite supplies, He feeds the stream and bids it follow us all our days.

I was pleased to find a quotation the other day, from one of the early fathers, which contains in it views I have frequently expressed to you—“The true Believer is composed of body, soul, and the Holy Spirit.” After the greatest research, eminent mental philosophers have given up all idea of a third principle which they can discover in man, as man. They can find nothing but the body and the soul. But, rest assured that as there is a certain something in the vegetable which we call vegetable life, as there is a sensitive substance which makes animal life, as there is a mysterious subsistence developed as mental life, so there is some real, substantial, Divine principle forming spiritual life.

The Believer has three principles, the body, the soul, and the indwelling Spirit, which is none other than the Holy Spirit of God, which abides in the faithful continually. Just such a relationship as the soul bears to the body, does the spirit bear to the soul. As the body without the soul is dead, so the soul without the Spirit is dead in trespasses and sins. As the body without the soul is dead naturally, so the soul without the Spirit is dead spiritually.

And, contrary to the general teaching of modern theologians, we insist upon it that the Spirit of God not only renovates the faculties which were there already, but does actually implant a new principle—that He does not merely set to rights a machinery which had before gone awry, but implants a new life which could not have been there. It is not a waking up of dormant faculties—it is the infusion of a supernatural Spirit to which the natural heart is an utter stranger.

Now, we think the first verse, to a great extent, sets forth the secret and mysterious work of the Holy Spirit in the creation of the new man in the soul. Into this secret no eye of man can look. The inner life in the Christian may well be compared to an enclosed garden—to a spring shut up—to a fountain sealed. But the second verse sets forth the manifest effects of Divine Grace, for no sooner is that life given than it begins to show itself. No sooner is the mystery of righteousness in the heart, than, like the mystery of iniquity, it “does already work.”

It cannot lie still. It cannot be idle. It must not rest. But, as God is ever active, so this God-like principle is active, too. Thus you have a picture of the outer life, proceeding from the inner. “A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters and streams from Lebanon.” The first is what the Christian is before God. The next is what the Christian will become before men. The first is the blessedness which he receives in himself. The next is the blessedness which he diffuses to others.

We will begin, then, where God the Holy Spirit begins with us, when He enters the recesses of the heart and breathes the secret life.  
I. With regard to the first text. You will clearly perceive that in each of the three metaphors you have very plainly the idea of secrecy. There is a garden. A garden is a place where trees have been planted by a skillful hand. They are nurtured and tended with care, and fruit is expected by its owner. Such is the Church—such is each renewed soul. But it is a garden enclosed and so enclosed that one cannot see over its walls—so shut out from the world’s wilderness that the passerby must not enter it. It is so protected from all intrusion that it is a guarded Paradise—as secret as was that inner place, the holy of holies—within the tabernacle of old.  
The Church—and mark, when I say the Church, the same is true of each individual Christian—is set forth, next, as a spring. “A spring”—the mother of sweet draughts of refreshing water, reaching down into some impenetrable caverns and bubbling up with perennial supplies from the great deeps. Not a mere cistern, which contains only, but a fresh spring, which through an inward principle within, begets, continues, overflows. But then, it is a spring shut up—just as there were springs in the East, over which an edifice was built, so that none could reach the springs save those who knew the secret entrance—so is the heart of a Believer when it is renewed by Divine Grace. There is a mysterious life within which no human skill can touch.  
And then, it is said to be a fountain. But it is a fountain sealed. The outward stones may be discovered, but the door is sealed, so that no man can get into the hidden springs. They are altogether hidden and hidden, too, by a royal will and decree of which the seal is the emblem. I say the idea is very much that of secrecy. Now, such is the inner life of the Christian. It is a secret which no other man knows, no, which the very man who is the possessor of it cannot tell to his neighbor. “The wind blows where it lists and you hear the sound thereof but can not tell from where it comes or where it goes. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.”  
There are mysteries in nature so profound that we only label them with some hard name and leave them—and all the knowledge that we have about them is that they are beyond the reach of man. But what are they? What are those mysterious impulses which link distant worlds with one another? What is the real essence of that power which flashes along the electric wire? What is the very substance of that awful force which rives the oak, or splits the spire? We do not know. These are mysteries.  
And even if we could enter these caverns of knowledge, if we could penetrate the secret chamber of nature, if we could climb the lofty tree of knowledge till we found the nest where the callow principles of nature as yet unfledged are lying—even then we could not find out where that hidden life is. It is a something—as certainly a something as the natural life of man. It is a reality—not a dream, not a delusion—it is as real (though far more Divine) as that “vital spark” which we say is “of heavenly flame.” But though real, it is not in itself perceptible by human senses. It is so hidden from the eyes of men who have it not, that they do not believe in its existence.  
“Oh,” they say, “there is no difference between a Christian and another man. There may sometimes be a little difference in his outward acts, but as to his being the possessor of another life, the idea is silly.” As to the regenerate being men of a distinct race of beings, as much above man naturally as man is above the brute beasts—carnal men would scorn to acknowledge. They cannot make this out. How can they? It is a spring shut up. It is a fountain sealed. No, and the Christian himself, though he feels the throbbing of the great life-force within, though he feels the perpetual bubbling up of the ever-living fountain, yet he does not know what it is. It is a mystery to him, too.  
He knows it came there once upon a time—perhaps he knows the instrumentality by which it came. But what it was he cannot tell. “One thing I know, whereas I was blind now I see. Whereas I once loved sin I now hate it. Whereas I had no thoughts after God and Christ, now my heart is wholly set upon Divine things.” This he can say. But how it came about, he does not know. Only God did it—did it in some mysterious way, by an agency which it is utterly impossible for him to detect. There are even times when the Christian himself finds this well so shut up that he cannot see it himself—and he is led to doubt about it. “Oh,” says he, “I question whether the life of God is in me at all.”  
I know some have scoffed at the idea of a Christian’s being alive, and at the same time doubting his spiritual existence. But however great a paradox it may seem, it is, nevertheless, a mournful truth in our experience. That spring, I say, is sometimes shut up even to ourselves and that fountain is so fast sealed, that although it is as really there as when we could drink of it, and the garden is as truly there as when we refreshed ourselves among its spicy beds, yet we cannot find any solace in it.  
There have been times, when if we could have the world for it, we could not discover a spark of love in our hearts towards God—no, not a grain of faith. Yet He could see our love when our blind eyes could not, and He could honor our faith even when we feared we had none. There have been moments when, if Heaven and Hell depended on our possession of full assurance, we certainly must have been lost—for not only had we no full assurance but we had scarcely any faith. Children of light do walk in darkness—there are times when they see not their signs—when for three days neither sun nor moon appears.  
There are periods when their only cry is, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” There is little wonder about this when we see how secret, how impalpable, how indiscernible by eye, or touch, or human intellect, is the Spirit of God within us. It is little wonder that sometimes flesh and blood should fail to know whether the life of God is in us at all. “A garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”  
A second thought is written upon the surface of the text. Here you see not only secrecy but separation. That also runs through the three figures. It is a garden but it is a garden enclosed—altogether shut out from the surrounding heaths and commons—enclosed with briars and hedged with thorns, which are impassable by the wild beasts. There is a gate through which the great husbandman, himself, can come. But there is also a gate which shuts out all those who would only rob the keeper of the vineyard of his rightful fruit.  
There is separation in the spring, also. It is not the common spring, of which every passerby may drink. It is one so kept and preserved distinct from men, that no lip may touch, no eye may even see, its secret. It is a something which the stranger doesn’t interfere with. It is a life which the world cannot give and cannot take away. All through, you see, there is a separateness, a distinctness. If it is ranged with springs, still it is a spring especially shut up. If it is put with fountains, still it is a fountain bearing a particular mark—a king’s royal seal—so that all can perceive that this is not a general fountain but a fountain that has a proprietor and stands especially alone by itself.  
So is it with the spiritual life. It is a separate thing. The chosen of God, we know, were separated in the eternal decree. Their names were written in a different book from the rest of men. The Book of Life records their names, and none but theirs. They were separated by God in the day of redemption, when Christ redeemed them from among men, out of every kindred and nation and tribe. They are separated day by day by Divine Providence, for the fiery pillar gives light to them, while it is darkness to the Egyptians.  
But their separation, so far as they can most clearly see it, must be a separation caused by the possession of the life which others have not. I fear there are some professed Christians who have never realized this. They are a garden. One could hardly speak ill of their character, their carriage is excellent, their deportment amiable. Their good works commend them before men, but still they are not separate from sinners. In vital essential distinction they have little manifest share. Their speech may be half of Canaan but the other half is of Ashdod. They may bring unto God thank-offerings but there is a niche in their house for Baal, too.  
They have not yet heard the cry, “Come you out of here, My people, that you be not partakers of her plagues.” Not yet has the mandate of the Prophet rung in their ears, “Depart you, depart you, go you out from here, be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.” They are a garden, but they are not a garden walled round. Oh, how many we have in this day of this kind! They can come to the Church, they can go to the world—they can talk as God’s people talk—and they can murmur as the rebellious murmur. They understand well the gift of prayer, but they understand little of the secret of the inner life of devotion.  
Brothers and Sisters, if you and I have ever received that third, that noble, that Divine principle, the life of God, into our souls, it will be utterly impossible for us to feel at home with the men of the world. No, we shall say, “without the camp” must be my place, bearing His reproach. Sometimes, indeed, we shall not feel at home with the professing Church, we shall be constrained to even come out of her, if we would follow the Lord fully. Yes, and there are sacred seasons when we shall be so enclosed that we shall not be at ease in any society, however select, for our souls will pine for sweet solitude, secret communion, hidden embraces. We shall be compelled to walk alone with Christ.  
The garden will be shut up even from other gardens, distinct even from other places where Christ walks. Oh, there will be periods with your soul, if it is renewed, when you must be alone, when the face of man will disturb you—and when only the face of Jesus can be company to you. I would not give a farthing for that man’s spiritual life who can live altogether with others. If you do not sometimes feel that you must be a garden enclosed, that you must enter into your closet and shut the door. If you do not feel seasons when the society of your dearest friend is an impediment, and when the face of your sweetest relation would but be a cloud between you and Christ, I cannot understand you.  
Be you, O children of Christ, as chaste virgins kept alone for Christ! Gad you not abroad, O my Heart, but stay at home with Jesus, your Lover, your Lord, your All. Shut up your gates, O my Heart, to all company but His. O my sweet well-spring of delights, be shut up to every lip but His, and O you fountain of the issues of my heart, be you sealed only for Him—that He may come and drink, and drink again, and take sweet solace in you—your soul being His, and His alone.  
In the third place, it is worthy of a more distinct remark that you have in the text the idea of sacredness. The garden enclosed is walled up that it may be sacred to its owner. The spring shut up is preserved for the use of some special person. And the fountain sealed more eminently still bears the mark of being sacred to some distinguished personage. Travelers have said that they have discovered gardens of Solomon which were of old enclosed where the king privately walked and they have also found wells of most deliciously cold water, which has been dexterously covered, so that no person unacquainted with the stone in the wall, which might revolve, or might be removed, could have found the entrance to the spring.  
At the foot of some lofty range of mountains a reservoir receives the cooling streams which flow from melted snows. This reservoir was carefully guarded and shut out from all common entrance, in order that the king, alone, might enter there and might refresh himself during the scorching heat. Now such is the Christian’s heart. It is a spring kept for Christ. Oh, I would that it were always so! Oh, how often do we pollute the Lord’s altar! How frequently, my Soul, do you let in intruders? Alas, how common it is for us to be feasting other friends and shutting the door against Him.  
How often do we keep Him waiting in the street, while we are entertaining some barbarian who is passing by, who offers us his kiss but is meanwhile stabbing us with his right hand? Christian Brothers and Sisters, I appeal to your experience. Have you not to mourn frequently that you are not so much for Christ as you could wish to be? Though you recognize the truth of the text—you are not your own but are bought with a price—do you feel its force as you ought to do, in the actions which you perform for Christ? Are they all wholly for Him? Could you take for your motto, “All for Jesus”?  
Could you feel that, whether you buy or sell, whether you read or pray, whether you go out in the world or come back to your home, that Jesus, only, is the one Object on whom your heart is set and for whom your life is spent? Blessed are they, those virgin souls, who where ever the Lamb does lead, from His footsteps never depart! Thrice happy are they who wear the white robe unsoiled by contact with the world! Thrice blessed are they who can say, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His lips, for His love is better than wine!” Every Christian should feel that he is God’s man— that he has God’s stamp on him—and he should be able to say with Paul, “From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”  
But I think there is another idea prominent and it is that of security— security to the inner life. “A garden enclosed.” The wild boar out of the wood shall not break in there, neither shall the little foxes spoil the vines. “A fountain shut up.” The bulls of Bashan shall not muddy her streams with their furious feet—neither shall the wild beast of Lebanon come there to drink. “A fountain sealed.” No putrid streams shall foul her springs. Her water shall be kept clear and living. Her fountains shall never be filled up with stones. Oh, how sure and safe is the inner life of the Believer!  
Satan does not know where it is, for “our life is hid with Christ.” The world cannot touch it. It seeks to overthrow it with troubles, and trials, and persecutions, but we are covered with the eternal wings and are safe from fear of evil. How can earthly trials reach the Spirit? As well might a man try to strike a soul with a stone, as to destroy the Spirit with afflictions. Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto Him. He has placed us in the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High. In His pavilion has He hidden us and in a high rock has He secured us. As a castle preserves the besieged and as the ramparts keep those who find refuge behind them, even so munitions of stupendous rock your dwelling place shall be.  
“Who is he that shall harm you,” when God is your protector? “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper and every tongue that rises against you in judgment shall You condemn.” No temptation shall be able to destroy the purity of the life within. No crushing weights of doubts shall be able to take away the vital principle from that new source of strength. If all the powers of earth and Hell could combine, and in their uttermost fury, assault the Spirit in its weakest hour, that immortal principle must still exist—it would boldly defy them all and triumph over every one of them. For He who gave it pledged His life for its preservation.  
The Spirit in the Christian is a spark of the Godhead and till the Godhead dies, the Christian’s inner life can never expire. We are immortal, even though we are mortal. Within this outward crust that perishes there is a soul which endures and within that soul which endures there is a something which might outlast even the soul itself—a part of the Being of God, the indwelling Holy One of Israel, who is Himself most surely Divine. “God dwells in us and we in Him.” We are one with Christ, even as Christ is one with the Father, and therefore as imperishable through Christ’s life as Christ Himself. Truly may we rejoice in the fact that “because He lives we shall live also.”  
Once more only. I think in looking at the text you receive the thought of unity. You notice, it is but one garden—“a garden enclosed.” “A garden.” It is but one spring and that is shut up. It is but one fountain. So the inner life of the Christian is but one. There is the old life which still survives— that old death, rather—the body of sin and death, struggling against the Law of life which God has put into His members, but this has no kinship with the Life Divine. It is alone and knows no relationship with earth. There is but one Life for all Christians—either we have it, or we are dead. There are degrees of operation but it is the same God.  
There are differences of administration, but it is the same Spirit that quickens. We may not, all of us, have “one Lord, one faith and one Baptism.” I wish we had. I would that the two Baptisms would cease, and that once again the Church would recognize and practice the Baptism of Believers. But we do have one Spirit, otherwise we are not Christians. I may dissent myself as much as I please from another man who is in Christ—I cannot do that, however, without sin. But dissociate myself as I may, I must be one with him, for the Life that is in him is in me. The same Life which quickens me, if I am in Christ, dwells also in him.  
When I hear strict communion talked of, it reminds me of a little finger which

was washed very clean, and therefore thought the rest of the body too filthy to have fellowship with it. So it took a piece of red tape and bound it tightly round itself, that the life-blood might not flow from itself into the rest of the body. What do you think, Brethren? Why, as long as that little finger was itself alive, the pulsations and the motions of the blood went from it to all the rest of the body, and that little piece of red tape was but a ridiculous sham. It did not affect anything. It had no influence. It only enabled the little finger boastfully to glory and perhaps to earn for itself the sad distinction—“These are they that separate themselves.” But the blood flowed on unimpeded and the nerves and sinews felt the common life-throb still.  
They forgot, when they denied fellowship in the outward act of eating bread and drinking wine, that the essential spirit of communion was far too spiritual to be thus restrained—it had overleaped their boundary and was gone! The only way in which a Christian can leave off communing with all other Christians is by leaving off being a Christian. Thus can the finger leave off communing with the rest of the body—by rotting away and no way else, as long as it is alive.  
Communion is the life-blood of the soul. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit that quickens the body of the Church and that Holy Spirit will go into every member. You may try to check Him by Church decrees, or to stop Him by your trust-deeds and your ordinances, that such-and-such a Church shall never be loosed from the bands of ancestral bigotry. But, by God’s Grace, the Church’s life will beat freely through all the members of the Church’s fellowship—and communion will go to all who are in Christ.  
There is but one garden, but one spring, but one sealed fountain. And if you have it in your heart and I have it in mine, there is a relationship between you and me that is as near as if you and I had the same soul, for you and I have the same Spirit. If you could imagine two bodies quickened by the very same mind, what a close connection would that be! But here are hundreds of bodies, hundreds of souls, quickened by the same Spirit. Brethren, not only ought we to love one another, but the love of Christ constrains us, so that we cannot resist the impulse. We do, indeed, love each other in Christ Jesus.  
II. I shall now need your attention, while with brevity I try to open the second text, which presents a decided contrast, because it deals not so much with the inner life as with the active life which goes abroad into all the deeds of the Christian in the world and is the natural outgoing of the life within.  
First, notice that in contradistinction to our first thought of secrecy, you have in the text manifestation. “A fountain of gardens.” Everybody can see a fountain which runs streaming through many gardens, making deserts fertile. “A well of living waters.” Whatever the traveler does not see, when he is riding along on a thirsty day, he is sure to see the fountain. If there is one anywhere, he is certain to observe it. “And streams from Lebanon.” So that any passerby in the valley, looking up the side of the mountain, will see by the clusters of trees which skirt the stream where the stream is.  
Or, if it is a smaller brook, just as sometimes in Cumberland and Westmoreland, on a rainy day you see the mountain suddenly marked with streaks of silver all down its brown sides, where the brooks are rippling—so the Christian becomes like the streams leaping down Lebanon’s steep sides, clearly perceived even from a distance—manifest to the most casual observer.  
Now, Brethren, this is what you and I ought to be. No man ought to court publicity for his virtue, or notoriety for his zeal. But, at the same time, it is a sin to be always seeking to hide that which God has bestowed upon us for the good of others. A Christian is not to be a city in a valley— he is to be “a city set upon a hill.” He is not to be a candle put under a bushel, but a candle in a candlestick, giving light to all. Retirement may be lovely in the eyes of some, and the hiding of oneself is doubtless a blessed thing, but the hiding of Christ in us can never be justified. The keeping back of the Truth of God which is precious to ourselves, is a sin against our kind, and an offense against God.  
Those of you who are of a nervous temperament and of retired habits of life, must take care that you do not too much indulge your natural propensity, lest you should be useless to the Church. Seek in the name of Him who was not ashamed of you to do some little violence to your feelings and tell to others what Christ has told you. Keep not the secret—it is too precious—it too much concerns the vital interests of man. Speak, if you can, not with trumpet tongue, yet speak with a still small voice! If the pulpit must not be your tribune, if the press may not carry on its wings your words, yet say, as Peter and John did, “Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto you.”  
And speak, too, as you can—gently to ones, if not loudly to twenties— quietly to twos, if not publicly to scores. By Sychar’s Well talk to the Samaritan woman, if you cannot on the mountain preach the sermon. In the house, if not in the temple. In the field, if not upon the exchange. In the midst of your own household, if you cannot in the midst of the great family of man. At any rate, hide not your talent—wrap it not up. “It is but one,” you say. So much the more reason why you should make the greater use of that one. Conceal it not—bring it out—trade with it. And so you shall multiply the talent and you shall bring in good interest to your Lord and Master.  
The inner life is secret—mind that you have this inner mystery. But out of the secret emanates the manifest. The darkness becomes the mother of light. From the dark mines comes the blazing coal. Oh, see to it that from all that is hidden, and secret, and mysterious, there comes out the plain and the manifest, that men may see the holiness, truthfulness, and zeal of God in your life!  
But clearly enough, again, we have in the second text, in opposition to the separation of the first, diffusiveness. The garden was enclosed before. Now it is “a fountain of gardens.” The well was shut up, now it is a well of living waters. Before we had the fountain sealed, now we have streams dashing down the sides of Lebanon. So a Christian is to be separate in his inner life. But in the outer manifestations of that inner life, he is to mingle for good among his fellow men. It was usual in Romish countries for women who wished to be especially holy, to make recluses of themselves.  
In the Church of St. Roche, in Paris, there was a small building erected on the side of the Church. The only opening was a little grating, through which the necessities of life were passed. Within this narrow cell, there lived for eighty years and died, I think, at the age of ninety-six, a woman doubtless devout but certainly superstitious. There she passed her life. The only sound she heard was the tramp of the worshippers upon the Church pavement and the chant of the daily service. But she lived there, thinking she was serving God by being separate from men.  
That is not the separation of the New Testament. We are to be separate from sinners, as Christ was, and whoever went among sinners more than He did? We are to be healthy, and by that health separate from the leper. We are to be clean, and by that cleanness separate from the filthy. But we are to go among them. We are to visit. We are to distribute ourselves what Christ has given to us. If we keep ourselves altogether apart, we shall be useless to our fellow men. We shall be like stagnant pools—we shall grow putrid by degrees. We must let the streams flow abroad. We must seek to give to others what Christ has given to us.  
Now, some of you who keep yourselves separate in that sense, may I beg you to see if there is no mission of mercy for you? Go out among them as physicians in the midst of the sick, as torchbearers in the midst of darkness. Go out as losers of the bonds among the captives. As openers of prison doors among those that are bound and He who has given you the true principle within, which is, and must be shut up, will bless the outgoings of your zeal, both in the morning and in the evening, and cause that, watering others, your own soul shall be watered, too.  
Briefly we are obliged to speak on each of these points. But notice, thirdly, that in opposition to the sacredness of the first text we have in the second verse an unlimited freeness, especially in that last expression— “streams from Lebanon.” What can be freer than the brook, which leaps along the mountainside? There the bird wets its wings. There the red deer comes to drink, and even that wild beast of Lebanon, of which we read in the Book of the Kings, comes there and without let or hindrance slakes its thirst. What can be freer than the rivulet singing with liquid notes flowing down the glen?  
It belongs to no one. It is free to all. Whosoever passes by, whether peer or peasant, may stoop there and refresh himself from the mountain stream. So is it with you, Christian. Carry about with you a piety which you do not wish to keep for yourself. A light loses none of its own luster when others are lit by its flame. Remember, you shall earn riches by giving riches and in this sense giving away shall be an increase of your wealth! I know some who are in an ill sense, like fountains shut up. They love the doctrine of election but there is one doctrine they love better and that is, the doctrine of exclusion.  
They love to think they are shut in, but they feel quite as much delight that others are shut out. Their conversation is always flavored with the thought of shutting others out. They are told that in such-and-such a Church there has been a large increase. Well, they hope they are genuine—by which they mean that they do not believe they are. A young Believer begins to tell them something of his joys. Well, they don’t like to be too fast in pronouncing an opinion—by which they mean they would not like one more to get in than should, and they are half afraid that perhaps some may overstep the bounds of election and get saved who should not be.  
Well, Brethren, I love the doctrine of election. I love to think that the garden is enclosed, but I love in my own life to exemplify the equally precious Truth of God of the freeness of the Gospel. So that if I speak to any it shall not be to discourage them, but to encourage them—not to say, “Get you gone!” But “Come, and welcome!” Depart, you cursed,” is nothing to do with me—my business is to say, “Come, you blessed.” I would rather go to the door and say, “Come in, you blessed of the Lord, why do you stand outside?” than slam it in a sinner’s face with, “What have you to do here?” No, we must be shut up in the inner life. But let every wall be broken down as to the outer life. We must be hidden springs within, but let us be sweetly flowing rivulets without—giving drink to every passerby.  
And not to detain you long, you will notice that, while we had in the other text the idea of security, in connection with that, we have here, in this text, the idea of approach. The garden was shut up—that was to keep it. There are no walls here, so that all may come to it. The streams were shut up before. Here it is an open well. The fountain was sealed in the first verse—here it is a flowing stream. All this is to teach us this—the way God keeps His people in security is not by shutting out their enemies from attacking them. But while laying them open to temptation and attack, He yet sustains them.  
It is not much to preserve oneself behind a wall which cannot be scaled. But to stand where arrows are flying thick as hail, where lances are being pushed with fury, where the sword-cuts are falling on every part—to stand, I say, invulnerable, invincible, immortal—this is to wear a Divine Life which cannot be conquered by human power! Such is the Christian. We are to pray, “lead us not into temptation.” But indeed, we often are tempted, notwithstanding our prayer. God will put us where we must be tempted—put us where we must be tried—if we are not tried, there is no honor to Him. And if we are not tempted, then where is the glory to the Divine Grace that delivers us out of temptations?  
The Lord does not put His plants into a hot-house, as some gardeners do. No, He sets them out in the open air and if the frost is coming, He says, “Ah, but no frost can kill them and they will be all the sturdier in the summer, for the cold in the winter.” He does not shelter them, either, from the heat of the sun, or from the cold of night—for in this world we must have tribulation and we must have much of it, too—for it is through much tribulation we inherit the kingdom. But what God does to His people is this. He keeps them in tribulation, preserves them in temptation and brings them joyfully out of all their trials.  
So, Christian, you may rejoice in your security. But you must not think that you are not to be attacked. You are a stream from Lebanon, to be dashed down many a cascade, to be broken over many a rough rock, to be stopped up with many a huge stone, to be impeded by many a fallen tree. But you are to dash forward with the irresistible force of God, sweeping everything away, till you find at last the place where shall be your perfect rest.  
And last of all, in opposition to the unity of which I spoke, we have in our second text great diversity. You have “a fountain,” not of a garden but “of gardens.” You have a well but it is a well of living waters. You have not a stream but streams—streams from Lebanon. So a Christian is to do good in all sorts of ways and his fruits are to be of many kinds. He is to be like the trees of Paradise, which bear twelve manner of fruits. The Christian is to have all sorts of Divine Graces. “Whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good repute,” he is to have all these.  
It is an old proverb that a man may have too many irons in the fire. But it depends upon what fire it is. For if it is God’s fire, put all the irons in it. A man may attempt too much, they say—but not for Christ. If you should attempt great things and have great faith, you shall succeed in all that you attempt. There seems to be a fear among some Christian men either of doing too much themselves, or letting other people do too much. And I know some to whom that text might almost be applied, “They have the key of the kingdom of Heaven but they neither enter themselves and they that would, they hinder.”  
Not content to refuse the burden for themselves—they will not even touch it with one of their little fingers—but they discourage others from carrying the burden, too. Well, we are not afraid as these are. Blessed be God, if there is a trench to be filled up, let us struggle about who shall lead the way. If there is a rampart to be climbed, if there is no other man to throw the irons over with the scaling-ladder, let your minister attempt the deed and lead the van, for he is well assured that there are many here who would jostle with him and say, “Let me go first. Let me serve my Master. Let me live or let me die, if I may but glorify Him.”  
What? Bring forth for Christ a little shriveled cluster? Climb to the topmost bough—to a cluster which the very birds of Heaven will not deign to touch, because it is too little even for their appetites? No! Rather let us have every bough weighed down with clusters, like those of Eshcol, which will take two ordinary men to carry, but which we can bear in rich profusion, because the life of the Spirit of God is in us!  
We are a race of little doers, of little givers, of little thinkers, of little believers. O God, raise us up again giants in these days! Give us again the consecrated men who shall stand upon the sword like the old Roman and say, “For God I devote myself. To Christ I give body, soul and spirit, and if I am offered up upon the sacrifice of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.” Oh, if the fountain, the secret fountain, were better seen to, I think there would be more of these outward streams. And if the sealed well were better guarded, we should see more of these rapid streams from Lebanon, which would make glad the people of God and the world at large.  
And now, how many of you have the secret spring within you? If your soul is not renewed by Divine Grace you cannot do good. “Except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” No man enters fully into discipleship with Christ till the water, as well as the Spirit has been reverently received—“Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit you cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven.” But these two things being done, being born of water and of the Spirit, go forth to show to others the mystery, the fellowship of the mystery—to make all men know that God has appeared unto us in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their iniquities.  
Preach of Christ when you know Christ, but not till then. Let the streams flow out where you have the inner fountain, but not till then. Sad reflection! There are some of you that have it not. Oh, if you have it not, you perish. You cannot get it of yourselves. He alone can give it. You are in His hands to give it to you. Oh, may your longings end in groaning today, and may you groan to God, “Lord! Renew me, Lord, cause me to be born again!” And those groans will be proofs that He has begun the good work, and those longings shall be evidence that there is a well in you, though it is a well shut up—a well shut up even from yourself.  
God grant that you may seek and find through Jesus Christ. And to Him be glory, forever and ever. Amen.

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GRACE FOR COMMUNION  
NO. 1941

**A SHORT ADDRESS TO A FEW FRIENDS AT MENTONE, AT THE BREAKING OF BREAD,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
ON LORD’S-DAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY 2, 1887.

**“Awake, O north wind, and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits.” Song of Solomon 4:16.**

THE soul of the Believer is the garden of the Lord. Within it are rare plants such as yield “spices” and “pleasant fruits.” Once it was a wilderness, overgrown with thorns and briars, but now it is “a garden enclosed,” an “orchard of pomegranates.”

At times within that garden everything is very still and quiet. Indeed, more still than could be wished. Flowers are in bloom, but they seem scentless, for there are no breezes to waft the perfume. Spices abound, but one may walk in the garden and not perceive them, for no gales bear their fragrance on their wings. I do not know that, in itself, this is an evil condition. It may be that “So He gives His beloved sleep.” To those who are worn with labor, rest is sweet. Blessed are they who enjoy a Sabbath of the soul!

The loved one in the text desired the company of her Lord and felt that an inactive condition was not altogether suitable for His coming. Her prayer is first about her garden, that it may be made ready for her Beloved, and then to the Bridegroom Himself, that He would come into His garden and eat its pleasant fruits. She pleads for the breath of Heaven, and for the Lord of Heaven.

First, she cries for THE BREATH OF HEAVEN to break the dead calm which broods over her heart. She cannot unlock the caskets of spice, nor cause the sweet odors to flow forth—her own breath would not avail for such an end. She looks away from herself to an unseen and mysterious power. She breathes this earnest prayer, “Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden!”

In this prayer there is an evident sense of inward sleep. She does not mean that the north wind is asleep—it is her poetical way of confessing that she, herself, needs to be awakened. She has a sense of absentmindedness, too, for she cries, “Come, you south.” If the south wind would come, the forgetful perfumes would come to themselves and sweeten all the air. The fault, whatever it is, cannot lie in the winds—it lies in ourselves.

Her appeal, as we have already said, is to that great Spirit who operates according to His own will, even as the wind blows where it wills. She does not try to “raise the wind”—that is an earthly expression relating to worldly matters—but, alas, it might fitly be applied to many imitations of spirituality! Have we not heard of “getting up revivals”? Indeed, we can no more command the Holy Spirit than we can compel the wind to blow east or west! Our strength lies in prayer. The spouse prays, “Awake, O north wind; and come, you south!” She thus acknowledges her entire dependence upon the free Spirit. Although she veiled her faith in a Divine Worker under the imagery of her song, yet she spoke as to a person. We believe in the personality of the Holy Spirit, so that we ask Him to, “Awake” and, “Come.” We believe that we may pray to Him and we are impelled to do so.

Notice that the spouse does not mind what form the Divine visitation takes so long as she feels its power. “Awake, O north wind.” Though the blast is cold and cutting, it may be that it will effectually fetch forth the perfume of the soul in the form of repentance and self-humiliation. Some precious Graces, like rare spices, naturally flow forth in the form of tears. And others are only seen in hours of sorrow, like gums which exude from wounded trees. The rough north wind has done much for some of us in the way of awakening our best Graces. Yet it may be that the Lord will send something more tender and cheering and, if so, we would cry, “Come, you south.” Divine Love warming the heart has a wonderful power to develop the best part of a man’s nature. Many of our precious things are brought forth by the sun of holy joy.

Either movement of the Spirit will sufficiently bestir our inner life, but the spouse desires both. Although in nature you cannot have the north wind and the south blowing at the same time, yet in Grace you can. The Holy Spirit may be at one and the same time working grief and gladness, causing humiliation and delight. I have often been conscious of the two winds blowing at once so that while I have been ready to die to self, I have been made to live unto God. “Awake, O north wind; and come, you south!” When all the forms of spiritual energy are felt, no Grace will be dormant. No flower can stay asleep when both rough and gentle winds awaken it.

The prayer is—“blow” and the result is—“flow.” Lord, if You blow, my heart flows out to You! “Draw me, we will run after You.” We know right well what it is to have Divine Grace in our souls and yet to feel no movement of it. We may have much faith in existence, yet none in exercise, for no occasion summons it into action. We may have much repentance, yet no conscious repenting. We may have much fire of love, yet no love flaming forth—and much patience in the heart, though at the moment we do not display it. Apart from the occurrences of Providence, which awakens our inward emotions one way and another, the only plan by which our Graces can be set in active exercise is by the Holy Spirit breathing upon us! He has the power to quicken, awake and bestir our faculties and Graces so that holy fruits within us become perceptible to ourselves and to others who have spiritual discernment.

There are states of the atmosphere in which the fragrance of flowers is much more diffused than at other times. The rose owes much to the zephyr which wafts its perfume. How sweet is even a field of beans after a shower! We may have much spice of piety and yet yield small fragrance unless the living power of the Holy Spirit moves upon us. In a forest there may be many a partridge, or pheasants and yet we may not see so much as one of them until a passing foot tramples down the underbrush and causes the birds to rise upon the wing. The Lord can thus discover our Graces by many a messenger, but the more choice and spiritual virtues need an agent as mysterious and all-pervading as the wind—need, in fact, the Spirit of the Lord to awaken them!

Holy Spirit, You can come to us when we cannot come to You! From any and every quarter You can reach us, taking us on our warm or cold side. Our heart, which is our garden, lies open at every point to You. The wall which encloses it does not shut You out. We wait for a visitation! We feel glad at the very thought of it! That gladness is the beginning of the stir—the spices are already flowing forth!

The second half of the prayer expresses our central desire—we long for THE LORD OF HEAVEN to visit us. The bride does not seek that the spices of her garden may become perceptible for her own enjoyment, nor for the delectation of strangers, nor even for the pleasure of the daughters of Jerusalem, but for her Beloved’s sake. He is to come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits. We are a garden for His delight. Our highest wish is that Jesus may have joy in us! I fear that we often come to the table of communion with the idea of enjoying ourselves or, rather, of enjoying our Lord—but we do not rise to the thought of giving Him joy.

Possibly that might even seem presumptuous. Yet, He says, “My delights were with the sons of men.” See how joyfully He cries in the next chapter, “I am come into My garden, My Sister, My Spouse: I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk.” Our heavenly Bridegroom rests in His love. He rejoices over us with singing! Often He takes more delight in us than we do in Him. We have not even known that He was present, but have been praying Him to come—and all the while He has been near us!

Note well the address of the spouse to her Beloved in the words before us. She calls Him hers—“My Beloved.” When we are sure that He is ours, we desire Him to come to us as ours and to reveal Himself as ours. Those words, “My Beloved,” are a prose poem—there is more music in them than in all the laureate’s sonnets! However slumbering my Graces may be, Jesus is mine! It is as mine that He will make me live and cause me to pour forth my heart’s fragrance!

While He is hers, she acknowledges that she is wholly His and all that she has belongs to Him. In the first clause she says, “Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden.” But now she prays, “Let my Beloved come into His garden.” She had spoken just before of her fruits, but now they are His fruits. She was not wrong when she first spoke, but she is now more accurate. We are not our own. We do not bring forth fruit of ourselves. The Lord says, “From Me is your fruit found.” The garden is of our Lord’s purchasing, enclosing, planting and watering—and all its fruit belongs to Him. This is a powerful reason for His visiting us! Should not a man come into his own garden and eat his own fruits? Oh, that the Holy Spirit may put us into a fit condition to entertain our Lord!

The prayer of the spouse is—“ Let my Beloved come.” Do we not say, “Amen, let Him come”? If He does not come in the glory of His Second Advent at this moment, as, perhaps, He may not, yet let Him come! If not to His Judgment Seat, yet let Him come into His garden. If He will not come to gather before Him all nations, yet let Him come to gather the fruit of His redemption in us! Let Him come into our little circle—let Him come into each heart. “Let my Beloved come.” Stand back, you that would hinder Him! O my Beloved, let not my sinful, sluggish, wandering thoughts prevent You from coming! You did visit the disciples, “the doors being shut”— will you not come where every opened door bespeaks Your welcome? Where should You come but to Your garden? Surely my heart has great need of You. Many a plant within it needs Your care. Welcome, welcome, welcome! Heaven cannot welcome You more heartily, O my Beloved, than my heart shall now do! Heaven does not need You so much as I do! Heaven has the abiding Presence of the Lord God Omnipotent, but if You dwell not within my soul, it is empty and void, and waste! Come, then, to me, I beseech You, O my Beloved!

The spouse further cries—“ Let Him eat His pleasant fruits.” I have often felt myself overcome with the bare idea that anything I have ever done should give my Lord pleasure. Can it be that any offering I ever gave Him should be thought worthy of His acceptance? Or that anything I ever felt or said should be a joy to Him? Can He perceive any perfume in my spices, or taste any flavor in my fruits? This is a joy worth worlds! It is one of the highest tokens of His condescension. It is wonderful that the King from the far country should come from the Glory Land, where all choice fruits are at their best, and enter this poor enclosure in the wilderness— and there eat such fruits as ours—and call them pleasant, too! O Lord Jesus, come into our hearts now! O Holy Spirit, blow upon our hearts at this moment! Let faith, love, hope, joy, patience and every Grace be now like violets which betray themselves by their perfume, or like roses which load the air with their fragrance!

Though we are not content with ourselves, yet may our Lord be pleased with us! Do come to us, O Lord! That You are our Beloved is a greater wonder than that You should come to us. That you have made us Your garden is a greater favor than that You should eat our fruits. Fulfill to us that gracious promise, “I will sup with him and he with Me,” for we do open to You. You said unto the woman of Samaria, “Give Me to drink,” and will you not, now, accept a draught of love from us? She had no husband, but You are our Husband—will You not drink from the cup which we now hold out to You? Receive our love, our trust, our consecration! Delight Yourself in us, as we now delight ourselves in You. We are asking a great thing of You, but Your love warrants large requests. We will now come to Your table where You shall be our meat and drink—but allow our spices to be the perfume of the feast and let us each say, “While the King sits at His table, my spikenard sends forth the smell thereof.” Fulfill this wish of our soul, Divine Lord and Master! Amen.

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“MY GARDEN”—“HIS GARDEN”  
NO. 2475

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 26, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 20, 1882.

**“Awake, O north wind, and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits.”  
Song of Solomon 4:16.**

WHAT a difference there is between what the Believer was by nature and what the Grace of God has made him! Naturally, we were like the waste howling wilderness, like the desert which yields no healthy plant or verdure. It seemed as if we were given over to be like a salt land which is not inhabited—no good thing was in us, or could spring out of us. But now, as many of us as have known the Lord are transformed into gardens—our wilderness is made like Eden, our desert is changed into the garden of the Lord. “I will turn to you,” said the Lord to the mountains of Israel when they were bleak and bare, “I will turn to you and you shall be tilled and sown.” And this is exactly what He said to the barrenness of our nature. We have been enclosed by Grace, we have been tilled and sown, we have experienced all the operations of the Divine Farmer. Our Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “My Father is the Farmer,” and He has made us to be fruitful to His praise, full of sweetness where once there was no fruit and nothing that could give Him delight.

We are a garden, then, and in a garden there are flowers and fruit. And in every Christian’s heart you will find the same evidences of culture and care—not in all, alike, for even gardens and fields vary in productiveness. In the good ground mentioned by our Lord in the parable of the sower, the good seed did not all bring forth a hundredfold, or even sixtyfold. There were some parts of the field where the harvest was as low as thirty-fold and I fear that there are some of the Lord’s gardens which yield even less than that. Still, there are the fruits and there are the flowers in measure. There is a good beginning made wherever the Grace of God has undertaken the culture of our nature.

I. Now coming to our text, and thinking of Christians as the Lord’s garden, I want you to observe, first, that THERE ARE SWEET SPICES IN BELIEVERS.

The text assumes, when it says, “Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out,” that there are, in the Lord’s garden, sweet flowers that drip with honey, and all manner of delightful perfumes. There are such sweet spices within the Believer’s heart—let us think of them for a few minutes and first, let me remind you of the names of these sweet spices.

For instance, there is faith. Is there anything out of Heaven sweeter than faith—the faith which trusts and clings, which believes and hopes, and declares that, though God shall slay it, yet will it trust in Him? In the Lord’s esteem, faith is full of fragrance. He never delighted in the burning of bulls and the fat of fed beasts, but He always delighted in the faith which brought these things as types of the one great Sacrifice for sin. Faith is very dear to Him. Then comes love and, again, I must ask— Is there to be found anywhere a sweeter spice than this—the love which loves God because He first loved us, the love which flows out to all the brotherhood, the love which knows no circle within which it can be bounded, but which loves the whole race of mankind and seeks to do them good? It is exceedingly pleasing to God to see love growing where once all was hate—and to see faith springing up in that very soul which was formerly choked with the thorns and briers of doubt and unbelief! And there is also hope which is, indeed, an excellent Grace, a far-seeing Grace by which we behold Heaven and eternal bliss. There is such a fragrance about a God-given hope that this poor sin-stricken world seems to be cured by it. Wherever this living, lively hope comes, there men lift up their drooping heads and begin to rejoice in God their Savior. You do not need that I should go over all the list of Christian Graces and mention meekness, brotherly kindness, courage, uprightness, or the patience which endures so much from the hand of God— whatever Grace I might mention, it would not be difficult at once to convince you that there is a sweetness and a perfume about all Grace in the esteem of Him who created it—and it delights Him that it should flourish where once its opposite was found growing in the heart of man. These, then, are some of the saints’ sweet spices.

Next, notice that these sweet spices are delightful to God. It is very wonderful that we should have within us anything in which God can take delight. Yet when we think of all the other wonders of His Grace, we need not marvel at all. The God who gave us faith may well be pleased with faith. The God who created love in such unlovely hearts as ours may well be delighted at His own creation. He will not despise the work of His own hands—rather will He be delighted with it and find sweet complacency therein. What an exaltation it is to us worms of the earth that there should ever be anything in us well-pleasing to God! Well did the Psalmist say, “What is man, that You are mindful of Him? And the son of man, that you visit Him?” But God is mindful of us and He does visit us! Of old, before Christ came into this world in human form, His delights were with the sons of men—much more is it so now that He has taken their nature into Heaven, itself, and given to those sons of men His own Spirit to dwell within them! Let it ravish your heart with intense delight that though often you can take no complacency in yourself, but go with your head bowed down like a bulrush and cry, “Woe is me!” yet in that very cry of yours, God hears a note that is sweet and musical to His ears!

Blessed is repentance, with her teardrops in her eyes, sparkling like diamonds. God even takes delight in our longings after holiness and in our loathing of our own imperfections. Just as the father delights to see his child anxious to be on the best and most loving terms with him, so does God delight in us when we are crying after that which we have not yet reached—the perfection which shall make us to be fully like Himself! O Beloved, I do not know anything that fills my soul with such feelings of joy as does the reflection that I, even I, may yet be and do something that shall give delight to the heart of God, Himself! He has joy over one sinner that repents, though repentance is but an initial Grace—and when we go on from that to other Graces and take yet higher steps in the Divine life— we may be sure that His joy is in us and, therefore, our joy may well be full.

These spices of ours are not only delightful to God, but they are healthy to man. Every particle of faith that there is in the world is a sort of purifier. Wherever it goes, it has a tendency to kill that which is evil. In the spiritual sanitary arrangements which God made for this poor world, He put men of faith—and the faith of these men—into the midst of all this corruption to help to keep other men’s souls alive, even as our Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “You are the salt of the earth.” The sweet perfumes that flow out from the flowers which God cultivates in the garden of His Church are scattering spiritual health and sanity all around! It is a blessed thing that the Lord has provided these sweet spices to overpower and counteract the unhealthy odors that float on every breeze! Think, then, dear Friends, of the importance of being God’s fragrant flowers which may yield perfumes that are delightful to Him—and that are blessed and healthful to our fellow men! A man of faith and love in a Church sweetens all his brethren. Give us but a few such in our midst and there shall be no broken spiritual unity! There shall be no coldness and spiritual death, but all shall go well where these men of God are among us as a mighty influence for good. And, as to the ungodly around us, the continued existence in the earth of the Church of Christ is the hope of the world! The world that hates the Church knows not what it does, for it is hating its best friend! The spices with which God is conserving this present evil age, lest His anger should destroy it because of the growing corruption, are to be found in the flowers which He has planted in the garden of His Church!

It sometimes happens that these sweet odors within God’s people lie quiet and still. There is a stillness in the air, something like that which the poet Coleridge makes “The Ancient Mariner” speak of in his graphic description of a calm within the tropics. Do you, dear Friends, ever get into that becalmed condition? I remember, when I was young, reading an expression—I think of Erskine’s—in which he says that he likes a roaring devil better than a sleeping devil. It struck me, then, that if I could keep the devil always asleep, it would be the best thing that could possibly happen for me—but now I am not so sure that I was right! At all events, I know this—when the old dog of Hell barks very loudly, he keeps me awake! And when he howls at me, he drives me to the Mercy Seat for protection. But when he goes to sleep and lies very quiet, I am very apt to go to sleep, too—and then the Graces that are within my soul seem to be absolutely hidden! And, mark you, hidden Grace, which in no way reveals itself by its blessed odors, is all the same as if there were none to those that watch from the outside and, sometimes, to the Believer himself!

What is needed, in order that he may know that he has these sweet perfumes, is something outside himself. You cannot stir your own Graces! You cannot make them more! You cannot cause their fragrance to flow forth! True, by prayer you may help to this end, but then that very prayer is put into you by the Holy Spirit—and when it has been offered to the Lord, it comes back to you laden with blessings. But often something more is needed—some movement of God’s Providence and much more—some mighty working of His Grace to come and shake the flower bells in His garden and make them shed their fragrance in the air. Alas, on a hot and drowsy day, when everything has fallen into a deep slumber, even God’s saints, though they are wise virgins, go as soundly asleep as the foolish virgins and they forget that “the Bridegroom comes!” “While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept” and, sometimes, you and I catch ourselves nodding when we ought to be wide awake! We are going through a part of that enchanted ground which John Bunyan describes and we do not know what to do to keep ourselves awake.

At such times, a Christian is very apt to ask, “Am I, indeed, planted in God’s garden? Am I really a child of God?” Now I will say what some of you may think a strong thing, but I do not believe that he is a child of God who never raised that question! Cowper truly wrote—

*“He has no hope who never had a fear.  
And he who never doubted of his state,  
He may, perhaps—perhaps he may—too late. I have sung and I expect that I may have to sing again— “‘Tis a point I long to know.  
Oft it causes anxious thought—  
Do I love the Lord or no?  
Am I His, or am I not?”*

I cannot bear to get into that condition and I cannot bear to keep in it when I am in it, but still, there must be anxious thought about this allimportant matter. Because you happened to be excited on a certain occasion and thought you were converted and were sure of Heaven, you had better look well to the evidence on which you are relying. You may be mistaken, after all, and while I would not preach up little faith, I would preach down great presumption! No man can have a faith too strong and no assurance can be too full if it really comes from God, the Holy Spirit. But if it comes merely out of your fancying that it is so and, therefore, will not examine yourself, whether you are in the faith, I begin to make up my mind that it is not so because you are afraid to look into the matter! “I know that I am getting rich,” says a merchant. “I never keep any books and I do not need any books, but I know that I am getting on well in my business.” If, my dear Sir, I do not soon see your name in the Gazette, I shall be rather surprised!

Whenever a man is so very good that he does not need to enquire at all into his position before God, I suspect that he is afraid of introspection and self-examination—and that he dare not look into his own heart! This I know, as I watch the many people of God committed to my care, here—I see some run on for 10 years or more serving God with holy joy and having no doubt or fear. They are not generally remarkable for any great depth of experience, but when God means to make mighty men of them, He digs about them and soon they come to me crying and craving a little comfort—telling me what doubts they have because they are not what they want to be! I am glad when this is the case, I rejoice because I know that they will be spiritually better off afterwards! They have reached a higher standard than they had previously attained. They have a better knowledge, now, of what they ought to be. It may be that, before, their ideal was a low one and they thought that they had reached it. But God has revealed to them greater heights which they have to climb—and they may as well gird up the loins of their mind to do so by Divine help!

As they get higher, they perhaps think, “Now we are at the top of the mountain,” when they are really only on one of the lower spurs of it. Up they go, climbing again! “If once I can reach that point, I shall soon be at the summit,” you think. Yes, and when you have, at last, got there, you see the mountain still towering far above you! How deceptive is the height of the Alps to those who have not seen them before! I said to a friend, once, “It will take you about 13 hours to get to the top of that mountain.” “Why,” he replied, “I can run up in half-an-hour.” I let him have a try and he had not gone far before he had to sit down to pant and rest. So you think of a certain height of Grace, “Oh, I can easily reach that!” Yes, just so, but you do not know how high it is. And those who think that they have reached the top do not know anything about the top, for he who knows how high is the holiness to which the Believer can attain will go on clambering and climbing, often on his hands and knees, and when he has reached that point which he thought was the summit, he will sit down and say, “I thought I had reached the top, but now I find that I have but begun the ascent.” Or he may say with Job, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear,” (and then I did not know much of You, or of myself, either), “but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

You see, then, that there are sweet spices lying in Christians, like hidden honey and locked-up perfume within the flowers on a hot day!  
II. What is needed is that THOSE SWEET ODORS SHOULD BE DIFFUSED. That is to be our second head. Read the text again—“Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.”  
Observe, first, that until our Graces are diffused, it is the same as if they were not there. You may go through a forest and it may be abounding in game, yet you may scarcely see a hare or notice a pheasant anywhere. There they lie, all quiet and undisturbed, but, by-and-by, the beaters go through the woods making a great noise and away the pheasants fly! And you may see the timid hares run like hinds let loose because they are disturbed and awakened. That is what we sometimes need, to be awakened and stirred from slumber! We may not know that we have any faith till there comes a trial—and then our faith starts boldly up! We can hardly know how much we love our Lord till there comes a test of our love—and then we so behave ourselves that we know that we do love Him. Oftentimes, as I have already reminded you, something is needed from without to stir the life that lies hidden within. It is so with these sweet flowers in the spouse’s garden—they need either the north wind or the south wind to blow upon them that they may shed abroad their sweet odors.  
Notice next, that it is very painful to a Christian to be in such a condition that his Graces are not stirring. He cannot endure it! We who love the Lord were not born again to waste our time in sinful slumber! Our watchword is, “Let us not sleep, as do others.” We were not born to inaction—every power that God has put within us was meant to be used in working, striving and serving the Lord! So, when our Graces are slumbering, we are in an unhappy state. Then we long for any agency that would set those Graces moving. The north wind? Oh, but if it shall blow, then we shall have snow! Well, then, let the snow come, for we must have our Graces set in motion—we cannot bear that they should continue to lie quiet and still. “Awake, O north wind!”—a heavy trial, a bleak adversity, a fierce temptation—anything so long as we do but begin to diffuse our Graces! Or if the north wind is dreaded, we say, “Come, you south!” Let prosperity be granted to us! Let sweet fellowship with our Brothers and Sisters awaken us and holy meditations, full of delight, stir our souls! Let a sense of the Divine life, like a soft south wind, come to our spirit. We are not particular which it is, let the Lord send which He pleases, or both together, as the text seems to imply, only let us be awakened! “Quicken You me, O Lord, according to Your Word”— whichever Word you shall choose to apply—only quicken Your servant and let not the Graces within me be as if they were dead!  
Remember, however, that the best Quickener is always the Holy Spirit and that blessed Spirit can come as the north wind, convincing us of sin and tearing away every rag of our self-confidence, or He may come as the soft south wind, all full of love, revealing Christ and the Covenant of Grace and all the blessings treasured for us therein. Come, Holy Spirit! Come as the Heavenly Dove, or as the rushing mighty wind, but come! Drop from above, as gently as the dew, or come like rattling hail, but come, blest Spirit of God! We feel that we must be moved, we must be stirred, our heart’s emotions must once again throb to prove that the life of God is really within us! And if we do not realize this quickening and stirring, we are utterly unhappy.  
You see also, dear Friends, from this text, that when a child of God sees that his Graces are not diffused abroad, then is the time that He should take to prayer. Let no one of us ever think of saying, “I do not feel as if I could pray and, therefore, I will not pray.” On the contrary, then is the time when you ought to pray more earnestly than ever! When the heart is disinclined for prayer, take that as a danger signal and, at once, go to the Lord with this resolve—  
*“I will approach You—I will force  
My way through obstacles to Thee!  
To You for strength will have recourse,  
To You for consolation flee!”*  
When you seem to yourself to have little faith, and little love, and little joy, then cry to the Lord all the more! “Cry aloud and spare not.” Say, “O my Father, I cannot endure this miserable existence! You have made me to be a flower, to shed abroad my perfume, yet I am not doing it. Oh, by some means stir my flagging spirit till I shall be full of earnest industry, full of holy anxiety to promote Your Glory, O my Lord and Master!” While you are thus crying, you must still believe, however, that God the Holy Spirit can stir your spirit and make you full of life again. Never permit a doubt about that fact to linger in your bosom, else you will be unnecessarily sad! You, who are the true children of God, can never come into a condition out of which the Holy Spirit cannot lift you up!  
You remember the notable case of Laodicea, which was neither cold nor hot and, therefore, so nauseous to the great Lord that He threatened to spue her out of His mouth? Yet what is the message to the angel of that Church? “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” This is not said to sinners, it is addressed to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans! “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Oh, matchless Grace! He is sick of these lukewarm professors, yet He promises to sup with them and that they shall sup with Him! That is the only cure for lukewarmness and decline—to renew heart-fellowship with Christ—and He stands and offers it to all His people right now! “Only open the door, and I will sup with you, and you shall sup with Me.”  
O you whose Graces are lying so sinfully dormant, who have to mourn and cry because of “the body of this death”—for death in you seems to have taken to itself a body and to have become a substantial thing, no mere skeleton, but a heavy, cumbrous form that bows you down—cry to Him who is able to deliver you from this lukewarm and sinful state! Let everyone of us put up the prayer of our text, “Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.”  
III. Our third and closing head will help to explain the remaining portion of our text—“Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.” These words speak of THE COMPANY OF CHRIST AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF OUR FRUIT BY CHRIST.  
I want you, dear Friends, to especially notice one expression which is used here. While the spouse was, as it were, shut up and frozen, and the spices of the Lord’s garden were not flowing out, she cried to the winds, “Blow upon my garden.” She hardly dared to call it her Lord’s garden! But now notice the alteration in the phraseology—“Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits.” The wind has blown through the garden and made the sweet odors to flow forth—now it is no longer, “my garden,” but, “His garden.” It is wonderful how an increase of Grace transfers our properties! While we have but little Grace, we cry, “my,” but when we get great Grace, we cry, “His.” Wherein you are sinful and infirm, Brothers and Sisters, that is yours—you rightly call it “my”—but when you become strong and joyous, and full of faith, that is not yours! And you rightly call it, “His.” Let Him have all the glory of the change while you take all the shame and confusion of face to yourself that ever you should have been so destitute of Grace! So the spouse says, “Let my Beloved come into His garden. Here are all the sweet perfumes flowing out. He will enjoy them—let Him come and feel Himself at home among them. He planted every flower and gave to each its fragrance—let Him come into His garden and see what wonders His Grace has worked.”

Do you not feel, Beloved, that the one thing you need to stir your whole soul is that Christ should come into it? Have you lost His company lately? Oh, do not try to do without it! The true child of God ought not to be willing to bear broken communion for even five minutes, but should be sighing and crying for its renewal! Our business is to seek to “walk in the light as God is in the light,” fully enjoying communion with Christ our Lord. But when that fellowship is broken, then the heart feels that it has cast all its happiness away and it must robe itself in sackcloth and sorrowfully fast. If the Presence of the Bridegroom shall be taken away from you, then, indeed, shall you have cause to fast and to be sad. The best condition a heart can be in, if it has lost fellowship with Christ, is to resolve that it will give God no rest till it gets back to communion with Him—and to give itself no rest till once more it finds the Well-Beloved!

Next, observe that when the Beloved comes into His garden, the heart’s humble but earnest entreaty is, “Let Him eat His pleasant fruits.” Would you keep back anything from Christ? I know you could not if He were to come into His garden! The best things that you have, you would first present to Him, and then everything that you have, you would bring to Him and leave all at His dear feet. We do not ask Him to come to the garden that we may lay up our fruits, that we may put them by and store them up for ourselves—we ask Him to come and eat them. The greatest joy of a Christian is to give joy to Christ! I do not know whether Heaven, itself, can exceed this pearl of giving joy to the heart of Jesus Christ on earth! It can match it, but not exceed it, for it is a superlative joy to give joy to Him—the Man of Sorrows, who was emptied of joy for our sakes and who now is filled up, again, with joy as each one of us shall come and bring his share and cause to the heart of Christ a new and fresh delight!

Did you ever reclaim a poor girl from the streets? Did you ever rescue a poor thief who had been in prison? Then I know that as you have heard of the holy chastity of the one, or of the sacred honesty of the other of those lives that you have been the means of restoring, you have said, “Oh, this is delightful! There is no joy equal to it! The effort cost me money, it cost me time, it cost me thought, it cost me prayer, but I am repaid a thousand times!” Then, as you see them growing up so bright, so transparent, so holy, so useful, you say, “This work is worth living for, it is a delight beyond measure!” Often persons come to me and tell me of souls that were saved through my ministry 20 years ago. I heard, the other day, of one who was brought to Christ by a sermon of mine nearly 30 years ago and I said to the friend who told me, “Thank you, thank you! You could not tell me anything that would give my heart such joy as this good news that God has made me the instrument of a soul’s conversion.” But what must be the joy of Christ who does all the work of salvation—who redeems us from sin, and death, and Hell—when He sees such creatures as we are made to be like Himself and knows the Divine possibilities of glory and immortality that lie within us?

What are we going to be, Brothers and Sisters, we who are in Christ? We have not any idea of what holiness, glory and bliss shall yet be ours! “It does not yet appear what we shall be.” We may rise even while on earth to great heights of holiness—and the higher the better—but there is something better for us than mortal eyes have ever seen or mortal ears have ever heard! There is more Grace to be in the saints than we have ever seen in them, the saintliest saint on earth was never such a saint as they are, yonder, who are before the Throne of the Most High! And I know not but that, even when they get there, there shall be a something yet beyond for them and that through the eternal ages they shall still take for their motto, “Onward and upward!”

In Heaven, there will be no, “Finis.” We shall still continue to develop and to become something more than we have ever been before—not fuller, but yet capable of holding more—always growing in the possibility of reflecting Christ and being filled with His love! And all the while our Lord Jesus Christ will be charmed and delighted with us. As He hears our lofty songs of praise. As He sees the bliss which will always be flashing from each one of us. As He perceives the Divine ecstasy which shall be ours, forever, He will take supreme delight in it all! “My redeemed,” He will say, “the sheep of My pasture, the purchase of My blood, borne on My shoulders, My very heart pierced for them, oh, how I delight to see them in the heavenly fold! These, My redeemed people, are joint heirs with Me in the boundless heritage that shall be theirs forever! Oh, how I delight in them!”

“Therefore, comfort one another with these words,” Beloved, and cry mightily that, on this Church, and on all the Churches, God’s Spirit may blow to make the spices flow! Pray, dear Friends, all of you, for the Churches to which you belong. And if you, my Brother, are a pastor, be asking especially for this Divine wind to blow through the garden which you have to cultivate, as I also pray for this portion of the garden of the Lord—“Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.” The Lord be with each one of you, Beloved, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—811, 814, 778. EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**JOHN 20:11-29.**

Verses 11-12. But Mary stood outside at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher, and saw two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. You see, dear Friends, love is very patient and persevering. The other disciples had gone home, but not Mary, she stands outside the sepulcher and still waits, for she cannot go till she has seen her Lord. Love, however, has many sorrows for, as Mary stood outside the sepulcher, she was weeping. Oftentimes your love to Christ will make you sorrowful when you, for a while, lose His Presence. It will be a great sorrow to you if your Lord should seem to have hidden Himself from you. But see how quick-sighted love is—Mary saw the angels, whom the other disciples might have seen if they had not gone home. One of the beatitudes is, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” And love is one of the most eminent signs of purity. I do not wonder, therefore, that love saw angels, since love sees God Himself!

13. And they said to her, Woman, why do you weep? They could not understand Mary’s tears. Their question seemed to say, “Christ the Lord is risen from the dead and all the streets of Heaven are ringing with hallelujahs because the great Conqueror has returned bearing the spoils of His victory. Why do you weep? Are you not one of those for whom this redeeming work was done? ‘Woman, why do you weep?’”

13. She said to them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. That was enough to make any of Christ’s loved ones weep and if ever you hear a sermon which has not Christ in it, you may well go down the aisle weeping. And if any ask why you weep, you may reply, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.”

14. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. A strange and sad unbelief had taken possession of her and there is nothing that blinds the eyes so quickly as unbelief. Christ is near you, poor Soul, near you in your trouble, but you do not know that it is Jesus! Open your eyes! May God the Holy Spirit touch them with His heavenly eye salve, that you may see that it is Christ, Himself, who is close beside you!

15. Jesus said to her, Woman, why do you weep? Whom do you seek? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, Sir, if you have borne Him hence, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away. Her supposition was wrong in one way, but right in another, for Jesus is the Gardener, and His Church is His garden! There was one gardener in whom we fell—here is another and a better Gardener in whom we rise! It is He, and He alone, who can properly tend all the plants of His Father’s right-hand planting. He is the Gardener, though not the one that Mary supposed! But what a strange request this was for her to make—“If you have borne Him hence, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Could she have carried away the body of Jesus if it had been there? If so, what a ghastly load for her tender frame to bear! Yes, but she would have done it, somehow or other, for, if faith laughs at impossibilities and cries, “It shall be done!” it is love that actually does the deed of holy daring. The task that seems well-near impossible is readily performed when the spirit is invigorated by love.

16. Jesus said to her, Mary. In the simple utterance of her name, there were tones which she could not mistake. It was the sweetest music she had heard since her Lord’s last message from the Cross! “Mary.” “Why, surely,” she must have thought, “it is the Master’s voice calling me by name!”

16. She turned herself and said to Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Or, “My Master!” The word, “Rabboni” means something more than, “Master.” Mary seems to say, “Greatest and best of all Teachers, I know Your voice! Now that You have called me by my name, I recognize You, and I wait to listen to the instruction You are ready to impart to me.”

17. Jesus said to her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father. “There will be time enough for the fellowship your heart craves”—  
17. But go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father; and to My God and your God. Practical service is better than personal rapture! Mary would gladly have held her Lord, but He said to her, “Go to My brethren.” You will always find that it is best and safest to do what Jesus tells you, when He tells you and as He tells you. What a delightful message is this from the risen Christ! “Go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father; and to My God and your God.”  
18, 19. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said to them, Peace be to you. If they had possessed more faith, they would have left a door open for Jesus to come in, however anxious they might have been to shut out the Jews! I am afraid, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we, also, are sometimes more anxious about shutting out the Jews than we are about letting in Christ! I mean, we are very particular in trying to keep out our own troubles and cares, but if we get Jesus within, we shall not think of the Jews, nor of our troubles and cares—they will all disappear as soon as He appears.  
20. And when He had so said, He showed to them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. That was enough to make them glad. The most glad sight out of Heaven and the most glad sight in Heaven, itself, is to see the Lord!  
21. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be to you: as My Father has sent Me, even so send I you. “I am the Messiah, the Sent One; you, too, shall be My missionaries, My sent ones.” It is but another form of the same word.  
22, 23. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive you the Holy Spirit: whoever sins you remit, they are remitted to them; and whoever sins you retain, they are retained. That is to say, “As you proclaim My Gospel, I will back up your message. When you preach of pardoning blood, I will make it efficacious. When you declare to penitent sinners that their sins are remitted, it shall be so. And when you tell those who believe not that they are condemned already, and that unless they repent they shall abide in condemnation, their sins shall still be retained.” The true minister of God speaks not apart from the Word of God—and when He speaks the Word of God, the God of the Word is, Himself, there to make it effectual. It shall be no wasted thunderbolt! It shall fall in reality and what the servant of Christ declares according to the Scriptures shall be proven to be true.  
24. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. Possibly he did not go out in the evening—it may be that he was a half-dead sort of Christian, like a great many people are in London. They think they have done finely if they go out on Sunday morning, but the evening—well, it is too cold for them, or they must find some other excuse for staying indoors! “Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.” That was a great pity because Thomas would not only be a loser by his absence, but he would be sure to influence others, for he was an Apostle. Surely, whenever it is possible, we who are leaders in the Church—ministers, deacons and elders—should take care that we are not absent from the House of the Lord.

25. The other disciples therefore said to him, We have seen the Lord. But he said to them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe. There is something good about that declaration of Thomas, for a man is not bound to believe merely on the testimony of others. He should, if he can, endeavor to get evidence for himself. And as Christ is still alive, the very best thing is to go to Him! But there was also much that Thomas said which was very wrong—he had no right to demand that he should see the nail prints in Christ’s hands and, worse still, that he should be permitted to put his finger into them, and to thrust his hand into his Lord’s side. There was more than a little impertinence about that utterance—and something more, even, than an ordinary unbelief! And when we ask for signs and wonders from God and say that we will not believe except we have them, we are guilty of very presumptuous conduct. We are bound to look for evidence concerning Christ, but when the evidence is sufficient, we ought not, out of curiosity, crave for more.

26. And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them. That was an improvement upon the meeting of the previous Lord’s-Day evening. Thomas had learned, by this time, what he had lost the week before, so he was present on this occasion.

26, 27. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be to you. Then said He to Thomas. Picking out the one who most needed to be addressed, like the Good Shepherd seeking out the sick sheep first. “Then said He to Thomas”—

27, 28. Reach here your finger, and behold My hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said to Him, My Lord and my God. It has been well observed that Thomas was the first person who ever proved to himself the Deity of Christ from the exhibition of His wounds. There is a good argument in it, which we cannot stay to explain at this time, but the very humanity of Christ has in it the doctrine of His Deity. You can easily argue from the one to the other. How Divine must He be who, in His condescension, took upon Himself our nature!

29. Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. That blessedness can be reached by all of us who believe in Christ! Those who lived in this world before Christ came, saw His day by faith, and they were blessed. Those who lived in His day, saw Him in the flesh and trusted Him, were blessed. But we who cannot see Him, yet believe in Him, are the most blessed of them all!

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.  
Sermon #1943 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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LOVE JOYING IN LOVE  
NO. 1943

**A SHORT ADDRESS TO A FEW FRIENDS AT MENTONE, AT THE BREAKING OF BREAD,  
ON LORD’S-DAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY 9, 1887, BY C. H. SPURGEON.**

**“I am come into My garden, My Sister, My Spouse: I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk: eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.” Song of Solomon 5:1.**

No sooner does the spouse say, “Let my Beloved come into His garden,” than her Lord answers, “I am come into My garden.” “Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” When we desire our Lord Jesus to come to us, He has already come, in a measure—our desire is the result of His coming! He meets us in all our desires, for He waits to be gracious. Our, “Come,” is no sooner uttered than it is lost in His, “Behold, I come quickly!”

When we perceive that the Bridegroom has come, we perceive, also, that He has done exactly what He was asked to do. How cheering to find that our mind is in harmony with His mind! Our heart says, “Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits.” His heart replies, “I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk.” “Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” The Lord Jesus makes the desires of His saints to be the foreshadowing of His own actions—“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” His secret counsel is made known in the believing soul by desires inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Note well that the Bridegroom kindly takes to Himself as His own all that is in the garden. His spouse spoke of, “His pleasant fruits,” and He acknowledges the least and most homely of them to be His own. He repeats the possessive particle—“My.” “My myrrh, My spice, My honeycomb, My honey, My wine, My milk.” He disdains nothing which the garden of His bride produces. He is fond of the notion of joint-heirship, even as in another place He said, “My Father, and your Father, My God, and your God.” Let us also value the personal possessive pronouns—the sweetness of the promises lies in them. These are our arms with which we embrace the promises.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, is it not charming to see our Lord appropriating us—all that we are, all that we have, all that grows within us—and all the varied forms of His Grace which are the outcome of His own work within our hearts? Within us, certain things are bitter, but wholesome—and He says, “My myrrh.” Some things are sweet, though homely—and He says, “My honey.” Some things are of a rarer sort and He says, “My spice”—while others are commonplace enough—and He says, “My milk.” Our Lord takes no exception to any one of the true growths of the garden, whether it is myrrh or milk. And He asks for nothing more than the garden may be expected to yield. He is content without the butter of cows, or flesh of fed beasts—satisfying Himself with honey fresh from the hive.

I note, with much delight, that matters which seem inconsistent with perfection are not refused by the heavenly Bridegroom. As the Lord did not refuse for an offering the leavened cakes of the first fruits, so in this instance He says, “I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey.” The honey would be purer without the comb, but as it is incident thereto, He takes the one with the other. He graciously accepts not only our heart’s desire, but the very mode in which our weakness works towards that desire! It is as if He delighted in the words of our prayers as well as in the essence of our prayers and prized the notes of our songs as well as the meaning of them. Yes, I believe our Lord puts our tears as well as our sorrows into His bottle and hears our groans as well as our desires! The honeycomb which contains the honey is precious to Him! After He had risen from the grave, He ate a piece of a honeycomb and I doubt not that He had a reason for choosing that food—sweet gathered from sweets, yet not without wax. Our Lord accepts our services without nicely noting and critically rejecting the infirmity which goes with them.

I note, also, that He, Himself, gathers what He enjoys—“I have gathered My myrrh with My spice.” Many a holy thing which we have not in detail offered to Him in set form, He knows to have been given in the gross and so He takes with His own hands what He knows we have, by a comprehensive covenant, made over to Him. How sweetly does He fill up our blanks and believe in our consecration, even when we do not repeat the form of it!

Moreover, He makes mixtures out of our fruits, for He gathers myrrh with balsam and drinks wine with milk, thus taking the rarer with the more common. He knows how to make holy compounds out of the Graces of His people, thus increasing their excellence. He is the best judge of what is admirable and He is the best fashioner and mixer of character— He is using His skill upon us. Often by our mingled experiences He accomplishes an increase of virtue in us. Some Graces are the result of work and wisdom, as wine which must be trod from the grapes. Others are natural, like milk which flows from living fountains without art of man. But the Lord accepts them both and so combines them that they are pleasant to Him to a high degree. Simple faith and experimental prudence make up a sacred milk and wine—and the like may be seen in rapturous love and calm patience which blend most deliciously! The Lord loves us and makes the most of us. He is pleased with all that is the true produce of His Grace and finds no faults with it—on the contrary, He says, “I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey.”

Having made these observations upon the Lord’s fulfilling the prayer of the spouse, I should like to deliver the following remarks upon the text—  
It is evident that the Lord Jesus is made happy by us. These poetical sentences must mean that He values the Graces and works of His people. He gathers their myrrh and spice because He values them! He eats and drinks the honey and the milk because they are pleasant to Him. It is a wonderful thought that the Lord Jesus Christ has joy in us! We cost Him anguish, even unto death, and now He finds a reward in us. This may seem a small thing to an unloving mind, but it may well ravish the heart which adores the Well-Beloved! Can it be true that we afford joy to the Son of God, the Prince Emmanuel? The King has been held in the galleries! He has been charmed by us! Our first repentance made Him call together His friends and His neighbors. The first gleam of faith He ever saw in us made His heart rejoice and all that He has seen in us ever since of His own image, worked by His Grace, has caused Him to see of the travail of His soul! Never has a farmer taken such pleasure in the growth of his choice plants as our Lord has taken in us! “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him; in those that hope in His mercy.” That is a thought to be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel! Yes, the Lord’s Church is His Hephzibah, for, He says, “My delight is in her.”  
The second thought is that the Lord Jesus will not and cannot be happy by Himself—He will have us share with Him. Note how the words run—“I have eaten.” “Eat, O friends!” “I have drunk.” “Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.” His union with His people is so close that His joy is in them, that their joy may be full. He cannot be alone in His joy! That verse of our quaint hymn is always true—  
*“And this I do find, we two are so joined,  
He’ll not be in Glory and leave me behind.”*He will not be happy anywhere without us. He will not eat without our eating and He will not drink without our drinking. Does He not say this in other words in the Revelation—“If any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and He with me”? The inter-communion is complete—the enjoyment is for both. To make our Lord Jesus happy, we must also be happy. How can the Bridegroom rejoice if His bride is sad? How can the Head be content if the members pine? At this table of fellowship, His chief concern is that we eat and drink. “Take, eat,” He says. And again, “Drink you, all of it.” I think I hear Him now say—“I have eaten and I have drunk. And although I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the Kingdom of God; yet eat you, O friends: drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved!” Thus we have seen, first, that Christ is made happy by us and, secondly, that He insists upon our sharing His joy with Him.  
If we have already enjoyed happy fellowship with Him, the Lord Jesus calls upon us to be still more happy. Though we may say that we have eaten, He will again say, “Eat, O friends!” He presses you to renew, repeat and increase your participation with Him. It is true we have drunk out of the chalice of His love, but He again invites us, saying, “Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved!” Of other wines it would be bad to say, “Drink abundantly,” but of this wine the Lord says, with an emphasis, “Drink abundantly, O Beloved!” Oh, for Grace to renew all former enjoyments with greater zest and deeper intensity! It has been sweet even to taste and sip—what must it be to eat and drink abundantly?  
Must it not mean that though we know the Lord Jesus, we should try to know more of Him, yes, to know all that can be known of that love which passes knowledge? Should we not labor to realize more of HIM, taking in the whole Truth of God concerning His Person and love by meditation, contemplation, understanding and reverent simplicity? Let nothing lie by—let us eat and drink all the stores of the banquet of love!  
As the mouth with which we eat is faith, does not the Savior seem to cry, “Believe on Me. Trust Me. Confide in Me abundantly”? Eat and drink with large appetite, by receiving into your heart’s belief all that can be received. Oh, for Grace to appropriate a whole Christ and all the love, the Grace, the Glory that is laid up in Him!  
Does it not also mean have greater enjoyment of Divine things? Partake of them without stint. Do not restrict yourself as though you could go too far in feeding upon the Lord Jesus! Do not be afraid of being too happy in the Lord, or of being too sure of His salvation, or of having too much assurance, or too much devout emotion! Dread not the excitements which come from fellowship with Christ! Do not believe that the love of Jesus can be too powerfully felt in the soul. Permit the full sweep and current of holy joy in the Lord to carry you away—it will be safe to yield to it. “Rejoice in the Lord always and again, I say, Rejoice.”  
Beloved, let us now take our fill of Christ. Since we believe, let us believe more unreservedly! If we enjoy, let us enjoy more thoroughly! If we have life, let us have it more abundantly. In this case we may eat and our soul shall live! We may drink and not only forget our misery, but drink again and enter into bliss! Our Lord beckons us from the shore to the sea. He calls us from the lower seat to come up higher. He would have us more glad, stronger, fuller, holier! He presses the provisions of His love upon us, like a host whose joy lies in seeing all his guests feasting. Do not hold back! Be not satisfied with little believing, scant enjoying and cool feeling—but let us enter fully into the joy of our Lord!  
True, we are unworthy, but He invites us! We shall be wise to yield to His loving pressure. We may not have such another feast, just yet, and possibly we may have to go for 40 days into the wilderness on the strength of this meal. Therefore let us keep the feast heartily! Our Lord, in His invitation, challenges our friendship and our love. He says—“Eat, O friends!” Prove yourselves friends by being free at His table. “Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved!” If this is His way of testing us, let us not be slow in accepting it. Let us show our love by joying in Him as He joys in us! Amen.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #919 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE KING FEASTING IN HIS GARDEN  
NO. 919

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 6, 1870, BY C.H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I am come into My garden, My Sister, My Spouse: I have gathered My myrrh with My spice. I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey. I have drunk My wine with My milk: eat, O Friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.”**

**Song of Solomon 5:1.**

I BELIEVE this text to be appropriate to the spiritual condition of our Church. If I am not very sadly mistaken, the Lord of Hosts is with us in a very remarkable manner. Our meetings for prayer have been distinguished by an earnest and fervent spirit. Our meetings with enquirers have been remarkably powerful. In a quiet manner, without any outward outcries, souls have been smitten down with conviction of sin, and have been comforted as they have received Christ by faith. By His Grace we are not a deserted Church, we are not left with broken hedges, with the wild boar of the wood committing devastations.

The Lord has sent a gracious rain which has quickened the seed. He has watered the plants of His garden, and made our souls to rejoice in His Presence. Now if the text is appropriate, as I believe it is, the duty to which it especially calls us should have our earnest attention. The workers for Christ must remember that even if they have to care for the garden, their chief business must be to commune with the Lord and Master of that garden, since He, Himself, this morning calls them to do so. “Eat O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.”

In happy and auspicious times, when the Spirit of God is working, it is very natural to say, “We must now work more abundantly than ever,” and God forbid that we should hinder such zeal—but more spiritual privilege is not to be put in the second place. Let us commune as well as work. For there shall we find strength for service, and our service shall be done the better, and become the more acceptable, and ensure the larger blessing. If while we serve like Martha we at the same time commune like Mary, we shall not, then, become cumbered with much serving. We shall serve and not be cumbered, and shall feel no fretfulness against others whose only faculty may be that of sitting at the Master’s feet.

The text divides itself readily into three parts. First, we have the Presence of the heavenly Bridegroom—“I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse.” We have, secondly, the satisfaction which He finds in His Church—“I have gathered My myrrh with My spice, I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey, I have drunk My wine with my milk.” And, thirdly, we have the invitation which He gives to His loving people—“Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.”

I. The voice of the Master Himself calls us to consider HIS PRES

ENCE—“I am come.” He tells us He is come. What? Could He come without our perceiving it? Is it not possible? May we be like those whose eyes were held so that they knew Him not? Is it possible for us to be like Magdalene, seeking Christ, while He is standing very near us? Yes, and we may even be like the disciples, who, when they saw Him walking on the water, were afraid.

They thought it was a spirit, and cried out—and Jesus said, “It is I, be not afraid,” before they knew who it was! Here is our ignorance, but here is His tenderness. He may come and yet we may not recognize Him—but here when He comes, He takes care to advertise us of the blessed fact, and calls us to observe and to consider, and to delight in it. He would, for our own comfort, prevent its being said of us, “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”

Let us observe, first, this coming was in answer to prayer. Our translators, in dividing the Bible into chapters, seem to have utterly disregarded the connection or the sense, so that they brought down their guillotine between two verses which must not be divided. The Church had said, “Awake, O north wind. And come, you south; blow upon my garden.” She had also said, “Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.” In answer to that prayer the Beloved replies, “I am come into My garden.” Prayer is always heard, and the prayer of faithful souls finds an echo in Jesus’ heart.

How quickly the spouse was heard! Scarcely had the words died away, “Let my Beloved come,” before she heard Him say, “I am come!” “Before they call, I will answer. And while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” He is very near unto His people, and therefore He very speedily answers their request. And how fully does He answer them, too! You will, perhaps, say, “But she had asked for the Holy Spirit—she had said, ‘Awake, O north wind. And come, you south.’ And yet there is no mention of the heavenly wind as blowing through the garden.” The answer is that the Beloved’s coming means all that.

His visit brings both north and south wind. All benign influences are sure to follow where He leads the way! Spices always flow out from the heart when Christ’s sweet love flows in—and where He is, Christians have all things in Him. There was a full answer to her prayer, and there was more than an answer, for she had but said, “Let Him come and eat,” but, lo, He gathers myrrh and spice, and He drinks of wine and milk. He does exceeding abundantly above what she had asked or even thought—after the right royal manner of the Son of God—who does not answer us according to the poverty of our expressions and the leanness of our desires, but according to His riches in Glory, giving to us Grace upon Grace out of His own inexhaustible fullness.

Brethren, this Church has had a full reward for all her prayers. We have waited upon God often, all the day long there has been prayer in this house, and during this last month there has scarcely been an hour in which supplication has been suspended. And the answer has already come. We are so apt to overlook the answer to prayer. Let it not be so. Let us praise the Lord that prayer has not been a vain service. It has brought down His Presence, the chief of all blessings, and that for which we most interceded at His Throne. Let us exalt Him!  
We can hear Him say now, “I am come into your meetings, I am blessing you. I am saving souls, I am elevating some of you into nearness of fellowship with Myself. I am chastening some of your spirits with sadness to think you have lived in so groveling an estate. I am with you, I have heard your prayers, I have come to abide with you as a people.”

Now, if this is the case, let us next observe what an unspeakable blessing this is! If the voice had said, “I have sent My angel,” that would have been a precious benefit. But it is not so spoken. The word is, “I am come.” What? Does He, before whom angels adoringly bow their heads—does He, before whom perfect spirits cast their crowns—does He condescend to come into the Church? Yes, it is even so. There is a personal Presence of Christ in the midst of His people. Where two or three are met together in His name, there is He in the midst of them. His corporeal Presence is in Heaven, but His spiritual Presence, which is all we want—all it is expedient for Him as yet to grant—is assuredly in our midst. He is with us truly and really when we meet together in our solemn assemblies, and with us, too, when we separate and go our ways in private to fight the battles of the Lord.

Brethren, for us to enjoy His Presence as a Church is a privilege whose value is only to be measured by the melancholy results of His absence. Where Jesus Christ is not in the garden, the plants wither, and like untimely figs the fruits fall from the trees. Blossoms come not, or if they appear, they do but disappoint when Jesus is not there to knit and fructify them. But when He comes, even the driest boughs in the garden become like Aaron’s rod that budded! Yes, our older Brethren in the Church remember times of trouble, times when the ministry was not with power, when the gatherings on the Lord’s-Day were joyless, when the voice of wailing saddened the courts of Zion. But now we rejoice, yes, and will rejoice! The contrast between the past and the joyous present should increase our gratitude till we praise the Lord on the high sounding cymbals with jubilant exaltation!

Remember, too, that if He had dealt with us according to our sins, and rewarded us after our iniquities, we should never have heard the footsteps of the Beloved traversing the garden. How many have grieved the Holy Spirit by careless living and backsliding? How have most of us followed Him afar off instead of keeping step with Him in service and fellowship? Alas, my Lord, if You had regarded only the sins of the pastor of the Church, You had long ago left this flock. But You have not dealt with us severely, but according unto Your love and to Your mercy You have blotted out our sins like a cloud. And like a thick cloud our transgressions, and still do You condescend to come into Your garden.

If you take each word of this remarkable sentence, you will find a meaning. “I am come.” There is the personal Presence of Christ. “I am come.” There is the certainty that it is so. It is no delusion, no dream, no supposition. “I am truly come.” Blessed be the name of the Lord, at this present time it is assuredly so! Many of His saints can bear testimony that they have seen His face and have felt the kisses of His lips, and have proven, even this day, that His love is better than wine. Note the next word, “I am come into My garden.” How near is the approach of Christ to

His Church! He comes not to the garden door, nor to look over the wall, nor in at the gate and out again. But into His garden.

He goes down every walk, midst the green alleys. Among the beds of spices He walks, watching each flower, pruning the superfluous foliage of every fruit-bearing plant, and plucking up by the roots such as His heavenly Father has not planted. His delights are with the sons of men. His communion with His chosen is most familiar—so that the spouse may sing, “My Beloved is gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.” Jesus Christ, the Lord, forgets not His Church, but fulfils the promise—“I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment. Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.”

Brethren, this is a solemn as well as a pleasant fact. You who are members of this Church, remember that Jesus is come into the Church, that He is now going His rounds among you, and marking your feelings towards Him. He knows today who is in fellowship with Him, and who is not. He discerns between the precious and the vile. He never comes without the winnowing fan when He visits His threshing floor. Beware if you are as chaff. He has come into His garden. O you that have not enjoyed much of His gracious company, pray to Him to cast a look towards you, and be like the sunflower which turns its face to the sun to refresh itself with His beams. O pant and long for His Presence. If your soul is as dark as the dead of night, call out to Him, for He hears the faintest sigh of any of His chosen.

“I am come into My garden,” He says. Note here the possession which Christ claims in the Church. If it were not His garden, He would not come into it. A Church that is not Christ’s Church shall have none of His Presence, and a soul that is not Christ’s has no fellowship with Him. If He reveals Himself at all, it is unto His own people, His blood-bought people, the people that are His by purchase and by power—and by the surrender of themselves to Him. When I think of this Church as committed to my care, I am overawed, and well may my fellow officers be cast down under the weight of our responsibility. But after all, we may say, “Master, this garden is not ours. It is Your garden. We have not begotten all this people, neither can we carry them in our bosoms. But You, great Shepherd of the sheep, You will guard the fold.”

Since the garden is His own, He will not suffer even the least plant to perish. My Brethren who work for Christ—do not be downcast if certain portions of the work should not seem to succeed. He will attend to it. “The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.” It is more His work than ours, and souls are more under His responsibility than ours. So let us hope and be confident, for the Master will surely smile upon His “vineyard of red wine.”

The next word denotes cultivation. “I am come into My garden.” The Church is a cultivated spot. It did not spring up by chance, it was arranged by Himself. It has been tended by Himself, and the fruits belong to Himself. Thankful are we if we can truly know that as a Church —

*“We are a garden walled around,*

*Chosen and made peculiar ground.”*  
Christ, the Great Cultivator, exercises care and skill in training His people, and He delights to see His own handiwork in them.

And then there are the two choice words at the close by which He speaks of His Church, herself, rather than of her work. As if He would draw the attention of His people to themselves and to Himself, rather than to their work. He says, “My Sister, My Spouse.” There is one name for the garden, but there are two names for herself. The work is His work, the garden is His garden, but see, He wants communion not so much with the work as with the worker, He speaks to the Church herself. He calls her, “My Sister, My Spouse.” “Spouse” has something in it of dearness that is not in the first word, for what can be dearer to the husband than the bride?

But then there was a time when the spouse was not dear to the Bridegroom, there was a period, perhaps when He did not know her, when there was no relationship between the two—though they are made of one flesh by marriage, yet they were of different families. And for this cause He adds the dear name of “Sister,” to show an ancient relationship to her, a closeness and a nearness by blood, by birth, as well as by betrothal and wedlock. The two words put together make up a confection of such inexpressible sweetness, that instead of seeking to expound them to you, I will leave them to your meditations, and may He who calls the Church, “Sister,” and, “Spouse,” open up their richness to your souls.

Here, then, is the gist of the whole matter. The Master’s Presence is in this Church in a very remarkable manner. Beloved, I pray that none of you may be like Adam, who fled among the trees to hide himself from God when He walked in the garden. May your business not act like an overshadowing thicket to conceal you from fellowship. He calls you, O Backslider, He calls you as once He called Adam—“Where are you?” Come, Beloved, come and commune with your Lord. Come away from those carking cares and anxieties which, like gloomy groves of cypress, conceal you from your Lord, or rather your Lord from you.

Don’t you hear His call? “O My Dove that is in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see your countenance, let Me hear your voice. For sweet is your voice, and your countenance is comely.” Let none of us be like the disciples in another garden when their Lord was there and He was in agony, but they were sleeping. Up, you Sleepers! Christ has come! If the midnight cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes,” awoke the virgins, shall not, “I am come,” awaken you? It is His own voice! It is not, “He comes,” but “I am come”!

Stand up, you Slumberers! And now, with heart and soul, seek fellowship with Him! It would be a sad thing if while Christ is with us any should be slumbering, and then should wake up and say, “Surely God was in this place and I knew it not.” Rather may you invite Him to come into your souls and abide with you until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, and you behold Him face to face.

II. Thus much upon the first point. And now may His Holy Spirit help us to view OUR LORD IN HIS CHURCH. The beautiful expressions of the text are capable of many holy meanings, and it is not possible that any expositions of mine could fully unveil their treasures. But let me observe, first, that Christ is delighted with the offerings of His people. He says, “I have gathered My myrrh with My spice.” We may consider myrrh and spice as sweet perfumes offered by way of incense to God—as being indicative of the offerings which His people bring to Him.

What if I say that prayer is like sweet smelling myrrh, and that the Beloved has been gathering the myrrh of holy prayer, the bitter myrrh of repenting sighs and cries in the midst of this Church, lo, these many months? You, perhaps, thought that poor wordless prayer of yours was never heard, but Jesus gathered it, and called it spice. And when some Brother was praying aloud, and in silence your tears fell thick and fast for perishing sinners, for you could not bear that they should die, nor endure that Christ’s name should be blasphemed, the Beloved gathered up the precious drops and counted them as costly oil of sweetest smell.

Was it not said in Psalm 72:15, “Prayer also shall be made for Him continually”? And you did pray for Him that His name might be as ointment poured forth, and that He might gird His sword upon His thigh and ride forth prosperously. Jesus observed and delighted in your heart’s offering. Others knew not that you prayed—perhaps you thought, yourself, that you scarcely prayed—but He gathered His myrrh with His spice from you. No faithful prayer is lost. The groanings of His people are not forgotten. He gathers them as men gather precious products from a garden which they have tilled with much labor and expense.

And then, may not spice represent our praises? For these, as well as prayer, come up as incense before His Throne. Last Thursday night when my brother spoke to you, if you felt as I did, I am sure your heart sent up praise as smoke of incense from the warm coals of a censer, as he cast on them handfuls of frankincense in the form of various motives for gratitude and reasons for praise. Oh, it was good to sing God’s praises as we then did by the hour together. It was delightful, too, to come to His Table and make that ordinance in very deed a service of praise to God. Praise is pleasant and comely, and most of all so because Jesus accepts it, and says, “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me.”

When the Lord, in another place, speaks of offering sweet cane bought with money, does He not refer to other offerings which His people bring in addition to their prayers and their praises, when they give to Him the first fruits of all their increase, and present thank offerings to His name? He has said, “None of you shall appear before Me empty,” and I hope none of you have been content to do so! The contributions given for the spread of His cause, for the feeding of His poor, and clothing of His naked ones are given by true hearts directly to Himself. Though they may be but as two mites that make a farthing, yet offered in His name are they not also included in this word, “I have gathered My myrrh with My spice”?

The Savior’s satisfaction is found, in the next place, in His people’s love—“I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey.” Shall I be wrong if I believe that this sweetness refers to Christian love? For this is the richest of all the graces, and sweetens all the rest. Jesus Christ finds delightful solace in His people’s love, both in the inward love which is like the honey, and in the outward manifestation of it, which is like the honeycomb. He rejoices in the love that drips in all its preciousness from the heart, and in the honeycomb of organization, in which it is for order’s sake stored up and put into His hand.

Or, what if it should mean that Christ overlooks the imperfections of His people? The honeycomb is not good eating, but He takes that as well as the honey! “I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey.” As He looks upon His people, and sees what He has done for them, His loving heart rejoices in what His Grace has accomplished! As a benevolent man who has taken a child from the street and educated it would be pleased to see it growing up, prospering, happy, well-informed, talented—so when Jesus Christ, remembering what His people were, sees in them displays of Divine Grace, desires after holiness, self-denials, communion with God, and the like—this is to Him like honey. He takes an intense satisfaction in the sweet fruits which He Himself has caused us to produce. In spite of all our imperfections, He accepts our love, and says, “I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey.”

Turning again to our precious text, we observe that our Lord’s satisfaction is compared to drinking as well as eating, and that drinking is of a twofold character. “I have drunk My wine.” Does He intend, by this, His joy which is fulfilled in us when our joy is full? Does He mean that as men go to feasts to make glad their hearts with wine, so He comes to His people to see their joy, and is filled with exultation? Isn’t that what He means? Surely He does. And the milk, may not that mean the Christian’s common, ordinary life? As milk contains all the constituents of nourishment, may He not mean by this the general life of the Christian?

Our Lord takes delight in the graces of our lives. One has said that wine may represent those actions resulting from well-considered dedication and deep spiritual thought. For wine must be extracted from the grape with labor and preserved with care—there must be skill, and work, and forethought spent upon it. But milk is a natural production—it flows freely, plentifully, spontaneously. It is a more common and ordinary, yet precious thing. So the Lord delights that His people should give to Him those elaborate works which they have to tend with loving care and watch over with much anxiety before they are produced.

These are the wine. But He would have them give Him the simple outgushing of their souls, the ejaculations which flow forth without labor, the little deeds of love which need no forethought, the everyday outgoings of their inner life—these are milk, and are equally acceptable to Him. Well, if it is so, certain it is that Christ finds great pleasure is His people, and in their various forms of piety He drinks His wine with His milk.

Permit me now to call your attention to those many great little words, which are yet but one—I refer to the word “My.” Observe that eight or nine times it is repeated. Here is the reason for the solace which the Bridegroom finds in His Church. Does He walk in the Church as men do in a garden for pleasure? Then He says, “I am come into My garden.” Does He talk with His Beloved? It is because He calls her, “My Sister, My Spouse.” Does He love her prayers and praises? It is because they never would be prayed or praised if He had not created these fruits of the lips.

He says not, “I have gathered your myrrh with your spice.” Oh, no! Viewed as ours, these are poor things, but viewed as His they are most acceptable. “I have gathered My myrrh with My spice.” So if He finds any honey in His people, any true love in them, He first put it there. “I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey.” Yes, and if there is any joy and life

in them to make His heart glad, He calls it, “My wine,” and, “My milk.” When I read these words, and thought of our Lord’s being fed by us, I could almost have cried out, “Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You? Or thirsty, and give You drink? Do You find any satisfaction in us? Surely, our goodness extends not to You. Why should we give You anything to eat?”

Yet He declares it. And we may blushingly believe Him, and praise His name—for surely if He found it so—it is because He made it so. If He has gotten anything out of us, He must first have put it in us. If He sees of the travail of His soul, it is because the travail came first.

Note well, you lovers of Jesus, that our Lord in this heavenly verse is fed first. “I have eaten,” He says. And then He turns to us, and says, “Eat, O Friends.” If any of you seek friendship with the Well-Beloved, you must commence by preparing Him a feast. Remember our Lord’s own parable— “Which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’?”

Even if your poverty compels you, to say, “As the Lord lives, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse,” listen to Him as He answers, “Fear not, make Me thereof a little cake first.” Be assured that after you have done so, your barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail. The way for Believers to be fed by Christ is to seek to feed Him—look to His being satisfied, and He will assuredly look to you. “You shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the same day that you have brought an offering unto your God.” (Lev. 23:14).

“Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” See, my Brothers and Sisters—you must find meat for your Lord, and then, but not till then—there shall be meat for you!

In a feast it is remarkable how complete the entertainment is. There is the sweetest food and the most nourishing and exhilarating drink. Then over and above that there is the rarest perfume, not counted to be needed in ordinary entertainments, but crowning all and making up a right royal feast. How marvelous that our Beloved should find within His Church all that His soul wants! Having given Himself to cover her, He delights in her, He rests in His love, and rejoices over her with singing. For the Joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame—and this day He continues to be filled with the same delight.

III. I would gladly linger, but time forbids. We must now remember, in the third place, that the text contains an INVITATION. The Beloved says, “Eat, O Friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.” In the invitation we see the character of the invited guests—they are spoken of as friends. We were once aliens, we are now more like the Lord from whom the love proceeds. O you that stand shivering in the cold shallows of the river of life, why tarry there? Descend into the greater depths, the warmer waves, and let the mighty stream bathe you breast high.

Yes, go farther, plunge where you can find no bottom, for it is blessed and safe swimming in the stream of Christ’s everlasting love and He invites you to it now. When you are at a big banquet table, pick not here and there a crumb, sip not now and then a drop—He says, “Eat,” and He adds, “drink abundantly.” The invitation to receive abundantly applies to both refreshments. Your eating and your drinking may be without stint. You cannot impoverish the Most High God, possessor of Heaven and earth. When you are satiated with His love, His table shall still be loaded. Your cups may run over, but His flagons will still be brimmed. If you are straitened at all, you are not straitened in Him—you are straitened in yourselves.

But now let me speak to my Brethren, and especially to my fellow workers in the kingdom of Christ. It is for us, just now, while our Lord is walking in His garden—while He is finding satisfaction in His work and in His people—to beware of taking any satisfaction in the work ourselves. And equally to beware that we do not neglect the appropriate duty of the occasion, namely, that of feasting our souls with our Lord’s gracious provisions. You are caring for others, it is well. You are rejoicing over others, it is well. Still watch well yourselves, and rejoice in the Lord in your own hearts.

What did He say to the Twelve when they came back glorying that even the devils were subject unto them? Did He not reply, “Nevertheless rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven”? It is your personal interest in Christ, your being yourself saved, Christ being present with you—that is your main joy. Enjoy the feast for yourselves, or you will not be strong to hand out the Living Bread to others. See that you are first partakers of the fruit, or you will not labor aright as God’s farmers. The more of personal enjoyment you allow yourself in connection with your Lord, the more strong will you be for His service, and the more out of an experimental sense of His preciousness will you be able to say with true eloquence, “O taste and see that the Lord is good!”

You will tell others what you have tasted and handled. You will say, “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and delivered him from all his fears.” I put this before you with much earnestness, and I pray that none of you may think it safe to work as to forget to commune—or wise to seek the good of others so as to miss personal fellowship with the Redeemer. I might now conclude, but it strikes me that there may be some among us who are, in their own apprehensions, outside the garden of Christ’s Church. They are, therefore, mourning over this sermon, and saying, “Alas, that is not for me! Christ is come into His garden, but I am a piece of waste ground. He is fed and satisfied in His Church, but He finds nothing in me. Surely I shall perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little!”

I know how apt poor hearts are to write bitter things against themselves—even when God has never written a single word against them. So let me see if by turning over this text we may not find thoughts of consolation for the trembling ones. We were once enemies. We are made servants, but we have advanced from the grade of service (though servants, still) into that of friends. From now on He calls us not servants, but friends, for the servant knows not what his Lord does. And all things that He has seen of His Father He has made known unto us.

The friendship between Christ and His people is not in name only, but in deed and in truth. Having laid down His life for His friends, having brought them to know His friendship in times of trial and of difficulty, He at all times proves His friendship by telling His secrets to them and exhibiting an intense sympathy with them in all their secret suffering. David and Jonathan were not more closely friends than Christ and the Believer, when the Believer lives near to His Lord. Never seek the friendship of the world, nor allow your love to the creature to overshadow your friendship with Christ.

He next calls His people Beloved as well as friends. He multiplies titles, but all His Words do not express the full love of His heart. “Beloved.” Oh, to have this word addressed to us by Christ! It is music! There is no music in the rarest sounds compared with these three syllables which drop from the Redeemer’s lips like sweet smelling myrrh. “Beloved!” If He had addressed that one word to any one of us, it would create a Heaven within our souls which neither sickness nor death could mar! Let me sound the note again, “BELOVED!” Does Jesus love me? Does He own His love? Does He seal the fact by declaring it with His own lips?

Then I will not stipulate for promises, nor make demands of Him. If He loves He must act towards me with loving kindness. He will not smite His Beloved unless love dictates the blow. He will not forsake His chosen, for He never changes. Oh, the inexpressible, the heaped-up blessedness which belong to the man who feels in his soul that Christ has called him Beloved!

Here, then, you have the character in the text of those who are invited to commune with Christ. He calls His friends and His Beloved. The provisions presented to them are of two kinds. They are bid to eat and to drink. You, who are spiritual, know what the food is and what the drink is—for you eat His flesh and drink His blood. The incarnation of the Son of God, and the death of Jesus the Savior—these are the two sacred viands whereon faith is sustained. To feed upon the very Christ of God is what is needed. Nothing but this can satisfy the hunger of the spirit. He who feeds on Him shall know no lack. “Eat,” says He, “and drink.” You ask, “Where are the provisions?” I answer, they are contained in the first words of the text, “I am come.” If He is come, then eat. If He is come, then drink. There is food, there is drink for you in Him!

Note that delightful word, “abundantly.” Some dainties satiate, and even nauseate when we have too much of them. But no soul ever had too much of the dear love of Christ. No heart did ever complain that His sweetness was too much. That can never be. Some things, if you have too much of them, may injure you. They are good to a certain point, but beyond that, evil. But even the smallest child of Grace shall never overindulge himself with Jesus’ love. No, the more you have, the more you shall enjoy, the more blessed shall you be, and who knows? There may be a soft breath in the text which may fan the smoking flax, a tender hand that may bind up the bruised reed. I will briefly indicate two or three comfortable thoughts.

Seeking Soul, should it not console you to think that Jesus is near? The kingdom of God is come near unto you, for He has come into His garden. He was in our last meeting for anxious souls, for many found Him there. You are not, then, living in a region where Christ is absent—maybe when He passes by He will look on you. Can you not put out your finger and touch the hem of His garment, for Jesus of Nazareth passes by? Even if you have not touched Him, yet it should give you some good cheer to know that He is within reach, and within call. Though you are like the poor withered lily in the garden, or worse still, like a noxious weed—yet if He is in the garden He may observe you and have pity on you.

Notice, too, that although the text speaks of a garden, it never was a garden till He made it so. Men do not find gardens in the wilderness. In the wilds of Australia or the backwoods of America, men never stumble on a garden where human foot has ever been. It is all forest, or prairie, or mountain. So, mark, Soul, if the Church is a garden, Christ made it so. Why cannot He make you so? Why not, indeed? Has He not said, “Instead of the thorns shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briers shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off”? This garden-making gives God a name. Jesus gets honor by plowing up the wastes, extracting the briers, and planting firs and myrtles there. See, then, there is hope for you yet, you barren Heart—He may yet come and make your wilderness like Eden—and your desert like the garden of the Lord.

Note, too, that the Bridegroom gathered myrrh, and fed on milk and wine, and honey. Yes, and I know you thought, “He will find no honey in me. He will find no milk and wine in me.” Ah, but then the text did not say He found them in the Church. It is said, “I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey. I have drunk My wine with My milk.” And if He put those things into His Church, and then took comfort in them, why not put them into you, and take comfort in you, too? Be of good cheer! Arise, He calls you this very morning.

Another word, perhaps, may help you. Did you notice, poor hungry Soul, how Jesus said, “drink abundantly”? “Ah,” you say, “He did not say that to me.” I know it. He said that to His friends and to His Beloved—and you dare not put yourselves among those. But do not you see how generous He is to His friends, and how He keeps back nothing? He evidently does not mean to lock anything up in the storeroom, for He tells them to eat and drink abundantly. Now, surely, where there is such a festival, though you dare not come and sit at the table with the guests, you might say with the Syrophenician woman, “Yet the dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs.”

It is good knocking at a door where they are keeping open house, and where the feast reveals a lavish hospitality. Knock now, and try it. If it were a poor man’s dinner with a dry crust and a poor herring, or if it were a miser’s meal spread most begrudgingly, I would not advise you to knock. But where there is wine and milk in rivers, and the good Man of the house bids His guests eat and drink abundantly, I say knock, for God says it

shall be opened!

Another thought. Jesus finds meat and drink in His Church, and you are afraid He would find neither in you—I want to tell you a Truth of God which, perhaps, you have forgotten. There was a woman that was a sinner. She had had five husbands, and he with whom she then lived was not her husband. She was an adulteress and a Samaritan. But Christ said, after He had conversed with her, that He had found meat to eat that His disciples knew not of. Where did He get it, then? If He had drank that day, He did not get it from Jacob’s well, for He had nothing to draw with, and the well was deep.

He found big refreshment in that poor woman, to whom He said, “Give me to drink.” The Samaritan harlot refreshed the soul of Jesus—when she believed in Him and owned Him as the Christ! Have you ever read that Word of His, “My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work”? And what is the will of Him that sent Him? Well, I will tell you what it is not— “It is not the will of your Father, that is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” The will of God and the will of Christ are these—to save sinners. For this purpose was Jesus born and sent into the world—He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. See, then, poor lost One, in saving you, Christ will find both meat and drink! I trust, therefore, you will look to Him and cry to Him, and cast yourself upon Him—and you shall never, as long as you live, have any cause for regretting it.

Finally, the text represents the Lord saying, “I am come into My garden.” It may imply that He is not always in His garden. Sometimes His Church grieves Him and His manifest Presence departs. But hearken, O Sinner, there is a precious thought for you—He is not always in His garden. But He is always on the Throne of Grace. He does not always say, “I am come into My garden,” but He always says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He never leaves the Mercy Seat. He never ceases to intercede for sinners.

Come, and welcome, then. If you have not seen the Beloved’s face, come and bow at His feet. Though you have never heard Him say, “Your sins are forgiven you,” yet come now with a broken and a contrite heart and seek absolution at His hands. Come, and welcome! Come, and welcome! May the sweet Bridegroom with cords of love draw you, and may this morning be a time of love. And as He passes by, if He sees you wallowing in your blood, may He say unto you, “Live!” May the Lord grant it, and on His head shall be many crowns. Amen! Amen! Amen!

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CHRIST’S PERFECTION AND PRECEDENCE  
NO. 2478

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 16, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.” Song of Solomon 5:10.**

THE spouse in this verse styles her Lord, “my Beloved,” from which it is easy for us to gather that it is of the utmost importance that our heart’s affection should be really and truly set upon Christ Jesus, our Lord. We must trust Him and we must love Him. Christ on the Cross saves us when He becomes to us Christ in the heart. It is of small service for us to know of Christ if we do not really trust and love Him. It will be of little use for us to talk of Him unless our heart is really welded and knit to Him. Let us, therefore, dear Friends, commence this evening’s meditation with a solemn enquiry made by each one for himself or herself, “Can I call the Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified on Calvary, but who now reigns at the right hand of the Father—can I truly call Him, ‘my Beloved’?” There may be a question raised in your soul by a natural anxiety lest you should presume, but be not content until you have solemnly and seriously searched your hearts, to know whether in very deed and truth an ardent affection burns within your spirit towards the Lord Jesus. It were better for you that you had never been born than that you should live and die without love to Christ. Remember that startling sentence of the Apostle Paul which is so solemn that I can scarcely quote it without tears, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let Him be Anathema Maranatha,” that is, “let Him be accursed at the coming of the Lord.” It will be so with you, dear Friends, however shining your moral attributes may have been, however you may have carved your name upon the rock of history—you will go down to endless misery and shame unless your heart has in it a vital sense of true religion—a sincere love to the crucified Christ of Calvary!

If this important personal enquiry has had its due weight upon our minds, it may lead us to another consideration, namely, that it is a blessed thing, if we love Christ, to be able to speak about our affection for Him as a matter of course and a matter of fact—not as a thing that hangs trembling in the balance, but as an ascertained Truth of God and certainty. The spouse does not speak of “Him whom I hope to love, byand-by,” or, of “Him whom I trust I shall one day know,” but she calls Him, without question or qualification, “my Beloved.” She is quite sure about this blessed relationship! She raises no doubts and she has no fears concerning it. I do not say that if any man has a doubt about his love to Christ, he need, therefore, necessarily condemn himself, but I do say that he must never be content to continue in such a state!

Perhaps they who love the Master best are the very people who will be the most likely to have such a high opinion of the love which He deserves that they will often chide themselves that they do not love Him at all, when they see how little their love is compared with that perfection of affection which He deserves. We must not affirm that the question of anxiety is sinful—it is painful—and anxiety, if it is not Divinely removed, will become sinful, but the anxiety is not so in itself. Yet, Beloved, I beseech you to press on beyond this stage of your pilgrim journey. Do not be content to live on hopes, fears, perhapses and surmises. You would not like to think that, perhaps, you loved your child, or your husband, or your friend. You would not care to say, “I hope I love virtue, I hope I love honesty”—but it is a baser thing, still, for us to allow a question to exist as to whether we love Him who is dearer than our own kindred and who is better than any one moral excellence, seeing that He is the combination of all excellences! O Beloved, seek to reach the blessed heights of full assurance, that each one of you may be able to say of Christ, “This is my Beloved and this is my Friend—I would as soon doubt my own existence as doubt the love that burns within my heart towards Him who has bought me with His precious blood.” Sing, as we have often done—

*“My Jesus, I love You, I know You are mine, For You all the follies of sin I resign.  
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior are Thou, If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ‘tis now.”*

If we have reached that stage in our journey heavenwards, it will be well if we go on a step further. Loving our Lord and Savior in our heart and being assured of that love in our inmost conscience after earnest heart-searching, it will be well if we have the courage to never hesitate in the avowal of that love. Our love to Christ is so sacred a passion that it is not to be talked of in all companies. We must not cast our pearls before swine, but, on the other hand, it is so ennobling a passion that we need never blush to acknowledge it in any company. If we are ever ashamed of loving Christ, we have good reason to be ashamed of such shameful shame! When you have heard His dear name reviled, did you ever start for fear lest you should be called upon to share His reproach? Did you ever sit silent when you ought to have spoken because Christ was being blasphemed? Did you ever try to make it out to yourself that it was a prudent retirement that shunned the conflict when, in very truth, it was a hateful cowardice that turned its back upon the Crucified in the hour of His need? I fear that the charge might be brought against the most of us! If so, let us humbly confess it on our knees, alone, and blush before the Presence of our blessed Master. Remember what we sang just now?—

*“Jesus! And shall it ever be?  
A mortal man ashamed of Thee!  
Ashamed of You, whom angels praise,  
Whose glories shine thro’ endless days?  
Ashamed of Jesus? Sooner far  
Let evening blush to own a star!  
He sheds the beams of light Divine  
O’er this benighted soul of mine.  
Ashamed of Jesus? Just as soon  
Let midnight be ashamed of noon!  
‘Tis midnight with my soul, till He,  
Bright Morning Star, bid darkness flee.  
Ashamed of Jesus? That dear Friend  
On whom my hopes of Heaven depend!  
No! When I blush, be this my shame,  
That I no more revere His name.”*

What can there be to be ashamed of in loving Him whom angels love, whom God loves, whom all holy spirits love? What? Not love Him? If He were not, in Himself, God, yet has He been so good to me that I must love Him! It is an old proverb that we must speak of friends as we find them, and praise the bridge that carries us over the stream. And here is One in whom we have found such goodness, such kindness, such gentleness and such disinterested affection—One who has done such wonders for us that if we do not love Him and boldly declare that we love Him—we have good reason to be ashamed of ourselves and to hide our heads in confusion forever and ever!

Young people, you who have lately come to love Christ, do not begin as some of your fathers did, in that half-hearted fashion which has continued with them until this day. Alas, there are some professing Christians who have grown gray and yet have scarcely ever dared to speak the name of Christ in company! Yes, some of them have even been ashamed, up to this moment, to be baptized and to come to the Lord’s Table. They say that they love Christ and I hope they do, yet up to this hour Baptism has been a cross too heavy for them to bear! And the Lord’s Supper has seemed to them to be an ordeal instead of a means of blessing! Play the man, young Christian! Be not ashamed to acknowledge your Lord! If ever there was unfurled in this world a banner which deserved the utmost allegiance of human hearts, it is the blood-stained banner of the Cross! And if ever there was a Leader who deserved that men should speak His praises, not—

*“With ‘bated breath, and whispering humbleness,”*but with manly enthusiasm, that Leader is the Christ of God who loved you and gave Himself for you! Yes, utter it in the face of a scoffing world! Stand to it in the teeth of a ribald infidel generation! Declare it before the crowd of gainsayers who will mock you to scorn as you pronounce it, “This is my Beloved—the Christ that died, the Christ that always lives at the right hand of God—this is my Beloved, and I am not ashamed to avow Him.”

Suppose that we have come as far as this—and I believe that many of us have come so far—it will be our bounden duty to go a step further. Loving Jesus, knowing that we love Him and boldly confessing our love to Him, let us, next, so study His Person and His Character that we shall be able to give a reason for the love that is in us to any who make the enquiry, “What is your Beloved more than another Beloved?” You observe that the spouse not only calls Him, “my Beloved,” but she describes the complexion of His Countenance and the details relating to His whole Person. She has a word of praise for all His features and all His members! She knows Him so well that she speaks of Him with a tongue like the pen of a ready writer. So, Beloved, let us study Christ as we come, again, to this Communion Table! You who love and fear Him, neglect not your Bibles. Neglect not that fellowship which, like the light of a candle, shines upon the page of the Bible.

Some of you are studying earthly sciences. Perhaps you give your minds to the classics, or you delight to master the mysteries of mathematics. But oh, take care that this most excellent science, the science of Christ Crucified, is not made to take a second place with you! Always put this science first—try to understand the Glory of your Lord’s Person— without beginning of days or end of years! Search into the purity of His Character in all that He was, here below, from His birth to His death. Be conversant with Christ in all His sacred offices. Think much of His precious blood and of all the holy mysteries that cluster around His Cross. Trace Him from Bethlehem to Gabbatha, and then from Gabbatha follow Him in His Resurrection and Ascension along the star-spangled way up to the Throne of His Glory. And let your soul hopefully linger in the full belief of His Second Coming, and in all the Glory that shall surely follow the day of His august appearing. Study Christ! Study Christ so as to be able to tell others of Him and be not slow to communicate to those of an enquiring mind that which you have, yourself, heard, seen and handled of the Word of Life—for so the spouse does in the chapter before us.

This much must suffice by way of introduction, or rather, by way of practical exhortation to such of you as are enlisted beneath Christ’s royal banner of love.

Now let us proceed to consider the general description of the Bridegroom given by His spouse in this verse. First, she says, “my Beloved is white and ruddy.” These words set forth His charming complexion. Secondly, the spouse calls her Beloved, “the chiefest among ten thousand,” and so she describes His personal precedence.

I. First, then, the spouse says, “my Beloved is white and ruddy.” And so she sets HIS CHARMING COMPLEXION.  
It seems to me that the spouse intends, by these words, to call attention to two chief characteristics of her Lord’s most blessed Person. Had not Solomon often seen the snow-white lambs—the emblems of purity— brought up to the Temple to be offered in sacrifice? “So,” said he, “my Beloved is white.” Had he not also seen the uplifted knife in the priest’s hand—and then seen the ruby stream as it flowed down at the foot of the altar till the white lamb was stained crimson in its own blood? So he puts the two together, the white—the immaculate purity. And the red— the sacrificial blood-shedding. And these two things, whether they are meant in the text or not, are certainly the two essentials of the Christian faith concerning the Person of Christ! And he is no Christian and, indeed, cannot be a Christian who has not well learned and joyously received the two Truths of God which the white and the red here set forth.  
Our Lord is, first of all, in Himself, white. That is, He has immaculate perfection of Character. As God, in Him is Light and no darkness at all— perfect purity without a trace of sin. He is very God of very God, the Holy One of Israel. In His Godhead, Jesus Christ is perfection itself. As to His Manhood, the term, whiteness, well describes Him who was born without natural corruption, or taint of hereditary depravity—“that holy Thing”— the Christ of God who became Incarnate, yet without sin. Does not this word, “white” describe Him, also, in His actual life? There was never any sin in Christ. You may challenge every Word of His and you shall find it pure. You may thrust it into the furnace heated seven times hotter than it is known to be heated, yet shall it come forth as it went in, for no dross shall be found in it! As to Christ’s actions, they are matchless and perfect in every respect! The two great objectives of His life were the Glory of God and the good of man. So pure, indeed, is the Character of Christ, that even those who have hated His religion and have read the writings of the four Evangelists with no design but to find some ground for mocking— have, nevertheless, been cowed before the majesty of the perfect life of Christ!  
In fact, it is today as it was of old, when the officers were sent to take Him prisoner—they went back without Him, for they said, “Never man spoke like this Man.” There is no spot in Him! He is the Lamb of God without blemish, the perfect Christ, and, therefore, we love Him. We love those who possess true excellence and, therefore, we must love Christ, for He has every excellence in perfection! If there were no Atonement—if we did not regard our Lord Jesus as our Savior—still every true heart ought to love Him and to be won to Him. There are such charms in His Character that if our souls were not besotted by the love of sin, we must worship and adore this glorious Son of God who is the brightness of the Father’s Glory, and the express image of His Person! He is so white and pure that we ought to love Him!  
Next we come to the blood-shedding—the sacrificial Character of Christ. Alas, that this glorious doctrine of the atoning Sacrifice should ever be cast into the background, as it so often is, for the blood-shedding of Christ is the very essence of Christianity! In the fullness of time, Jesus Christ, born of a woman, came into this world as the Substitute for sinners. The vengeance of God against sin was poured out upon Him. He suffered death that those who trust Him might not die—the Lamb of God was slain in their place that He might render satisfaction to the injured honor and broken Law of God. This is the chief reason, after all, why Christ’s people love Him—because in His precious blood they see the pardon of all their sins, they see the lifting of themselves up into the life of God—they see the open way of access to the Father, they see the gates of Heaven opened to all Believers!  
Beloved, there are some in these days who cry up the glorified Christ and I will cry Him up with them, nor shall they find a word too strong for His praise! Yet they would have men trust in the glorified Christ—they preach the doctrine of the Second Advent as though it were the chief teaching of Holy Scripture—and they seem to look to the Second Coming of Christ rather than to the first! But let Paul’s words be always our motto, “We preach Christ Crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks, foolishness, but to them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” With that same Apostle let us cry, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” His Throne is glorious and His Glory shall speak for itself, but the despised and crucified Christ is the source of the sinner’s salvation—and this Truth of God is to be preached and held up as the first and cardinal doctrine of our holy faith!  
Brothers and Sisters, let us thus look at Jesus, “white” in His spotless innocence, “ruddy” in His sacrificial suffering. Let us view Him as the one sinless Being and also as the chief of martyrs—the One in whom was no sin—yet upon whom the Lord did cause to meet the iniquity of all His people, with all the suffering it deserved and all the vengeance and wrath of Almighty God that were rightly due to the transgressors! I must not detain you longer upon this part of the subject, but I cannot pass from it without asking the question—Do we all love this precious One in whom there is all excellence and in whom there is also this matchless suffering, this sin-atoning grief? Oh, if your heart is truly set on Christ, you have a portion so rich that you need not envy even the angels, for— *“Never did angels taste above,  
Redeeming Grace and dying love.”*  
If this is your lot, you are happy, thrice happy, though poor, sick and unknown! If Christ is, indeed, your Beloved, you are married to One who is the equal of the Eternal God! If your heart embraces Christ and Christ is really yours, you have more than the world can ever compass! You have more than Heaven, itself, could give if Christ were withdrawn from its courts of Glory. Be happy, then! Be joyous in your Lord! Let your heart go up to Him and rest in Him. And when you come to the Communion Table, let it be with your eyes and your heart fixed on your Beloved, who is “white and ruddy.”  
But, my dear Hearer, if you have not Christ, oh, how I wish you had Him—and you may have Him this very night! Many of you are strangers to me. At this time of the year, when so many of our regular hearers take their vacation at the seaside, or in the country, there is room for more strangers. Well, dear Friends, we are strangers to one another, but I hope many of you are not strangers to the Master! Or, if you are, possibly the Lord brought you here that you might meet with Him and that He might meet with you. It would be a blessed Sabbath, indeed, to your soul if now you could say, “This perfect Man, I must love Him. This suffering Substitute, I must trust Him. God has laid Him in Zion as a foundation and a chief cornerstone—I will come and build all my hopes for time and for eternity upon Him and His great atoning Sacrifice.”  
You are black, poor sinner, but then, He is white! And His white shall stand in the place of your black. You are black, but then He is ruddy. And His crimson blood shall wash away every speck and stain of your sin! All you have to do is simply to look to Him by faith, for there is life in a look at Him! Only trust Him, Trembler! Only trust Him, guilty Sinner! Only trust Him and that simple trust shall bring you life, health, perfection, Heaven, God Himself! God grant that it may be!  
II. Now, passing on to the remaining words of the text, notice that the spouse says of her Beloved that He is, “the chiefest among ten thousand.” These words set forth HIS PERSONAL PRECEDENCE.  
“The chiefest among ten thousand.” Is it not incorrect to say, “the chiefest”? I care not if it is and I would not like to see the word altered into “chief.” Human words, at best, are such poor things that they stagger under the mighty burden of the perfections of Christ! We seem to need some of those huge pillars and pedestals that we sometimes see outside massive piles of architecture, that we may bear up the ponderous Truth of our text! We must have such words as “chiefest,” for common language does not suffice in such a case as this! I suppose that, in Heaven, they have done with our poor imperfect speech and know how to speak of Christ as He deserves. Anyhow, we believe with good John Berridge—  
*“Living tongues are dumb at best,  
We must die to speak of Christ.”*  
He is the chiefest among ten thousand and it so happens that this word, “chiefest,” may mean any one of three or four things. First, take it as it stands—“Chiefest”—that is to say, Christ is higher, better, lovelier, more excellent, than any who are round about Him. If you shall bring ten thousand angels, He is the chiefest Angel, the Messenger of the Covenant. If you shall bring ten thousand friends, He is the chiefest Friend, the “Friend that sticks closer than a brother.” If you shall bring ten thousand physicians, He is the best Physician, for He heals all diseases. If you find ten thousand shepherds, He is the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd. If you find one, two, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, all excellent, they must all give way when He appears, as the stars are forgotten when the sun arises in his strength. Christ is the chiefest, the best, the highest of all beings! Whatever excellences there may be in others, they are all eclipsed by the surpassing excellences that are found in Him!  
Christ is the chief among ten thousand; that is to say, He is the Head, the Ruler, the Prince, the King, the Lord over all. There He stands, with His feet like most fine gold, and all around Him are the chariots of God that are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, and there is not one who lifts his head as high even as his Lord’s feet! And among all the cherubic and seraphic host there is not one who would not count it his highest Heaven to fly at Christ’s command to the meanest cottage, or even to a dunghill whereon Lazarus lies with the dogs licking his sores! Christ is King of all the angels and, here below, too, there are ten thousand forces and powers continually at work, for God has His hosts and armaments on earth as well as in Heaven—but Christ is Lord High Admiral of all the seas, the great Commander-in-Chief of all the battalions, the mighty King who rules over all!  
And when He comes into His Church, we know that He is Chief there. Who dares look at Him and claim equality with Him? I tremble at the thought of that dreadful blasphemy which might well have condemned England to the lowest Hell for daring to call an earthly monarch, “the head of the Church.” It cannot be! It is sheer impiety for man or angel to ever dare to steal that title of Christ! He, alone, is King in the midst of Zion! He is the one and only Head of the Church! It was a brave deed of Cameron and his comrades to lift up their voices against this infamy when first it sought to spread itself in Scotland. And it is ill on our part that we have not lifted up our voices more loudly against it in this, our land! A man or a woman, head of the Church? No, never! Let Christ and Christ, alone, wear the crown He bought with His own blood! He alone is King and let Him always be so proclaimed and acknowledged!  
In matters of religion, we need not Caesar’s favor and we fear not Caesar’s frown. Christ is the one Head of His Church—and His true Church is free from both the control and the patronage of the State—and so she shall be wherever true hearts beat loyally to Christ, and wherever true lips speak His praises! He is “the chiefest among ten thousand.” If there are ten thousand bishops, He is the Bishop of souls! If there are ten thousand fathers, He is “the Everlasting Father.” If there are ten thousand teachers, yet shall they not be called Rabbis, for One is our Teacher and Rabbi, even Christ! And at His feet the reverent Church adoringly bows, hailing Him, and Him alone, as Head and Master, “the chiefest among ten thousand.”  
According to the Septuagint, the text has another meaning. Our Lord, in Scripture, is called the Chosen One, the Elect of God. As the Psalmist puts it, speaking by prophecy, “I have exalted One chosen out of the people.” Christ is chosen out of ten thousand as the Mediator to stand between God and men. Whoever else might have been employed by God for this service—and we are not able to think of any other—yet first of all was Christ chosen of God. And today we may call Him the Chosen One because He is the Chosen of His Church. If the question were put to us and a poll were demanded upon it—“Of all the Church of Christ, who shall be Head and Lord? Who shall be Master? Who shall be Teacher? Who shall be the Beloved?”—would not all of us hold up our hands for Him—yes, hands and hearts as well! And we would even lay down our heads on the block if it were necessary to secure His election! Every one of us would, with a burst of acclamation, unconstrained except by His own charms, elect Him to be the Head and Lord in the midst of Zion!  
I put to you, dear Hearer, a more personal question—Have you chosen Him? If not, will you, by His Grace, put your hand on your heart, now, and say, “Now have I chosen Him because He has first chosen me”? I pray you at once to make a choice of Him, for if you do, you will never regret it. I have stood by a great many deathbeds, but there is one scene I never saw, and never expect to see—and that is a child of God repenting that He ever loved Christ Jesus! May you be able to say what we have often sung!—  
May Christ be the chosen of your heart! God grant that no soul here may refuse admission to the Prince of Peace!  
Lastly, according to the margin of our Bible, the text bears this meaning and probably should be thus read, “He is the Standard-Bearer among ten thousand.” The, “ten thousand,” we may consider to be the warriors of God enlisted to fight His battles against error and sin. Who is the Standard-Bearer of God’s militant host below? The only answer is that, “Christ is the Standard-Bearer among ten thousand.” For a standardbearer, there was need of a select man with good strong arms who could firmly grasp the pole that held aloft the standard—a man resolute of heart, who, having once taken charge of the flag, would sooner die than loose his hold of the colors. It needed for a standard-bearer one who was courageous, one who would not be alarmed by the din and strife of battle and turn his back, but who would go at the head of the host, carrying the banner into the very thick of the fray to lead on the militant band till they had put all their foes to the rout. The standard-bearer should be a stronger man than all the rest of the host, for—  
*“If the standard-bearer falls,  
As fall full well he may,”*  
what mischief would come to the host and what confusion to this hearts of all the warriors!  
Now, our Lord Jesus Christ has come into this world and set up a standard because of the Truth of God and well does He handle it, firmly does He grasp it. When on the Cross, the battle thickened round Him— all the hosts of Hell and all the bands of cruel ones on earth sought to strike Him and to seize the Standard—but He bore it still aloft through all the dreadful fray! And this day, though He is now in Heaven, yet by His blessed Spirit that Standard is still unfurled to the breeze. In the order of His Providence, it seems to me that Christ is always bearing that Standard a little farther and a little farther on—and if Christians would but keep nearer to Christ and be more like He is, the victories of His Church would be daily fresh and new!  
We should soon see this world conquered for Christ if we kept step with the Divine Standard-Bearer. He is bearing that Standard in front of some of you into that alley at the back of the house where you live—dare you follow Him and go and win some spoil for Him? Christ’s banner is uplifted in many parts of London tonight—dare you follow it? Dare you stand in the streets and in the by-ways to tell of Heaven’s accomplished salvation, and of Christ’s finished work that saves from death and Hell? The nations of the earth need the Gospel! Christ is opening the gates of brass to our missionaries—are there no young men here who will follow Christ’s banner as it gleams afar? Have I no young John Williams here? Is there no young man here who will be a Robert Moffat or a William Knibb? There is the Standard-Bearer—Christ is not in the background! Oh, why should we be so slow to follow Him? We are not straitened in Him, but in ourselves! God give us to be worthy followers of so glorious a Standard-Bearer as Christ Jesus our Lord!  
Lift up your eyes to Heaven and see Him, there, bearing the Standard at the right hand of God! The troops are marshalling! The bugle sounds for some of us! Gray-heads, are you ready? Young men and maidens, are you ready? If the trumpet sounds in your ears tonight, are you ready to rally round that Standard and to sing the praises of Him who has called you? He is coming soon and then, when the Standard-Bearer is here, shall we have a share in His triumph? Shall we rise to shame and confusion of face, or shall we rise to participate in the splendor of His universal reign? God grant that we may all love and trust the Divine StandardBearer and that we may all be found among His faithful soldiers forevermore!  
The Lord be with you, Beloved, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

**“‘Tis done! The great transaction’s done! I am my Lord’s, and He is mine!  
He drew me and I followed on,  
Charmed to confess the voice Divine. High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow, That vow renewed shall daily hear Till in life’s latest hour I bow  
And bless in death a bond so dear.”**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
ISAIAH 61.**

Verse 1. The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me. You know who it is that speaks these words, our Lord Jesus, Himself.  
1, 2. Because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the meek; He has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn. The Divine Messiah comes to usher in the true Jubilee—the blessed day in which the poor shall have the Gospel preached to them and in which the broken-hearted shall find their brokenness healed. He comes to bring the captive ones back from the Babylon of sin and to deliver from prison all those who, because of their transgressions, are bound with fetters. In a word, He comes to proclaim that now is the accepted time, now is the day of Grace, now is the year of Jubilee. As for the adversaries of His people, to them it shall be “the day of vengeance of our God,” for the Lord will deal out to them, measure for measure, as they have dealt to His oppressed and persecuted people.  
3. To appoint to them that mourn in Zion, to give to them beauty—Or, “a coronet”—  
3. For ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified. When Jesus comes, He brings all things with Him, for He is all things to His people and they find their all in Him. There is no sorrow at His coming to those who receive Him—it is gladness—gladness repeated and gladness multiplied. Not only does joy come in one form, but in many, as the verses of this chapter so sweetly remind us! And that which comes is permanent, making those that receive it to be like long-standing trees, for they shall outlive their sorrows and prove that they were planted by God for His own Glory.  
4. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. Truly, God’s living Church today shall do all this! The Jewish Church became a waste and God’s Glory seemed to be trodden under the foot of His foes, but the true children of the promise—they who are counted for the seed, even as many as believe, who are thus the seed of believing Abraham—shall build up all these wastes and happy shall they be in such joyous service!  
5, 6. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But you shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: you shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall you boast yourselves. Because of the sin of His people, the aliens and the foreigners trample upon them. But if you and I are truly of the holy seed, having living faith in Christ, we shall look upon the whole race of men as enduring all their care and toil on our behalf. They shall be our plowmen and our vinedressers, but we shall be the ministers of God, the priests of the Lord, making use of every new invention—traveling by steam, speaking by telephone—using everything for God’s Glory, letting men invent all they can and we, ourselves, turning all things to account for the honor and Glory of our God. I know that there is another fulfillment of this test for God’s ancient people, but this is also a fulfillment of it to us who are His spiritual people, His real children, born according to the promise.  
7. For your shame you shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. That is a sweet state of heart for any of us to be in—to rejoice in our portion! Oh, what a wonderful portion we have to rejoice in! How blessed is the lot of God’s chosen people! However small a part of our portion may be visible to the eyes here below, yet we can sing—  
*“All things are ours, the gift of God,  
The purchase of a Savior’s blood!  
While the good Spirit shows us how  
To use and to improve them too.”*  
Instead of confusion such as once was the lot of the righteous, “they shall rejoice in their portion.”  
7. Therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be to them. Here is another choice expression—“everlasting joy.” Theirs is not a transient joy like the mirth of fools, which is as the crackling of thorns under a pot, but, “everlasting joy shall be to them.”  
8. For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burned offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. That is why they have everlasting joy. There would be no everlasting joy if it were not for the Everlasting Covenant! Those gentlemen who want to cut that word, “everlasting,” out of our Bibles will find that it will be a very long while before we shall agree to be rid of it! No, we shall never consent to give it up! We shall always rejoice that we have God’s everlasting love and an Everlasting Covenant and, therefore, that we shall have everlasting joy!  
9. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles. They shall be discerned and distinguished. Just as surely as you may know a Jew anywhere in the world, today, so shall men know the people of God. Though they wear no peculiar garb, yet their speech shall betray them. There shall be a something about them which shall bear testimony to the fact that “they are the seed which the Lord has blessed.” “Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles.”—

9, 10. And their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD has blessed. I will greatly rejoice—Not a little, for He is a great God, so, “I will greatly rejoice” in Him. “The Lord has done great things for us.” Let us, therefore, greatly rejoice in Him. “I will greatly rejoice”—

10. In the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God. Not only shall my lips be full of joy, but my inmost nature, the very essence of my being— “my soul shall be joyful in my God.” “In my God.” That is a stage higher than saying, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.” We do greatly rejoice in the Lord, but our very soul is joyful when we can, each one, call Him, “my God.” That is a possession that the richest among you may well envy if you do not have it.

10. For He has clothed me with the garment of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. The loveliest sight in the world is one of God’s people. We sometimes sing, and sadly sing, concerning this earth—

*“Where every prospect pleases,  
And only man is vile.”*

But there is another side to that picture, for when the “man” is a true child of God, we can say—  
*“Though every prospect pleases,  
Yet man outshines them all!”*

Well did the Psalmist sing, “You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor.” Angels do homage to the renewed man, for the promise is, “They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” You who are children of God need not wish to change places, even, with an archangel, for you are brother to Him who sits upon the Throne of God! You wear a nature that is akin to that of the Only-Begotten! Indeed, it is the same nature as His! Glory, then, in this great Truth of God—that you are covered with the robe of righteousness, decked with ornaments like a bridegroom, and adorned with jewels like a bride!

11. For as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. They are sown in the earth at present, but, as the seeds come up in the springtime beneath the genial showers and the shining of the sun, so righteousness and praise shall, in due time, come up in a golden harvest on every hill and valley of this poor sinful world! Hasten it, O Lord, hasten it in Your own good time! Amen.

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SPICES, FLOWERS, LILIES AND MYRRH  
NO. 2479

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 23, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 5, 1880.

**“His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.”  
Song of Solomon 5:13.**

IN this chapter the spouse describes in detail the Person of her Beloved. She is not satisfied with saying, “He is altogether lovely,” but she delights to talk of the charms of each part of His sacred Person and to picture the beauties of His Divine form and features, so that thereby she may, perhaps, win some other heart, first to admire and then to love Him.

Dear Friends, there are some things about which you will be wise not to go into details. You had better speak in general terms of half the things on earth, for if you once describe them in detail, you will have to confess that they are marred by a thousand imperfections! You may be content to give merely a surface glance at them, for if you dive beneath the surface, you will soon discover much that will alter your opinion of the thing that, at first sight, looked so lovely. But it is not so with Jesus, our Well-Beloved! You may talk of Him as long as you please and praise Him as much as you can, yet you will never discover that you have exaggerated His excellences. You may go into detail about Him and dwell with much minuteness upon everything relating to His Character, His offices, His Words, His deeds and you shall be made to wonder at the perfection of each one of them. You may apply the microscope to Christ. You may examine His little things, if, indeed, anything can be little that refers to Him. You may look into the deep things of Christ, the hidden things of Christ, His secrets—and the more closely you look, the more you will be amazed, astonished and filled with delight!

It is of Christ, the Heavenly Bridegroom, that we perceive the spouse to be speaking and mentioning in detail at least 10 particulars, dwelling with delight upon the beauties of His head and His locks, His eyes and His cheeks, His lips and His hands and every part of Him. And, Beloved Friends, I think it shows true love to Christ when we want to speak at length upon everything that concerns Him. The general Hearer says, “Oh, yes, yes! Of course, Christ is the Son of God and He is also perfect Man— I believe that.” But he does not want you to go into minute particulars concerning your Lord. It is not so with those who truly love the Savior— they wish to know all that can be known about Him. True love likes to become familiar with the object of its affection—its heart is set upon that object. It studies it and can never know it too well or too closely. True love to Christ thinks of Him from morning till night. It is glad to be released from other thoughts that it may follow only its one darling pursuit. True love to Christ seeks to get to Him, to live with Him, to live upon Him and thus to know Him so intimately that things which were unobserved and passed over at the first, stand out in clear light to the increased joy and delight of the contemplative mind! I wish, dear Friends, that we had many more of those people who study Christ from head to foot that they may learn all that can be learned about Him—those who would be able, with the spouse, to talk of His charms and beauties in detail—and to describe them as she does with rapturous delight!

You know how very unacquainted many people are with the Song of Solomon—they shut up this Book of Canticles in despair and say that they cannot understand its meaning. You will find that it is just the same with every truly spiritual thing! If you put into the hands of any one of them a deeply spiritual book, he will say, “I cannot comprehend what the writer means. The man seems to be in a rapture and I cannot make out what he is aiming at by such writing.” Just so. Unspiritual people are all at sea in spiritual things and even some of God’s children, who know Christ so as to be saved by Him, seem to be altogether out of their depth when you begin to speak of the things which you have made touching the King, or dilate upon those special Truths of God which only experience and fellowship with Christ can reveal to the soul. In speaking upon our text, I am sure that I shall not say too much in praise of my Lord and Master! My fear is that I shall not say a thousandth part as much as He deserves—and yet, perhaps, it shall seem but trivial talk to some who as yet do not know that one hair of His head is worth more than the whole world and that one drop of His precious blood has an eternal efficacy about it. On the other hand, I know that I shall not speak too enthusiastically for those whose hearts are warm with love to Christ. May the Lord, in great mercy, make us all to have such hearts, and He shall have all the praise!

There are two things I shall speak of as I may be helped by the Holy Spirit. First, Christ looked upon is very lovely— “His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers.” Secondly, Christ listened to is very precious— “His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.” There is an important distinction between the two heads of my discourse that I want you to notice before I proceed further, for there is a considerable difference between Christ looked upon and Christ listened to. There are some who listen to Christ’s Gospel and they do well. But those who also look with eyes of love upon His sacred Person. Those who contemplate not only what He says but what He is. Those who delight to know not only what He taught but what He is who taught it—these are they who have penetrated yet further into the mysteries of Christ.

I. With these we begin as we consider our first point—CHRIST LOOKED UPON IS VERY LOVELY. Note that these saints first see their Lord’s loveliness and then they say concerning Him, “His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers.” But why do they mention His cheeks?

I suppose, first, because every part of Christ is inexpressibly delightful. Take any portion of His Countenance that you may and it has surpassing beauty about it. The spouse had already spoken about her Beloved’s head, locks and eyes—now she mentions His cheeks. Any sight of Christ is delightful—a single passing glimpse of Him is a foretaste of Heaven, the beginning of Paradise! Though you see but little of Christ, yet if it is Christ whom you really see, that sight will save you! Though you see Christ, as it were, with but one eye, and though that eye is dim, and though that dim eye is filled with tears, yet if you do but see Him at all, that sight will save you—and just in proportion as you are able to see Him, your delight will increase! A sight of Him in any capacity and under any form has great richness of sweetness in it.

Think for a moment what is meant by a sight of, “His cheeks. Though you may not yet see the majesty of His brow as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Though you may not perceive the brightness of the lightning flashes of His eyes, which are as a flame of fire. Though you may scarcely be able to imagine, at present, what will be the Glory of His Second Advent—yet if you can but see the cheeks that He gave to the smiters—if you do but know something of Him as the suffering Savior, you shall find that there is inexpressible delight in Him and, with the spouse, you will say, “His cheeks are as a bed of spices.” To a believing soul, then, there is great delight in every part of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, I think the saints see great loveliness in those parts of Christ which have been most despised. Just now I mentioned the cheek as one of those parts of Christ’s blessed body that were exposed to special shame, as Isaiah foretold, using, by Inspiration, the very words of the Messiah in His agony—“I gave My back to the smiters and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.” Oh, if we could but see Him, now! If we could but gaze upon His face as it is in Glory, what a subject of meditation it would be to think that ever the spit of cruel mockers did run down those blessed cheeks— that infinite loveliness was insulted with inconceivable contempt—the holy face of the Incarnate Son of God distained with the accursed spit of brutal men! [See sermon #2473, Volume 42—“An Awful Contrast”—read/download at http://www.spurgeongems.org ] O my Soul, how low your Lord has stooped! Can you really believe it possible that it should have been so? Yes, you know that it was so, yet, is it not sad to think that His dear face, which is as the sun shining in his strength, which is, indeed, the very Heaven of heavens, the light of the Temple of God above—is it not sad to think that His face should have been spit upon for your sake and because of your sin and your iniquity? Alas, that each of us had a part in that shameful deed—

*“My Jesus! Who with spittle vile  
Profaned Your sacred brow?  
Or whose unpitying scourge has made  
Your precious blood to flow?  
‘Tis I have thus ungrateful been  
Yet, Jesus, pity take!  
Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord,  
For Your sweet mercy’s sake!”*

“It was I, with my vain and idle talk, with my false and proud speech, that did spit into that dear face.” How sad that He should ever have been made to suffer so! O glorious love, that He should be willing, even, to stoop to this terrible depth of ignominy that He might lift us up to dwell with Him on high! So, I say again, every part of Christ is lovely, but that which has been most despised and most subjected to suffering and shame for us is the peculiar subject of our delightful contemplation.

And next, my Brothers and Sisters, those parts of Christ in which we do not immediately see any special office or use are, nevertheless, peculiarly lovely to the saints. I can gaze by faith on the brow of Him who plans for me and admire His infinite wisdom. I can think of the eyes of Him who looks in love upon me and bless Him for His care. I can praise the lips that speak for me in Heaven and that speak to me upon earth— and I can bless the matchless eloquence that never ceases to plead for me and with me. But as for the cheeks of Christ, what do they do for me? What peculiar function have they to perform? I fear that we are all too apt to ask concerning Christ, “How is this to work for our advantage and how is that to turn out for our profit?” Has it come to this—that we are never to love Christ except when we see that we are profited by Him? If there is an abstruse doctrine, as we think it, that does not appear to have a practical outlook, are we, therefore, never to speak of it? If we cannot see that we derive comfort, or profit, or sanctification from some teaching which may be high, mysterious, sublime, so that we do not see whereunto it tends, yet, Beloved, are we to refuse to think of it?

Until the question, “ Cui bono?” shall have been answered, will we seal up that sacred page and never read it? Do you care only for the lips that speak to you? Have you no love for the cheeks that are silent? Do you care for nothing but for the eyes that are watching over you? If there comes to you nothing from those cheeks of your Lord, yet shall they not be to you, “as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers”? The fact is, we are not to judge concerning Christ in any such fashion as this. On the contrary, if there is any duty which Christ has commanded, but which, instead of seeming to be easy and profitable to us, is hard and requires that we should give so much that Judas will cry out, “To what purpose is this waste?” let us never mind him, but break our alabaster boxes and pour out the sweet perfume upon our dear Master! Let the cheeks that seem to have no special office to fulfill—let that part of Christ or of Christianity that seems to serve no end that we can see—be, nevertheless, precious to us! These are His cheeks, therefore are they precious to me! This duty is a command from Him, therefore I must perform it! And this doctrine, of which I do not see the practical end, is, nevertheless, a doctrine of His teaching—therefore I accept it with delight!

But further, Beloved children of God, the followers of Christ have an intense admiration, an almost infinite love for that part of Christ by which they are able to commune with Him and, perhaps, that is one reason why His cheeks are here mentioned. The cheek is the place of fellowship where we exchange tokens of love. What a blessing it is that Christ should have had a cheek for the lips of love to approach and to kiss! What a privilege it is that it always should be possible for a loving heart to express its affection to Christ! If He had accepted us and then put us right away from Him and said, “There, you may love Me, but you must never tell Me of it.” If we were conscious that when we did talk of our love to Christ, He never knew it, for He was far away and high above us—and did not care for such poor love as ours—in such a case He would not be half such a Christ as He now is to us. If He had taken Himself away to the ivory palaces and had shut the door and if, when we tried to gaze up at Him, He only looked down upon us with His countenance “as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars,” but never stooped to where we were, that He might commune with us, and that we might tell Him the story of our love—He would not be half as sweet to us as He is now!

Many of you know what it is to pray right into His very ear in the time of your sorrow and you also know what it is to speak right into His ear in the hour of your joy! And, sometimes, when you have been alone with Him (now I am talking of the deep things of Christ, of the pearls which are not to be cast before swine)—you know that He has heard what you have said to Him. You have been as certainly assured that He has been listening to your declaration as if, like Peter, you had heard Him ask, “Do you love Me?” and you had answered, “Lord, You know all things; you know that I love You.” And you have been delighted with the thought that He did know that you loved Him and that you might tell Him that it was so! You also rejoiced that you could go forth into the world and do something that He would see you do, something that you did not do for the sake of the Church, much less for your own sake, but which you did all for Him, just as you would give Him the kisses of love upon His own cheeks, which are, “as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers.” Those of you who have been in communion with Christ know what I mean and you know that anything by which you come into close contact with Christ is very, very delightful to you.

How greatly we rejoice to think of Christ’s Humanity because we feel that it brings Him very near to us! He is our Brother! He feels what we feel and through His Humanity this wondrous Man is next of kin to us! He who is truly God is also our near Kinsman, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh! How the blessed doctrine of the union of the saints with Christ delights us as we remember that “we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones”! How the wondrous Truth of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit charms us because the same Spirit that rested upon Him also rests upon us! And the holy oil that was first poured upon Him, who is the Head, descends even to us who are as the hem of the garment that reaches to the ground! It is the same Spirit that is upon Him that is upon us and so, again, we are one with Him. Does not this Truth of God also make prayer very sweet as the means of getting to Christ? And does it not make praise very sweet as another means of communicating with Christ? And oh, though some put the sacred Table of the Lord out of its proper place, yet to the communion of the body of Christ, it is a dear and blessed ordinance! Often do we know Him in the breaking of bread when we have not recognized Him, even though He has talked with us by the way. So, you see, the saints delight in those Truths concerning Christ which enable them to have fellowship with Him and thus they realize what the spouse meant when she said, “His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers.”

I have thus tried to show you that the saints see great beauty in Christ when they look upon Him. But now I have to remind you that saints also labor to tell others of the loveliness of Christ when they look upon Him. In this blessed service, however, they must, in part, labor in vain, for, as we have often sung—

*“Living tongues are dumb at best,*

*We must die to speak of Christ.”*  
I suppose that even he who has seen Christ in Heaven could not fully tell us of His beauties. Paul has not told us much of what He heard in Paradise, though he told all he could tell after he had been caught up to the third Heaven. He “heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful (or possible) for a man to utter.” Oh, how one longs for but a moment’s sight of Christ in Glory! One might be content to have only a dry crust and to lie in an underground dungeon for the rest of one’s life, if one might but gaze on His blessed face, for once, and hear Him say, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” Perhaps you think you would have a deal to tell if that were your blessed experience, but, Beloved, you might not have anything to tell—you would only feel less able to speak than you ever were before! You would be so dazzled, so astonished, so amazed at the Glory of Christ that, perhaps, you might never be able to speak at all!

The spouse, however, in our text tries to speak of the loveliness of Christ by comparisons. She cannot do it with one emblem—she must have two concerning His cheeks—they are “as a bed of spices,” “as sweet flowers.”

Notice, in the metaphors used by the spouse, that there is a blending of sweetness and beauty—“as a bed of spices”—there is sweetness. And then, “as sweet flowers”—there is beauty. There is sweetness to the nostrils and beauty to the eyes—spice for its fragrance and flowers for their loveliness. In Christ there is something for every spiritual sense and for every spiritual sense there is a complete satisfaction and delight in Him. Look at Him and He is to your sight as sweet flowers! Get a spiritual taste of Him and then He is as honey and the honeycomb! Take, as it were, a spiritual smell of Him and you shall find that He is “as a bed of spices.” Touch Him, or hear Him and it shall be just the same—you shall find the daintiest, the highest, the most harmonious feelings your spirit ever knew when you do but approach Him with any spiritual sense in full exercise. Our blessed Master may be viewed from every side and yet He is perfect from every aspect. We have seen Him far above us. There are few things that look well when set up aloft and gazed at from below—but He does. We shall one day see Him side by side and I guarantee you that we shall count Him lovely, then, even as we reckon Him lovely now! Angels have looked down upon Him from above, gazing on Him when He was here on earth, and He was infinitely lovely to their vision. Seen by daylight or by moonlight, seen in the crowd or seen in solitude, seen in our days of sorrow or seen in our times of joy, our Lord Jesus possesses all kinds of loveliness compacted into one perfect loveliness—all perfections blended to make one perfection—every sweet concocted and distilled to make one perfect sweetness. Well, therefore, may His spouse pile up the metaphors and blend sweet spices with fragrant flowers in trying to describe His charms!

Notice that when the spouse is speaking of the cheeks of her Beloved, she brings in the idea of abundance—spices, yes, “a bed of spices.” Flowers—not one or two, but, according to the Hebrew, “towers of perfume,” which I understand to mean those raised beds which we delight to have in our gardens, where there are many flowers set in order, forming charming banks of beauty. No doubt Solomon had some of those in his garden, for, “there is nothing new under the sun.” And those raised beds of dainty flowers are fit emblems of the beauteous cheeks of Christ, with their delicate tints of white and red. So in Christ there is infinite abundance.

There is also in Christ infinite variety. There is in Him all you can need of any one thing and there is more than all you can need of everything! There is all that your soul could take in of any one thing and more than your soul could take in if it were multiplied a million times and could take in a million precious things at once! There is all you ever have needed and all you ever will need. Did I say, “need”? There is in Christ all you can desire, for that is one of His names, “He Is All Desires.” When you get to Heaven and have a larger heart than you at present possess. When your soul shall be spacious as the sea. If it could be vast as the universe itself, still He would be able to fill it and still to be, Himself, overflowing with blessing! There is abundance in Him and there is variety. Oh, what a Christ He is! “As a bed of spices, and as sweet flowers.”

The spouse’s metaphors seem to me, also, to suggest use and delight. She speaks of spices, for which there is practical use in surgery and in medicine, for preservation and for perfume. And she also mentions sweet flowers, for which there may not be any particular use, but which are charming for ornament and for the delectation of taste. So, dear Friends, in Christ Jesus there is all that we need, but there is a great deal more! There is something beside and beyond our actual necessities—there are many spiritual luxuries. I like, at the Lord’s Table, to think to myself, “Here is bread, that is the staff of life, but what is that in the cup? Wine! Ah, why not water? Here is more than I need, for I can live without wine but the Lord says that I shall not do so. He will not only give His people the best things, but the best of the best! When our Lord keeps house, He does not allow us just so many ounces of bread and so many ounces of meat, as they do in the workhouse, but He says, “Eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” The Bridegroom cries, “Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved!” And He does not merely bring out wine, but you know how it is described—“wines on the less well-refined.” Christianity is not the bond slave’s starvation allowance that some people make it out to be—duty, doing and serving to win Christ and to keep up your position—and I know not what besides. It is heirship with Christ, the possession in Him of everything and the privilege of living up to our royal income—oh that we could attain to that high style of living! “All things are yours.” Then claim them as your own! God has given you His dear Son and He has given you Himself, for He has said, “I will be their God.” Then live with the joy that a man ought to have who has Jehovah to be his God and Jesus Christ to be his Savior! The Lord has given us everything—then let us live at the rate of joy that a man ought to have who possesses everything! God bring us to that happy state!

“His cheeks”—those features of the Beloved which do not, at first, seem likely to yield us anything—“are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers,” inexpressibly precious, yielding to us both what we need and what shall delight and overflow our souls. You see, Beloved, what saints think of Christ—let each one of us ask himself and herself, “Do I think thus of Him? Do I thus admire Him? Is He everything to me?” These are sure marks of a true Christian, that he loves his Master and praises Him. There is many a poor child of God who is half afraid that he is not in the number of God’s people, but he says, “I love Jesus. Oh, I would do anything to glorify Him.” My dear Friend, do not ever get the idea that you love Him without His loving you! You may be quite sure that the reason why you love Him is because He first loved you. And if you love Him very much, you may rest assured that He loves you a great deal more! If you have but a spark of love to Him in your heart, He has a furnace of love to you in His heart! If your love to Him is but as a single grain, His love to you is abundant as the richest harvest! His love to you is as much above your love to Him as the heavens are higher than the earth!

Oh, that we did but think more highly of Christ! Perhaps it may help us to do so if we consider how worthy He is of that love and how wondrously His thoughts of us exceed our thoughts of Him. I sometimes feel very sad when I think about some who profess to be the Lord’s people. Ah, me, there are many who, I hope, may prove to be His people, but they do not reflect much credit on Him. Some of God’s children are a very strange lot—if we had such sons and daughters as God has, some of us would never be able to bear with them at all—we would be impatient with them and turn them out of doors to get on as best they could by themselves. When you get sick, sad and weary of God’s people, turn your thoughts to God, Himself, and if ever you see any spots in the Church, Christ’s bride, look at her glorious Husband and you will only love Him the more as you think of His wondrous condescension in having loved such a poor thing as His Church is, even at her best!

Think how bright He is, how glorious, how surpassing are His charms that they can be seen even through the defects and imperfections of His redeemed ones! We may well marvel that ever such love as His could have been lavished upon such unworthy beings as His people are. Do not get depressed and distressed, dear Friends, because of your own imperfections, or the imperfections of others! Or if you do, quickly rise again to fight against sin under the blessed conviction that there are no imperfections in Him—that He is altogether lovely, altogether sweet—and that the day must come when we, who are one with Him even now, shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is. Complete sanctification will be the lot of every redeemed soul! If we have known the Lord and have already had something of His likeness, we shall go on to know Him till we are perfect in that likeness. Let that blessed consummation be the subject of our constant prayer and our confident expectation.

II. Now, secondly, and but briefly, let us turn to the other part of our text—“His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.” These words teach us that CHRIST LISTENED TO IS VERY PRECIOUS. When He is silent, and we only look at Him, He is lovely to our eyes. But when He speaks, we can see “His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.”

Notice, first, that it is well, whenever we hear the voice of Jesus Christ, to try to see the blessed Person who is speaking. The Gospel is very precious to those of us who know its power, but, beyond all question, Christ Himself is even more precious than His Gospel. It is delightful to read any promise of the Scriptures, but it is more delightful to come into communion with the faithful Promiser. The time when I can most enjoy a promise from the Word of God is when it seems to me as if it must have been written only yesterday—on purpose to meet my case—or as if I could see the eternal pen writing every one of the strokes and making them all for me! Whenever you hear one of the Lord’s promises, think of the Divine lips that spoke it and you will love the promise all the better because you have thought of the lips that uttered it. The spouse does not say in our text, “His Words are sweet,” but she speaks of, “His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.” Why should we not believe more in a personal Christ and why should we not always see the connection between the mercy and the hand that gives it, and between the promise and the lips that speak it?

Some of you may remember William Huntington’s story that I have sometimes quoted to you about an old farmer, who, when one of his daughters was married, gave her a thousand pounds as a wedding present. There was another daughter and her father did not give her a thousand pounds when she was married, but he gave her something as a wedding present and then he kept on, pretty nearly every day in the week, sending her what he called “the hand-basket portion, with father’s love.” And so in the long run she received a great deal more than her sister did! It was not given all at the same time and then done with—but it kept on coming—now a sack of flour, and then this, and that, and the other, always, “with father’s love.” And so she had far more than the thousand pounds and she also had far more of his love. I like, when I get a mercy, to have it come to me with my Heavenly Father’s love. Just my daily portion as I need it—not given all in a lump, so that I might go away with it into a far country, as we are sure to do if we have all our mercy at once—but given day by day, as the manna fell, with our Heavenly Father’s love every time—a fresh token of Infinite Grace and Infinite Love! So, you see, the mercy leads you to think of the hand that gives it and of the Father who sends it, as in the text it is not the words of the Beloved, but His lips which the spouse says are “like lilies, dropping sweetsmelling myrrh.”

Notice the comparison in the text—lilies—not white lilies, of course, but red lilies, crimson lilies, lilies of such a color as are frequently to be seen which would be a suitable emblem of the Beloved’s lips. Christ’s lips are peculiarly delightful to us, for it is with them that He speaks to us and intercedes with the Father for us. When He pleads as the Intercessor on behalf of a poor soul like me, His lips are, indeed, in God’s sight, like lovely lilies. The Father looks at His dear Son’s lips and He is charmed with them and blesses us because of Christ’s intercession. And whenever Christ turns round, and speaks to us, shall we not listen at once, with eyes and ears wide open, as we say, “I like to watch His lips as He is speaking, for His lips are to me as lilies”?

I suppose this comparison means that Christ’s lips are very pure, as the lily is the purest of flowers, and that they are very gentle, for we always associate the lily with everything that is tender, soft and kind. There is not a thorn about it as there is with the rose. We speak not of it as Herbert did of the rose—

*“Whose hue, angry and brave,*

*Bids the rash gazer wipe his eyes.”*  
It is not so. The lily is all tenderness and is without a thorn, though often it may be found growing among thorns. The lily is also inconceivably beautiful and so is Christ in speaking to His people. “Never man spoke like this Man.” The very words of Christ are the loftiest poetry and the sweetest music! Though they sometimes make us weep, great joy lies deeply hidden beneath the grief He causes to our spirits. “His lips are like lilies.”

But, dear Friends, the spouse’s comparison fails, for she said, “His lips, like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.” Lilies do not do this, but Christ does! He is more than a lily, or He is a lily of such a sort as never bloomed on earth except once! He was the only lily that ever dropped sweet-smelling myrrh! The spouse says that His lips do that—what does this mean? Does it not mean that His Word is often full of a very sweet, mysterious, blessed influence? You have come here often and it is not because I have spoken that there has been a blessing to your souls. When I have set forth Christ to you—and I have no other theme but Christ—there have often come to you mysterious droppings. You have had singular feelings in your spirit caused by the secret oozing of the Word of God, the flowing out from the Word, and flowing in into your spirit, causing you to say, “What a change has come over me! I went into God’s House very heavy, but I came away quite relieved. I went in there perplexed and worried, but I came away knowing clearly what I ought to do. I went in there cold and chilly, and feeling myself at a distance from God, but I came out ready to dance with the sense of His realized Presence!” Ah, that change has been caused by some of the sweet-smelling myrrh that has dropped from the lips of Christ!

There are many people who meet with us on the Sabbath who do not care to come out to the week-night services. I take the week-night attendance as somewhat of a test of piety—any hypocrite will come out on a Sunday, but it is not every hypocrite who will come out on a Thursday night, though some do, I dare say! But still, the most of them are for a Sunday religion only—a week-day religion they do not need. That is to say, they will feed on the Word after a fashion and worship God after a fashion, when most other people do! But give me that religion that loves to creep out on a week-night and is willing to take a back seat if it may but get a bit of spiritual food! Give me that man who says, “My soul must be fed. I have been tearing about all this week, almost worn out with fatigue and perplexed with a great many cares—it is a delightful thing to be able to get into the House of Prayer to hear about Christ and to feed on Him.” Oh, you who eat your morsels in secret behind the door, I believe more in you than in those who sit openly at the table, but who never have a secret feast at all!

“Oh, but!” says one, “I do not hear the Word to profit.” No, of course you do not! You see, you are looking to the lips of a man. But if you look to the lips of the Master, you will find that “His lips are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.” You may have heard the story of the lady who was present when Mr. Ebenezer Erskine preached at a Scotch Communion Service. She thought she had never heard such a man in all her life! He preached Christ so sweetly that she was charmed. She enquired where he was to preach the next Sabbath and she left her own place of worship to go to hear Mr. Erskine again. But it was a dreadfully dry discourse, she said, and she was foolish enough to go into the vestry and say to the preacher, “My dear Sir, I have been bitterly disappointed in hearing you this morning. I heard you last Sabbath and you so extolled Christ that I enjoyed the service above measure. So I thought I would come again to hear you, but now I have got nothing.” “No, Madam,” replied the good man, “last Sabbath you went to worship God and to feed on Christ, so you received the blessing you sought. Today, you came to hear Mr. Erskine, and you have heard me, but you have missed the blessing.”

Oh, dear Friends, beware of going to places of worship merely to hear men! Of course you must hear a man speaking, but go with this view— that those lips which are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, should be the lips to which you really are listening! Be praying all the time, “Lord, speak to me through the minister. Speak to me through the hymn. Speak to me through the prayer, speak to me through any part of the service—yes, speak through the speaker’s not speaking if You will—only speak to me! Let those dear lips of Yours drop sweet-smelling myrrh into my soul!” Pray thus and you shall not be disappointed, you can be sure of that.

This blessing is what you and I must seek after day by day, for we need this myrrh for the healing of the wounds that sin has made. We need this myrrh in our spiritual worship that we may offer it up to God. We need this myrrh to perfume us and make our lives fragrant in the midst of our daily cares. We need this myrrh to kill the contagion that abounds in this wicked world—and we shall get it through the Word of God when it comes fresh from the lips of Christ! O God, bring us all into this blessed state!

I close by saying that if there are any here present who do not prize the Word of God, who have no care to listen to the lips of Christ, I pray God that they may speedily be converted, for if they are not, they shall hear Him speak when His lips shall not be as lilies, but as a flaming fire! And His Word that shall be spoken, then, shall burn as an oven, and His enemies shall be consumed thereby! God give Grace to such as have not believed in Jesus to look to Him and listen to Him now! “Incline your ears,” He says, “and come to Me: hear, and your soul shall live.” Yes, He says, “Look to Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” May God give His blessing to these words, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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÷Son 5.16

ALTOGETHER LOVELY  
NO. 1001

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JULY 23, 1871, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Yes, He is altogether lovely.” Song of Solomon 5:16.**

WHEN the old Puritan minister had delivered his discourse, and dwelt upon firstly, and secondly, and thirdly, and perhaps upon twenty-fifthly before he sat down, he usually gave a comprehensive summary of all that he had spoken. Everyone who carefully noted the summary would carry away the essence of the sermon. The summary was always looked upon by the Puritan hearer as one of the most valuable helps to memory, and consequently a most important part of the discourse.

In these five words the spouse here gives you her summary. She had delivered a tenfold discourse concerning her Lord. She had described in detail all his various beauties, and when she had surveyed him from head to foot, she gathered up all her commendations in this sentence—“Yes, He is altogether lovely.” Remember these words, and know their meaning, and you possess the quintessence of the spouse’s portion of the Song of Songs.

Now, as in this allegorical song the bride sums up her witness in these words, so may I say that all the patriarchs, all the Prophets, all the Apostles, all the confessors, yes, and the entire body of the Church have left us no other testimony. They all spoke of Christ, and they all commended Him. Whatever the type, or symbol, or obscure oracle, or open word in which they bore witness, that witness all amounted to this— “Yes, He is altogether lovely.” Yes, and I will add, that since the canon of inspiration has closed, the testimony of all saints on earth and in Heaven, has continued to confirm the declaration made of old.

The verdict of each particular saint and of the whole elect host as a body, still is this, “Yes, He is altogether lovely.” From the sighs and the songs which mingle on the dying beds of saints I hear this note supreme above all others, “He is altogether lovely.” And from the songs unmingled with groans, which perpetually peal forth from immortal tongues before the Presence of the Most High, I hear this one master note—“Yes, He is altogether lovely.” If the whole Church desired to say with the Apostle, “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum,” she need not wait for a brief and comprehensive summary, for it lies before her in this golden sentence, “Yes, He is altogether lovely.”

Looking at my text in this light I felt much humbling of spirit, and I hesitated to preach upon it, for I said in my heart, “It is high, I cannot attain unto it.” These deep texts show us the shortness of our plumb line. These ocean verses are so exceedingly broad that our skiffs are apt to be driven far out of sight of land where our timid spirits tremble to spread the sail. Then I comforted myself by the thought that though I could not comprehend this text in a measure, nor weigh its mountains in scales, or

its hills in a balance, yet it was all my own—by the gift of Divine Grace— and therefore I need not fear to enter upon the meditation of it.

If I cannot grasp the ocean in my span, yet may I bathe in it with sweet content. If I cannot describe the King in His beauty, yet may I gaze upon Him, since the old Proverb says, “A beggar may look at a prince.” Though I pretend not so to preach from such a heavenly word as that before us—as to spread before you all its marrow and fatness—yet may I gather up a few crumbs which fall from its table. Poor men are glad of crumbs, and crumbs from such a feast are better than loaves from the tables of the world.

Better to have a glimpse of Jesus, than to see all the glory of the earth all the days of our life. If we fail on this subject we may do better than if we succeeded upon another. So we will pluck up courage, seek Divine help, and draw near to this wondrous text with our shoes from off our feet like Moses, when he saw the bush aglow with God.

This verse has been translated in another way—“He is all desires.” And so, indeed, Jesus is. He was the desire of the ancients. He is the desire of all nations still. To His own people He is their All in All. They are complete in Him. They are filled out of His fullness—

*“All our capacious powers can wish,*

*In Him does richly meet.”*  
He is the delight of His servants, and fills their expectations to the full. But we will not dispute about translations, for, after all, with such a text, so full of unutterable spiritual sweetness, every man must be his own translator and into his own soul must the power of the message come by the enforcement of the Holy Spirit.

Such a text as this is very like the manna which fell in the wilderness, of which the rabbis say it tasted after each man’s liking. If the flavor in a man’s mouth was very sweetness, the angel’s food which fell around the camp was luscious as any dainty he had conceived. Whatever he might be, the manna was to him as he was. So shall this text be. To you with low ideas of Christ the words shall but glide over your ears and be meaningless. But if your spirit is ravished with the precious love of Jesus there shall be songs of angels, and more than that—the voice of God’s own Spirit to your soul in this short sentence, “Yes, He is altogether lovely.”

I am an engraver this morning, and I seek some place where I may engrave this heavenly line. Shall I take unto me ivory or silver? Shall I borrow crystal or gold? These are too common to bear this unique inscription—I put them all aside. Shall I spell my text in gems, with an emerald, a sapphire, a ruby, a diamond, or a pearl for each single letter? No, these are poor perishable things—we put them all away. I want an immortal spirit to be the tablet for my writing—no, I must lay aside my engraving tool, and ask the Spirit of God to take it—I want a heart prepared of the Holy Spirit, upon whose fleshy tablets there shall be written this morning no other sentence than this, and this shall suffice for a right royal motto to adorn it well—“Yes, He is altogether lovely.”

Spirit of God, find out the prepared heart, and with your sacred hand write in eternal characters the love of Christ, and all His inimitable perfections! In handling our text this morning we shall note three points of character, and then we shall show three uses to which we may profitably turn it.

I. We shall consider THREE POINTS OF CHARACTER which are very noticeable in these words, and the first which suggests itself is this—the words are evidently uttered by one who is under the influence of overwhelming emotion. The words are rather a veil to the heart than a glass through which we see its emotions. The sentence labors to express the inexpressible. It pants to utter the unutterable. The person writing these words evidently feels a great deal more than any language can possibly convey to us.

The spouse begins somewhat calmly in her description—“My Beloved is white and ruddy.” She proceeds with due order, commencing at the head and proceeding with the various parts of the Person of the Beloved but she warms, she glows, she flames, and at last the heat which had for awhile been repressed is like fire within her bones, and she bursts forth in flaming words. Here is the live coal from off the altar of her heart—“Yes, He is altogether lovely.”

It is the utterance of a soul that is altogether overcome with admiration, and therefore feels that in attempting to describe the well-beloved, it has undertaken a task beyond its power. Lost in adoring wonder, the gracious mind desists from description, and cries with rapture, “Yes, He is altogether lovely.” It has often been thus with true saints. They have felt the love of Jesus to be overpowering and inebriating.

Believers are not always cool and calm in their thoughts towards their Lord—there are seasons with them when they pass into a state of rapture. Their hearts burn within them. They are in ecstasy—they mount up with wings as eagles! Their souls become like the chariots of Amminadab. They feel what they cannot tell, They experience what they cannot express though the tongues of men and of angels were perfectly at their command. Favored Believers are altogether enraptured with the sight they have of their all-beauteous Lord.

It is to be feared that such raptures are not frequent with all Christians. Though I should gravely question his saintship who has never experienced any degree of holy rapture—there are some saints to whom a state of overwhelming adoration of their Lord has been by no means an unusual thing. Communion with Jesus has not only entranced them now and then, but it has perfumed all their life with holiness. And if it has not caused their faces literally to shine like the face of Moses, it has made the spiritual glory to flash from their countenances and elevated them among their fellow Christians to be leaders of the host of God, which others have admired and wondered.

Perhaps I speak to children of God who know very little of what I mean by the overwhelming emotions created by a sight of our Lord. They have not so seen the Lord as to have felt their souls melting within them while the Beloved spoke with them. To such I shall speak with sorrowful sympathy, being, alas, too much like unto them. But my prayer shall go up all the while, “Lord, reveal Yourself to us, that we also may be compelled to say, ‘Yes, He is altogether lovely.’ Show us Your hands and Your side till we exclaim with Thomas, ‘My Lord and my God.’ ”

Shall I tell you why it is, my Brethren, that many of you but seldom enjoy the exceeding bliss of Jesus’ Presence? The cause may lie partly in what is, alas, too common among Christians—a great degree of ignorance of the Person of the Lord Jesus. Every soul that sees Jesus by faith is saved by the look. If I look to Christ with a bleared eye that is ever so weak and clouded with tears, and if I only catch a glimpse of Him through clouds and mists, yet the sight saves me. But who will remain content with such a poor glimpse of His Glory as that?

Who wishes to see only “through a glass, darkly”? No, let my eyes be cleansed till they become as doves by the rivers of waters and I can see my Lord as He is seen by His bosom friends, and can sing of those beauties which are the light and crown of Heaven itself. If you do but touch the hem of Jesus’ garment, you shall be made whole—but will this always satisfy you? Will you not desire to get beyond the hem and beyond the garment to Himself, and to His heart, and there forever take up your abode? Who desires to be forever a babe in Grace, with a half-awakened dreamy twilight consciousness of the Redeemer?

Brothers and Sisters, be diligent in the school of the Cross where is enduring wisdom. Study your Savior much. The science of Christ Crucified is the most excellent of sciences. And to know Him and the power of His Resurrection is to know that which is best worth knowing. Ignorance of Jesus deprives many saints of those Divine raptures which carry others out of themselves. Therefore let us be among those children of Zion who are taught of the Lord.

Next to this you shall find the want of meditation to be a very serious robber of the wealth of renewed hearts. To believe a thing, is, as it were, to see the cool crystal sparkling in the cup. But to meditate upon it is to drink it. Reading gathers the clusters, contemplation squeezes forth their generous juice. Meditation is of all things the most soul-fattening when combined with prayer. The spouse had meditated much in this chapter, for otherwise she had not been able to speak in detail concerning her Lord.

O saintly hearts, imitate her example! Think, my Brethren, of our Lord Jesus—He is God, the Eternal, the Infinite, the ever Blessed. Yet He became Man for us—Man of the substance of his mother, like ourselves. Meditate upon His spotless Character. Review the sufferings which He endured on Calvary. Follow Him into the grave, and from the grave to the Resurrection—and from the Resurrection up the starry way to His triumphant Throne. Let your souls dwell upon each of His offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King. Pore over each one of His Characters, and every Scriptural title!

Pause and consider every phase of Him, and when you have done this, begin again and yet again. It is good to chew the cud by meditation—then shall the sweetness and fatness of Divine Truth come to your soul, and you shall burst forth with such rapturous expressions as that of the text— “Yes, He is altogether lovely.” The most of you are too busy, you have too much to do in the world. But what is it you are doing? Scraping together dust, loading yourselves with thick clay!

O that you were busy after the true riches and could step aside awhile to enrich yourselves in solitude, and make your hearts vigorous by feeding upon the Person and work of your ever Blessed Lord! You miss a Heaven below by a too eager pursuit of earth. You cannot know these joyful raptures if meditation is pushed into a corner.

Another reason why little of the Lord’s beauty is discerned is the low state of the spiritual life in many a Christian. Many a Believer is just alive and no more. Do you not know such starving souls? May you not be one such yourself? His eyes are not delighted with the beauties of Christ. He is partly blind and cannot see afar off. He walks not with Jesus in the garden of pomegranates. He is too feeble to rise from the couch of weakness—he cannot feed upon Christ, his appetite is gone—the sure sign of terrible decline.

For him there is no climbing to the top of Amana, no leaping for joy in the temple, no dancing before the ark with David. No, if he is but carried to the feet of Jesus in an ambulance as a sick man borne of four, it is as much as he has yet received. To be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might—to have the wings of eagles with which to mount above the clouds of earth—to this too many are strangers. But Beloved, there are noble spirits and better taught who know something of the life of Heaven even while here below! The Lord strengthen us with Grace in our inner man—and then shall we drink deeper draughts of the wines on the lees well refined! And then, also, our eyes being open, we shall see Jesus more clearly, and bear fuller witness that He is “fairer than the children of men.”

I am afraid that the visits of Christ to our souls have been disesteemed, and the loss of those visits has not caused us corresponding sorrow. We did not sufficiently delight in the beauty of the Bridegroom when He did come to us. When our hearts were somewhat lifted up with His love we grew cold and idle. And then He withdrew His conscious Presence. But, alas, we were not grieved—we wickedly tried to live without Him. It is wretched work for a Believer to try and live without his Savior. Perhaps, dear Brethren, some of you have tried it until at last you have almost succeeded. You were likely to mourn like doves if you had no word from your Master in the morning, and without a love-token before you went to rest you tossed uneasily upon your bed.

But now you are carnal and worldly, and careless, and quite content to have it so. Jesus hides His face, the sun is set, and yet it is not night with you. O may God be pleased to arouse you from this lethargy and make you mourn your sad estate! Even if an affliction should be necessary to bring you back from your backsliding it would be a cheap price to pay. Awake, O north wind, with all your cutting force, if your bleak breath may but stir the lethargic heart! May the Lord grant us Grace to love Christ so that if we have not our fill of Him, we may be ready to die with hungering and thirsting after Him!

May we never be able to find a place to build our nest while our wings wander away from the Tree of Life. Like the dove of Noah, may we drop into the water and be drowned sooner than find rest for the sole of our feet except upon the Ark, Christ Jesus, our Savior. Beloved, if none of these suggestions should hit the mark and reveal the cause why so little

is known of rapturous love to Christ, let me suggest another. Very often professors’ hearts are vain and frivolous. They are taken up during the week with their business. This might plead some excuse. But when they have little spaces and intervals these are filled up with very vanity.

Now, if the soul has come to look at the mere trifles of this world as allimportant, is it any marvel that it should be unable to perceive the exceeding preciousness of Christ Jesus? Who will care for the wheat when he dotes on the chaff? And with this it will often happen that the professor’s mind has grown proud as well as vain. He does not remember his natural poverty and meanness and consequently does not value the riches of Christ Jesus. He has come to think himself an established, experienced Christian. He fancies that he is not like those foolish beginners who are so volatile and so readily led astray.

He has acquired the wisdom of years and the stability of experience. O Soul, if you are great, Christ will be little! You can never see Him on the Throne until you have been on the dunghill yourself. If you are anything, so much the less is Christ. For if he is All in All, then there is no room for anything else—and if you are something, you have stolen just so much from the Glory of your Lord Jesus! Lie low in the dust, it is the place for you--"

*“The more Your Glories strike my eyes,*

*The humbler I shall lie.”***The humbler I am in myself, the more shall I be capable of seeing the enchanting beauties of Christ. Let me just say these two or three words. I believe those are the happiest saints who are most overwhelmed with a sense of the greatness, goodness, and preciousness of Christ.**

**I believe these to be the most useful saints, also, and to be in the Christian Church as a tower of strength. I pray that you and I, walking with God by faith, may nevertheless often have our festival days, our notable seasons when He shall especially bless us with the kisses of His love, and we shall drink larger draughts of His love, which is better than wine. Oh, to be carried right away with the Divine manifestation of the Chief among ten thousand, so that our souls shall cry out in rapture, “Yes, He is altogether lovely.” This is one characteristic of the text—may it be transferred to us.**

2. **A second is this, and very manifest it is upon the surface of the verse—here is *undivided affection*. “He is altogether lovely.” Note that these words have a world of meaning in them, but chiefly they tell us that Jesus is to the true saint the only lovely One in the world. “He is altogether lovely.” Then there is no loveliness anywhere else. It is as though the spouse felt that Christ had engrossed all the beauty and all the love-worthiness in the entire universe.**

**Who among us will say that she erred? Is not Jesus worthy of all the admiration and love of all intelligent beings? But may we not love our friends and kinsfolk? Yes but *in* Him, and in *subservience* to Him. So, and so only, is it safe to love them. Did not our Lord Himself say, “If any man love his father or mother more than Me, he is not worthy of Me”? Yes, and in another place He put it more strongly still, for He said, “Except a man hate his father and mother,” or love them not at all in comparison with Him, “he is not worthy of Me.”**

**Unless these are put on a lower stage than Jesus is, we cannot be His disciples. Christ must be Monarch in the breast. Our dear ones may sit at His footstool, and we may love them for His sake, but He alone must fill the throne of our hearts. I may see excellences in my Christian Brethren, but I must not forget that there would be none in them if they were not derived from Him. Their loveliness is only a part of His loveliness, for He worked it in them by His own Spirit. I am to acknowledge that Jesus is the monopolizer of all loveliness, the engrosser of all that is admirable in the entire universe. And I am, therefore, to give Him all my love, for “He is altogether lovely.”**

**Our text means, again, that in Jesus loveliness of all kinds is to be found. If there is anything that is worthy of the love of an immortal spirit it is to be seen in abundance in the Lord Jesus. Whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report. If there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, all can be found without measure in Christ Jesus. As all the rivers meet in the sea, so all beauties unite in the Redeemer.**

**Take the character of any gracious man and you shall find a measure of loveliness, but it has its bounds and its mixtures. Peter has many virtues, but he has also a few failings. John, too, excels, but in certain points he is deficient. But herein our Lord transcends all His saints, for all human virtues, all Divine, are harmoniously blended in Him. He is not this flower or that, but He is the Paradise of perfection. He is not a star here or a constellation there—He is the whole Heaven of stars—no, He is the Heaven of heavens. He is all that is fair and lovely condensed in one.**

**When the text says, again, that Jesus “is altogether lovely,” it declares that He is lovely in all views of Him. It generally happens that to the noble building there is an unhappy point of view from which the architecture appears at a disadvantage. The choicest piece of workmanship may not be equally complete in all directions. The best human character is deformed by one flaw, if not with more. But with our Lord *all* is lovely, regard Him as you will. You may contemplate Him from all points and only find new confirmation of the statement that, “He is altogether lovely.”**

**As the everlasting God, before the world was made angels loved Him and adored Him. As the Babe at Bethlehem or as the Man at Bethany. As walking the sea or as nailed to the Cross. In His grave, dead, and buried, or on His Throne triumphant—rising as Forerunner, or descending a second time to judge the world in righteousness. In His shame, despised and spit upon, or in His Glory, adored and beloved—with the thorns about His brow and the nails piercing His hands, or with the keys of death and Hell swinging at His girdle—view Him as you will, and where you will, and when you will—“He is altogether lovely.”**

**Under all aspects, and in all offices and in relations, at all times and all seasons, under all circumstances and conditions, anywhere, everywhere, “He is altogether lovely.” Nor is He in any degree unlovely. The commendation forbids the idea! If He is “altogether lovely,” where could you find room for deformity? When the artist painted Alexander, he laid the monarch’s finger on an unsightly scar. But there are no scars to conceal when you portray the countenance of Immanuel!**

**We say of our country—and who among us will not say it?—“With all her faults we love her still.” But we love Jesus and find no strain put upon our hearts—for trace of fault He has none. There is no need of apologies for Jesus, no excuses are required for Him. But what is that I see upon His shoulder? It is a hard, rough Cross. And if I follow Him I must carry that Cross for His sake. Is not that Cross unsightly? Oh, no! He is altogether lovely, Cross and all. Whatever it may involve to be a Christian, we count even the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt!**

**The world will honor a half Christ, but a whole Christ it will not acknowledge. The bat’s-eyed Socinian says, “I admire the *man* Christ, but I will not adore Jesus the God.” To him the eternal Word is but half lovely, if lovely at all. Some will have Christ the Exemplar, but they will not accept Him as the vicarious Sacrifice for sin, the Substitute for sinners. Many will have Christ in silver slippers—my lord archbishop’s religion—but they would not listen to the Gospel from a poor gracious Methodist, or think it worth their while to join the unlettered throng whose devout songs rise from the village green.**

**Alas, how much we see of crosses of gold and ivory, but how little do men love the lowly Cross of Jesus! Brethren, we think Jesus “altogether lovely” even in poverty, or when hanging naked on the Cross, deserted and condemned. We see unspeakable beauty in Jesus in the grave, all fair with the pallor of death. Jesus bruised as to His heel by the old serpent is yet comely. His love to us makes Him evermore “white and ruddy” to our eyes. We adore Him anywhere and everywhere, and in any place, for we know that this same Christ whose heel is bruised breaks also the serpent’s head, and He who was naked for our sakes, is now arrayed in Glory!**

**We know that the Despised and Rejected is also King of kings, and Lord of lords, the “Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” “Yes, He is altogether lovely.” There are no flaws in Him. The text intends us to know that Jesus is lovely in the highest degree—not lovely positively and then failing comparatively, but lovely superlatively, in the highest possible sense. But I leave this for your hearts to enlarge upon. I will close this point by saying every child of God acknowledges that Christ Jesus is lovely altogether to the whole of himself.**

**He is lovely to my judgment. But many things are so, and yet are not lovely to my affections. I know them to be right, and yet they are not pleasant—but Jesus is as lovely to my heart as to my head, as dear as He is good. He is lovely to my hopes—are they not all *in* Him? Is not this my expectation—to see Him as He is? But He is lovely to my memory, too—did He not pluck me out of the net? Lovely to all my powers and all my passions, my faculties and feelings. As David puts it, “My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God”—the whole of the man seeking after the whole of the Savior.**

**The whole Savior sweet and inexpressibly precious to the man’s entire being. May it be so with you and with me. But is it so? Do you not set up idols in your hearts? Men of God, do you not need to take the scourge of small cords, and purge the temple of your souls this morning? Are there not buyers and sellers where Christ, alone, ought to be? Oh, to love Him wholly, and to love Him only—so that we have no eyes for other beauty, no heart for other loveliness since He fills our souls—and is to us “altogether lovely.”**

3. **The third characteristic of the text is that to which I desire to draw the most attention, and that is *ardent devotion*. I called the text a live coal from off the altar and surely it is so. If it should drop into our hearts to set them ablaze, it would be an unspeakable mercy. Ardent devotion flames from this sentence. It is the language of one who feels that no emotion is too deep when Jesus moves the heart. Do any chide you and say you think too much of your religion? It cannot be, it cannot be! If the zeal of God’s House should eat us up until we had no existence except for the Lord’s Glory, we should not have gone too far!**

**If there is corresponding knowledge to balance it, there cannot be too much of zeal for God. The utterance is that of one whose heart is like a furnace, of which love is the fire. “He is altogether lovely”—it is the exclamation of one who feels that no language is too strong to commend the Lord. The spouse looked through the Hebrew tongue to find an intense expression, and our translators ransacked the English language for a forcible word—and they have put it in the most weighty way—“He is altogether lovely.”**

**There is no fear of exaggeration when you speak of Christ—hyperboles are only sober truth when we depict His excellence. We have heard of a portrait painter who owed his popularity to the fact that he never painted truthfully, but always gave a flatteringly touch or two. Here is one who would defy his art, for it is impossible to flatter Jesus. Lay on, you men of eloquence—spare no colors, you shall never depict Him too magnificently! Bring forth your harps, you seraphs! Sing aloud, you blood-washed ones! All your praises fall short of the Glory which is due Him. It is the language of one who feels that no service would be too great to render to the Lord.**

**I wish we felt as the Apostles and martyrs and holy men of old did—that Jesus Christ ought to be served at the highest and richest rate. We do little, very little—what if I had said we do next to nothing for our dear Lord and Master nowadays? The love of Christ does not constrain us as it should. But those of old bore poverty and dared reproach, marched weary leagues, passed tempestuous seas, bore perils of robbers and of cruel men to plant the Cross in lands where as yet Jesus was not known.**

**Feats like these nowadays could not be expected of men. And yet they were performed as daily matters of commonplace by the Christians of the earliest times. Is Christ less lovely, or is His Church less loyal? Would God she estimated Him at His right rate, for then she would return to her former mode of service. Brethren, we want to feel, and we *shall* feel, if this text is deeply engraved on our hearts, that no gift is too great for Christ—though we give Him all we have, and consecrate to Him all our time and ability, or sacrifice our very lives to Him! No suffering is too great to bear for the sake of the Crucified, and it is a great joy to be reproached for Christ’s sake. “He is altogether lovely.”**

**Then, my Soul, I charge you think nothing hard to which He calls you, nothing sharp which He bids you endure. As the knight of the olden time consecrated himself to the Crusade and wore the red Cross on his arm, fearing not to meet death at the hands of the Infidel if he might be thought a soldier of the Lord, so we, too, would face all foes for Jesus’ sake. We want the chivalrous spirit once again in the Church of God. A new crusade gladly would I preach! Had I the tongue of such an one as the old hermit to move all Christendom, I would say, “This day Christ, the altogether Lovely One, is dishonored—can you endure it?**

**“This day idols stand where He should be and men adore them—lovers of Jesus, can you tolerate it? This day Juggernaut rides through the streets on his bloody way! This day God’s Christ is still unknown to millions and the precious blood cleanses not the nations—how long will you have it so? We, in England, with ten thousand Christian hearts, and as many tongues endowed with eloquence, and purses weighted with gold—shall we refuse our gifts, withhold our witness, and suffer the Lord to be dishonored?**

**“The Church is doing next to nothing for her great Lord! She falls short both of her duty and of the grim need of a perishing world. O for a flash of the celestial fire! Oh, when shall the Spirit’s energy visit us again? When shall men put down their selfishness and seek only Christ? When shall they leave their strifes about trifles to rally round His Cross? When shall we end the glorification of ourselves, and begin to make Him glorious, even to the world’s end? God help us in this matter, and kindle in our hearts the old consuming heart-inflaming fire, which shall make men see that Jesus is All in All to us.”**

II. **Thus I have shown you the characteristics of the text, and now I desire to USE IT IN THREE WAYS FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES. As time flies, we must use it briefly. The first word is to you Christians. Here is very *sweet instruction*. The Lord Jesus “is altogether lovely.” Then if I want to be lovely, I must be like He, and the model for me as a Christian is Christ.**

**Have you ever noticed how badly boys write at the bottom of the pages in their copy-books? There is the copy at the top. And in the first line they look at that. In the second line they copy their own imitation. In the third line, they copy their imitation of their imitation, and so the writing grows worse and worse as it descends the page. Now, the Apostles followed Christ. The first fathers imitated the Apostles. The next fathers copied the first fathers, and so the standard of holiness fell dreadfully.**

**And now we are too apt to follow the very lees and dregs of Christianity and we think if we are about as good as our poor, imperfect ministers or leaders in the Church, that we shall do well and deserve praise. But now, my Brethren, cover up the mere copies and imitations and live by the first line. Copy Jesus! “He is altogether lovely.” And if you can write by the first line, you will write by the true and best model in the world. We want to have Christ’s zeal, but we must balance it with His prudence and discretion. We must seek to have Christ’s love to God, and we must feel His love to men, His forgiveness of injury, His gentleness of speech, His incorruptible truthfulness, His meekness and lowliness, His utter unselfishness—His entire consecration to His Father’s business.**

**O that we had all this, for depend upon it, whatever other pattern we select, we have made a mistake! We are not following the true classic model of the Christian artist. Our master Model is the “altogether lovely” One. How sweet it is to think of our Lord in the double aspect as our Exemplar and our Savior! The laver which stood in the temple was made of brass—in this the priests washed their feet whenever they offered sacrifices. So does Christ purify us from sin. But the tradition is that this laver was made of very bright brass, and acted as a mirror, so that as often as the priests came to it they could see their own spots in it. Oh, when I come to my Lord Jesus, not only do I get rid of my sins as to their guilt, but I see my spots in the light of His perfect Character, and I am humbled and taught to follow after holiness.**

**The second use to which we would put the verse is this—here is a very *gentle rebuke* to some of you. Though very gentle, I beseech you to let it sink deep into your hearts. You do not see the lowliness of Christ, yet “He is altogether lovely.” Now, I will not say one hard word, but I will tell you sorrowfully what pitiable creatures you are. I hear enchanting music, which seems more a thing of Heaven than of earth—it is one of Handel’s half-inspired oratorios. Yonder sits a man, who says, “I hear nothing to commend.”**

**He has not the power to perceive the linked sweetnesses, the delicious harmonies of sounds. Do you blame him? No, but you who have an ear for music, say, “How I pity him—he misses half the joy of life!” Here, again, is a glorious landscape, hills and valleys, and flowing rivers, expansive lakes and undulating meadows. I bring to the point of view a friend, whom I would gratify, and I say to him, “Is not that a charming scene?” Turning his head to me, he says, “I see nothing.” I perceive that he cannot enjoy what is so delightful to me. He has some little sight, but he sees only what is very near, and he is blind to all beyond. Now, do I blame him?**

**Or if he proceeds to argue with me, and say, “You are very foolish to be so enthusiastic about a non-existent landscape—it is merely your excitement,” shall I argue with him? Shall I be angry until him? No, but I shed a tear, and whisper to myself, “Great are the losses of the blind.” Now, you who have never heard music in the name of Jesus, you are to be greatly pitied, for your loss is heavy. You who never saw beauty in Jesus and who never will forever—you need all our tears. It is Hell enough not to love Christ! It is the lowest abyss of Tartarus, and its fiercest flame, not to be enamored of the Christ of God.**

**There is no Heaven that is more Heaven than to love Christ and to be like He is. And there is no Hell that is more Hell than to be unlike Christ and not to want to be like He is—but even to be averse to the infinite perfections of the “Altogether Lovely.” The Lord open those blind eyes of yours, and unstop those deaf ears, and give you the new and spiritual life, and then will you join in saying, “Yes, He is altogether lovely.” The last use of the text is that of *tender attractiveness***. “Yes, He is altogether lovely.” Where are you this morning, you who are convicted of sin and want a Savior, where have you crept to? Are you hidden away where my eyes cannot reach you?

At any rate, let this sweet thought reach you. You need not be afraid to come to Jesus, for “He is altogether lovely.” It does not say He is altogether terrible—that is your misconception of Him. It does not say He is somewhat lovely, and sometimes willing to receive a certain sort of sinner. But, “He is altogether lovely,” and therefore He is always ready to welcome to Himself the vilest of the vile. Think of His name. It is Jesus, the Savior. Is not this lovely? Think of His work. He is come to seek and to save that which was lost. This is His occupation. Is not that lovely? Think of what He has done. He has redeemed our souls with His blood. Is not that lovely?

Think of what He is doing. He is pleading before the Throne of God for sinners! Think of what He is giving at this moment—He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. Is not this lovely? Under every aspect Christ Jesus is attractive to sinners who need Him. Come, then! Come and welcome! There is nothing to keep you away, there is everything to bid you come!

May this very Sunday in which I have preached Christ, and lifted Him up, be the day in which you shall be drawn to Him, never again to leave Him, but to be His forever and forever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— [Song 5](tw://bible.*?id=22.5.0|_AUTODETECT_|).

MR. SPURGEON begs earnestly to thank a friend, who desires to be anonymous, for £500 towards buildings for the Pastors’ College, to commemorate the thousandth Sermon, as also Mr. Thomas Ness for £10, and a Sermon-reader for a guinea. This last donor believes that at least a thousand readers might send a guinea each at once, to celebrate the occasion, and to aid in erecting rooms in which preachers would be trained, whose theme would be the Gospel of Jesus. Mr. Spurgeon is thankful for the timely aid. Some £3,000 more will probably be required for the buildings.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

THE BEST BELOVED  
NO. 1446

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “Yes, He is altogether lovely.”  
Song of Solomon 5:16.

No words can ever express the gratitude we owe to Him who loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins! The love of Jesus is unutterably precious and worthy of daily praise. No songs can ever fitly celebrate the triumphs of that salvation which He worked single-handedly on our behalf—the work of Jesus is glorious beyond comparison and all the harps of angels fall short of its worthy honor. Yet I believe and my heart prompts me to say so, that the highest praise of every ransomed soul and of the entire Christian Church should be offered to the blessed Person of Jesus Christ, our adorable Lord. The love of His heart is excelled by the heart which gave forth that love and the wonders of His hands are outdone by the hands, themselves, which worked those Divine miracles of Grace.

We ought to bless Him for what He has done for us as Mediator in the place of humble service under the Law and for what He suffered for us as Substitute on the altar of sacrifice from before the foundation of the world—and for what He is doing for us as Advocate in the place of highest honor at the right hand of the Majesty on high! But still, the best thing about Christ is Christ, Himself! We prize Him, but we worship Him! His gifts are valued, but He, Himself, is adored! While we contemplate, with mingled feelings of awe, admiration and thankfulness, His Atonement, His Resurrection, His Glory in Heaven and His Second Coming, still, it is Christ, Himself, stupendous in His dignity as the Son of God and superbly beautiful as the Son of Man who sheds an incomparable charm on all those wonderful achievements wherein His might and His merit, His goodness and His Grace appear so conspicuous!

For Him let our choicest spices be reserved and to Him let our sweetest anthems be raised. Our choicest ointment must be poured upon His head and for Him, alone, our most costly alabaster boxes must be broken. “He is altogether lovely.” Not only is His teaching attractive, His doctrine persuasive, His life irreproachable, His Character enchanting and His work a self-denying labor for the common good of all His people, but He, Himself, is altogether lovely! I suppose at first we shall always begin to love Him because He first loved us and even to the last His love to us will always be the strongest motive of our affection towards Him. But there ought to be added to this another reason less connected with ourselves and more entirely arising out of His own superlative excellence—we ought to love Him because He is lovely and deserves to be loved!

The time should come and with some of us it has come, when we can heartily say, “We love Him because we cannot help it, for His allconquering loveliness has quite ravished our hearts.” Surely it is but an

unripe fruit to love Him merely for the benefits which we have received at His hands. It is a fruit of Grace, but it is not of the ripest flavor. There are other fruits, both new and old, which we have laid up for You, O our Beloved, and some of them have a daintier taste. There is a sweet and mellow fruit which can only be brought forth by the summer sun of fellowship—love because of the Redeemer’s intrinsic goodness and personal sweetness. Oh that we might love our Lord for His own sake! Love Him because He is so supremely beautiful that a glimpse of Him has won our hearts and made Him dearer to our eyes than light! Oh that all true and faithful disciples of our beloved Lord would press forward towards that state of affection and never rest till they reach it!

If any of you have not reached it, you need not, therefore, doubt your own safety, for whatever the reason why you love Jesus—if you love Him at all—it is a sure pledge and token that He loves you and that you are saved in Him with an everlasting salvation! Still, covet earnestly the best gifts and rise to the highest degree of devotion. Love as the purest of the saints have loved! Love as John the Apostle loved, for your Lord exceeds all the loving homage you can pay to Him. Love His Person. Love Him for He is better than all that He has done or given! And as from Himself all blessings flow, so back to Himself should all love return!

Our text tells us that Christ is altogether lovely. What a wealth of thought and feeling is contained in that exclamation! I am embarrassed to know how to preach on such a subject and half inclined to wish it had not been laid so much upon my heart. What, I pray you, what is loveliness? To discern it is one thing, but it is quite another thing to describe it! There is not one among us but knows how to appreciate beauty and to be enamored by its attractions. But how many here could tell us what it is? Stand up, my Brother, and define it! Perhaps while you were sitting down you thought you could easily tell the tale, but now you are on your feet you find that it is not quite so easy to clothe in words the thoughts which floated through your brain.

What is beauty? Cold-blooded word-mongers answer fitness. And certainly there is fitness in all loveliness. But do not tell me that beauty is mere fitness, for I have seen a world of fitness in this world which, nevertheless, seemed to me to be inexpressibly ugly and unlovable. A wise man tells me that beauty is proportion. But neither is this a full description by many a league. No doubt it is desirable that the features should be well balanced—the eyes should be fitly set, no one feature should be exaggerated and none should be dwarfed—

*“In nature what affects our hearts,  
Is not the exactness of peculiar parts:  
‘Tis not a lip nor eye we beauty call,  
But the joint force and full result of all.”*

Harmony is beauty. Yet I have seen the chiseled marble fashioned with skillful art into a well-near perfect form which did not, could not, impress me with a sense of loveliness.

There stands in one of the halls of the Vatican a statue of Antinous. Every feature in that statue is perfect in itself and in complete harmony with all the rest. You could not find the slightest fault with eye or nose or mouth. It is, indeed, as much the ideal of male beauty as the Venus is of female charms, yet no one could ever have been enchanted with the statue, or have felt affection to the form which it represents. There is no expression whatever in the features! Everything is so adjusted and proportioned that you need a divergence to relieve you. The materialism is so carefully measured out that there needs a stir, a break in the harmony, to give it at least some semblance of a soul! Beauty, then, consists not in mere harmony, nor in balancing the features.

Loveliness surely is attractiveness. Yes, but that is another way of saying you do not know what it is. It is a something that attracts you and compels you to exclaim, “Nothing under Heaven does allure so strongly!” We feel its power; we become its slaves; but we cannot write with pen of cold steel, nor could we write even with a pen of lightning, a description of what it is. How, then, can I—enamored, entranced, enraptured as I am with Him whom my soul loves—how can I speak of Him? He is altogether lovely! Where shall I find words, terms, expressions that shall fitly set Him forth? Unless the Eternal Spirit shall raise me up out of myself, I must forever be incapable of setting forth the Well-Beloved!

Besides, were I baffled by nothing else, there is this—that the beauty of Christ is mysterious. It surpasses all the comeliness of human form. He may have had great beauty according to the flesh. That I cannot tell, but I should imagine that such a perfect soul as His must have inhabited a perfectly molded body. Never yet did you or I gaze with satisfaction upon the work of any painter who has tried to picture our Lord Jesus Christ. We have not blamed the great masters, but we have felt that the effort surpassed their powers. How could they photograph the sun? The loftiest conceptions of great artists, in this case, fall far short of the mark.

When the brightness of the Father’s Glory is the subject, the canvas glows in vain. Art sits at her easel and produces diligently many a draft of the sacred features, but they are all failures and they must be. Who shall ever depict Immanuel, God-With-Us? I suppose that, by-and-by, when our Lord had entered upon His active life and encountered its struggles, His youthful beauty was marred with lines of sadness and sorrow. Still His courage so overshadowed His cares—the mercy He showed so surpassed the misery He shared and the Grace He dispensed so exceeded the griefs that He carried that a halo of real Glory must always have shone around His brow!

His Countenance must still have been lovely even when surrounded with the clouds of care and grief. How can we describe the marred visage? It is a great mystery, but a sure fact that in our Lord’s marred Countenance His beauty is best seen. Anguish gave Him a loveliness which otherwise He had not reached. His passion put the finishing touches upon His unrivalled loveliness. But, Brothers and Sisters, I am not about to speak of Christ’s loveliness after the flesh, for we now, after the flesh, know Him no more. It is His moral and spiritual beauty of which the spouse in the song most sweetly says, “Yes, He is altogether lovely.” The loveliness which the eye dotes on is mere varnish when compared with that which dwells in virtue and holiness! The worm will devour the loveliness of skin and flesh, but a lovely character will endure forever.

I. THIS IS RARE PRAISE. Let that be our first head. This is rare praise. What if I say it is unique? For of no other being could it be said, “Yes, he is altogether lovely.” It means, first, that all that is in Him is lovely, perfectly lovely. There is no point in our Lord Jesus that you could improve. To paint the rose were to spoil its ruddy hue. To tint the lily, for He is lily as well as rose, were to mar its whiteness. Each virtue in our Lord is there in a state of absolute perfection— it could not be more fully developed. If you were able to conceive of each virtue at its ripest stage it would be found in Him. In the matter of transparent ingenuousness and sterling honesty, did ever man speak or act so truthfully as He?

Ask, on the other hand, for sympathizing tenderness and love—was ever any so gentle as Jesus? Do you want reverence to God? How He bows before the Father! Do you want boldness before men? How He beards the Pharisees! You could not better anything which you find in Jesus. Wherever you shall cast your eyes, they may rest with satisfaction, for the best of the best of the best is to be seen in Him! He is altogether lovely at every separate point, so that the spouse, when she began with His head, descended to His feet and then lifting her eyes upward, again, upon a return voyage of delight, she looked into His Countenance and summed up all that she had seen in this one sentence, “He is altogether lovely.” This is rare praise!

And He is all that is lovely. In each one of His people you will find something that is lovely—in one there is faith, in another abounding love—in one tenderness, in another courage. But you do not find all good things in any one saint—at least not all of them in full perfection. But you find all virtues in Jesus and each one of them at its best! If you would take the best quality of one saint and the best quality of another—yes, the best out of each and all the myriads of His people—you would find no Grace or goodness among them which Jesus does not possess in the fullest degree and in the highest perfection! He combines all the virtues and gives them all a sweetness over and beyond themselves.

In flowers you have a separate beauty belonging to each. No one flower is just like another—each one blushes with its own loveliness. But in our Lord these separate and distinct beauties are found united in one. Christ is the flower in which all the beauties of the garden of perfection are bound up. Each gem has its own radiance—the diamond is not like the ruby, nor the ruby like the emerald—but Christ is that ring in which you have sapphire, ruby, diamond, emerald set in choice order, so that each one heightens the other’s brilliance. Look not for anything lovely out of Jesus, for He has all the loveliness! All perfections are in Him making up one consummate perfection—and all the loveliness which is to be seen elsewhere is but a reflection of His own unrivalled charms.

In Jesus Christ—this, moreover, is rare praise again—there is nothing that is unlovely. You have a friend whom you greatly admire and fondly esteem, of whom, nevertheless, I doubt not you have often said to yourself in an undertone, “I wish I could take away a little of the rough edge of his manners here and there.” You never thought that of Christ! You have observed of one man that he is so bold as to be sometimes rude and of another that he is so bland and amiable that he is apt to be effeminate. You have said, “That sweetness of his is exceedingly good, but I wish that it were qualified with sterner virtues.” But there is nothing to tone down or alter in our Divine Lord. He is altogether lovely!

Have you not, sometimes, in describing a friend, been obliged to forget, or omit, some rather prominent characteristic when you wished to make a favorable impression? You have had to paint him as the artist once painted Oliver Cromwell—the great wart over the eyebrow was purposely left out of the portrait. Cromwell, you know, said, “Paint me as I am, or not at all.” We have, however, often felt that it was kind to leave out the warts when we were talking of those we esteemed and to whom we would pay a graceful tribute. But there is nothing to leave out in Christ, nothing to hold back, or to guard, or to extenuate! In Him is nothing redundant, nothing overgrown. He is altogether lovely.

You never need put the finger over the scar in His case, as Apelles did when he painted his hero. No, tell it all out—reveal the details of His private life and secret thoughts—they need no concealment! Lay bare the very heart of Christ, for that is the essence of love and loveliness! Speak of His death-wounds, for in His scars there is more beauty than in the uninjured comeliness of another. And even when He lies dead in the tomb He is more comely than the immortal angels of God at their best estate! Nothing about our Lord needs to be concealed! Even His Cross, at which His enemies stumble, is to be daily proclaimed and it will be seen to be one of His choicest beauties.

Frequently, too, in commending a friend whom you highly appreciated, you have been prone to ask for consideration of his position and to make excuse for blemishes which you would gladly persuade us are less actual than apparent. You have remarked how admirably he acts considering his surroundings. Conscious that someone would hint at an imperfection, you have anticipated the current of conversation by alluding to the circumstances which rendered it so difficult for your friend to act commendably. You have felt the need of showing that others influenced him, or that infirmity restrained him. Did you ever feel inclined to apologize for Christ? Did He not always stand unbending beneath life’s pressure—upright and unmoved amidst the storms and tempests of an evil world?

The vilest calumnies have been uttered against Him in the age just past which produced creatures similar to Thomas Paine, but they never required an answer! And as for the more refined attacks of our modern skepticism, they are, for the most part, unworthy, even, of contempt! They fall beneath the glance of the Truth of God, withered by the glance of the eye of honesty. We never feel concerned to vindicate the Character of Jesus—we know it to be safe against all comers. No man has been able to conjure up an accusation against Jesus. They seek false witnesses, but their testimony agrees not together. The sharp arrows of slander fall blunted from the shield of His perfectness. Oh, no—He is altogether lovely in this sense—that there is nothing whatever in Him that is not lovely! You may look and look and look again, but there is nothing in Him that will not bear scrutiny, world without end!

Taking the Lord Jesus Christ as a whole—this is what our text intends to tell us—He is inexpressibly lovely, altogether lovely! The words are packed as tightly as they can be, but the meaning is greater than the words. Some translate the passage, “He is all desires,” and it is a good translation, too, and contains a grand truth. Christ is so lovely that all you can desire of loveliness is in Him and even if you were to sit down and task your imagination and burden your understanding to contrive, to invent, to fashion the ideal of something that should be inimitable—yes, (to utter a paradox)—if you could labor to conceive something which should be inconceivably lovely, yet you would not reach to the perfection of Christ Jesus!

He is above, not only all we think, but all we dream. Do you believe this? Dear Hearers, do you think of Jesus in this fashion? We speak what we know and testify what we have seen. But no man among you will receive our witness until he can say, “I, also, have seen Him, and having seen Him, I set to my seal that He is altogether lovely.”

II. And now, secondly, as this is rare praise, so likewise IT IS PERPETUAL PRAISE. You may say of Christ whenever you look at Him, “Yes, He is altogether lovely.” He always was so. As God over all, He is blessed forever, Amen. When, in addition to His Godhead, He assumed our mortal clay, was He not inimitably lovely then? The Baby in Bethlehem was the most beautiful sight that ever the world beheld. No fairer flower ever bloomed in the garden of creation than the mind of that Youth of Nazareth gradually unfolding, as He “grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the Grace of God was upon Him.”

All the while He lived on earth, what moral perfections, what noble qualities, what spiritual charms were about His sacred Person! His life among men is a succession of charming pictures and He was lovely in His bitter passion, when as the thick darkness overshadowed His soul He prayed, in an agony of desire, “Not My will, but Yours, be done.” The bloody sweat did not disfigure Him, but rather adorned Him! And oh, was He not lovely when He died? Without resentment He interceded for His murderers. His patience, His self-possession, His piety as “the faithful Martyr,” have fixed as the meridian of time the hour when He said, “It is finished,” and “bowed His head,” and “cried with a loud voice, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.”

He is lovely in His Resurrection from the dead—beyond description lovely! Not a word of accusation did He utter against His cruel persecutors, though He had risen clothed with all power in Heaven and in earth! With such tender sympathy did He make Himself known to His sorrowing disciples that, despite the waywardness of their unbelief, their hearts’ instinct told them it was “the same Jesus.” He is altogether lovely. He will be lovely when He comes with solemn pomp and sound of trumpet—with escort of mighty angels—and brings all His saints who have departed with Him and calls up those that are alive and remain on the earth till His advent, to meet Him in the air.

Oh, how lovely He will appear to the two throngs who will presently join in one company! How admirable will His appearance be! How eyes, ears, hearts and voices will greet Him! With what unanimity the host redeemed by blood will account their highest acclamations as a trivial tribute to His honor and glory! “He is altogether lovely.” Yes, and He shall be lovely forever and ever when your eyes and mine shall eternally find their Heaven in beholding Him. “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever,” is always worthy of this word of praise—“altogether lovely.” Let us retrace our steps for a minute. The more we study the four Gospels, the more charmed we are with the Gospel—for as a modern author has well said— “The Gospels, like the Gospel, are most Divine because they are most human.”

As followers of Jesus, rank yourselves with those men who companied with Him all the time that He went in and out among them and you shall find Him lovely in all conditions. Lovely when He talks to a leper and touches and heals Him; lovely by the bedside when He takes the feverstricken patient by the hand and heals her; lovely by the wayside, when He greets the blind beggar, puts His finger on his eyes and bids him see. He is lovely when He stands on the sinking vessel and rebukes the waves; lovely when He meets the bier and rekindles the life that had expired; lovely when He visits the mourners, goes with the sisters of Bethany to the newly-made grave and weeps, and groans, and—majestically lovely—bids the dead come forth!

Lovely is He when He rides through the streets of Jerusalem upon a colt, the foal of an ass. Oh, had we been there, we would have plucked the palm branches and we would have taken off our garments to strew the way! Hosanna, lovely Prince of Peace! But He was just as lovely when He came from the garden with His face all smeared with bloody sweat. He was just as lovely when they said, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” He was just as lovely and, if possible, more so, when down those sacred cheeks there dripped the cursed spit from the rough soldiers’ mouths—yes, and loveliest, to my eyes, loveliest of all, when mangled, wounded, fainting, bruised, dying, He said, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” uttering a plaintive cry of utmost grief from the felon’s gallows where He died. Yes, view Him where you will, in any place, is He not—I speak to you who know Him, and not to those who never saw Him with the eyes of faith—is He not, in the night and in the day, on the sea and on the land, on earth and in Heaven, altogether lovely?

He is lovely in all His offices! What an entrancing sight to see the King in His beauty, with His diadem upon His head as He now sits in yonder world of brightness! How charming to view Him as a Priest, with the Urim and Thummim, wearing the names of His people bejeweled on His breastplate! And what a vision of simple beauty to see Him as a Prophet teaching His people in touching parables of homely interest, of whom they said, “Never man spoke like this Man!” The very tones of His voice and the glance of His eyes made His eloquence so supreme that it enthralled men’s hearts! Yes, He is lovely, altogether lovely in any and every Character. We know not which best befits Him, the highest or the lowest positions. Let Him be what He may—Lamb or Shepherd, Brother or King, Savior or Master, Foot-Washer or Lord—in every relation He is altogether lovely!

Get a view of Him, my Brothers and Sisters, from any point and see whether He is not lovely. Do you remember the first sight you ever had of Him? It was on a day when your eyes were red with weeping over sin and you expected to see the Lord dressed in anger coming forth to destroy you! Oh, it was the happiest sight I ever saw when I beheld my sins rolling into His sepulcher and, when looking up, I beheld Him, my Substitute bleeding on the tree! Altogether lovely was He that day! Since then, Providence has given us a varied experience and taken us to different points of view that we might look at Christ and see Him under many aspects. We look at statues from several standpoints if we would criticize them. A great many in London are hideous from all points of view—others are very well if you look at them this way, but if you go over yonder and look from another point the artist appears to have utterly failed.

Now, Beloved, look at Jesus from any point you like and He is at His best from each and every corner! You have been in prosperity—God multiplied your children and blessed your basket and your store—was Jesus lovely then? Assuredly He was the light of your delights! Nothing He had given you vied with Himself. He rose in your hearts superior to His own best gifts. But you tell me that you have been very sick and you have lost one after another of your dear ones. Your means have been reduced; you have come down in the world—say, then, is Jesus lovely now? I know that you will reply, “Yes, more than ever is Christ delightful in my eyes.” Well, you have had very happy times and you have been on the mount of hallowed friendship. The other Sunday morning many of us were up there and thought, like Peter, that we should like to stay there forever—and is not Jesus lovely when He is transfigured and we are with Him?

Yes, but at another time you are down in the depths with Jonah, at the bottom of the sea. Is not Christ lovely then, too? Yes, even there He hears our prayers out of His holy temple and brings us up from the deep abyss! We shall soon lie dying. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, what brave talk God’s people have often given us about their Lord when they have been on the edge of the grave! That seems to be a time when the Well-Beloved takes the veil off His face altogether and sits by the bedside and lets His children look into His face and see Him as He is. I guarantee you the saints forget the ghastliness of death when their hearts are ravished with the loveliness of Christ!

Yes, up to this point Jesus has been lovely. And now, let us add that He will always be so. You know there are persons whom you account beautiful when you are young, but when you grow older in years, riper in judgment and more refined in taste, you meet with others who look far more beautiful. Now, what do you think of your Lord? Have you met with anyone, in fact or in fable, more beautiful than He? You thought Him charming when you were but a baby in Grace. What do you think of Him now? Taste, you know, grows and develops with education—an article of art which fascinated you years ago has no longer any charms for you because your taste is raised. Has your spiritual taste outgrown your Lord’s beauties?

Come, Brothers and Sisters, does Christ go down as you learn the Truth of God more exactly and acquaint yourself more fully with Him? Oh no! You prize Him a thousand times more today than you did when the first impression of His goodness was formed in your mind! Some things which look very lovely at a distance lose their loveliness when you get near to them—but is it not true, (I am sure it is), that the nearer you get to Christ the lovelier He is? Some things are only beautiful in your eyes for their novelty—you admire them when you have seen them once—if you were to see them a dozen times you would not care much about them. What do you say about my Master? Is it not true that the more you see Him, the more you know Him and the more familiar your communion with Him, the more He rises in your esteem? I know it is so and well, therefore, did the spouse say, “He is altogether lovely.”

Christ is altogether lovely in this respect—that when men reproach Him and rail at Him, He is often all the lovelier in His people’s eyes. I guarantee you Christ has been better known by the Burnside in Scotland by His covenanting people than ever He has been seen under the roof of cathedral architecture! Away there in lonely glens, amid the mosses and the hills, where Covenanters met for fear of Claverhouse and his dragoons, the Lord Jesus has shone forth like the sun in his strength! We have, nowadays, to be satisfied with His moonlight face, but in persecuting days His children have seen His sun face, and oh, how glad they have been! Hear how the saints sing in prison! Listen to their charming notes, even on the rack, when the glory of His Presence fills their souls with Heaven on earth and makes them defy the torments of the flesh!

The Lord Jesus is more lovely to the soul that can bear reproach for Him than He is to any other. Put the Cross on His back if you will, but we love Him all the better for that! Nail up His hands, but we love Him all the better for that! Now fasten His feet, yes, but our soul melts with love to Him and she feels new reasons for loving Him when she beholds the nails! Now stand around the Cross, you worldlings, and mock Him if you will. Taunt and jest, jeer and jibe—these do but make us love better the great and glorious One who “made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a Servant, and being found in fashion as a Man, humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.”

Beloved, you shall keep on looking at Christ from all these points of view till you get to Heaven and each time you shall be more enamored of Him! When you reach the celestial City and see Him face to face, then shall you say, “The half has not been told us,” but even here below Christ is altogether lovely to His people.

III. I leave that head just to notice, in the third place, that though this praise is rare praise and perpetual praise, yet IT IS ALSO TOTALLY INSUFFICIENT PRAISE. Do you say that He is altogether lovely? It is not enough! It is not a thousandth part enough! No tongue of man or tongue of angel can ever set forth His unutterable beauties! “Oh,” you say, “but it is a great word, though short—very full of meaning though soon spoken— ‘altogether lovely.’” I tell you it is a poor word. It is a word of despair! It is a word which the spouse uttered because she had been trying to describe her Lord and she could not do it—and so she put this down in very desperation, as much as to say—“There, the task is too great for me. I will end it. This is all I can say. ‘Yes, He is altogether lovely.’”

I am sure John Berridge was right when He said *—  
“Living tongues are dumb at best,  
We must die to speak of Christ.”*

Brothers and Sisters, the praise of the text is insufficient praise, I know, because it is praise given by one who had never seen Him in His Glory. It is Old Testament praise, this, that He is altogether lovely—praise uttered upon report rather than upon actual view of Him. Truly, I know not how to say it better, but I shall know one day! Till then I will speak His praise as best I can, though it falls far short of His infinite excellence. Our text is cloth of gold, but it is not fit for our Beloved to put the sole of His feet upon. He deserves better than this, for this is only the praise of a Church that had not seen Him die and had not seen Him rise—and had not seen Him in splendor at the Divine right hand!

“Well,” you say, “try if you can, to do better.” No, I will not, because if I did praise Him better, the style would not last long, for He is coming quickly and the best thing the best speaker could ever say of Him will be put out of date by the majesty of His appearing! His chariot is waiting at His door right now and He may soon come forth from His secret chambers and be among us and oh, the Glory—oh the Glory! Paul, you know, stole a glance through the lattices one day when he was caught up into the third Heaven. Somebody said to me, “I wonder why Paul did not tell us what he saw?” Yes, but what he saw he might not tell and the words he heard were words which it were not lawful for a man to utter and yet live among this evil generation. We shall hear those words, ourselves, soon, and see those sights not many days hence, so let it stand as it does, “He is altogether lovely.”

But when you have thus summed up all that our poor tongues can express, you must not say, “Now we have described Him.” Oh no, Sirs, you have but held a candle to this glorious sun—He is such an One as thoughts cannot compass, much less, language describe! I leave this point with the reflection that God intends to describe Him and set Him forth one day. He is waiting patiently, for long-suffering is part of Christ’s Character and God is setting forth the long-suffering of Christ in the patient waiting of these 1,800 years. But the day shall presently dawn and usher in the everlasting age when Christ shall be better seen, for every eye shall see Him and every tongue confess that He is Lord! The whole earth will, one day, be sweet with the praise of Jesus!

Earth, did I say? This alabaster box of Christ’s sweetness has too much fragrance in it for the world to keep it all to itself! The sweetness of our Lord’s Person will rise above the stars and perfume worlds unknown! It will fill Heaven itself! Eternity shall be occupied with declaring the praises of Jesus! Seraphs shall sing of it; angels shall harp it; the redeemed shall declare it! He is altogether lovely! The cycles of eternity, as they revolve, shall only confirm the statement of the blood-redeemed that He is altogether lovely! O that the day were come when we shall bow with them and sing with them! Wait a little while and be not weary and you shall be Home—and then you shall know that I spoke the truth when I said that this was insufficient praise! Earth is too narrow to contain Him! Heaven is too little to hold Him! Eternity, itself, too short for the utterance of all His praises!

IV. So I close with this last thought, which may God bless for practical uses. This praise is VERY SUGGESTIVE. If Christ is altogether lovely it suggests a question. Suppose I never saw His loveliness? Suppose that in this house there should be souls that never saw anything in Christ to make them love Him? If you were to go to some remote island where beauty consisted in having one eye, a twisted mouth and a sea-green complexion, you would say, “Those people are strange beings.” Such are the people of this world! Spiritual beauty is not appreciated by them! This world appreciates the man who makes money, however reckless he may be of the welfare of others while scheming to heap up riches for himself.

As for the man who slays his fellow creatures by thousands, they mount him on a bronze horse, put him on an arch, or they pile up a column and set him as near Heaven as they can. He slew his thousands! He died blood-red—he was an emperor, a tyrant, a conqueror—the world feels his power and pays its homage! As for this Jesus, He only gave His life for men. He was only pure and perfect, the mirror of disinterested love. The vain world cannot see in Him a virtue to admire. It is a blind world, a fool world, a world that lies in the Wicked One! Not to discern the beauties of Jesus is an evidence of terrible depravity!

Have you, my dear Friend, to frankly confess that you were never enamored of Him who was holy, harmless and undefiled and went about doing good? Then let this come home to you—the question is not as to whether Christ is lovely or not, the mistake is here—you have not a spiritually enlightened eye, a fine moral perception, nor even a well-regulated conscience, or you would see His loveliness at once. You are evil and blind! God help you to feel this! Do you not love Christ? Then let me ask you why you do not? There was never a man, yet, that knew Christ that could give a reason for not loving Him, neither is there such a reason to be discovered! He is altogether lovely! In nothing is He unlovable.

Oh I wish that the good Spirit of God would whisper in your heart and incline you to say, “I will see about this Christ. I will read of Him. I will look at the four portraits of Him painted by the Evangelists and if He is, indeed, thus lovely, no doubt He will win my heart as He appears to have won the hearts of others.” I pray He may. But do not, I pray you, continue to deny Christ your love. It is all you can give Him. It is a poor thing, but He values it. He would sooner have your heart than all the gold in Europe. He would sooner have the heart of a poor servant girl or of a poor humble laborer upon the soil than the Queen’s diadem. He loves love! Love is His gem—His jewel. He delights to win it and if He is, indeed, altogether lovely, let Him have it!

You have known people, I dare say, whom you could not help loving. They never had to say to you, “Love me,” for you were captivated at once by the very sight of them. In like manner many and many have only received one beam of light from the Holy Spirit and have thereby seen who Jesus was and they have at once said of Him, “You have ravished my heart with one look of Your eyes” and so it has been that all their life they have loved their Lord. Now, the praise is suggestive still further. “Is Christ altogether lovely? Then do I love Him? As a child of God, do I love Him as

much as I ought? I do love Him. Yes, blessed be His name, I do love Him. But what a poor, cold, chill love it is. How few are the sacrifices I make for Him. How few are the offerings that I present to Him. How little is the fellowship that I maintain with Him.”

Brother, Sister, is there a rival in your heart? Do you allow anyone to come in between you and the “Altogether Lovely”? If so, chase the intruder out! Christ must have all your heart and let me tell you, the more we love Him, the more bliss we shall have. A soul that is altogether given up to the love of Christ lives above care and sorrow. It has care and sorrow, but the love of Christ kills all the bitterness by its inexpressible sweetness! I cannot tell you how near a man may live to Heaven, but I am persuaded that a very large proportion of the bliss of Heaven may be enjoyed before we go there. There is one conduit pipe through which heavenly joy will flow and if you draw from it, you may have as much as you will.

“Abide in Me” says Christ. And if you abide in His love you shall have His joy fulfilled in yourselves so that your joy may be full. You will have more capacious vessels in Heaven, but even now the little vessel that you have can be filled up to the brim by knowing the inexpressible loveliness of Jesus and surrendering your hearts to it! Oh that I could rise to something better than myself! I often feel like a chick in the egg—I am pecking my way out and I cannot get clear of my prison. Gladly would I chip the shell, come forth to freedom, develop wings and soar heavenward, singing on the way! Would God that were our portion! If anything can help us get out of the shell and to begin to rise and sing, it must be a full and clear perception that Jesus is altogether lovely!

Come, let us be married to Him afresh tonight. Come, believing hearts, yield again to His charms! Surrender yourselves, again, to the supremacy of His affection. Let us have the love of our espousals renewed. As you come to His table, think of the lips of Christ, of which the spouse had been speaking before she uttered my text—“His mouth is most sweet.” There are three things about Christ’s mouth that are very sweet. The first is His Word—you have heard that. The second is His breath. Come, Holy Spirit, make Your people feel that. And the third is His kiss. May every believing soul have that sweet token of His eternal love!

Forgive my ramblings. May God bless to all His people the word that has been spoken. May some that never knew my Master ask to know Him tonight. Go home and seek Him. Read the Word to find Him. Cry to Him in prayer and He will be found of you. He is so lovely that I should not live without loving Him and I shall deeply regret it if any one of you shall spend another 24 hours without having had a sight of His Divine face by faith.

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ASLEEP AND YET AWAKE—A RIDDLE  
NO. 1561

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 10, 1880, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I sleep, but my heart is awake: it is the voice of  
my Beloved that knocks.”  
Song of Solomon 5:2.**

**WE are glad to perceive in this Song the varied experience of the bride. She was the well-beloved of the heavenly Bridegroom, but she was not without her faults. Though the “fairest among women,” she was human and, therefore, she had not reached angelical perfection. She was not perfect, to begin with, for at the outset she confessed, “I am black, because the sun has looked upon me: they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept.” She was not perfect even in the exhibition of her love to Him who had chosen her, for she has to acknowledge, as upon the occasion before us, that she treated Him in an unworthy manner. She kept Him waiting at her door in the chilly night and grieved Him so that He withdrew. She was not perfect, even, to the end of the chapter, for she could not hear her Lord’s voice so clearly as certain of her companions and she cried in the last chapter of her Song, “Cause me to hear it.”**

**Brothers and Sisters, we shall not be able to claim entire perfection so long as we are this side the hills of division. Till the day breaks and the shadows flee away, our Lord will have to sanctify and cleanse His spouse “with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” We are glad, I say, to have the experience of the spouse—that is, of the Church as a whole—because we know that as is the Church, such are the members and the rule that holds good for the whole will be found in its measure and proportion to be fulfilled in all its parts. We, too, have to say, “I am black, because the sun has looked upon me.”**

**And at times we have to ask, “Why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of your companions?” We have had mournfully to cry, “I sought Him, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer,” while the watchmen have justly smitten us and wounded us for our neglect of our Lord. Let us bless God that in the Book of revealed Truth He has not merely given us the ideal standard after which we are to seek, but He has also preserved for us the humbler patterns of those who have strived to reach to the utmost height and who have climbed a good way towards it, but who, nevertheless, have proved that, though they were the best of men, they were men at the best. Thus our Lord has saved us from despair by making us to know that we may be sincere and true and accepted, though we, too, fall short as yet of the holiness which we pant after with our whole hearts.**

**Nor are we only favored with the poetic story of the bride—we have, also, in the Word of God, the biographies of the saints, the memoirs of the godly and these are exceedingly useful to us. I fear we would not, Brothers and Sisters, at certain times, know whether we were God’s people at all if we were not able to compare ourselves with others of the family. We may lose our way, sometimes, as poor sheep have often done and then, though the greatest comfort is derived from seeing the footprints of the Shepherd, yet no small measure of consolation is to be gained through marking the footsteps of the flock. The sight of human footsteps on the sandy waste has caused us to take heart again.**

**We have exclaimed, “Here one has been who was surely a child of God and since I am here, I may be a child of God, too. I have similar failings and weaknesses and I chide myself for them, but I will not utterly condemn myself and say I cannot be a Believer, for I perceive that these spots were on others of God’s children, too.” The perception of our likeness to others who were truly saints has often afforded us a spark of hope when we were in a maze and dared scarcely hope that we were right towards God. Frequently the experience of others will help us to thread our way when it winds and twists and we cannot see an inch before us.**

**The young man thinks that he understands himself, but no old man does. Ask the man who is best acquainted with himself and he will tell you that he is increasingly a riddle and that his experience becomes an enigma more profound every day. The Believer feels that he needs the help of the Divine Teacher to enable him to trace the thread of his spiritual life throughout all the tangle of the skein. It needs a Grace-taught man to make himself out and to comprehend what he is and where he is and what is the very truth of his life’s paradox. At times I ask myself, “Am I all sin, or is there yet a spark of Grace?” Soon Grace shines like the sun and then I almost dream that sin is extinct! We are driven to read ourselves in others. We look at the saints of Holy Scripture and, as we mark their lives, we say, “I can understand this man better than I can myself, for lookers-on see more than players. And now, by understanding him, I begin, also, to comprehend my own position. I calculate my latitude and longitude by observing a star. I estimate the contending influences that rage within me by seeing how others drifted, or stemmed the torrent. I see the strange convolutions of my intertwisted soul in others and, as in a glass, I discern myself.”**

**But, my Brothers and Sisters, we must take care that we do not wrongly use the memoirs of saints as recorded in Scripture—they are not all for our imitation, but many of them for our warning! You may not do all that a good man has done. If you were to copy certain of the actions of the most gracious men, you would soon find yourself more faulty than they, for *you* would be sure to throw the emphasis upon their *errors*—and their Graces you would probably miss. You would copy their faults and aggravate them. Follow no man where he does not follow Christ! Above all, the lives of the saints may never be used as an excuse for our faults. We shall not be justified in following afar off because Peter did so, nor in calling fire from Heaven upon our enemies because James and John wished to do so, nor in quarrelling because Paul and Barnabas fell into sore contention.**

**We may wisely quote David as an encouragement to a penitent, that God will forgive his sin, but not as an *apology* for ourselves should we be tempted to commit the sin. We must often use the saints of God as beacons rather than as harborlights—as lighthouses set upon rocky coasts to advise us of the dangers into which they fell. Take care that Holy Scripture is used for holy ends and that holy men are viewed as helps to holiness and not as excuses for imperfection. Let us learn from their virtues, *imitation—*but from their faults, *warning*—and from both, *instruction*. Judgment is profitable to direct. Follow the Lamb wherever He goes, but there is not a sheep of His flock to whom you may do the same. Do whatever Jesus does—copy the example of Christ in all its touches, so far as it is imitable—but do not the same even towards the beloved John, though his head is fresh from his Master’s bosom—no, nor towards Paul, though he is not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles.**

**We come, then, dear Friends, to use the example of our text with those limitations which we have thus set forth. We have in the text, first, slumber confessed—“I sleep.” But over against this there is wakefulness claimed—“but my heart is awake.” Very soon we have mystery solved—how is it that the heart stays awake?—“It is the voice of my Beloved that knocks.” Before we close we shall try, fourthly, to have a lesson learned out of the text. May the Holy Spirit make the whole subject profitable to us and practically influential upon our lives.**

I. **First, then, here is SLUMBER CONFESSED. The spouse laments her state and sighs out, “I sleep.” It strikes us at once that her sleep is a recognized state. We are astonished that she should say, “I sleep,” and we conclude that it is not so profound a sleep as it might be, for when a man can *say*, “I sleep,” he is not altogether steeped in slumber! When children of God perceive their own imperfections and mourn over them, there is evidently a root of virtue in them—when they perceive the decay of their Grace there is some Grace left undecayed with which they are bemoaning their decline! I would not give you encouragement, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you are asleep at all, to continue in it, but yet I would say this, that if you mourn over your sluggishness, you are not altogether a sluggard—if you feel uneasy in your dullness you are not altogether given over to spiritual stupidity—if you are anxious to be awakened out of your slumber, it is certain that you are not given over to sleep yourself into the sepulcher of insensibility.**

**God be thanked that you cannot enjoy pleasant dreams upon the bed of carelessness! You do not sleep as do others— you are evidently not steeped in that fatal slumber of spiritual death in which the dead world is slumbering all around. Infinite Mercy has had some dealings with you and has made you to be spiritually awake so far that you can feel that you sleep and mournfully *confess* it. When a man detects pride within him but has Grace enough to long to be humble; when a man feels hardness of heart but groans about it and wishes to be softened; when a man laments the stubbornness of his will and cries to God to give him full submission; when a man mourns a sluggishness of heart and strives after quickening—then he has marks and signs of spiritual life and of an inward energy which will, by God’s Grace, cast out his disease and bring him spiritual health!**

**There is life where there is pain! There is growth where there is a yearning of desire! The holy fire still lingers in the breast, though it is so smothered by the ashes that only a little smoke can be discerned. It will revive again; it will kindle and burn up, for it is of God’s creating. He who can mournfully say, “I sleep,” will, one day, be wide awake. Be very thankful, therefore, when you have a tender conscience! Cultivate a quick perception and when you are aware of the slightest defalcation or decline, confess at once to God that you begin to sleep. Further, as this sleep is a matter recognized, so is it a matter complained of. The spouse is not pleased to sleep—she says, “I sleep,” but she does not mention it as a matter for congratulation! She is not pleased with her condition.**

**Here, again, I would remark that it is well for saints, when they perceive that they are in the least degree backsliding, that they should mourn before God and accuse themselves before Him. “Judge yourselves, that you be not judged.” Before another person can hint that you are careless, find it out, yourself, and mourn over it. Before another can complain of your dullness and say, as the shipmen did to Jonah, “What do you mean, O sleeper?” complain about yourself. Act tenderly to others, but severely towards yourselves. So all prudent men will do if *God* keeps them prudent. This sleepiness is not a thing to be indulged in, but to be abhorred. To say the least of it, it is a low state of enjoyment. Sleep is peaceful and quiet, but it cannot enjoy the sweets of the senses and the delights which the mind can receive.**

**Sleep is Death’s cousin and he that slumbers lies at the door of the sepulcher. The image of death is set upon the sleeper’s face and it is a miracle and a sort of foretaste of the Resurrection that any man does wake again after he has fallen into a deep slumber. It is not, therefore, good *spiritually* for us to be asleep, for then we cannot taste the honey of the Word of God, nor enjoy the fragrance of the ordinances, nor see the beauties of Christ—nor will *any* of the spiritual passions be delighted, nor our spirit be carried away with holy joy. Therefore, when we come into God’s House and we hear the old familiar story of the Cross and it does not charm us, let us mournfully say, “I sleep.”**

**When others are ready to dance before the Lord with exultation while singing the solemn Psalm, if we, ourselves, feel no devout gratitude, let us cry self-complainingly, “I perceive that I sleep.” And when at the Table the chosen emblems of the bread and wine do not bring the Master near to us and we go away as hungry as we came because we have not fed on His body and His blood, then let us say, again, “Alas, I sleep, I sleep! For these things would be most sweet and nourishing to me if my spiritual faculties were as they ought to be!” If we fail to enjoy the banquets of our Bridegroom’s love, it must be because a deadness is stealing over us and we are not so thoroughly alive and awake as we were in days gone by—and this is a condition to be deplored as soon as it is perceived.**

**We ought to complain of ourselves if we sleep because it is a state of danger. While men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. It is bad, then, to have a drowsy minister and drowsy Church officers, for these will not watch the fields for God. He who sleeps is in danger of the thief or the murderer. While Saul lay stretched on the plain, Abishai lifted up his spear and said, “Let me smite him but this once.” He who sleeps may lose his all, yes, lose *himself*. Let us, therefore, dread this perilous state and, if we feel it creeping over us, let us shake ourselves and say, “I sleep, but I will not give way to slumber! Lord, by Your Grace, awaken me!”**

**Sleep is a state of inaction. A man cannot do his daily business while his eyes are closed in slumber. There is a sleepwalking which can do much, but I know of no spiritual sleepwalking. You cannot walk the road to Heaven asleep, nor preach the Gospel as you should, nor serve God and your generation aright if you are in a spiritual slumber. I know a great many who are so—they are alive, I hope, but very sleepy! They do very little; they are too sluggish to attempt much. “The slothful man says, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.” This was his argument for keeping in the chimney corner. In truth, the lion is about as real as the monster which has been described of late as prowling over this county of Surrey and devouring women and children all the way from Banstead Downs to Clapham Common!**

**Solomon seems to have been very familiar with this fable of the sluggard’s lion, for in another proverb he makes the idler cry, “There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!” These poor creatures are so dreamy in spirit that they see a lion *everywhere—*threatening them if they try to do good in any form! They must sit quiet and still and try to enjoy themselves as best their sleep will allow them to do, for they cannot venture out to work because of the lion! They cannot teach a little Sunday school class, for there is a lion there! Nor go out to speak to a dozen people in a village—a furious lion is roaring there! In fact, they will be devoured if they leave their easy retirement and put their heads out of doors. God help us to escape this lazy condition! May we live while we live! Let not our souls merely act as salt to keep our carcasses from rotting, but let them be the seed plot and hotbed of holy actions out of which shall yet spring glory to God and blessing to our fellow men. If you do not feel active and energetic, make it a matter of self-complaint and utter the shame-faced confession, “I sleep.”**

**Yet again, this slumber should be not only a matter of complaint as an evil to be dreaded, but it should be regarded as a fault to be ashamed of. A Christian man should not say, “I feel dull, careless and inactive,” and make the confession as if he almost deserved to be *pitied* for a misfortune which was no fault of his. My Brothers and Sisters, you may be pitied, but you are, also, to be blamed, perhaps blamed *far more* than pitied! An apparent spiritual slumber may creep over us because the body is very weak and sickly and *here* pity is allowable, yes, justly due. Certain states and conditions of the flesh, no doubt, will overcome the spirit, as when even the choicest of the Apostles slept in the garden. The Master at first said, “What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?” But afterwards He made a generous excuse for them and said, “The spirit is truly willing, but the flesh is weak.” Make excuses for others and let your Lord make excuses for you, but do not frame apologies on your *own* account.**

**David writes in the Psalm, “I said, This is my infirmity.” Quite right, David. I dare say it was so. But the other day I said the same of myself and before long I answered to my conscience for it, for conscience asked, “Is it not your *sin* as well as your infirmity?” I was compelled to divide the statement, no, at last to *withdraw* the first part of it altogether and cry, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” May we not be too ready to lay the blame of our impatience, our unbelief, or our hastiness upon the *body* when we ought to take all blame to ourselves? It is always safest to blame ourselves and it is frequently dangerous to make an excuse. Still, sometimes dullness may be an infirmity. When a man is weary with a hard day’s work, or with business that has cost him long care and he kneels by his bedside at a very late hour to pray and finds himself going to sleep, I do not think that his fault is a very grievous one.**

**It is certainly not that dreadful sin which shall never be forgiven, either in this world or in that which is to come! When a man is brought very low by weakness of body and he cannot, on the Sabbath, feel himself up to the mark in all respects, I do not think we should hold a Church meeting and turn him out! Nor do I think that he should excommunicate himself! When a widowed spirit is broken with bereavement when the husband is dead; when children or brothers have died; when parents have been snatched away and the heart is very heavy—if the heart cannot rejoice in the Lord, it is a pity that it cannot—but there is a measure of infirmity as well as fault in the heaviness of the soul. In such cases good people may guardedly say with David, “This is my infirmity.” May God help us when we feel such infirmities that we may speedily rise above them, being made strong in weakness and being taught to glory in infirmities because the power of Christ rests upon us.**

**Again, I repeat it—for others we may put in the gentle word even as the Master did for His disciples—“The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak,” but for ourselves we should rather use heart-searching and self-condemnation that we may make the bed of slumber thorny to our idle flesh. Brothers and Sisters, when a Christian’s soul is heavy with slumber, he ought to be ashamed. Think of who it is that loved us, even Jesus, the eternal Son of God! Has He loved us and can we ever be cold towards Him? Then blush and let the scarlet abide in the face! Think of what Jesus has done for us and what love He has manifested towards us. O Gethsemane! O Calvary! Are we thus redeemed and after this does our love decline into slumber? Break, my Heart! Break with indignation at yourself that such should be the case!**

**And what is this time in which we live? A time in which all the powers of darkness are on the alert, raging to do evil and mischief. Are we sleeping *now***, when the adversary is daily making an attack upon us? When men are dying and are perishing by millions, can it be that we slumber? And such as we are, who do little enough when we are wide awake and have little enough of power and ability—how is it that we can slumber? If we are lethargic, should we not bow ourselves in the dust before God and beseech Him to have mercy upon us? Furthermore, it is an evil to be fought against. When a man is obliged to say, “I sleep,” let him not content himself with sleeping on. Now is the time for much prayer! Let him wrestle with this deadly foe till he is fully awakened!

Falling into indifference on the road to Heaven is something like sleeping on the vast plains of snow, where, if a man gives way to the natural inclination to slumber which comes on through the intense cold, he may lie down and never rise again! Oh, take care, you that are looking for Heaven and eternal life, that you yield not to sleep, for your Master comes and it may be that within another hour you may hear the midnight cry! Let us whip ourselves with a strong resolve that we will not sleep. Let us say unto our soul, “Come, wake up! My spirit, you shall not sleep. This cannot be. I must not have it, I will not, I dare not. I will goad you, I will crucify you to the cross, for you shall not slay yourself with suicidal slumber.”

With this resolve let us seek out means of waking ourselves up. Sometimes we may do well to seek for a better ministry than we have attended. Alas, there are ministries which are as cradles to rock babes to sleep! There are preachers who charm most wisely if their intent is to send the universe to sleep. Beware of preaching which comforts you in idleness and increases your spiritual insensibility! There are certain preachers who mar the Gospel and tell their tale so heartlessly that I think if all Heaven did rock and reel with tempest, a man might yet sleep on so long as such soothing voices lulled his ears. We cannot afford to waste our Sabbaths in listening to another Gospel, or in hearing lullabies which make us duller than we were.

But if you cannot reach a rousing ministry, read good books—turn to solid Gospel treatises, such as the Puritans bequeathed us. Search the Scriptures and the works of godly men whose words were all on fire—these thrown upon your soul like burning coals may set it on fire. Christian conversation, too, is another useful means of keeping us awake. John Bunyan mentions that in going over the Enchanted Ground the pilgrims, to prevent drowsiness, fell into good discourse. Here is his quaint rhyme about it—

*“When saints do sleepy grow, let them come here   
And hear how these two pilgrims talk together:   
Yes, let them learn of them in any wise,   
Thus to keep open their drowsy, slumbering eyes,   
Saints’ fellowship, if it is managed well,   
Keeps them awake and that in spite of Hell.”*

Imitate this example, but if discourse does not avail, get to work for Christ! This is a very effective way of keeping yourself awake, God the Holy Spirit blessing you in it. In looking after the souls of others, your own soul will receive a watering.

I do not think that soul-slumber so often visits the *active* as it does those who have little to do in the Master’s service. If active service does not suffice, then cry mightily to God, “I sleep, my Savior! Awake me, I pray You!” You are half awake, already, if you can cry in that fashion. Cry again, “I sleep, my Lord! Use even a rod upon me to wake me rather than I should slumber.” You are not asleep, Brother, Sister, you are already awakened—the bitter anguish of the soul in its horror of its own slumber has already been blessed of God to its awakening. Anyway, this sleep is an evil which must be overcome. Come, make up your minds, today, members of this Church, that you will not yield to drowsiness!

I hope none of you are inclined to say, “Well, I may get to Heaven in this sleepy way and so what does it matter? My fellow members would put me in the ambulance and carry me along like a wounded soldier and this will be easier than marching at the double, day after day.” No, no, my Brothers and Sisters, we have enough of the invalid and wounded already! We have as many as we can carry of the non-effectives. We need no more. Ask the blessed Physician to make you strong so that you may tug at the guns with the rest of us, or charge the enemy at bayonet point when the trumpet sounds. I said, years ago, I would sooner lead a dozen real live earnest Christians than a dozen hundred of the half-and-half sort and this feeling grows with me!

I would almost as soon not be a Christian as be as some Christians are—they have enough religion to make them uncomfortable, but not enough to make them useful. They drink such shallow draughts that they increase their responsibility rather than their energy. Oh, for a deep draught of Grace which shall fill us with all the fullness of God and make us men in Christ to the utmost capacity of our sanctified manhood! Cold meat may be pleasant, but cold religion is an ill dish to serve to Christ or to ourselves! God make us like those creatures that are said to live in the fire. May He fill us with His own Spirit and make us burn and blaze with an unquenchable heat of love towards Him of whom it is said that the zeal of God’s house did eat Him up. He poured out His soul unto death that He might redeem us to Himself—let us see to it that we are altogether His own. With this I leave the sleeping for another theme.

II. We reach the point of the paradox—here is WATCHFULNESS CLAIMED by one who confessed to sleep. “My heart is awake,” says the Bride, “I sleep, but my heart is awake.” It may seem an odd thing to sleep and yet to be awake, but I commenced by saying that the Christian is a great puzzle. Ralph Erskine’s, “Believer’s Riddle,” is a remarkable production, but every word of it may be justified by experience and by Scripture. A man is a mass of contradictions, but a man in Christ is far more so. He truly says—

*I’m in my own and others’ eyes   
A labyrinth of mysteries.”*

We are asleep and awake at the same time. As Erskine rhymes it *—   
“Both sleeping flesh I have, that rests   
In sloth unto my shame,   
And waking Grace, that still protests   
Against this lazy frame.”*

There is an inner life within every Christian which can never die and there is about him an inward death which can never rise to life. Jesus said, “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Therefore this Divine Life, though it may grow weak and feeble and slumbering, yet never passes into the condition of absolute death, or even of complete insensibility. Somewhat of Heaven is about the man of God when the earth encompasses him most. “Sin shall not have dominion over you”—God still has the throne, even when Satan rages most. This inward life usually shows itself in the uneasiness of the declining heart. When a Believer feels that he is not what he ought to be, nor what he wants to be, he cannot be happy. He cannot rest and be content. There was a time when such a condition would have satisfied him, but now he is distressed beyond measure and, like Noah’s dove, finds no rest for the sole of his feet. Hear him sing in the minor key *—*

*“Where is the blessedness I knew   
When first I saw the Lord?   
Where is the soul-refreshing view   
Of Jesus and His Word?   
What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!   
How sweet their memory still!   
But they have left an aching void   
The world can never fill.”*

He sleeps, but his heart beats, sighs and palpitates with dire unrest!

The inner life shows itself, also, in desire, for the heart is the seat of desire and it leads the man to say, “I am not what I would like to be. I live at a poor dying rate—Christ’s love is so great to me and mine to Him so chill. Lord, lift me out of this frozen state. I cannot bear this grave of lethargy. Lord, bring my soul out of prison! Give me more Grace. Give me Grace to love Jesus better and to be more like He is. Poor as I am, I long to be enriched by Your love and mercy. O visit me with Your salvation!” Such a pleading heart is still awake though the mind may be dull. The Lord judges us by our earnest *desires* more than by our accomplishments.

An old writer says if you send a man on horseback for the doctor, if the horse is a sorry jade that cannot move quickly, you praise the man when you see him whipping and spurring and doing his best to hurry the horse along. You do not blame him for that which is beyond his power. So he says, oftentimes, when our desires whip and spur our languid spirits, God sees what a rate we would go at if we *could* and He takes the will for the deed. Often our desires are so awakened that we would harness the lightning and bit the tempest if we could and spur both to a swifter speed! Desires prove wakefulness—“I sleep, but my heart is awake.”

The spouse gave another proof of her wakefulness by her discernment. She says, “It is the voice of my Beloved that knocks.” Even when half asleep she knew her Lord’s voice. You may catch a true Believer at his worst, but he still knows the Gospel from everything else and can detect another Gospel in a moment! You shall come forth with all your eloquence, your poetry and sweet concocted phrases—with a something that is not the Gospel of the blessed God and you shall, for a moment, please the ears of the Christian because of the literary excellence of your address. But he soon detects you. It is true of all Christ’s sheep, “A stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.”

The awakening Believer perceives that the most musical voice of a stranger has not the charm in it which is found in the voice of His Lord. Yes, he soon closes his ears to it in disgust and in holy trembling lest he should be deceived. His resolve is, “I will hear what God the Lord will speak.” He determines to be deaf to other voices, but to his Redeemer he says, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.” Blessed is he who in his dullest state can still discern and discriminate and cry, “It is the voice of my Beloved.”

This wakefulness of heart shows itself often in the soul chiding itself. “I sleep,” she says. She would not have blamed herself as I have tried to describe her doing if she had not been, in some measure, awake. This blessed living wakefulness within the heart will, by-and-by, display itself in *action*. The heart will wake up all that is within us and we shall hasten to our Beloved. It is wonderful how a true Christian flies back to his God as soon as the Spirit of the Lord sets him free from the net. “Whom have I in Heaven but You and there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.” Brothers and Sisters, you and I cannot rest anywhere short of Christ! When we were ravens, we could rest on our own wings, or on the carrion of this world—but now that we have been made doves, we must seek our Noah and His ark!

A friend at the back of this Tabernacle furnished me with some pigeons but a little while ago. They were taken home to Norwood and shut up for a few days and well fed in the hope that they would stay with us. But no sooner were they set at liberty than they soared aloft, made three circles in the sky and then flew direct for this spot. How I wished, on my sick bed, that I had their wings and could hasten here, too! It is so with Believers. The devil may put us in captivity and shut us up awhile, but give us the opportunity and our heart knows the way back to Jesus!

The spouse has dove’s eyes and she sees from afar. She makes short work of it and is back, again, with all the speed of the chariots of Amminadib! This puzzle of, “I sleep, but my heart is awake,” has been experienced by thousands. I quote no solitary instances—there are hundreds of the same. I lately met with a little poem by Thomas Vaughan which touched my heart because it so aptly described my state. I will read it, to show you that the paradox of a Believer’s life is no fiction of mine, but is the frequent experience of God’s people. In a little out-of-the way poem, which perhaps no one of you has ever seen, Vaughan quaintly sings—

*“My sweetest Jesus! ‘Twas Your voice,   
‘If I am lifted up I’ll draw all to the sky,’   
Yet I am here! I’m stifled in the clay,   
Shut up from You and the fresh feast of day.   
I know Your hand’s not short, but I’m unfit,   
A foul, unclean thing to take hold of it!   
I am all dirt! Nor can I hope to please   
Unless in mercy You love a disease.   
Diseases may be cured,but who’ll reprieve   
Him that is dead? Tell me, my God, I live.   
‘Tis true, I live:but I so sleep that   
I cannot move, scarcely hear when You call!   
Sin’s lullabies charm me when I would come   
But draw me after You and I will run.   
You know I’m sick: let me not feasted be,   
But keep a diet, all prescribed by Thee.   
Should I carve for myself, I would exceed   
To surfeits soon and by self-murder bleed.   
I ask for stones and scorpions, but still crest   
And all for love: should not You grant, I were lost.   
Dear Lord, deny me still: and never sign   
My will, but when that will agrees with Yours   
And when this conflict’s past and I appear   
To answer, what a patient I was here,   
How I did weep when You did woo: repine   
At Your best sweets and in a childish whine   
Refuse Your proffered love; yet cry and call,   
For rattles of my own to play withal:   
Look on Your Cross and let Your blood come in   
When mine shall blush as guilty of my sin.   
Then shall I live, being rescued in my fall.   
A text of mercy to Your creatures all   
Who having seen the worst of sins in me,   
Must needs confess, the best of love’s in Thee.”*

Does not this writer dip his pen into your soul’s sorrows?

III. Spare me a minute or two while I dwell on the head of MYSTERY SOLVED. “I sleep, but my heart is awake.” Why is her heart awake? It is because the voice and knock of her Beloved are heard. Every child of God has a wondrous union with Christ. “Because I live,” says Christ, “you shall live also.” Ask why you are alive in such a body of death and grave of sin as your poor nature is? You live because Christ lives and you cannot die till He does! This is why you cannot sleep as do others, because He does not sleep. “He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep,” and till Christ’s spiritual life shall altogether slumber out into forgetfulness and inaction yours never shall. The mystic union between yourselves and Jesus secures you from destruction which, apart from Him, would sweep you away as with a brook.

This is why, dear Friends, when you get where you should *not* be, you cannot be happy because Jesus is not happy when you are there! He groans over your follies. They cost Him wounds and bloody sweat and death and they must cost you something, too, if you indulge in them. That field all tangled with the brambles tore the Shepherd when He sought you out and the briars will tear you, also, if you wander there. The reason why you are awake at all is because Jesus calls you. His voice rings in your ears through His Word both heard and read. He *more* than calls—He knocks at your heart by affliction, by mercy, by warning, by comfort. He will do more with you, yet, if you are His—He will put in His hand by the hole of the door and then you shall open to Him and He will come and sup with you and you with Him.

The mystery is all solved, the saint would be a sinner if it were not that he is one with the sinner’s Savior—the living Believer would be a lump of death and corruption if it were not that he is one with Him who is the Resurrection and the Life who has said, “Whoever believes in Me shall never die.” And again, “Though he were dead yet shall he live.” What a blessing is this vital union with the ever-blessed Head, immortal and unslumbering!

IV. Now for THE LESSON LEARNED. It is this—be very careful when you possess great joys, for in this instance the spouse had been with the Beloved in choice fellowship and yet was soon drowsy. He had given her to drink abundantly and He had feasted with her, but no sooner had the sun set than she said, “I sleep.” We are amazing creatures. Our very perfect brethren, although they do not see it, generally exhibit some glaring imperfection if you let them talk for five minutes. If you knock at the door to see if Mr. Pride is at home, you need not praise him long before he will show his full-length portrait. We are thankful for these brethren so far as they are saints, for good people are scarce—but I wish they would not tell us so much about their saintliness, for I have noticed that great cry often goes with little wool and the noisiest thing that goes down the street is the dust cart.

He who makes most noise about his own perfection has the least of it! Let us be careful whenever we rise to the summit of the hill—careful to stay up, careful that we so act when we are up that we do not come down with a run. Whenever the Lord visits you, entertain Him right heartily. Be careful that nothing grieves Him, lest He depart. High joys may produce slumber—the chosen three upon the Mount Tabor were soon overcome with heaviness. At the too-transporting sight of the transfigured Savior, darkness covered them! Mind what you do when on the mountain! Be careful to carry a full cup with a steady hand.

Next, when you are blaming yourselves for your own work, do not forget the work of the Spirit in you. “I sleep”— smite your heart for that, but do not forget to add, if it is true, “My heart is awake.” Bless God for any Grace you have, even if it is but little. What if I am not sanctified as I wish to be and shall be, yet I am perfectly justified! What if I do not exhibit my Father’s likeness so completely as I hope to do, yet I am His child! What if, as yet, I do not produce all the fruits of the Spirit, yet I have the germs of them, the buds and blossoms—and soon I shall have the ripe fruit! In Aaron’s rod we see that the same power that could put the buds and blossoms on a dry stick could put the almonds there, too!

Lastly, make sure, above all things, that you have that true faith which knows the voice of Jesus. The spouse had not awaked if it had not been for the charm of Jesus’ voice which affected even her drowsy faculties. Some persons can be more easily awakened by the voices of those they love than by any other means. The charm of memory, the charm of intimate affection, the charm of delight gives music to some tongues—let your ears find all its music in the voice of Jesus! Know His voice. He says, “Incline your ears and come unto Me: hear and your soul shall live. My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me and I give them eternal life.”

God bless you, dear Friends, with a faith that trusts Jesus, knows His voice and follows Him! And may we be awakened out of all our sleepiness, if we are at all drowsy, into a holy wakefulness so as to serve the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and strength while we live. Come, Holy Spirit and give us this privilege, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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WARNING AND ENCOURAGEMENT  
NO. 3013

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1906.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, IN THE YEAR 1864.

**“I sleep, but my heart wakes: it is the voice of my beloved that knocks, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.” Song of Solomon 5:2.**

How changeable is the creature! In the verse preceding our text, we find the spouse in a happy, healthy, heavenly frame of mind, for her Beloved was with her and she was in the enjoyment of the closest communion with him. We find him saying, “I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved.” Yet, from the height of this glorious fellowship, how soon the spouse comes down to the depths of such a cry as this, “I sleep, but my heart wakes”! Truly, the weather of our isle is not more variable than the feelings of Believers. One day the sun shines hot and strong. The next day comes a black cloud, accompanied with the lightning flash and the voice of thunder. Then come the rattling drops of hail and then, in a few more hours, it is hot again, or perhaps the chilly North wind begins to blow. Have you not been on Mount Tabor at one moment and at another in the Valley of Achor? Have you not been at one time like the chariots of Amminadib, driving so fast that the axles were hot with speed, and soon after you have been like Pharaoh’s chariots when the wheels were taken off so that you drove heavily? Now you mount as upon eagle’s wings and soon you sink as in deep mud where there is no standing! At one moment delighting in God’s goodness and mercy, but the next moment, crying, “All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me.” Lord, what a changeable creature is man! When You have taken him up to his highest altitude, how speedily he comes down, by the force of Your hand, to the very depths! How soon do You bring him down from his highest eminence even to the very dust!

Christian, when the Lord favors you and your soul walks in near fellowship with Him, remember that there is a devil within you and a devil outside you. Be careful of your footsteps—even when you are on the top of the mountain, even when Jesus is sitting by you and whispering in your ear that you are His, watch with the greatest, possible care, for you never lose your corruption! Your communion may be transient, but your corruption is perpetual. To be with Christ is but a thing of a moment with you, but to be with your corruption is a thing of every hour in the day! I pray you, keep this in mind and whenever you are in your best frame, then be doubly careful lest you should lose your Beloved and have to cry once again, “I sleep, but my heart wakes!” Dr. Ives, who used to live on the road to Tyburn at the time when prisoners were always carried in a cart to be hanged there, would frequently say, when he had any friends with him, if he saw the criminals riding by, “There goes Dr. Ives.” And when they asked him what he meant, he replied, “Such crimes as that felon has committed I would have committed but for the Grace of God.” That is true even of you who live nearest to God. You who have the most familiarity with Christ and enjoy the most holy fellowship with Him may soon become the very leaders of the hosts of Satan if your Lord withdraws His Grace! David’s eyes go astray and the sweet Psalmist of Israel becomes the shameless adulterer who robs Uriah of his wife. Samson one day slays a thousand of his enemies with the might of his arm and the velour of his heart—another day his honor is betrayed, his locks are shorn, and his eyes are put out by a strumpet’s treacherous wiles.

How soon are the mighty fallen! Behold Solomon, the wisest of men, yet the greatest fool who ever lived! Even Job fails in patience and Abraham staggers as to his faith. “Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” These observations seem to rise at once to our minds when we consider such passages as abound in this “Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.” We find, at one moment, that the spouse is so happy that she cries out, “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love,” and, at another moment, she is searching for her Beloved and cannot find him, and mourning because of the darkness, and of the cruelty of “the watchmen that go about the city.”

The text very readily suggests three subjects for meditation—first, a lamentable state—“I sleep.” Secondly, a hopeful sign—“but my heart wakes.” And thirdly, a potent remedy—“It is the voice of my Beloved.” Nothing can wake a Believer out of his sleep like the voice of his Beloved!

I. First, here is A LAMENTABLE STATE—“I sleep.”  
I think I can describe this state pretty well because I experience it too often and I am afraid many of you could also describe it with some degree of accuracy, for frequently you, too, fall into it. What is it for a Christian to sleep? Well, thank God, there is a sleep which the Believer never knows. He can never again sleep that deadly sleep in which Christ found him while he was in his sinful state—he shall never sleep the judicial sleep into which some were cast as the result of sin! He shall not sleep, as do others, to his eternal ruin, yet he may sleep dangerously and sinfully—and this is the state in which the Christian is found when he thus sleeps—in a state of inaction. You are doing something for God but you are doing it as a matter of custom than as a matter of loving earnestness. You pray. You go up to the House of God. You teach in the Sunday school but you do these things mechanically, as a man walks who is sound asleep. You are in a sort of spiritual somnambulism! The work that you are called upon to perform, you do after a fashion, but there is none of the power of God in the work—there is no earnestness thrown into it. It is done, and that is the end of it—but your heart has been absent from it.  
Coupled with this, there is a need of vigor in everything to which such a man sets his hand. If he preaches, there is no force or burning energy, no boiling, scalding periods—he just takes his text and speaks upon it. Perhaps God’s people are edified, perhaps sinners are saved, but that man has no enjoyment in his work during the whole time that he sluggishly performs it thus. A man, to enjoy the work of the Lord, must throw his whole strength into it. It is the same when you come to prayer. You pray after a sort, but it is not that wrestling with the Angel which gets the blessing from Him. You knock at the door, but not with that force which causes it to open. You have forgotten your former vigor. Whereas once your place of prayer was the witness of groans and tears, now you can go into it and come out of it without so much as a single sob. And it is just the same when you read the Scriptures. Once the page sparkled with promises and your soul was satisfied with marrow and fatness. But when you read it now it is very dull and you no longer derive refreshing consolation from it. Like the temple out of which God has moved, you walk through it—there are the pillars, there stand all the symbols of worship. The altar is there, but God, the King, has gone and a voice has been heard to say, “Arise, let Us go from here.” And so, you go through the sacred edifice and find nothing there. In this same sleepy state, we go up to the House of God to listen to His Word and if our sleep has got a strong hold upon us, we cannot get any comfort. We begin to rail at the minister because we are not edified as we used to be—we think that a change has come over him. That is possible, but it is just as likely, and more so, that our lack of enjoyment of God’s Word is owing to ourselves. We sit and hear as God’s people hear—and we sing as God’s people sing, and pray as they pray—after the outward form, but we go out as a man rises from his bed whereon he has tossed all night and we feel that we are not a whit refreshed! And the Sabbath that was once a joy and delight to us, has perhaps become a weariness and a burden!  
There is no enjoyment while a man is thus asleep and, as there is no enjoyment, there is no consciousness of pain. Ah, Beloved, I have known seasons when I would almost have given my right arm to be able to shed tears of repentance—wherein I wished that I might again have a broken heart—when I have longed to make my soul feel even the pains of Hell rather than not feel anything! This is one of the worst states a Christian can be in—to go nodding on through life, slumbering over eternal realities, dreaming over Heaven, nodding his head and continuing to sleep when he is in the Presence of the Most High God and should have gathered up all his powers and strung them to the highest pitch of intensity! Have you not been in such a state? If you have not, happy man are you! There are most holy men, some of the giant servants of God, who have fallen into this state and have been compelled to cry out, “I sleep,” finding themselves happy, indeed, if they could add, “I sleep, but my heart wakes.”  
Such a state as this is very sinful. Is it not sinful, O my Soul, to be trifling with the eternal state, to be playing at prayer? Can you be so dull and heavy about eternal things when worldlings are so thoroughly awake about their silver and gold and commercial pursuits? When souls are being hurried to eternity, how is it that I can still be indifferent? While time is speeding on and eternity is so near, how can I still go to my slothful couch and cry, “A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of your hands to sleep”? Chosen in Christ, redeemed with His precious blood, quickened by the Divine Spirit and made partakers of the Divine Nature, how can it be consistent with our position and condition to sleep as do others? The light of God’s Grace has shone upon us—is this a time to slumber? Let the world sleep if it will, for its object and aims are not worthy of the Christian’s high ambition, but shall you and I sleep when Heaven is before us and Hell behind us—when there is temptation surrounding us everywhere and angels beckon us to Heaven while a glorious company of saints holds us in full survey? Come, my Brothers and Sisters, we must feel that such a state as this is sinful in the highest degree!  
And how dangerous it is, too! A man who sleeps in his enemy’s camp is exposed to imminent peril. There lies Sisera asleep in Jael’s tent. Little do you know, O silly Dreamer, when that woman’s hand lifts up the mallet to drive the nail through your brain! If you desire to sleep, Christian, wait until you get Home! There you shall have rest enough forever in your Father’s House, but, to sleep here is to sleep in the dragon’s jaw! To sleep on the top of the mast when the ship is driving before the storm! No, awake and think of your position and condition and sleep no longer! O God, have mercy upon Your people who have long prosperity! There is the pinnacle of the Temple and blessed is the man whose feet slip not when he stands there. I do not think we sleep so much, spiritually, when we have bodily affliction, though pains of body frequently make a Christian long for his rest. Nor do I think we have slumbering times when we are losing our friends. Men cannot easily sleep when the funeral knell is tolling in their ears and when they are following dear departed ones to the grave. Nor do I think we sleep much when we are the subjects of very violent temptations and have a great many doubts and fears. But when we are in our vessel when the day is fine and the sail is spread, and the wind blows softly, and the ship goes on steadily without a motion, gliding as o’er a sea of glass—then it is that the mariner, perhaps, forgets the rock and the shoal! The poet was right when he said—  
*“More the treacherous calm I dread,  
Than tempests lowering overhead.”*

I do not like trouble and pray God to deliver me from it. I cannot well endure bodily pain. I find myself impatient under tribulation, but I am able to say this—if I had my choice between the severest affliction and a state of sinful slumbering, I would prefer to have the affliction. “There is no devil,” said one, “like having no devil.” That is to say, there is no temptation like the temptation of not being tempted! The worst form of danger is when a man is left to himself, when he is not much tossed about, when he is quiet and easy. It ought not to be so. The greater our prosperity, the better should we love God. And the more our spirit is at ease, the more we should serve Him with both our hands and render Him hearty thanksgiving for His favor towards us! It should be so, but it is not so. In these smooth waters we are sure to meet with mischief and, therefore, may the Lord, in His mercy, watch over us when we are in much prosperity!

Do I hear somebody ask, “How may I know when I am asleep?” If you are a true Christian, you will soon know it by a sort of instinct, when an unutterable sense of misery comes over you. I may compare the sleep of a sinner to the sleep produced by opium which gives its victim dreams of the most magnificent character, carrying the soul up to Heaven and then, soon, dashing it down to the depths. All sorts of fantastic imaginations are the offsprings of that deadly drug, yet the man enjoys himself while under its influence. But though it causes some happiness in the use of it, it will bring him to Hell as surely as murder itself! The sleep of a Christian, when he falls into this state, is rather like the sleep produced by henbane—it is a kind of uneasy, short, disturbed, unreeling rest. It does a man little harm compared with the other and his constitution recovers from the shock much more readily. Such, I say, is the Christian’s sleep—there is no pleasure in it as there is in the sinner’s sleep, but his sleep is uneasy, his conscience pricks him, his heart wakes and he finds no peace in it. It lasts but for a little time and it does him much damage, but still, not the deadly damage that the world’s sleep of sin brings to its votaries. God save you from it! May He ever keep you from falling into that kind of sleep!

I think many of you will not need me to warn you of it. Still, if you do need to know, let me ask you to compare yourself with what you used to be. Are you as lively in Divine things as you once were? Is prayer as fervent and refreshing to your souls as it once was? Do you find that willingness to pray that you once had? Do you find that you have to flog yourself into your closet and, when you get there, do you offer up your prayers and desires with coldness which you were known to offer with warm and loving fervor? Do you still continue to have the blessedness you had when first you knew the Lord? If not, that is a symptom of sleep. Then, compare yourself with what you ought to be. Think how you ought to have grown during the years that you have been a Believer. Are you what you ought to have been? Then, if you are not, you must be asleep, or else you would have made better progress. Compare yourself with what others have been and you will see cause for shame! And if so, my Brothers and Sisters, you are asleep! You are in a dangerous condition and I pray the living God, by the demand for watchfulness when the Prince of this world comes, by the agonies of Christ in Gethsemane, yes, by the blood of Him who poured out His soul unto death, to awake you out of this deadly sleep, for it is a state that will lead to some great and grievous sin, some black and terrible fall unless God shall prevent it by His Grace! First you sleep, then you slumber, then you sin, then you sin again, then you go still deeper and so will you continue unless God, in His Grace, steps in to deliver you from the consequences of this dreadful sleep!

II. Yet, secondly, there is, in the text, A HOPEFUL SIGN. I think that most of us, though we do sleep, can say as the spouse does, “my heart wakes.” Beloved, it is a blessed sign that the spouse knows her state and truly confesses it. She does not say, mark you, “I am a little tired. My eyes are heavy.” No, but with honesty of heart she says, “I sleep.” Ah, it is a good sign when you and I know our state and are willing to confess it before God. I have heard of a Believer in Christ who, on one occasion, was intoxicated, and he was expelled from the church as the result of it. But he was visited by many Christian Brothers and among the rest by one who prayed with him. They prayed together to God, but he could not get any peace. “No,” said his friend, “and you never will until you come to the point and confess your sin as it really is.” And when the man said, in his prayer, “Lord, You know that I have disgraced myself. I have been drunk,” it was then that he obtained peace. He had directed the lances to the wound—he had put before God the right state of the case and this is what we must do, Beloved, if we would have restoring and renewing Grace—we must tell the Lord what our sin really is. As the spouse did, we must confess, “I sleep.”  
But you will observe that the spouse is as bold in saying, “my heart wakes,” as she was in saying, “I sleep.” What does this mean, “my heart wakes”? Why, just this. “My conscience tells me that this sleepy state is not a proper one for me to be in and my heart cries that I must get out of it. I cannot find any rest while I slumber. At a distance from God, I cannot be happy.” Peter may follow afar off, but Peter cannot be happy afar off. Peter may sit and warm his hands with the servants in Pilate’s Hall, but he cannot warm his heart. Sinners may say, “Why make all this fuss about a little sleep? There is no great sin in it.” Ah, but little sins trouble Believers far more than great sins trouble sinners! If a Christian’s soul is but a little away from God, it is sufficient to mar his joy and make him unhappy. A man clad in armor may go walking through the woods and may never feel the thorns, but another man who has had his armor taken off, will be scratched and torn to pieces! Sinners clad in the armor of sin feel not the thorn of Christ’s desertion—but saints who have thrown this armor aside and are tender of heart, feel even His slightest frown.  
My dear Hearer, perhaps you are slumbering this evening and are content to be so. Then you are no child of God! But if you are slumbering and there is some power—something within you that keeps crying out, “O God, I would be delivered!” Though this voice is ever so feeble, though this cruel sleep of yours may almost have gagged it, yet if it does rebel against this state and cries out, “Lord, I would be changed! I would be different! Turn You unto me and I shall be turned! Revive me, and I shall be revived!” If there is such a longing as this in you, you are still a child of God and well may you exclaim, “I sleep, but my heart wakes. Lord, I would live near to You if I could. I am like a man that rides a sorry jade of a horse—the horse will not go, but he spurs him, hacks at the bit and strikes him again and again, for the man would go if he could—and so it is with me! ‘The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak’ and, ‘when I would do good, evil is present with me,’ and ‘how to perform that which is good I find not.’” Lord, help Your servants and let them not sleep any longer!  
III. Now, thirdly, here is A POTENT REMEDY—“the voice of my Beloved.”  
Some Christians try to get themselves into a healthy state of heart by looking to the Law of God, by self-examination and by a thousand other remedies. But, after all, the true cure for every disease in the Christian is in Christ Himself. You may try to chasten yourselves for your sins, but you will continue to sin if that is all that you do. Beloved, I know that the heart has a great objection to coming to Christ after being in a sleepy state. Old Legality whispers in our ears that, “You cannot go and trust Christ as you did, for see how badly you have behaved? You must not go to the fountain filled with blood, now, as you did at first, for look, you have played the harlot and you cannot go with the same confidence as you went at first.” “Ah, Old Legality, I can, and I will!” The Law never did bring us out of our state of nature and will it bring us now out of our state of lethargy? If the Law had first of all quickened us, then it would be well to look for restoration by the Law! But inasmuch as we found our first life by simply believing in Christ, the only way to renew that life is by believing in Jesus Christ again! I will listen, then, not to the voice of the curse, not to the condemnation of Moses, but to the voice of my Beloved, for no music is like His and nothing can so wake my soul as hearing Him speak to me. Hear, then, the voice of your Beloved in the Gospel! He is still your Beloved, though you are asleep! But He sleeps not and He calls to you, “Come to My bosom; come, My Beloved, open the doors of your heart to Me. Come, My affianced and Precious One, I have not put you away, though you have grieved Me and opened My wounds afresh. I have loved you with an everlasting love. Open the doors of your heart to Me and let Me come into communion with you.” It is the voice of Jesus speaking to you through your minister and He cries to you, “Come to Me now! Trust Me once again and your spiritual strength shall be renewed.”  
Then turn to this precious Book and you will hear the voice of your Beloved there. In words like these He speaks to you, “Turn, backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you.” Hear Him as He cries to you, “I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.” Hear Him as He cries to you, ungodly ones, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon”  
Hear, then, your Beloved’s voice and mark, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you do not hear the voice of your Beloved in the days of prosperity, you will be likely enough to hear it in affliction. If nothing else will keep you awake, the rod will. If you will sleep in prosperity, you shall have adversity—and sooner than you shall be lost, you shall lose everything. If, my Brothers and Sisters, God sees we cannot stand our present peace and prosperity, He will send His servant, Death, into our families. He will take away our possessions. He will place us in adversity. He will wither all our fair flowers and break all our idols and dash in pieces everything that stands between our soul and Himself! Oh, that we were wise, and would hear His gentle voice! “Be not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle,” but hear what the Lord says to you from the watchtower of His ministry and from the witness box of His Word—and then you shall escape the rod.  
And perhaps, my Brothers and Sisters, the Beloved may speak to you without the ministry and without the Word. If He shall do so, I pray you to catch His Words. It may be, while you are sitting here, or when you are walking home, or perhaps at the Lord’s Table, where some of us hope to meet, directly, you will hear Him whisper some kind, assuring Word that shall sink your fears again. I have known what it is to preach, sometimes, on a Sunday, and I have felt like a butcher who stands in his shop cutting out joints of meat for others—they are fed, but he, himself, has nothing. Or as a cook who prepares and sends up dinners, but cannot so much as get a taste, himself. Then I have gone downstairs to the Lord’s Table with a dull heart and, perhaps, in a second, as though a strange miracle has been worked, my soul has been as full of devout joy and holy mirth as ever spirit was out of Heaven! And if you ask me how that has been caused, I would say it has been caused by some kindly look of my Beloved, some loving glance of His eyes, or some sweet Word from His mouth—and my soul has rejoiced with unspeakable joy! Why should it not be so with you tonight? That is the best thing to waken you up! If your heart is dull and heavy, as soon as your Beloved speaks, you will at once awake to spirit and to life!  
My time has gone but I want to say this to you. I am sometimes, no, I am often haunted with the fear lest we, as a Church, should fall asleep. Oh, how greatly has the Lord blessed us these many years! And what favor seems to rest upon every agency! The preaching of the Word has been very successful, but still it is open to the conversion of many. In our classes how is God honored! Ah, you little know, some of you, what others of us see—and even we do not see one-tenth of what God is doing in the class conducted by one of our sisters here. And our Sunday schools may very well be a delight, for the Lord is working a great work in them! But I am always jealous over you, lest you should slumber. How easy it is to fall asleep! I often fear that my voice, which was once like a trumpet to you, will become like sleep music—that you will become so accustomed to it, and I, perhaps, shall become so dull and heavy, that the life of God will almost die out among us. My soul weeps and cries to God over this matter! My Master knows that I would cheerfully resign, that another voice might speak to you, if that would keep alive your zeal and enthusiasm. If it is, however, not my fault, even a changed ministry would not suffice. When Churches grow to a great size, people think they must always continue so, and that God will always bless them as He has done. Why, Sirs, as our first blessings came in answer to prayers—all future blessings must come in the same way!  
I remember well, when we used to meet together in Park Street to have holy communion with the Lord, how we used to wrestle with Him in prayer, so much so that I have scarcely been able to pronounce the benediction, much less give any address, because we all seemed to be carried away in the mighty majesty of wrestling prayer! We have now, sometimes, very choice seasons, but I am afraid not altogether such as we once had. At any rate, if there is any falling off, I thank God there is very little, indeed. It is scarcely perceptible as yet, but how soon may there be, unless we watch and are jealous with a holy jealousy? Let us work with Christian earnestness in prayer. O you who have done little for Christ of late, I pray you, do more for Him! You who think your time of service is over and that you may retire like pensioners, and no more fight, I want you to enlist again! Put on the colors once more as if you were but raw recruits! You who once could defy persecution and stand up in the street to preach Christ and laugh at all your fears, gather up your courage once again! Oh, that you would wake up, as a Church, and put on your beautiful array of past times when you were despised and persecuted—and the minister’s name was a byword and a proverb, and you, yourselves, because you were linked with him, were thought to be fools and the off-scouring of all things! But now I tremble lest we should grow respectable and great, and lest men should think we are respectable and depart from us. My soul begs and beseeches you to renew your prayers for me, that I may preach with greater vigor. What if my ministry should become as dull and stupid as the ministry of onehalf of my Brothers—what if it should become as useless and as unprofitable as the ministry of nine out of ten who occupy the pulpit? I had sooner die than live to be such a being as many who stand up in the pulpit wholly to waste people’s time and not to win souls! My spirit pants to have the consuming zeal of Baxter and the earnest, passionate enthusiasm of Whitefield—but I cannot get it except through your prayers! Or getting it, it cannot be maintained without your vehement cries and entreaties before the Lord!  
Perhaps we, as a Church, have been brought to our present state for a great purpose which has never dawned upon us. We have already done something for God—we are filling the pulpits of our village churches with men sound in the faith and earnest for God. We are erecting a great barrier against the everyday increasing encroachment of heresy and infidelity—but we need to do something more and something looms upon us in the future—I scarcely know what—some high and holy purpose which this Church has been brought up to this point to accomplish. Shall we draw back? Men of Ephraim, will you draw back in the day of battle? Will you be condemned for not coming to the help of the Lord against the mighty? Shall the angel pronounce over you the sentence, “Ichabod, for the Glory of the Lord has departed from you because of your declining to continue earnest in zeal”? If it is so to any extent, let us return unto the Lord! Let us take to Christ words of repentance and faith and let us beseech Him to make this Church again His buckler and twoedged sword and to make His minister once more a captain in the midst of the Lord’s hosts, for the day of the Lord is mighty and the battle of the Lord is terrible—and every man must take his place and every soldier must draw his weapon from his thigh—for the day of the Lord draws near and the battle of God is to be fought now, even now! Let us arise, my Brothers and Sisters! Let us rush like lions to the prey, like swift eagles to the chase! And God shall help us, God shall help us, and that right early!  
This Church cries tonight, “I sleep.” But she can also say, “my heart wakes.” The heart of the Church is still awake! I think my voice to you tonight is an echo of the voice of your Beloved. Sisters, Brothers, bestir yourselves! Let us cry mightily unto God! Let us labor for the winning of souls! Let us pant and pray for a great increase to our membership and God will save sinners, in answer to our prayer, and His name shall be glorified forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
EXODUS 12:1-27.

Verses 1, 2. And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. And for this reason that, now, as a nation, they were to begin their separate history, separate in existence from all the rest of mankind!

3, 4. Speak you unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house: and if the household is too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. The separation of the lamb was to take place some four days before the time of its slaughter. Probably it was kept in the house, according to the Jewish tradition it was so, and they would hear it bleating and be reminded of the purpose for which it was to be slain.

5. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: you shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats. You know what a type this is of Christ, “without blemish,” offered up for us in the very fullness of His strength, in the prime and glory of His Manhood, giving Himself up to be our Paschal Lamb, “The Lamb of God.”

6. And you shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. Just as the sun went down, or just before it set for the evening. There is also the marginal reading “between the two evenings.” The evening before the sun set, was the first, and then the daylight after the sun set was the second evening.

7. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. Not on the threshold, lest it should be trodden upon—and woe be unto the man who shall trample upon the blood of Christ! On the two side posts and on the lintel was placed the mark indicating that God had redeemed the inmates of that house with blood.

8, 9. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the innards thereof. We are to have a whole Christ, with His head of wisdom and His heart of love, the walk and conversation of Christ, and all the inward secret life and Grace of Christ to be ours.

10. And you shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire. Not a bone was to be left for the Egyptians to treat with dishonor, but all was to be consumed.

11, 12. And thus shall you eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord’s Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. All those false gods had been smitten in the different plagues and now, inasmuch as the Egyptians regarded the first-born in the family with veneration, the last stroke was about to be struck—and Pharaoh and all his subjects would stagger under the tremendous blow.

13. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are. Oh that we would all look upon the blood of Jesus as a token—a token of Divine Love in giving the Well-Beloved to die for us—a token that Justice has had its due—a token that we are perfectly secure forever!

13. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you. It is God’s view of the blood of Christ, which is the all-important matter! When He looks at Christ upon the Cross and is satisfied with the Atonement that He there offered, the Lord passes over all those for whom Christ died as a Substitute.

13-15. And the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever. Seven days shall you eat unleavened bread; even the first day you shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. Therefore he was no partaker in the redemption purchased by blood. He who is not purged from hypocrisy may say what he likes, but the blood will not save him unless he repents—there must be the putting away of this leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, or else even the blood of Atonement will not avail.

16. And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you, no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you. What rest this brought into the houses of the Israelites! There was not only deliverance from the plagues, but there was also rest from all manner of work. Herein is the blessedness of the blood of the Lamb—when it comes to the home and the heart of the Believer, it gives him rest of soul while others are toiling in vain to get relief by their own works!

17-25. And you shall observe the feast of unleavened bread, for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall you observe the day in your generation, by an ordinance forever. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whoever eats that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger, or born in the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall you eat unleavened bread. Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the Passover. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin, and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians and when He sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the Destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. And you shall observe this thing for an ordinance to you and to your sons forever. And it shall come to pass, when you come to the land which the LORD will give you. According as He has promised, that you shall keep this service. What? Were they never to forget the slaying of the lamb and the sprinkling of the blood? No, never! Not when they came to Canaan, to the land that flowed with milk and honey, and when God had worked other great marvels for them? No, never! And the highest honor that we shall ever have will be this, to be able truthfully to sing—

*“A monument of Grace,  
A sinner saved by blood.”*

26, 27. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? That you shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’S Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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NEARER AND DEARER  
NO. 793

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 2, 1868, BY C. H. SPURGEON**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I sleep, but my heart wakes: it is the voice of my beloved that knocks, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? My beloved put his hand by the hole of the door, and my heart was moved for him. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spoke: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. The watchmen that want about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I am sick of love.”  
Song of Solomon 5:2-8.**

THE most healthy state for a Christian is that of unbroken and intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. From such a state of heart he should never decline. “Abide in Me, and I in you,” is the loving precept of our ever loving Lord. But, alas, my Brethren, as in this world our bodies are subject to many sicknesses, so our souls, also, by reason of the body of this death with which we are encompassed, are often sorely afflicted with sin, sickness, and an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the Lord. We are not what we might be. We are not what we should be. We are not what we shall be. We are not what we wish to be. I fear that many of us are not walking in the light of God’s countenance, are not resting with our heads upon the Savior’s bosom, nor sitting with Mary at the Master’s feet. We dwell in Kedar rather than Zion, and sojourn in Mesech rather than Jerusalem.

Spiritual sickness is very common in the Church of God, and the root of the mischief lies in distance from Jesus—following Christ afar off—and yielding to a drowsy temperament. Away from Jesus, away from joy. Without the sun the flowers pine. Without Jesus our hearts faint. My object, this morning, is to put myself into the hands of the Holy Spirit that He may now come, and, like a physician, prescribe for you, if any of you in your hearts have become like the spouse in this part of the Song, that you may as fully imitate her in that which is good as in that which is blameworthy. If you do not soon find your Beloved to your soul’s joy, may you at least, like the spouse, declare that you are “sick of love,” and continue to follow His track until you overtake Him.

I. Commencing where the text begins, we observe that the spouse confesses A VERY COMMON SIN. She cries, “I sleep.” She had no right to be asleep, for her beloved knew no rest. He was standing outside in the cold street, with his head wet with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. Why should she be at ease? He was anxiously seeking her, how was it that she could be so cruel as to yield to slumber? It is a most unseasonable thing, my Brothers and Sisters, for any of us to be indolent and indifferent, for we profess to have gone forth to meet the Bridegroom, and it is shameful for us to sleep because He tarries for a little while.

The world is perishing. We are sent into the world instrumentally to be its saviors—how dishonorable that with such necessities for activity and with such noble ends to be served by industry—we should fold our arms and delight ourselves in indolence! Nothing can be more inexcusable than for us to sleep, seeing that we are not of the night nor of darkness. If we had been the children of the night it might seem according to our nature for us to be sluggards. But we have avowed that the light of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has shone into our eyes—let us not, therefore, sleep as others do —but let us watch and be sober, for they that sleep, sleep in the night. And since the night is past to us, it is highly indecent and improper that we should still continue to toss upon the bed of sloth.

No time for slumber, it seems to me, can be more unseasonable to the Christian than the present one, for the world is reeking with wickedness, and superstitions like the frogs of Egypt are covering the land. Everyone who is but so much as half awake can see the enemy industriously sowing tares among the wheat! Shall the watchmen of Zion continue to slumber on their watchtowers when the foe is undermining the bulwarks? Shall the shepherds sleep when the wolf has broken into the fold? Shall the seamen sleep when the gale is furiously driving the vessel upon the rocks? So far as our own hearts are concerned we have no private reasons for slumbering, for our daily cares require watchfulness. The temptations which assail us every hour demand of us that we should stand with our loins girt—our abounding enemies all warn us that our danger is extreme unless we are always fully equipped in our celestial armor.

If we must sleep, let it be in a less dangerous position than these hostile lands through which we march today. There will be rest enough on the other side of Jordan where the drawn sword is exchanged for the welltuned harp. But to be careless now is to sleep in the midst of a bloody conflict, to dream upon the verge of a precipice, and to sport in the jaws of death! From our beds let the Master’s voice arouse us, for He cries aloud, “What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” Do you not find, my Brethren, that almost unconsciously to yourselves a spirit of indifference steals over you? You do not give up private prayer, but alas, it becomes a mere mechanical operation. You do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, but still your bodily presence is all that is given and you derive no refreshment from the unspiritual exercise.

Have you not sat at the Lord’s Table spiritually asleep? Has not the heavenly Watcher detected your soul nodding when the sacred emblems have been spread before you, or even in your mouth? Have you not been content with the bare symbols, which are barrenness, while the spiritual essence, which is marrow and fatness, you have not tasted? I find from the very fact that I am always engaged in the Master’s service from the early morning till far into the night, that I become dull and carnal. I become cumbered with much serving so that I have to question the vitality of my religion because its freshness and vigor flag. It is grievous to go on like a clock which is wound up, not because you rejoice in the work, but because you must.

My soul shudders at the thought of routine religion, formal service, dead devotion, mechanical godliness! What a mercy to reach the fresh springs, to feel a daily renewed youth, an anointing with fresh oil! For this I pine and pant. One gets driving on in the dark, as coachmen sometimes do when they are asleep on the box—dangerous work, this! I know that I am safe in Christ, but I would gladly suffer anything rather than become habitually of a slumbering heart. Better smart under the long whip of affliction, or feel the stings of conscience, or even the darts of the devil than lie down in carnal security’s lap to be shorn of one’s locks by the Philistines! Yet I fear this has been my case. I do not know how far my confession may be echoed by my Brothers today, but I am shrewdly suspicious that the more wakeful you are, the more heartily will you acknowledge a terrible tendency in the other direction.

Again let me remind you that to sleep now is an evil thing, dangerous to yourselves, a cruel thing to others, an ungrateful act towards Christ and dishonorable to His cause. Shall such a King be served by lie-a-bed soldiers? Shall His midnight pleadings be repaid by our daylight sleepiness? Shall an agony of bloody sweat be recompensed by heavy eyelids and yawning mouths? Away, forever away, O you who are redeemed by the Well-Beloved, with this detestable slumber, of which I fear you must honestly confess yourselves to have been guilty!

II. The song before us reminds us of A HOPEFUL SIGN. “My heart wakes.” What a riddle the Believer is! He is asleep, and yet he is awake! His true self, the I, the veritable Ego of the man is asleep—but yet his heart, his truest self, his affections are awake. The Believer is a standing paradox. He cannot even understand himself. The wakefulness of the heart, does it not mean just this? “I sleep, but I am not content to be asleep”? The true Believer is not satisfied to slumber. Time was when if he could have pacified his conscience, he would have been extremely thankful, however deadly might have been the drug which caused the slumber. But now the man starts, shivers, tosses to and fro in his sleep, is tired by his rest, dreams horribly, and cries to be awakened.

The saved man cannot be happy in a false and rotten peace. The Divine life within struggles against the monstrous serpent of sin which tries to twist its folds of sleep around it. No renewed heart can enjoy perfect rest while conscious of being an idler in the vineyard, and a loiterer in the race. Backsliding Believer, does your heart wake? If so, you will know it, for it will smite you, it will upbraid you and demand of you whom you are, that you should thus behave yourself! Elect of God, and yet asleep while Jesus is dishonored? Redeemed by blood, and yet misspending time which belongs to your Redeemer? Married to Christ, and yet absent from your Husband and content without a smile from His dear face? How can it be? Be ashamed and be confounded, and never show your face anymore, for this is ingratitude of the deepest dye!

It is a hopeful sign when a man can conscientiously say as much as the spouse in this case, but remember it is not much to say. Do not pride yourself upon it. Be ashamed that you should be asleep at all. Do not congratulate yourself that your heart is awake. Be thankful that infinite love affords you Divine Grace enough to keep your heart alive, but be ashamed that you have no more when more may be had and should be had. Mere longings and moans are so small a work of Grace that they should alarm rather than console. It will be a foul temptation of Satan it you are led to say, “I am content to sleep so long as my heart does but wake.” Firm resolves of amendment are necessary but something more than resolves.

Alas, I have need to add these few words because the most of our resolutions vanish into thin air. We get as far as this, “I am not quite content to be in such a lukewarm state of mind, and I will therefore, by-and-by, endeavor to arouse myself and renounce this downy bed of sloth.” This is not much to say, for it is no more than we ought to do. It is all the less, because we so seldom keep the vow, but like the disturbed sluggard we turn over to the other side and mutter sullenly, “A little more folding of the hands to sleep.” I fear that there are thousands of God’s children who are enough awake to know that they are asleep, convinced enough of their wrong to know that they are wrong, and to hope that they will one day be better, but alas, they continue in the same unhallowed condition!

May I invite every Believer to make a strict examination of his own spiritual state. My Brother, you may be sleeping through great worldly prosperity, for nothing tends to slumber more surely than a gentle rocking in the cradle of luxury. On the other hand you may be sleeping because of overwhelming sorrow, even as the 11 fell asleep when our Lord was in the garden. Some make a downy pillow of their wealth, but others fall asleep in their poverty like Jacob with a stone for his pillow. To be surrounded with constant worldly occupation, to be oppressed with many cares in business—this is to pass through the enchanted ground. And happy is the man who has Grace enough to overcome the influence of his position.

Now, if your heart is today sufficiently awake to tell you that you are not living as near to God as you were some years ago—that you have not the love to Him you once had and that your warmth and zeal for Christ has departed from you—I beseech you hear the voice of Jesus Christ: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” “Repent and do your first works.” Turn unto your Savior now, that this very day before the sun goes down you may rejoicingly exclaim, “I have found Him whom my soul loves! I will hold Him, and will not let Him go.”

III. The third thing in the text is A LOVING CALL. Asleep as the spouse was, she knew her husband’s voice, for this is an abiding mark of God’s people. “My sheep hear My voice.” A half sleeping saint still has spiritual discernment enough to know when Jesus speaks. At first the Beloved simply knocked. His object was to enter into fellowship with His Church, to reveal Himself to her, to unveil His beauties, to solace her with His Presence. And such is the object of our blessed Lord this morning in bringing us to this House. I hope this sermon will be a knock—I trust my discourse may give many knocks at the door of every backsliding Believer here.

Jesus cries, “Open to Me! Open to Me!” Will you not admit your Savior? You love Him. He gave Himself for you, He pleads for you! Let Him into your soul, commune with Him this morning. When you turn to read His Word, every promise is a knock. He says, “Come and enjoy this promise with Me, for it is yes and amen in Me.” Every threat is a knock. Every precept is a knock. In outward Providences every benefit which we receive through our Mediator’s intercession is a gentle knock from His pierced hands, saying, “Take this mercy, but open to Me! It comes to you through Me! Open to Me!” Every affliction is a knock at our door. That wasting sickness, that broken bone, that consumptive daughter, that rebellious child, that burning house, that shipwrecked vessel and dishonored bill— all these are Christ’s knockings, saying, “These things are not your joys, these worldly things can afford no rest for the soles of your feet. Open to Me, open to Me! These idols I am breaking, these joys I am removing. Open to Me, and find in Me a solace for all your woes.”

Knocking, alas, seems to be of little use to us. We are so stubborn and so ungenerous towards our heavenly Bridegroom, that He, the Crucified, the immortal Lover of our souls may stand and knock, and knock, and knock again, and the preacher and adversity may be His double hammer, but yet the door of the heart will not yield. Then the bridegroom tried his voice. If knocking would not do, he would speak in plain and plaintive words, “Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled.” The Lord Jesus Christ has a sweet way of making the Word come home to the conscience. I mean not, now, that effectual and irresistible power of which we shall speak by-and-by, but that lesser force which the heart may resist, but which renders it very guilty for so doing.

Some of you who are the Lord’s people have heard soft and sweet whispers in your heart, saying, “You are saved. Now, My Beloved, live in the light of salvation. You are a member of My mystical body, draw near and enjoy fellowship with Me, such as a member ought to have with its Head.” Do you not see the Lord Jesus beckoning to you with a gentle finger, and saying, “Come with Me oftener into the closet of secret prayer. Get oftener alone to muse on things Divine. Acquire the habit of walking with Me in your business. Abide in Me, and I in you”? Do not these admonitions visit you like angels’ whispers, and have you not too often resisted them? Have you not been thoughtful for them for the moment, and recorded them in your diary, and then forgotten them and lived as frigidly as you had done before, though the Sun of Righteousness was waiting to arise upon you with healing beneath His wings?

Now, Beloved, observe the appeals which the beloved here makes. He says, “Open to me,” and his plea is the love the spouse has to him, or professes to have—the love he has to her, and the relationship which exists between them. “Open to me, my sister.” Next akin to me, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, born of the same mother, for Jesus is “the Seed of the woman,” even as we are. One with us in our humanity, He takes each human heart that believes to be His mother, and sister and brother. “Open to Me, My sister.” If you are so nearly related to Jesus, why do you act so coldly towards Him? If, indeed, He is your closest kinsman, how is it that you live so far remote, and come not to visit Him, neither open the doors of your heart to entertain Him?

“My dove,” my gentle one, my favorite, my innocent. Oh, if you are, indeed, His dove, how can you rest away from the dovecote? How can you be satisfied without your Mate? One turtledove pines without the other, how is it you do not pine to have fellowship with the dear Husband of your soul? “My Love,” Jesus calls us what we profess to be! We say we love Him. Yes, and unless we have been dreadfully deceived, we do love Him. It brings the tears to my eyes to think that I should so often be indifferent to Him, and yet I can say it as before Him, “You know all things, You know that I love You.” Brothers and Sisters, if we love Him, let us crave His Presence in our souls! How miserable must it be to live as some do day after day without a real soul-stirring Heaven-moving prayer! Are there not some who continue week after week without searching the Word and without rejoicing in the Lord?

Oh, wretched life of banishment from bliss! Dear Hearer, can you be satisfied to go forth into the world and to be so occupied with it that you never have a desire towards Heaven? If so, mourn over such backsliding, since it exiles you from your best Beloved’s bosom! The bridegroom adds another title, “my undefiled.” There is a spiritual chastity which every Believer must maintain. Our heart belongs to no one but Christ. All other lovers must be gone. He fills the throne. He has bought us—no other paid a part of the price—He shall have us altogether. He has taken us into personal union with Himself—of His mystical body we make up a part. We ought, therefore, to hold ourselves as chaste virgins unto Christ, undefiled with the pollutions of the flesh and the rivalries of earthly loves. To the undefiled, Jesus says, “Open to Me.”

Oh, I am ashamed, this morning, to be preaching from such a text! Ashamed of myself most of all, that I should need to have such a text applied to my own soul! Why, Beloved, if Christ deigns to enter into such a poor miserable cottage as our nature is, ought we not to entertain the King with the best we have, and feel that the first seat at our table is all too poor and too mean for Him? What if in the midst of this dark night our Beloved comes to us who profess to love Him? Shall He have to knock and speak and plead by every sweet and endearing title, and yet shall we refuse to arise and give Him the fellowship He craves? Did you notice that powerful argument with which the heavenly Lover closed His cry? He said, “My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night.”

Ah, sorrowful remembrances, for those drops were not the ordinary dew that fall upon the houseless traveler’s unprotected head! His head was wet with scarlet dew, and His locks with crimson drops of a tenfold night of God’s desertion, when He “sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” My Heart, how vile you are, for you shut out the Crucified! Behold the Man crowned with thorns and scourged, with traces of the spit of the soldiers—can you close the door on Him? Will you despise the “despised and rejected of men”? Will you grieve the “Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief”? Do you forget that He suffered all this for you, for you, when you deserve nothing at His hands? After all this will you give Him no recompense, not even the poor return of admission to your loving communing?

I am afraid some of you Believers think it a very small thing to live a day or two without fellowship with God in prayer. Probably you have fallen into such a sleepy state that you can read your Bible without enjoyment, and yet you do not feel it to be any very remarkable thing that it is so. You come to and fro to the Tabernacle and listen to the Gospel, and it does not come home to you with the power it once had—and yet you do not feel at all alarmed about it. My Master does not treat your state of mind with the same indifference that you do, for it causes Him pain, and though as Mediator His expiatory griefs are finished once and for all, yet He has anguish, still, over your indifference and coldness of heart. These sorrows are the drops that bedew His head—these are the dewdrops that hang about His raven locks.

O will you grieve Him? Will you open all His wounds and crucify Him afresh? Will you put Him to open shame? Doors of the heart, fly open! Though rusted upon your hinges, open at the coming of the sorrowful Lover who was smitten of God and afflicted! Surely the argument of His grief should prevail instantly with every honest heart! He whose head is wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night must not be kept standing in the street—it behooves us that He is entertained with our warmest love! It is imperative that He is housed at once.

IV. Yet the spouse hastened not to open the door, and I am afraid the like delay may be charged upon some of us. Our shame deepens as we pursue our theme and think how well our own character is photographed here by the wise man, for notice, in the fourth place, that after the knocking and the pleading, the spouse made A MOST UNGENEROUS EXCUSE. She sat like a queen and knew no sorrow. She had put off her garments and washed her feet as travelers do in the East before they go to rest. She was taking her ease in full security and therefore she said to her beloved, “I have put off my tunic, I cannot robe myself again. As for my feet, I have washed them, and to tread the floor to open the door would defile them. Therefore, I pray you have me excused.”

A bad excuse was, in this case, far worse than none, because it was making one sin an apology for another. Why did she put off her coat? The bridegroom had not come—she should have stood with her loins girt about and her lamp trimmed. Why had she washed her feet? It was right to do so if the emblem had indicated purity, but it indicated carnal ease. She had left holy labor for carnal rest. Why did she do these things? She thus makes her wicked slumber and inaction to be an excuse for barring out her husband. My dear Brothers and Sisters, there is a temptation which is very cunning on the part of Satan, and perhaps he will exercise that upon some of you this morning. While I have been preaching, you have said, “Well, that is just like me. The text fully opens up my experience.” And then the devil will say, “Be satisfied! You see you are in the same condition as the spouse was, therefore it is all right.”

Oh, damnable temptation! What can be more vile than this, that because another has sinned against the Beloved, I am to be content to sin in the same way? Perhaps you will turn this sad course of conduct in the ancient spouse into an excuse for your own negligence. Shall I English the excuse she made? It is this—“O Lord, I know that if I am to enter into much fellowship with You, I must pray very differently from what I have done of late. But it is too much trouble! I cannot stir myself to energy so great. My time is so taken up with my business! I am so constantly engaged that I could not afford even a quarter of an hour for retirement. I have to cut my prayers short.” Is this, in part, the miserable excuse?

Shall I go on? Shall I expose more of this dishonorable apology? It is this—“I do not want to begin an examination of myself. It may reveal so many unpleasant truths. I sleep, and it is very comfortable to sleep. I do not want to be driven out of my comforts. Perhaps if I were to live nearer to Christ I should have to give up some of the things which I so much enjoy. I have become conformed to the world of late. I am very fond of having Mr. So-and-So to spend an hour with me in the evening and his talk is anything but that which my Master would approve of but I cannot give him up. I have taken to read religious novels. I could not expect to have the Lord Jesus Christ’s company when I am poring over such trash as that, but still I prefer it to my Bible. I would sooner read a fool’s tale than I would read of Jesus’ love.”

How ashamed I feel this morning, to have to put into words like these, the sins of some of you! But my words are literal truth. Do not many of you live as if you had a name to live, and were dead? Jesus Christ comes and knocks this morning, and reminds you that the happiest life is living near to Him! That the holiest, purest, sweetest hours you ever had were those in which you threw yourselves upon Him and gave up all beside. He reminds you of your better days. O do not, I pray you, offer Him frivolous and vexatious excuses. O despise not your Lord who died for you—in whose name you live and with whom you hope to reign forever—who is to wrap you about with glory in the day of His appearing!

Let it not be said that He is pushed into a corner and His love despised while the vile painted-faced world takes up the love of your life! It should not be so! It is baseness itself on our part when it is so. Still as a wonder of wonders, although shamefully and cruelly treated, the beloved husband did not go away. We are told that he “put his hand by the hole of the door,” and then the heart of his spouse was moved for him. In the Eastern door there is generally a place near the lock into which a man may put his hand, and there is a pin inside which, if removed, unfastens the door. Each one of these locks is different from another, so that no one usually understands how to open the door except the master.

So the Master in this case did not actually open the door—you notice the spouse did that, but he pulled out the pin, so that she could see his hand—she could see that the doer was not fast closed now he had removed the bar. “My Beloved put his hand by the hole of the door.” Does not this picture THE WORK OF EFFECTUAL GRACE, when the Truth of God does not appeal to the ear alone, but comes to the heart? When it is no longer a thing thought on and discussed and forgotten, but an arrow which has penetrated into the reins, and sticks fast in the loins to our wounding—and ultimately to our spiritual healing?

No hand is like Christ’s hand! When He puts His hand to the work it is well done. He “put in His hand”—not His hand on me to smite me, but His hand in me to comfort me, to sanctify me. He put in His hand, and straightway His beloved began to pity Him, and to lament her unkindness. She thought, as she looked at that hand pierced with the nail mark, “O Jesus, have I no love for You? Have You done all this for me, and have I been a transparent hypocrite after all, and locked You out when I ought to have admitted You? I have used no other friend so badly. I should have been ashamed to have thought of such conduct even to a foe. But You! O You who have done more for me than mother, brother, husband, friend could have done! To You I have been an ingrate most base and willful.”

Her heart was moved with repentance. Her eyes gushed with tears and she rose to let him in. As she arose she first buckled on her garments, and then she searched for the alabaster box of precious ointment that she might anoint his weary feet and dewy locks. No sooner did she reach the door, than notice the love of God to her! Her “hands dropped with myrrh, and her fingers with sweet smelling myrrh.” Here is the Holy Spirit come to help our infirmities. She begins to pray and the Holy Spirit helps her! She begins already to enjoy the sweetness, not of communion, but of the very desire after communion. For, Beloved, when our tears begin to flow because we are far from Christ, those holy drops have myrrh in them. When we begin to pray for Divine Grace there is a blessedness even about our yearning, and longing, and sighs, and panting, and pining! Our fingers drop with sweet smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. A function from the Holy One descends upon the soul when it is earnestly seeking for its Beloved. But that ought never to satisfy us!

Behold another temptation of the devil—he will say to you, “On this very morning you felt some sweetness in hearing about Christ. Your hands have evidently dropped with myrrh upon the handles of the lock.” Yes, but still it is not the myrrh that will content the loving heart, it is Christ she wants! And if not only hands, but lips and feet and her whole frame had dropped with myrrh, this would never have contented her until she could get the Lord Himself. I pray you, Beloved, if the life of Jesus is in you of a truth, rest not satisfied with all the Graces and the promises and the doctrines and the gifts of the Spirit of God, but seek after this most excellent gift—to know Christ, and to be found in Him—to say of Him, “He loved me, and gave Himself for me,” And, yet more, “His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me.” It was that effectually putting in of the hand that moved her. O Lord, grant the like unto us!

VI. But now, in the sixth place, observe THE DESERVED CHASTISEMENT which the bridegroom inflicted. When her spouse was willing to commune, she was not. And now that she is willing, and even anxious, what happens? I wish to describe this to you because some of you may have felt it, and others of you who never have, but have preserved your intimacy with Christ up till now, may be warned by it. The newly awakened one went to the door and opened it to her beloved, for though he was gone, she did not doubt of her love, nor of his love to her. “I opened to my beloved, but,” says the Hebrew, “He had gone, he had gone.”

The voice of lamentation, the reduplicated cry of one that is in bitter distress! There must have been a sad relief about it to her sinful heart, for she must have felt afraid to look her dear one in the face after such heartless conduct. But sad as it would have been to face him, it was infinitely sadder to say, “He is gone, he is gone.” Now she begins to use the means of Grace in order to find Him. “I sought Him,” she said, “and I found Him not. I went up to the House of God. The sermon was sweet, but it was not sweet to me, for He was not there. I went to the communion table, and the ordinance was a feast of fat things to others, but not to me, for He was not there! I sought Him, but I could not find Him.”

Then she betook herself to prayer. She had neglected that before, but now she supplicated in real earnest, “I called Him. I said to Him, Come, my Beloved, my heart wakes for You. Jesus, reveal Yourself to me as You do not to the world”—

*“I thirst, I faint, I die to prove  
The sweetness of redeeming love,  
Your love, O Christ, to me.”*

Her prayers were many. She kept them up by day and by night. “I called Him, but He gave me no answer.” She was not a lost soul—do not think that! Christ loved her just us much, then, as before, no, loved her a great deal more. If there can be any change in Christ’s love, He must have much more approved of her when she was seeking Him in sorrow than when she was reclining upon the conch and neglecting Him. But He was gone, and all her calling could not bring Him back.

What did she do? Why, she went to His ministers—she went to those who were the watchmen of the night, and what did they say to her? Did they cheer her? Perhaps they had never passed through her experience. Perhaps they were mere hirelings. However it might be, they struck her. Sometimes the truthful preaching of the Gospel will smite a child of God when he gets out of his walk with God, and it is right it should be so. But they did more than strike, they “wounded” her until she began to bleed from the wounds given by the very men whom she hoped would have comforted her. “Surely,” she might have said, “you know where the city’s King is, for you are the city’s guards!” But she received no comfort.

When a poor soul in this case flies to an unsympathizing minister, he will say, “Well, you say you have lost the Presence of Christ, you should bestir yourself to find it.” “Yes,” says the spouse, “I rose up and opened to Him.” “You should use the means.” “But I have used the means. I sought Him, but I found Him not.” “You should pray.” “I did pray. I called Him, but He gave me no answer.” “Well then,” perhaps they will add, “you should wait patiently for Him.” “Oh, but,” she says, “I cannot, I must have Him now! I am sick of love.” And then perhaps the minister will be sharp, and say, “I fear you are not a child of God.”

Now what is that? Why, that is taking away the veil from the mourning seeker! That is plucking away the ensign of sincerity from the benighted seeker! No woman went into the streets of Jerusalem without her veil, unless she was of the baser sort, and the watchmen seemed to say to this woman, “You are of ill name, or you would not be here at this time of night crying out for one you have lost.” Oh, cruel work to pull off her veil and expose her, when she was already wretched enough! Sometimes a sharp sentence from a true minister may set a poor soul in the stocks who ought rather to have been comforted. I hope these hands will never pull away the veil from any of you poor mourning lovers of Christ. Far rather would these lips tell Him when I speak with Him that you are sick of love!

But it cannot be helped at all times, for when we are dealing with the hypocrite, the tender child of God thinks we mean him. And when we are speaking against the formalist, as we must do, the genuine Believer writes bitter things against himself. When the fan is in our hand, and we are seeking thoroughly to purge the floor, it sometimes happens that some of the lighter wheat gets blown a little away with the chaff, and so distress is brought to weak but real children of God. If so, remember it is not our fault, for we would not grieve you—it is your fault for having lost your Beloved, for if you had not lost Him, you would not have been saying, “Tell me where I shall find Him!” You would have been rejoicing in Him, and no watchmen would have struck you, and no keepers of the walls would have taken away your veil from you, for Jesus would have been your Protector and your Friend.

VII. Now, to close. As the poor spouse did not, then, find Christ, but was repulsed in all ways, she adopted A LAST EXPEDIENT. She knew that there were some who had daily fellowship with the King—daughters of Jerusalem who often saw him, and therefore she sent a message by them, “If you see my beloved, tell him that I am sick of love.” Enlist your brother saints to pray for you! Go with them to their gatherings for prayer. Their company will not satisfy you without Jesus, but their company may help you find Jesus. Follow the footsteps of the flock, and you may, by-and-by discover the Shepherd.

And what a message it is to send to Christ! Do not send it by other people’s lips only, send it by your own! Tell Him, “I am sick of love.” This is, of all things, the most painful, and the most happy thing in all the world. This is a sickness that I should like to die of, but I should like to feel it in rather a different shape from this. There are two love-sicknesses in Solomon’s Song. The one is when the spouse longs for the presence of her lord, and the second is when she gets that presence—then he is so glorious to her, that she is ready to die with excessive joy, and she exclaims, “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.”

If you cannot get the second, remember that the first is the clear way to it. Resolve in your heart, my Brothers and Sisters, that you never will be happy till you win the face of Christ! Settle it in your soul that there shall be no end to your cries and tears till you can say with all your heart, “My Beloved is near to me. I can speak to Him. I am in the enjoyment of His love.” If you can be content without it you shall go without it, but if you must have it you shall have it. If your hunger will break through stone walls to reach your Lord, no stone walls shall keep Him from you. If you are insatiable after Christ, He will feed you with Himself.

If you bid goodbye to all the dainties of the world and all its sweet draughts and its delicacies, and must have Christ, and Christ alone, then no hungering soul shall long be kept without Him. He must come to you. There are cords that draw Him to you at this hour. His love draws you to Him, but your love draws Him close to you. Be not afraid. Your soul shall be like the chariots of Amminadab—perhaps even this morning—and you shall go your way rejoicing! The Lord grant it may be so for His love’s sake. Amen.

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÷Son 5.6

THE SOUL’S DESERTION  
NO. 3552

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1917.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“My beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone.” Solomon’s Song 5:6.

The happiest condition of a Christian out of Heaven is to live in the conscious enjoyment of the Presence of the Lord Jesus. When the love of Christ is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, the Believer need not envy an angel his harp of gold! It matters not what may be his outward trial, the Holy Spirit is able to make the heart live above all surrounding circumstances, so that we can have summer in the midst of winter and pluck our ripest fruits when there are neither leaves nor fruits upon the tree. But the Christian is unhappy—unhappy to the utmost degree—whenever he loses the sense of the Presence of his Lord. Then the pillars of his house are made to tremble, his fresh springs are dried up, the sun is hid from his eyes and the sky is so dark overhead that he walks, rather wanders, about a world which cannot render to his soul any substantial comfort. Were he a worldling, he could live upon the world, but having been taught by Divine Grace to aspire after something nobler and better, the loss is exceedingly grievous to his spirit. I question whether the most of Christians do not sometimes lose the enjoyment of the Lord’s company. I question yet further whether there are not very many professors who live contentedly under that loss—nor can I account for this, except on the supposition that they can have known but little of that Presence in their best estate. Otherwise, they must be in a most sickly and slumbering condition of soul, gradually becoming worse and worse—or else they never could bear to have things as they are with them. It seems to me that a real Believer in a sound state of health no sooner loses the Presence of his Lord than he begins to cry for Him. Where has Christ gone? Why have I lost sight of Him? The sounds of His footsteps still linger in the ear. The Believer wakens and starts, and asks himself, “How is this? Where has my Beloved gone? What is it that has chased Him from me? I cannot live if He leaves me, therefore, let me speedily seek Him and never rest until once more I am restored to full communion with Him.” Let me, then, talk a little with such Believers as have lost, for awhile, the comfortable Presence of their Lord. The first question shall be—

I. WHY WAS THE BELOVED GONE?  
According to the text, He was gone. Read the preceding verses, or perhaps you have them upon your memories. The spouse had been asleep. This was the beginning of the mischief. “I sleep, but my heart wakes.” If we begin to fall asleep, we must not wonder if we miss the quickening and comforting influences of our Lord’s Presence. Jesus Christ did not put us in His Church that we might sleep away our time on earth. Do not fancy that such an active spirit as that which burned and blazed in our Savior’s flesh can be content to hold communion with lazy sluggards who toss upon their bed and say, “Yet a little more sleep and a little more folding of the arms to slumber.” It is the active Christian who keeps pace with Christ! Christ is a quick walker—if you crawl along the path of duty, He will soon leave you behind—until you begin to enquire, “Where is He gone,” and quicken your pace to overtake Him. Are there any here who have missed Christ’s Presence, and who may trace it to the fact that they have been drowsy in prayer of late, heavy in all the exercises of study and duty, and, in fact, altogether sleepy? Have they been without care for the conversion of others, having scarcely any concern, even, about their own children? Are they, perhaps, indifferent to the welfare of Christ’s Church, feeding little upon the Word and resorting but little to the assemblies of the saints? Marvel not if the Beloved withdraws Himself when His spouse does nothing but nod and sleep, instead of keeping company with Him in active service!  
After the spouse had fallen asleep, her Beloved came and knocked at the door, saying, “Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.” Yet she refused to open the door to him. Surely this is another sin which drives Christ away—when admonished for falling into a drowsy state, not to regard it. Depend upon it, there is extreme peril to a soul that does not accept the warning. Awful as it is to sin when unwarned, it is still more horrible to persevere in sin in the teeth of rebuke and after gentle, loving expostulations. What? Did conscience prick me and will I not be scrupulous? After having seen my fault and smarted for it, do I still persist in it? Have I been lukewarm and indifferent? Does the Holy Spirit visit me, remonstrate with me, and make me feel that I am gradually backsliding and little by little declining? Have I vowed and resolved that I would seek spiritual recovery and am I still as dull, careless, and unconcerned as ever? This argues ill and argues ill for my soul! The Beloved will not put up with these rebuffs forever. Out of love to us, He will hide His face. If we grieve Him, He will go. If we walk frowardly towards Him, He will soon walk frowardly towards us. These are God-provoking sins! It is a defying of His Spirit when you thus spurn His gentle admonitions!  
Note, further, that the spouse, when her Beloved knocked at the door, made idle excuses that she had taken off her cloak and her sandals, and could not put them on. She was taking her rest upon her couch and could not bring herself to come to the door to let him in. Ah, how often self-indulgence lies at the bottom of the sin that drives Christ away! A Believer cannot let his lower nature get the uppermost and yet find that he is walking agreeably to the Lord’s mind. Your spiritual nature ought to keep your mental nature under control—and your mental nature ought to keep your bodily or animal nature entirely in check. A man who is a thinker and a philosopher will scorn to let the mere passions govern him, but a true Christian, having a yet higher spirit within him than the mere mind, having that new living Seed within himself which comes from God, and leads him to God, should not and must not allow his baser nature to reign supreme! If we indulge the flesh, depend upon it, Christ will not be with us! He does not come to dwell with swine, but with men—but not with men of the earth, earthy, except in order to renew them and make them like Himself, who is the Second Man, the Lord from Heaven— to make them heavenly. If your conversation is to be with Christ, your conversation must be in Heaven! If you would enjoy the sunlight, you must not bow your face down to the earth. If you seek to be enriched in the things of God, you must not be forever groping among the dark pits and bogs, and morasses of earth. Oh, Soul, are you indulging yourself and taking things easy? Carnal security is one of your worst enemies! Do I hear any man say, “It is enough, my Soul—you have much spiritual goods laid up for many years—take your ease”? Do you think that there is no need for you to watch? Do you think you have become so experienced that there is no occasion for you to be much in prayer, for a word with you is as an hour with some? Do you imagine that there is no cause for you to be continually striving against your besetting sin because you have got such complete mastery over these infirmities? Oh, when we talk so, we betray the darkness in which we are living, the self-deception we are fostering, the corruption we are degenerating into and the desertion we are provoking! Such backsliding as this will soon make Jesus hide His face from us!  
Beloved, the simple reason of Christ’s conscious absence from our souls is, in most cases, sin. I say in most cases, for sometimes Christ may hide Himself in absolute Sovereignty, but I am always jealous lest we should charge God foolishly. You are so apt to put too many saddles on that stalking horse! There are such multitudes of professors who would even excuse their sins upon the plea of a Divine Sovereignty which exposed them to temptation, that I scarcely like to mention it. I believe that God does not afflict willingly or arbitrarily the children of men. Neither does Christ hide His face from His people for nothing—but your sins have separated between you and your God. He chastises us, not as silly parents may do, out of mere spleen or caprice, or to please themselves, as the Apostle seemed to think some fathers did in his day, for he says, “They verily chastened us after their own pleasure.” But when God chastens us, it is for our profit. Our good is His aim and His end in using the rod of correction. He makes us smart for the sin which seemed sweet. He nauseates our palate with the bitter fruits of disobedience, that we may afterwards relish the peaceable fruits of righteousness!  
Now, Beloved, in each individual case, the hiding of the Lord’s face may be occasioned by a different sin. It is very probable that my Lord thinks that to be a high sin in me which He would take little notice of in you. It is equally possible that He may think that to be peculiarly offensive in you which He would not visit in my case with stripes, for according to our constitution, our office, our experience, our light and our several circumstances, our transgressions may be estimated. You are not provoked, perhaps, by a good deal of noise from one of your children, but half that noise from another of your children would exceedingly vex you. Because the one happens to be of a quick, impetuous temperament, you set it down to natural disposition, but the other, being of gentler habit and quieter mood, you upbraid him for his excitement, as if it were of evil prepense and intended to aggravate and annoy! So you may have a confidential servant in your family, from whom you may reasonably expect more care, thoughtfulness and circumspection than you look for in any of the other servants. The more trust you repose, the more scrupulousness you require. Let us, then, each one according to his position, seek Grace to walk uprightly, carefully, tenderly. It has been well said that what an ordinary subject might do or say, one of the Cabinet Council must not even think. The favorite of kings has a dangerous path to walk—and though it is a blessed privilege to be the favorite of Heaven, it involves a very solemn responsibility. “You only have I known of all the inhabitants of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for your iniquities.” You can see defilement on a white slab which you would not have noticed on the common soil—and so there are sins which spoil the character of saints that would hardly be observed in ordinary society. The Presence of Christ can only be preserved with incessant watchfulness and inviolate fidelity. The sacred Dove is soon disturbed. The Beloved is soon awakened and made to stir. Hence it should be our cry, “I charge you by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love until he please.” Having thus considered the cause why the Beloved is gone, let us enquire—  
II. WHAT ENSUES UPON THE WITHDRAWAL OF HIS PRESENCE?  
Great mistakes have been made upon this subject. Some have supposed that Believers suddenly cease to be followers of Christ, go back into the world, apostatize and perish! But the Lord does not desert His people after this fashion. He has not cast away His people whom He did foreknow, and He never will! Has He put His hand to the work of their salvation? He will not permanently turn away from them! When he turns away, it is always with a gracious motive—hence the consequences, though often very sad—are not fatal. The withdrawal of His conscious Presence is not intended to slay us, though it brings us very low and would leave us a prey to destruction were it not that He stays His hand in time, and gives Grace to keep the soul alive under His desertion!  
As soon as Christ is gone, there is a suspension of those influences that once made the Christian happy and strong. The Holy Spirit no longer comforts the soul. The Word does not enliven or invigorate. The sweetest sermons fail to cheer the heart. Even the promises of God’s Holy Book are like lanterns without candles—they bring no light. When Christ hides His face from a disciple, his spirits flag and he feels a general depression. He cannot pray as it was his habit to do—he cannot preach as he once did. The holy duties to which he tenaciously clings become rather a burden than a pleasure. Instead of those delightful walks he had alone when his soul went up to God in quiet meditation, he finds his thoughts all dissipated, scattered here and there. Nor can he by any means concentrate—far less can he make his thoughts soar and mount towards Christ. He goes to his Bible—not as often as he did, nor yet so solemnly as he did—but the Book does not speak to him. God answers him neither by Urim nor by Thummim, nor by open voice. And now he does not seem to have the illuminations of God’s Spirit. He does not dive into the meaning of the Word as once he did. Providence, again, seems dark. The secret of the Lord does not appear to be with him as it formerly was. He has no enjoyment. The soul follows after God after a fashion, but, alas, he has to cry, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul, and why are you disquieted within me?” Thus Divine Influences are, for a while suspended.  
Then it follows that he loses much of his assurance. He used to know he was a Christian. Now he begins to sing, “‘Tis a point I long to know.” So he has to furbish up his old evidences and eat some of the stale food that he used to care little for when he used to live upon a daily portion from the King, even a portion from the King’s table. He sits down in the ashes and is glad to sit there. Sometimes he mourns because he cannot mourn, and frets because he cannot fret. While he sees his sin, he is afraid he has not a true feeling of it. Though he still looks to the Cross of Christ and to the precious blood of Atonement, he does not seem to have the power of looking that he once had, nor to derive that comfort from casting himself upon the finished work which before he did when Jesus Christ was manifestly with Him.  
But perhaps it will aid you in realizing the dark features of this desertion if I use a little simile. You see full often a house that is left by its former tenant and is shut up. Jesus Christ never altogether leaves a heart of which He has once taken possession. There is one room in a

Believer’s soul which the Holy Spirit never quits. Where He comes, He comes to abide and to abide forever! Still, that room is so secret that while He resides there, the whole house may look as if it was deserted. Compare that empty house with a cheerful home. What a contrast between its previous and present condition! Why, the joy has gone from it! The blinds are drawn down—or, perhaps, the windows stare at you in their desolation. The house looks unfurnished. It is no longer an ornament to the street. Its decorations have vanished since its inhabitants have fled. The house is there, with all its capacities, but the home, with all its vivacities, is lacking. The life and the loveliness have gone from it! And so a child of God soon loses all his joy and comfort when the Tenant of his soul is withdrawn. No sparkling of the eyes, no singing of the great hallelujahs, no sounding of the cymbals, even the high-sounding cymbals. He will be glad enough to get a note out of the harp, now! He cannot get up to those glorious songs which once made his spirit keep tune with the angels because the joys of Heaven had come down to earth!  
Then the house, being empty, is sure to get into a state of filth. There is nobody to clean the dust—all sorts of spiders and foul things get into the corners and crannies—and the longer the house is shut up, the more these creatures multiply. Down in the cellar there is a little vegetation— long yellow stalks and roots trying to live—left there by some old inhabitant. But there is nothing fair, nor beautiful. All is uncomfortable. So it gets to be in our hearts! All sorts of evils spring up. Evils we little suspected, which would have been kept in check by the Presence of Christ, begin to multiply and increase upon us, and the little good that is in us seems to be an unhealthy sprout bringing forth nothing unto perfection!  
Then a house with nobody in it decays. How the metal rusts! How the paint gets stained! How the wood begins to rot! How the whole thing has a damp kind of smell! It is all going to ruin. Why, 10 years of habitation would not do so much mischief as these 12 months of shutting up. When Jesus Christ is gone, everything is amiss—love nearly expires, hope scarcely glimmers, faith is well-nigh paralyzed, no Grace is in lively exercise! Without the life of God in the soul, there is a total collapse and a chill strikes right through the spirit. Has the house been long empty? The boys outside are pretty sure to mark it for their sport, and to break the windows. In fact, it stands exposed to all sorts of outward damage. So, too, with malice and mischief, the devil will come upon a man when he knows that he has lost the light of God’s Countenance. What a horrible old coward he is! When the child of God is rejoicing in the company of Christ, he has not often to encounter Satan. The accuser of the Brothers and Sisters well knows how to time his tactics and his temptations! But when he sees that the Lord has departed, then Satan takes courage and attacks the child of God to his serious damage and hurt! I heard the other day of a good country plowman who told a story of victory over temptation in his own simple style. He was a man who feared God above his neighbors and seemed to live above the world in spiritual things. A minister asked him if he did not get tempted and worried sometimes by Satan. “Yes,” he said, “I have known much about being tempted by Satan in my time. Why, Sir, 10 years ago I was threshing in this barn, here, and the devil came upon me with a strong temptation. It plagued and worried me so, that I could not get rid of it—till at length I put down my flail and got away into a corner, just beyond the wheat there—and I wrestled with God against Satan until I gained such a victory that I came back to my place rejoicing! Many a time since that,” said the old man, “he has lurked about my path, but I never stop to parley. I repeat the promise by which I found a way of escape that day in this barn, and I feel myself made strong by the remembrance of that victory.” Yes, and just so when we can remember some of those occasions when we seemed to overcome temptation by private communion with God, then we get strong, but— *“Let the Lord be once withdrawn  
And we attempt the work alone,  
When new temptations spring and rise—  
We find how great our weakness is.”*  
Like Samson, when his hair was lost, we think we shall defeat Satan as at other times, but we—  
*“Shake our limbs with vain surprise,  
Make feeble fight and lose our eyes.”*  
When houses have been long left without tenants and look deserted, they get up a rumor that they are haunted. And I am sure that when a heart has been left by Christ and there have been no comfortable enjoyments of His Presence, our souls do get haunted with strange, mysterious doubts and fears, vexations and forebodings which you cannot grapple with—horrors that do not take any shape, troubles that ought not to be distressing, alarms that are made up of shadows—dangers that have not any real existence! Oh, that Christ were there! As phantoms would all vanish in the sunlight, so would all these dreary doubts and dismal dilemmas be chased away if Christ returned! Oh, that our poor empty house could once more have its gates flung wide open and that the King would come to dwell in His own palace and make it all bright and lustrous with His Presence! Master, see how sick we are without You! Come, blessed Physician! Jesus, see what wretched beings we are if You withdraw! Come, our Beloved, come to us! Let the sad effects of Your departure quicken Your footsteps and bring You over the mountains of division to the longing spirits of Your fainting children! Passing on, let us enquire—  
III. WHAT COMFORT IS THERE FOR A SOUL WHEN THE BELOVED HAS WITHDRAWN HIMSELF AND IS GONE?  
Let me reply, there is no comfort at all that will be of any service to you unless you get Him back. Ah, but if a wife loves her husband, and he is gone, we may quote the old song—  
*“There is nae luck about the house  
When the gude man’s awa’.”*  
The dear man, the joy of her heart, being gone, she could not make anything go well. And so, where the loving heart has lost its Beloved, its best Beloved, there seems to be no joy anywhere! Nothing can make up to a regenerate soul for the loss of the society of her Lord. And yet some considerations may help to stay us while we are seeking for it. Though He is gone, He is still our Beloved. Though we cannot see Him, yet we love Him! And if we cannot enjoy Him, we thirst after Him! And that is some consolation, though it is a poor consolation, to think it has not quite lost all its life, for it has got life enough to smart, life enough to be in pain and life enough to feel itself in exile until Christ’s return! I think, too, there is some comfort in this—that though He is gone, He is gone out of love. Was it in a tiff of anger? Yet it was rather a rebuke of our sins than a rejection of our persons. Christ withdraws because He wants to bring us to our senses and to draw us more closely to Himself. He knows that if we were to have enjoyments and yet walk in sin, this would be highly dangerous and, therefore, these enjoyments must be withheld till the heart is broken and the soul abhors itself in dust and ashes!  
It is some comfort also, that though He is gone, He is not gone out of earshot. Jesus Christ can still hear the cry of His people. No, He is not gone beyond the reach of His eyesight. He is looking upon His poor deserted one to see what the effect of His hiding Himself is.  
And there is this to be said, that He is not so far gone but that at any moment He can return, and His return can at once make our souls like the chariots of Aminnadib! He can rise upon our darkness and that in the next instant if so it pleased Him. He is gone, but He is not altogether gone. He has not taken His love from us, nor shall His loving kindness utterly fail. Still on His hands He bears the marks of His passion for our salvation. Still on His breastplate glitter the jewels that bear our names. He cannot forget us, though He hides Himself! He may be asleep, but it is in the same vessel with us—and near the helm. He may appear to have utterly deserted us, but, “can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?” Yes, they may forget, but Christ shall never forget His saints! But now, lastly—  
IV. WHAT IS OUR DUTY IN SUCH A PLIGHT?  
If he is gone, what then? I answer—our duty is to repent of that which has driven Him away. We must institute a search at once! Bunyan describes the citizens of Mansoul as searching for the cause why Immanuel had withdrawn Himself, and they took Master Carnal-Security and burned his house, and hanged him on a gallows on the site where the house stood, for it was through feasting with him that the Prince was angered, and His subjects lost His Presence. Search yourselves if you are not as happy as you were—if you are not living as near Heaven-Gate as you were, search yourselves.  
And having done so, and found out the evil, ask for Divine Grace to be purged of it. Oh, you will fall into that evil, again, if you trust to your own strength! But in reliance upon the Holy Spirit’s power, you can overcome it—you can put your foot upon the neck of this evil and so destroy it that it shall not molest you again!  
And then, Beloved, let me earnestly entreat you—and I am speaking more to myself, perhaps, than I am to any of you—to stir up your whole soul to recover lost ground. Be ashamed that there is any lost ground to recover. Oh, it is easier to lose Christ than it is to find Him after we have lost Him. It is easier to go straight on in the strength of Grace than it is to have to go back to find your roll which you have lost under the settle in the Harbor of Ease, and then, after going back, to have to go over the same ground again! When you have got the wings of an eagle, what blessed work it is to soar and to pass over long tracks of country! But when the eagle wing is gone and you have to limp painfully along, like David, with broken bones, it is hard work. But, Beloved, if you have slipped at all, ask for Grace to recover now! For my own part, I feel I have so little Grace that I have none to lose. As to falling back—oh, what should we be if we fell at all back, for we are back enough now! We are nowhere at all in comparison with the saints of God in the olden times. We are but beginners and babes, but where, where, where shall we be if we are to go still farther back? No, no, Sovereign Grace, prevent so dreadful a catastrophe! Press forward!  
And, Brothers and Sisters, will it not be a great thing and a right thing for us to endeavor to set apart much time for special prayer that we may have lost Grace restored? Should we not set ourselves to this one thing— that we must get back, by the simplicity of faith, to the foot of the Cross? And by the earnestness of love, unto the bosom of the Master once more—and that we will not be satisfied with preaching, and praying, and going to places of worship, or with ordinances, or with anything—until we get Christ back again? Oh, my Soul, I charge you be content with nothing till you get your Lord again! Say, with the good housewife I spoke of just now, whose husband was away from home, “Yes, this room shall be decorated, and every part of the house shall be cleansed, but, ah, the joy of my heart will be to see him return! And until he comes, the house cannot be cheerful and joyous.” It is so with our souls. We must have the King back, and back soon! And when He does come back, we must hold Him fast and not let Him go. Charge your souls to be more careful in the future, lest you again provoke Him to jealousy.  
Alas, for those who never knew my Lord! Oh, may they seek Him early and find Him speedily! If it is sad to lose His Presence for awhile, what must it be to live and die without Christ? Oh, that is a black word for anyone to have written on his brow, “Without Christ.” If you are in that condition, dear Hearer, may Divine Grace bring you to Christ, and Christ to you, that you may enjoy the fellowship of His love! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **SONG OF SOLOMON 2:1-7; 3:1-5.**

**SONG OF SOLOMON 2.**  
Verses 1, 2. I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. It is the nature of love to make the thing beloved like itself. If Christ is a lily, He makes His people lilies, too. Certainly He is the lily of the valley, and before long His Church is able to say, “As the lily among the thorns, so am I,” while for the present, Jesus says it. She is among the thorns, thorns that hurt and vex her. The people of God are still in the tents of Kedar, still among the wicked, having their ears vexed with their filthy conversation. But the lily is all the more beautiful on account of the thorns that make the background—and so your piety may be all the more resplendent because of the evil men among whom you sojourn.

3. As the apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. The citron tree towered aloft in the midst of the forest and it was covered with its golden apples. Such is Jesus Christ, the most lovely of all objects, and though there are some that pretend to contend with Him, yet to the Believer, rivals are left in the distance—no—they are altogether forgotten! “As the apple tree among the trees of the woods, the most distinguished and the most lovely, so is my beloved among the sons.” How do you know?

3. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. I know his loveliness, for I have felt it, and I not only have comfort without, but I have food within.

4, 5. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love. A strange thing is this love of Christ, for, as Erskine puts it—

*“When well, it makes me sick;*

*When sick, it makes me well.”*  
There is no infirmity which this love of Christ cannot care, no conflicting passion which it cannot remove and, on the other hand, a great amount of this love shed abroad in the heart will often prostrate the Christian with excess of delight, till he is ready to cry out, with good Mr. Welsh, the Scotch pastor, “Hold, Lord! Hold! It is enough! Remember I am but an earthen vessel and if I have too much of Glory, I shall not live.” I am afraid we shall not often have to say this, yet there are times when the Believer’s joy knows no bounds and his hallowed delight in his God is so excessive that he needs to have some supernatural support to enable him to endure the delight which his Father gives him!

6. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand does embrace me. The hand with which He smites His enemies cannot smite me, for it is under my head, my sweet support. And His right hand, the hand with which He blesses, the hand of His power and His Glory, does embrace each one of His people.

7. I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please. The next passage we shall read is at the commencement of the Third Chapter, and presents quite a different scene. Perhaps you will scarcely think it is the same person that writes it, but, oh, we are very variable! See now how that sunshine has just gilded that side of the house and, in another minute—see—it melts away and has gone again! Just so is it with our experience. We rejoice for a few moments, but soon the clouds hang heavy over us and we scarcely know what and where we are! The Spouse has now altered, but her Husband never does alter, for the Lord, the King, abides still the same, and herein is our joy.

**SONG OF SOLOMON 3.**  
Verses 1-3. By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loves: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loves: I sought him but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw you him whom my soul loves? The same question over and over again—only that one thought, “Where is He?” Ministers were nothing. Streets of ordinances were nothing. What the soul needed was to find a personal Christ, and to have personal fellowship with Him.

4. It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loves; I held him and would not let him go. Jacob’s wrestling is succeeded by Jacob’s vows.

4. Until I had brought him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. Fellowship that is sweet to me must be sweet to others of my Brothers and Sisters, therefore will I bring Him to the Church, and tell to all the assembled people how sweet, how delightful He is to my soul!

5. I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.  
—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #539 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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HEAVENLY LOVESICKNESS!  
NO. 539

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 8, 1863, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell Him that I am sick of love.”  
Song of Solomon 5:8.**

**SICK! That is a sad thing. It moves your pity. Sick of love—lovesick! That stirs up other emotions which we shall presently attempt to explain. No doubt certain sicknesses are peculiar to the saints—the ungodly are never visited with them. Strange to say, these sicknesses, to which the refined sensibilities of the children of God render them peculiarly liable, are signs of vigorous health. Who but the Beloved of the Lord ever experience that *sin sickness* in which the soul loathes the very name of transgression, is unmoved by the enchantments of the Tempter, finds no sweetness in its besetting sins, and turns with detestation and abhorrence from the very thought of iniquity?**

**No less is it for these, and these alone, to feel that *self sickness* whereby the heart revolts from all creature confidence and strength, having been made sick of self, self-seeking, self-exalting, self-reliance, and self of every sort. The Lord afflicts us more and more with such self sickness till we are dead to self, its puny conceits, its lofty aims, and its unsanctified desires. Then there is a *twofold lovesicknes*s. Of the one kind is that lovesickness which comes upon the Christian when he is transported with the full enjoyment of Jesus, even as the bride elated by the favor, melted by the tenderness of her Lord, says in the fifth verse of the second chapter of the Song, “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.”**

**The soul, overjoyed with the Divine communications of happiness and bliss which came from Christ, the body scarcely able to bear the excessive delirium of delight which the soul possessed, she was so glad to be in the embraces of her Lord that she needed to be stayed under her overpowering weight of joy. Another kind of lovesickness, widely different from the first, is that in which the soul is sick, not because it has too much of Christ’s love, but because it has not enough present consciousness of it. Sick, not of the enjoyment, but of the longing for it. Sick, not because of excess of delight, but because of sorrow for an absent lover.**

**It is to this sickness we call your attention this morning. This lovesickness breaks out in two ways and may be viewed in two lights. It is, first of all, the soul *longing for a view of Jesus Christ in Grace*. And then again, it is the same soul *possessing the view of Divine Grace and longing for a sight of Jesus Christ in Glory.*** In both these senses we, as accurately as the spouse, may adopt the languishing words, “If you find my Beloved, tell Him that I am sick of love.”

**I.** First, then, let us consider our text as the language of a soul LONGING FOR THE VIEW OF JESUS CHRIST IN GRACE.  
**1.** Do you ask me concerning *the sickness itself*—What is it? It is the sickness of a soul panting after communion with Christ. The man is a Believer. He is not longing after salvation as a penitent sinner under conviction, for he is saved. Moreover, he has love to Christ and knows it. He does not doubt his evidence as to the reality of his affection for his Lord, for you see the word used is, “*My* Beloved,” which would not be applicable if the person speaking had any doubt about her interest.   
Nor did she doubt her love, for she calls the spouse, “My *Beloved*.” It is the longing of a soul, then, not for salvation, and not even for the certainty of salvation, but for the enjoyment of present fellowship with Him who is her soul’s Life, her soul’s All. The heart is panting to be brought once more under the apple tree. To feel once again His “left hand under her head, while His right hand does embrace her.” She has known, in days past, what it is to be brought into His banqueting house, and to see the banner of love waved over her. She therefore cries to have love visits renewed.   
It is a panting after communion. Gracious hours, my dear Friends, are never perfectly at ease except they are in a state of nearness to Christ. For mark you, when they are not near to Christ, they lose their peace. The nearer to Jesus, the nearer to the perfect calm of Heaven. And the further from Jesus, the nearer to that troubled sea which images the continual unrest of the wicked. There is no peace to the man who does not dwell constantly under the shadow of the Cross. For Jesus is our peace and if He is absent, our peace is absent, too.   
I know that being justified we have peace with God, but it is “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” So that the justified man himself cannot reap the fruit of justification, except by abiding in Christ Jesus, who is the Lord and Giver of peace. The Christian without fellowship with Christ loses all his life and energy. He is like a dead thing. Though saved, he lies like a lumpish log—   
***“His soul can neither fly nor go   
To reach eternal joys.”***He is without liveliness. Yes, more, he is without animation till Jesus comes. But when the Lord sensibly sheds abroad His love in our hearts, then *His* love kindles ours. Then our blood leaps in our veins for joy, like the Baptist in the womb of Elizabeth.   
The heart when near to Jesus has strong pulsations, for since Jesus is in that heart, it is full of life, of vigor and of strength. Peace, liveliness, vigor—all depend upon the constant enjoyment of communion with Christ Jesus. The soul of a Christian never knows what *joy* means in its true solidity, except when she sits, like Mary, at Jesus’ feet. Beloved, all the joys of life are nothing to us. We have melted them all down in our crucible and found them to be dross. You and I have tried earth’s vanities and they cannot satisfy us. No, they do not give a morsel of meat to satiate our hunger.   
Being in a state of dissatisfaction with all mortal things, we have learned through Divine Grace that none but Jesus, none but Jesus can make our souls glad. “Philosophers are happy without music,” said one of old. So Christians are happy without the world’s goods. Christians, with the world’s goods, are sure to bemoan themselves as naked, poor and miserable, unless their Savior is with them. You that have ever tasted communion with Christ will soon know why it is that a soul longs after Him. What the sun is to the day, what the moon is to the night, what the dew is to the flower— such is Jesus Christ to us.   
What bread is to the hungry, clothes to the naked, the shadow of a great rock to the traveler in a weary land—such is Jesus Christ to us. What the turtle is to her mate, what the husband is to his spouse, what the head is to the body— such is Jesus Christ to us. And therefore, if we have Him not, no, if we are not *conscious* of having Him. If we are not one with Him, no, if we are not *consciously* one with Him, little marvel if our spirit cries in the words of the Song, “I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, tell Him that I am sick of love.” Such is the character of this lovesickness.   
We may say of it, however, before we leave that point, that it is *a sickness which has a blessing attending it*— “Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness.” And therefore, supremely blessed are they who thirst after the Righteous One—after Him who in the highest perfection embodies pure, immaculate, spotless righteousness. Blessed is that hunger, for it comes from God. It bears a blessing within it. For if I may not have the blessedness in full bloom of being filled, the next best thing is the same blessedness in sweet bud of being empty till I am filled with Christ. If I may not feed on Jesus, it shall be next door to Heaven to be allowed to hunger and thirst after Him.  
There is a hallowedness about that hunger since it sparkles among the beatitudes of our Lord. Yet it is a sickness, dear Friends, which, despite the blessing, *causes much pain*. The man who is sick after Jesus will be dissatisfied with everything else. He will find that dainties have lost their sweetness and music its melody and light its brightness—life itself will be darkened with the shadow of death to him—till he finds his Lord and can rejoice in Him.   
Beloved, you shall find that this thirsting, this sickness—if it ever gets hold upon you—is *attended with great vehemence*. The desire is vehement as coals of juniper. You have heard of hunger that breaks through stone walls—but stone walls are no prison to a soul that desires Christ. Stone walls, no, the strongest natural barriers, cannot keep a lovesick heart from Jesus. I will venture to say that the temptation of Heaven itself, if it could be offered to the Believer without his Christ, would be as less than nothing. And the pains of Hell, if they could be endured, would be gladly ventured upon by a lovesick soul, if he might but find Christ.   
As lovers sometimes talk of doing impossibilities for their fair ones, so certainly a spirit that is set on Christ will laugh at impossibility and say, “It shall be done.” It will venture upon the hardest task, go cheerfully to prison and joyfully to death, if it may but find its Beloved and have its lovesickness satisfied with His Presence. Perhaps this may suffice for a description of the sickness here intended.  
**2.** You may enquire concerning the *cause* of this lovesickness. What makes a man’s soul so sick after Christ? Understand that it is the *absence* of Christ which makes this sickness in a mind that really understands the preciousness of His Presence. The spouse had been very willful and wayward, she had taken off her garments, had gone to her rest, her sluggish slothful rest, when her Beloved knocked at the door. He said “Open to Me, My Beloved. For My head is filled with dew and My locks with the drops of the night.”   
She was too slothful to wake up to let Him in. She urged excuses—“I have put off my coat. How shall I put it on? I have washed my feet. How shall I defile them?” The Beloved stood waiting, but since she opened not, He put in His hand by the hole of the lock and then her heart was moved towards Him. She went to the door to open it and to her surprise her hands dripped with myrrh and her fingers with sweet smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. There was the token that He had been there, but He was gone. Now she began to bestir herself and seek after Him.   
She sought Him through the city, but she found Him not. Her soul failed her. She called after Him, but He gave her no answer and the watchmen, who ought to have helped her in the search, smote her and took away her veil from her. Therefore it is that now she is seeking, because she has lost her Beloved. She should have held Him fast and not have permitted Him to go. He is absent and she is sick till she finds Him. Mingled with the sense of absence is *a consciousness of wrong-doing*.   
Something in her seemed to say, “How could you drive Him away? That heavenly Bridegroom who knocked and pleaded hard, how could you keep Him longer there amidst the cold dews of night? O unkind heart! What if your feet had been made to bleed by your rising? What if all your body had seen chilled by the cold wind, when you were treading the floor? What had it been compared with His love to you?” And so she is sick to see Him, that she may weep out her love and tell Him how vexed she is with herself that she should have held to Him so loosely and permitted Him so readily to depart.   
So, too, mixed with this, was *great wretchedness* because He was gone. She had been for a little time easy in His absence. That downy bed, that warm coverlet had given her a peace, a false, cruel and a wicked peace. But she has risen now, the watchmen have smitten her, her veil is gone and, without a friend, the princess is deserted in the midst of Jerusalem’s streets. Her soul has melted for heaviness and she pours out her heart within her as she pines after Her Lord. “No Love but my Love, no Lord but my Lord,” she says, with sobbing tongue and weeping eyes. For none else can gratify her heart or appease her anxiety.   
Beloved, have you ever been in such a state, when your faith has begun to droop and your heart and spirits have fled from you? Even then your soul was sick for Him. You could do without Him when Mr. Carnal-Security was in the house and feasted you—but when he and his house have both been burned with fire, the old lovesickness came back and you wanted Christ. Nor could you be satisfied till you found Him once again. There was *true love* in all this and this is the very essence of all lovesickness.   
Had not she loved, absence would not have made her sick, nor would her repentance have made her grieve. Had she not loved, there would have been no pain because of absence and no sinking of spirits. But she did love, and thus all this sickness. It is a delightful thing to be able to know when we have lost Christ’s company that we do love Him—“Yes, Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You. I did deny You. Yes, in the moment of Your sorrow, I said, ‘I know not the Man.’ I did curse and swear that men might think I was no follower of Yours, but still You know all things, You know that I love You.”   
When you can feel this, dear Friends, the consciousness that you love will soon work in you a *heart-burning*, so that your soul will not be satisfied till you can tell out that love in the Master’s Presence and He shall say unto you, as a token of forgiveness, “Feed My sheep.” I do not doubt that in this sickness there had been *some degree of fear*. Sorrowful woman! She was half afraid she might never find Him again. She had been about the city—where could He be? She had sought Him on the walls and on the ramparts, but He was not there.   
In every ordinance, in every means of Divine Grace, in secret and in public prayer, in the Lord’s Supper and in the reading of the Word, she had looked after Him—but He was not there. And now she was half afraid that though He might give His Presence to others, yet never to her. And when she speaks, you notice there is half a fear in her voice. She would not have asked others to tell Him if she had any assuring hope that she should meet Him herself—“If you find Him,” she seems to say, “O you true converts, you that are the *real* daughters of Jerusalem. If He reveals Himself to you, though He never may to me, do me this kindness, tell Him that I am sick of love.”  
There is half a fear here and yet there is *some* hope. She feels that He must love her still, or else why send a message at all? She would surely never send this sweet message to a flinty, adamantine heart, “Tell Him I am sick of love,” and she remembered when the “glances of her eyes had ravished Him. She remembered when a motion from her hand had made His heart melt and when one tear of her eyes had opened all His wounds afresh. She thinks, “Perhaps He loves me still as He loved me then, and my moans will enchain Him. My groans will constrain Him and lead Him to my help.”   
So she sends the message to Him—“Tell Him, tell Him I am sick of love.” To gather up the causes of this lovesickness in a few words, does not the whole matter spring from *relationship*? She is His *spouse*. Can the spouse be happy without her beloved Lord? It springs from *union*. She is part of Himself. Can the hand be happy and healthy if the life-floods stream not from the heart and from the head? Fondly realizing her *dependence*, she feels that she owes all to Him and gets her all from Him. If, then, the fountain is cut off, if the streams are dried, if the great source of all is taken from her, how can she but be sick?   
And there is, besides this, *a life and a nature* in her which makes her sick. There is a life like the life of Christ, no, her life is *in* Christ, it is hid with Christ in God. Her nature is a part of the Divine nature. She is a partaker of the Divine nature. Moreover she is in *union* with Jesus and this piece divided, as it were, from the body, wriggles like a worm cut asunder and pants to get back to where it came from. These are the causes of it. You will not understand my sermon this morning but think me raving, unless you are spiritual men. “But the spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”  
**3.** *What endeavors such lovesick souls will put forth*. Those who are sick for Christ will first send their *desires* to Him. Men use pigeons sometimes to send their messages. Why, what sort of carrier pigeons do they use? The pigeon is of no use to send anywhere but to the place from which it came, and my desires after Christ came from Him, and so they will always go back to the place from which they came. They know the way to their own dovecot, so I will send Him my sighs and my groans, my tears and my moans. Go, go, sweet doves, with swift and clipping wings, and tell Him I am lovesick.   
Then she would send her *prayer*s. Ah, methinks she would say of her desires, “They will never reach Him. They know the way but their wings are broken and they will fall to the ground and never reach Him.” Yet she will send them whether they reach Him or not. As for her prayers, they are like arrows. Sometimes messages have been sent into besieged towns bound to an arrow, so she binds her desires upon the arrow of her prayers and then shoots them forth from the bow of her faith. She is afraid they will never reach Him, for her bow is slack and she knows not how to draw it with her feeble hands which hang down.   
So what does she do? She has traversed the streets. She has used *the means*. She has done everything—she has sighed her heart out and emptied her soul out in prayers. She is all wounds till He heals her. She is all a hungry mouth till He fills her. She is all an empty brook till He replenishes her once again and so now she *goes to her companions* and she says, “If you find my Beloved, tell Him I am sick of love.” This is using the intercession of the *saints*. It is unbelief that makes her use it, and yet there is a little faith mixed in her unbelief. It was an unbelief but not a *mis*belief.   
There is efficacy in the intercession of saints. Not of *dead* saints—they have enough to do to be singing God’s praises in Heaven without praying for *us*—but saints on earth can take up our case. The king has his favorites. He has his cupbearers. He has some that are admitted into great familiarity with him—give me a share in a good man’s prayers. I attribute, under God, the success the Lord has given me to the number of souls in every quarter of the earth who pray for me. Not you alone, but in every land there are some that forget me not when they draw near in their supplications.  
Oh, we are so rich when we have the prayers of saints! When it is well with you, speak for me to the Captain of the Host and if He should say to you, “What was his message?” I have no other message but that of the spouse, “Tell Him I am sick of love.” Any of you who have close familiarity with Jesus, be the messengers, be the heavenly tale-bearers between lovesick souls and their Divine Lord. Tell Him, tell Him we are sick of love. And you that cannot thus go to Him, seek the help and aid of others. But after all, as I have said, this is unbelief though it is not *mis*belief, for how much better it would have been for her to *tell Him herself*.   
“But,” you say, “she could not find Him.” No, but if she had had faith she would have known that her prayers could. For our prayers know where Christ is when we do not know, or rather, Christ knows where our prayers are—and when we cannot see Him they nevertheless reach Him. A man who fires a cannon is not expected to see all the way where the shot goes. If he has his cannon rightly sighted and fires it, there may come on a thick fog, but the shot will reach the place. And if you have your hearts sighted by Divine Grace after Christ, you may depend upon it—however thick the fog—the hot shot of your prayer will reach the gates of Heaven though you cannot tell how or where.   
Be satisfied to go to Christ yourself. If your Brothers and Sisters will go, well and good, but methinks their proper answer to your question would be in the language of the women in the sixth chapter, the first verse, “Where is your Beloved gone, O you fairest among women? Where is your Beloved turned aside? That we may seek Him with you.” They will not seek Him *for* us they say, but they can seek Him *with* us. Sometimes when there are six pair of eyes, they will see better than one. And so, if five or six Christians seek the Lord in company, in the Prayer Meeting, or at His Table, they are more likely to find Him. “We will seek Him with you.”   
**4.** Blessed lovesickness! We have seen its character and its cause and the endeavors of the soul under it. Let us just notice *the comforts which belong to such a state as this*. Briefly they are these—*you shall be filled*. It is impossible for Christ to set you longing after Him without intending to give Himself to you. It is as when a great man prepares a feast. He first puts plates upon the table and then afterward there comes the meat. Your longings and desires are the empty plates to hold the meat. Is it likely that Christ means to mock you? Would He have put the dishes there if He did not intend to fill them with His oxen and with His fatlings?   
He makes you long—He will certainly satisfy your longings. Remember, again, that He will give you Himself *all the sooner for the bitterness of your longings*. The more pained your heart is at His absence the shorter will the absence be. If you have a grain of contentment without Christ, that will keep you longer tarrying. But when your soul is sick till your heart is ready to break, till you cry, “Why tarries He? Why are His chariots so long in coming?” When your soul faints until your Beloved speaks to you, and you are ready to die from your youth up, then shortly He will lift the veil from His dear face and your sun shall rise with healing beneath His wings. Let that console you.   
Then, again, when He does come, as come He will, oh, *how sweet it will be*! Methinks I have the flavor in my mouth now and the fullness of the feast is yet to come. There is such a delight about the very thought that He will come, that the thought itself is the prelude, the foretaste of the happy greeting. What? Will He once again speak comfortably to me? Shall I again walk the bed of spices with Him? Shall I ramble with Him among the groves while the flowers give forth their sweet perfume—I shall! I shall! And even now my spirit feels His presence by anticipation—“Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadab.”   
You know how sweet it was in the past. Beloved, what times we have had, some of us! Oh, whether in the body or out of the body, we cannot tell—God knows. What mountings! Talk you of eagles’ wings? They are earthly pinions and may not be compared with the wings with which He carried us up from earth! Speak of mounting beyond clouds and stars?— They were left far, far behind. We entered into the unseen, beheld the Invisible, lived in the Immortal, drank in the Ineffable, and were blessed with the fullness of God in Christ Jesus, being made to sit together in heavenly places in Him.   
Well, all this is to come again, “I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice.” “A little while and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while and you shall see Me.” “In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment. But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer.” Think of this! Why, we have comfort even in this lovesickness! Our heart, though sick, is still whole, while we are panting and pining after the Lord Jesus— ***“O love Divine,how sweet Youare,   
When shall I find my willing heart   
All taken up with You?   
I thirst, I faint, I die to prove   
The fullness of redeeming love—   
The love of Christ to me.”*II.** And now, secondly, with as great brevity as we can, this lovesickness may be seen in A SOUL LONGING FOR A VIEW OF JESUS IN HIS GLORY.   
**1.** And here we will consider *the complaint* itself for a moment. This ailment is not merely a longing after communion with Christ on earth—that has been enjoyed and generally this sickness follows that—

***“When I have tasted of the grapes,   
I sometimes long to go   
Where my dear Lord the vineyard keeps   
And all the clusters grow.”***

It is the enjoyment of Eshcol’s first fruits which makes us desire to sit under our own vine and our own fig tree before the Throne of God in the blessed land.

Beloved, this sickness is characterized by certain marked symptoms. I will tell you what they are. There is a loving and a longing, a loathing and a languishing. Happy soul that understands these things by experience. There is *a loving in* which the heart cleaves to Jesus—

***“Do not I love You from my soul?   
Then let me nothing love—   
Dead be my heart to every joy   
When Jesus cannot move.”***

A sense of His beauty! An admiration of His charms! A consciousness of His infinite perfection! Yes! Greatness, goodness and loveliness, in one resplendent ray combine to enchant the soul till it is so ravished after Him that it cries with the spouse, “Yes, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved and this is my Friend, O you daughters of Jerusalem.” Sweet loving is this—a love which binds the heart with chains of more than silken softness and yet more firm than adamant.

Then there is *a longing*. She loves Him so that she cannot endure to be absent from Him. She pants and pines. You know it has been so with saints in all ages—whenever they have begun to love they have always begun to long after Christ. John, the most loving of spirits, is the author of those words which he so frequently uses—“Come quickly, even so, come quickly.” “Come quickly,” is sure to be the fruit of earnest love. See how the spouse puts it—“O that You were as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find You without, I would kiss You. Yes, I should not be despised.”

She longs to get hold of Him. She cannot conclude her song without saying, “Make haste, my Beloved and be You like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.” There is a longing to be with Christ. I would not give much for your religion if you do not long to be with the Object of your heart’s affections. Then comes *a loathing*. When a man is sick with the first lovesickness, then he does not loathe—it is, “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples.” When a man has Christ, he can enjoy other things. But when a man is longing after Christ and seeking after Christ, he loathes everything else—he cannot bear anything besides.

Here is my message to Jesus—“Tell Him”—what? Do I want crowns and diadems? Crowns and diadems are nothing to me. Do I want wealth and health and strength? They are all very well in their way. No—“Tell Him, tell the Beloved of my soul that I grieve after Himself—His gifts are good—I ought to be more grateful for them than I am, but let me see His face. Let me hear His voice. I am sick of love, and nothing but that can satisfy me, everything else is distasteful to me.”

And then there is a *languishing*. Since she cannot get the society of Christ—cannot as yet behold Him on His Throne nor worship Him face to face—she is sick until she can. For a heart so set on Christ will walk about traversing highway and by-way, resting nowhere till it finds Him. As the needle once magnetized will never be easy until it finds the pole, so the heart once Christianized never will be satisfied until it rests on Christ—rests on Him, too, in the fullness of the beatific vision before the Throne. This is the character of the lovesickness.

**2.** *As to its Object—*what is that? “Tell Him that I am sick of love.” But what is the sickness for? Brethren, when you and I want to go to Heaven I hope it is the true lovesickness. I catch myself sometimes wanting to die and be in Heaven for the sake of rest. But is not that a lazy desire? There is a sluggish wish that makes me long for rest. Perhaps we long for the happiness of Heaven—the harps and crowns. There is a little selfishness in that, is there not? Allowable, I grant you. But is not there a little like selfishness? Perhaps, we long to see dear children, beloved friends that have gone before. But there is a little of the earthy there.

The soul may be as sick as it will, without rebuke, when it is sick to be with Jesus. You may carry this to its utmost extent without either sin or folly. What am I sick with love for? For the pearly gates?—No. But for the pearls that are in His wounds. What am I sick for? For the streets of gold?—No. But for His head which is as much fine gold. Am I sick for the melody of the harps and angelic songs?—No. But for the melodious notes that come from His dear mouth. What am I sick for? For the nectar that angels drink?—No. But for the kisses of His lips.

What am I sick for? For the manna on which heavenly souls feed?—No. But for Himself, who is the meat and drink of His saints. Himself! Himself! My soul pines to see HIM! Oh, what a Heaven to gaze upon! What bliss to talk with the Man, the God, crucified for me! To weep my heart out before Him. To tell Him how I love Him, for He loved me and gave Himself for me. To read my name written on His hands and on His side—yes, and to let Him see that His name is written on my heart in indelible lines. To embrace Him, oh, what an *embrace* when the creature shall embrace His God— to be forever so close to Him that not a doubt, nor a fear, nor a wandering thought can come between my soul and Him forever!—

***“Forever to behold Him shine,   
Forevermore to call Him mine,   
And see Him still before me.   
Forever on His face to gaze,   
And meet His full assembled rays,   
While all the Father He displays   
To all the saints in Glory.”***

What else can there be that our spirit longs for? This seems an empty thing to worldlings, but to the Christian this is Heaven summed up in a word—“To be with Christ, which is far better,” than all the joys of earth. This is the Object, then, of this lovesickness.

**3.** Do you ask what are *the excitements of this sickness*? What is it that makes the Christian long to be at Home with Jesus? There are many things. There are sometimes some very little things that set a Christian longing to be at Home. You know the old story of Swiss soldiers, that when they have enlisted into foreign service they never will permit the band to play the *“Ranz des Vaches”—the Song of the Cows*, because as soon as ever the Swiss hears the Song of the Cows, he thinks of his own dear Alps and the bells upon the cows’ necks and the strange calls of the herd-boys, as they sing to one another from the mountain peaks.

And he grows sick and ill with homesickness. So if you were banished, if you were taken prisoner or a slave, why, to hear some note of one of old England’s songs would set your spirit pining for home, and I do confess, when I hear you sing sometimes—

***“Jerusal em! My happy home!   
Name ever dear to me;   
When shall my labors have an end,   
In joy and peace and you?”***

It makes me say, “You daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, tell Him that I am sick of love.” It is the song of home that brings the homesickness.

We remember what He used to be to us, what sweet visits we have had from Him. Then we get sick to be always with Him. But, best of all, when we are in His presence, when our soul is overjoyed with His delights—when the great deep sea of His love has rolled over the mast-head of our highest thoughts and the ship of our spirit has gone right down, foundering at sea in the midst of an ocean of delights—ah, then its highest, its deepest thought is, “O that I may always be with Him, in Him, where He is, that I might behold His Glory: the Glory which His Father gave Him, and which He has given me, that I may be one with Him, world without end.”

I do believe, Brothers and Sisters, that all the bitters and all the sweets make a Christian when he is in a healthy state, sick after Christ—the sweets make his mouth water for more sweets and the bitters make him pant for the time when the last dregs of bitterness shall be over. Wearying temptations, as well as rapt enjoyments all set the spirit on the wing after Jesus.

**4.** Well now, Friends, *what is the cure of this lovesickness*? Is it a sickness for which there is any specific remedy? There is only one cure that I know of, but there is some relief. A man that is sick after Christ, longs to be with Him and pants for the better land, singing as we did just now—

***“Father, I long, I faint to see   
The place ofYour abode.”***He must have the desire realized, before the thirst of his fever will be relieved. There are some reliefs and I will recommend them to you.

Such, for example, is a strong faith that realizes the day of the Lord and the Presence of Christ, as Moses beheld the promised land and the goodly heritage, when he stood on the top of Pisgah. If you do not get Heaven when you want it, you may attain to that which is next door to Heaven and this may bear you up for a little season. If you cannot get to behold Christ face to face, it is a blessed make-shift for the time to see Him in the Scriptures and to look at Him through the glass of the Word. These are reliefs, but I warn you, I warn you of them. I do not mean to keep you *from* them—use them as much as ever you can—but I warn you from expecting that it will cure that lovesickness.

It will give you ease but it will make you more sick still, for he that lives on Christ gets more hungry after Christ. As for a man being satisfied and wanting no more when he gets Christ—why he wants nothing but Christ it is true, and in that sense he will never thirst. But he wants more and more and more and more of Christ. To live on Christ is like drinking seawater, the more you drink the more thirsty you grow. There is something very satisfying in Christ’s flesh—you will never hunger except for that—but the more you eat of it the more you want. And he that is the heartiest feaster and has eaten the most, has the best appetite for more.

Oh, strange is this, but so it is. That which we would think would remove the lovesickness and is the best stay to the soul under it, is just that which brings it on more and more. But there is a *cure*, there is a cure and you shall have it soon—a black draught and in it a pearl—a black draught called Death. You shall drink it, but you shall not know it is bitter, for you shall swallow it up in victory! There is a pearl, too, in it—melted in it. Jesus died as well as you, and as you drink it, that pearl shall take away all ill effect from the tremendous draught.

You shall say, “O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?” When you have once drank that black draught, you are secure against that lovesickness forever. For where are you? No pilgrimage, no weary flight through cold ether. You are *with Him* in Paradise! Do you hear that, Soul? You are with Him in Paradise, never to be separated, not for an instant! Never to have a wandering thought, not one! Never to find your love waning or growing cold again! Never to doubt His love to you any more! Never more to be vexed and tempted by sighing after what you cannot view. You shall be with Him, where He is—

***“Far from a world of grief and sin,   
With God eternally shut in.”***

Till then, Beloved, let us strive to live near the Cross. Those two mountains, Calvary and Zion, stand right opposite one another. The eye of faith can sometimes almost span the interval. And the loving heart, by some deep mystery of which we can offer you no solution, will often have its sweetest rapture of joy in the fellowship of His griefs. So have I found a satisfaction in the wounds of a crucified Jesus, which can only be excelled by the satisfaction I have yet to find in the sparkling eyes of the same Jesus glorified. Yes. The same Jesus!

Well spoke the angels on Mount Olivet—“ *This same Jesus*, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven.” This same Jesus! My Soul coats on the words! My lips are fond of repeating them. This same Jesus!—

***“If in my soul s uch joy abounds   
While weeping faith explores His wounds,   
How glorious will those sears appear,   
When perfect bliss forbids a tear?   
Think, O my Soul, if it is so sweet   
On earth to sit at Jesus’ feet,   
What mustit beto wear a crown   
And sit with Him upon His Throne?”***

Would to God you all had this lovesickness! I am afraid many of you have it not. May He give it to you. But oh, if there is a soul here that wants Jesus, he is welcome! If there is one heart here that says, “Give me Christ,” you shall have your desire. Trust Jesus Christ and He is yours. Rely upon Him. You are His. God save you and make you sick *of* vanities, sick *after* verities—pining even unto sickness for Jesus Christ, the Beloved of my soul, the sum of all my hope, the sinner’s only Refuge and the praise of all His saints, to whom be everlasting glory. Amen.

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THE INCOMPARABLE BRIDEGROOM AND HIS BRIDE  
NO. 2469

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JUNE 23, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 10, 1866.

**“What is your Beloved more than another beloved, O you fairest among women? What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you so charge us?”  
Song of Solomon 5:9.**

THIS morning, [See sermon # 694, Volume 12, “Sin Laid on Jesus.”] we had the great privilege of preaching the doctrine of Substitution and of directing the minds of God’s people to the solid rock of the meritorious Sacrifice of Christ whereon all their hopes of Heaven must be built. What we have to say, tonight, is less doctrinal and more practical—therefore let us guard ourselves at the outset. If we should, with very much earnestness, urge Believers to good works, let nobody suppose that, therefore, we imagine that men are saved by works! Let no one, for a moment, dream that in urging the Believer to bring forth fruit to righteousness, we are at all teaching that salvation is the work of man! I have no doubt that all of us who know anything of true religion are of the same opinion as that celebrated Scotch Divine, old David Dickson, who was asked, when dying, what was the principal subject on which his thoughts were engaged. He answered, “I am gathering up all my good works and all my bad works, tying them into one bundle and throwing them all, alike, down at the foot of the Cross and am resting alone upon the finished work of Jesus.”

It is related of that mighty master in Israel, James Durham, that his experience at the last was very much akin to that of his friend, Dickson, for he said, “Notwithstanding all my preaching and all my spiritual experiences, I do not know that I have anything to hang upon excepting this one sentence spoken by Christ, ‘Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.’” “Ah,” replied someone who stood by Mr. Durham at the time, “you might well hazard a thousand souls, if you had them, upon the strength of that one precious text.”

Having said so much by way of caution, I want to address some earnest words to the people of God upon certain practical Truths of God that arise out of our text. And the first thing I have to say is this, that the daughters of Jerusalem recognized in the spouse an exceeding beauty which dazzled and charmed them, so that they could not help calling her the “fairest among women.” This was not her estimate of herself, for she had said, “I am black, but comely.” Nor was it the estimate of her enemies, for they had struck and wounded her. But it was the estimate of fair, candid and impartial onlookers.

I. This leads me to remark, first, that OUR CHARACTER SHOULD GIVE WEIGHT TO OUR PROFESSION OF RELIGION.  
You will observe that it was in consequence of thinking her the “fairest among women” that they asked the spouse, “What is your Beloved more than another beloved?” They thought that one so fair might well have her choice of a Bridegroom, that one so lovely would be likely to have an eye to loveliness in her Husband and, consequently, they considered her judgment to be worth some attention—and so they put to her the question why her Beloved was more than another beloved. Take it for granted, dear Friends, as a truth which your own observation and experience will make every day more and more clear, that your power to spread religion in the world must mainly depend upon your own personal character, but, of course, in absolute reliance upon the Holy Spirit! I suppose it is the earnest wish of every Christian to win for Christ some new converts, to bring some fresh province under the dominion of the King of Kings. I will tell you how this may be accomplished.  
Your power to achieve this noble purpose must largely depend upon your own personal consistency. It little matters what I say if I do the reverse! The world will not care about my testimony with my lips unless there is also a testimony in my daily life for God, for truth, for holiness, for everything that is honest, lovely, pure and of good report. There is that in a Christian’s character which the world, though it may persecute the man, himself, learns to value. It is called consistency—that is, the making of the life stand together—not being one thing in one place and another thing in another, or one thing at one time and quite different on another occasion. It is not consistency to be devout on Sunday and to be dishonest on Monday! It is not consistency to sing the songs of Zion, today, and to shout the songs of lustful mirth tomorrow. It is not consistency to occasionally wear the yoke of Christ and yet frequently to make yourself the serf of Satan! But to make your life all of a piece is to make it powerful and when God the Holy Spirit enables you to do this, then your testimony will be noticed upon those among whom you live.  
It would be ludicrous, if it were not so sorrowful a thing to be spoken of, even with weeping, that there should be professed Christians who are, through inconsistency, among the worst enemies of the Cross of Christ! I heard, the other day, a story which made me laugh. A poor creature, in a lunatic asylum, had got it into his head that he was some great one and he addressed a person who was visiting the asylum in the following words—“I am Sir William Wallace. Give me some tobacco!” What a ridiculous contrast between his proud assertion and his poor request! Who but a lunatic would have said such a thing?  
Yet, alas, we know people who say, by their actions, if not in words, “I am a Christian, but I will take advantage of you when I can. I am one of the blood-royal of Heaven, my life is hid with Christ in God and my conversation is in Heaven, but—but—I like worldliness, sensual pleasure and carnal mirth quite as well as other men!” I say again that this kind of thing would be superlatively ludicrous if it were not ineffably sorrowful, and it is, anyhow, utterly contemptible. If your life is not all of a piece, the world will soon learn how to estimate your testimony and will count you to be either a fool or a knave, or, perhaps, both!  
But it is not enough to be barely consistent—what the world expects in Christians is real holiness as well as consistency. Holiness is something more than virtue. Virtue is like goodness frozen into ice, hard and cold. But holiness is that same goodness when it is thawed into a clear, running, sparkling stream. Virtue is the best thing that philosophy can produce, but holiness is the true fruit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and of that, alone! There must be about us an unworldliness, a something out of the common and ordinary way, or else, mark you, that uncommon Gospel, that heavenly Gospel which we hold, will not seem to be bringing forth its legitimate fruit. If you are just barely honest and no more. If you are barely moral and no more—it is of no service that you should try to speak of Christ—the world will not reckon you as the fairest among women and it will not enquire anything about your Well-Beloved!  
But, Brothers and Sisters, I feel as if, instead of exhorting you thus, I might better turn to confession, myself, and ask you to join me in confessing how far short we come of being anything like the fairest among women as to character. We hope that we have something Christ-like about us, but oh, how little it is! How many imperfections there are! How much is there of the old Adam and how little of the new creature in Christ Jesus! Archbishop Usher was once asked to write a treatise upon Sanctification. This he promised to do, but six months rolled away and the good Archbishop had not written a sentence. He said to a friend, “I have not begun the treatise, yet I cannot confess to a breach of my promise, for, to tell you the truth, I have done my best to write upon the subject, but when I came to look into my own heart, I saw so little of sanctification there, and found that so much which I could have written would have been merely by rote as a parrot might have talked, that I had not the courage to write it.” Yet, if ever there was a man renowned for holiness, it was Archbishop Usher! If ever there was a saintly man who seemed to be one of the seraphic spirits permitted to stray beyond the companionship of his kind among poor earthworms here, it was Usher! Yet this is the confession that he makes concerning himself!  
Where, then, shall we hide our diminished heads? I am sure we may all say, with good Mr. Fletcher, of Madeley, who was another bright example of seraphic holiness, that what we need is more Divine Grace. He had written a pamphlet on some political matter and Lord North wrote to know what he could give him in return. His answer was, “I need what Your Lordship cannot give me—more Grace.” That is also true of us—we need more Grace. It is to be had and if we had it, and it transformed us into what we should be, oh, what lives of happiness and of holiness we might lead here below! And what mighty workers would we be for our Lord Jesus Christ! How would His dear name be made to sound to the utmost ends of the earth! I fear it is but a dream—but just conceive that all of you, the members of this Church, were made to be truly saintly— saints of the first water, saints who had cast off the sloth of worldliness and had come out in the full glory of newness of life in Christ Jesus! Oh, what a power might this Church become in London! And what a power to be felt the wide world over! Let us seek it. Let us strive after it, remembering that it is a truth never to be denied, that only in proportion to the sanctity and spirituality of our character will our influence be for good among the sons of men!  
II. Advancing now a step, our second remark will be that WE SHOULD CHARGE OTHERS CONCERNING CHRIST. “What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you do so charge us?”  
The “fairest among women” was asked why she had so spoken—“I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell Him that I am sick with love.” By this, “charge,” is meant, I suppose, that the spouse commanded them and spoke solemnly to them about her Beloved. Christians, be troublesome to the world! O house of Israel, be like a burdensome stone to the world! You are not sent here to be recognized as honorable citizens of this world, to be petted and well-treated! Even Christ, Himself, the Peaceable One, said, “I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it is already kindled?” What I mean is this—we are not to be quiet about our religion! The world says to us, “Hold your tongue about religion, or at least talk about it at proper times. But do not introduce it at all seasons so as to become a pest and a nuisance.” I say again and you know in what sense I mean it, be a nuisance to the world! Be such a man that worldlings will be compelled to feel that there is a Christian in their midst!  
An officer was walking out of the royal presence on one occasion when he tripped over his sword. The king said to him, “Your sword is rather a nuisance.” “Yes,” was the officer’s reply, “Your Majesty’s enemies have often said so.” May you be a nuisance to the world in that sense— troublesome to the enemies of the King of Kings! While your conduct should be courteous and everything that could be desired as between man and man, yet let your testimony for Christ be given without any flinching and without any mincing of the matter!  
This afternoon I was reading a sermon by a certain Divine whose subject of discourse was why the working classes do not go to a place of worship and the preacher seems to have made up his mind that whatever is preached in this Tabernacle is especially obnoxious to laboring men and women. The reason he gives why the working classes do not attend places of worship is that we preach such dreadful doctrines! It is very remarkable that places where these Truths of God are preached, are crowded, while places where the opposite things are proclaimed are often empty! It is curious, if the doctrine of the Gospel is such a very horrible thing that it drives people away, that at the places where it is preached, there are more people than can get in, whereas where some of the modern doctrines are declared, you may see more spiders than people! It is an amazing circumstance, certainly, yet one for which we can easily account.  
A Socinian minister was once asked by one who preached Evangelical Truth, “If I, who proclaim doctrines which you say are obnoxious to common reason, have my place full, and you, who preach such pretty, reasonable doctrines, can get nobody to hear you, do you not think it is because the people have an idea that what I teach is true—and that what you preach, though it is very pleasant and palatable, is not true and, therefore—they do not care to hear it?” It is not by altering our testimony that we are to hope to win an audience—and it is not by hiding the Light of the Gospel under a bushel that you or I shall discharge our obligations to our Lord! We must speak up for Christ and so speak up for Him that men will be moved to ask us the question, “What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you do so charge us?”  
I have read that Mr. Kilpin, of Exeter, had every pew in the chapel where he preached sketched out on a plan and the names of all the occupants of the pews written on it, so that he might pray for everyone and, if possible, speak to everyone. Such a plan might not be practicable in so large a building as this, but it is an excellent method, but if we cannot adopt it, let this place be mapped out in your own minds and let every Believer, wherever he sits, consider that there is a little district allotted to him and let him seek to have a word of courteous Christian conversation about Divine things with all who sit near him! I suggest this as a very excellent mode of beginning to “charge” others about Christ. And then, in your daily business, in the workshop, at fit times and seasons, at periods when Christian prudence and Christian zeal would give their voice together, introduce Christ and begin to talk of Him and hold Him up as the great cure-all for human diseases, the great staff and support for human weakness! We shall never see as much blessing as we might until the work of the Church becomes far more general than it is at present.  
There is something which every Believer can do for his Lord. He must be able to tell of what he has tasted and handled of the Word of Life—and if he has not tasted and handled it—then he is not a child of God at all. The best teaching in the world is experimental —nothing wins upon men like personal witnessing—not merely teaching the doctrine as we find it in the Book, but as we have felt it in its living power upon our own hearts! When we begin to tell of its effect upon ourselves, it is amazing what power there is upon others in that testimony! A person talks to me about

a certain medicine, how it is compounded, what it looks like, how many drops must be taken at a dose and so on. Well, I do not care to hear all that and I soon forget it. But he tells me that for many months he was bed-ridden, he was in sore distress and in great pain and almost died. And, looking at him as he stands before me in perfect health, I am delighted with the change—and he says that it was that medicine which restored him. If I am a sick man in the same state as he was, I say to him, “Give me the name and address, for I must try that medicine myself.”  
I believe that the simple witness of converted boys and girls, converted lads and lasses, especially the witness of converted fathers and mothers and beloved friends—the witness that comes of the gray head that is backed up by years of godly living has a wonderful power for the spread of the Gospel! But we cannot expect that God will give us a very large blessing until the whole of us shall be at work for our Lord. We need not all climb up the pulpit stairs, but each one of us can proclaim Christ according to our ability and according to the circumstances in which He has placed us. When we shall do that, then we may expect to see “greater things than these”—days that will make us laugh for joy of heart—and well-near make us dance like David did before the Ark will come when all the rank and file of the army—and even those who halt upon their crutches—shall march unanimously against the foe!  
III. Thirdly, it is important for us to MAKE ALL WHO COME IN CONTACT WITH US FEEL THAT CHRIST JESUS IS FIRST AND FOREMOST WITH US.  
You perceive that the question of the text is not, “What is your Beloved that He should be equal to others?” It is, “What is your Beloved more than another beloved?” The idols of the heathen are all made to stand in the Pantheon, face to face, and there is no quarrelling among them. But as soon as you introduce Christ, they must all go down, or He will not stay. The principle of the toleration of every form of doctrine—I mean not, of course, civil toleration which we hold to be always necessary and right, but I mean mental toleration—the principle of the mental toleration of all forms of doctrine and all forms and shades of action, is heathenish, for where Christ comes, He comes to reign, and when once He enters the soul of a man, it is down, down, down with everything else!  
There is a text which is often misunderstood. I heard it read thus only last Sunday—“No man can serve two masters.” I very much question whether he cannot! I believe he could serve not only two, but twenty! That is not the meaning of the text—the true reading of it is, “No man can serve two masters.” They cannot both be masters. If two of them are equal, then neither of them is really master. It is not possible for the soul to be subject to two master passions. If a man says, “I love Christ,” that is well. But if he says, “I love Christ and I love money—and I love them both supremely”—that man is a liar, for the thing is not possible! There is only one that can be the master passion and when Jesus enters the soul, love to Him must be the master passion of the heart!  
It strikes me that a Christian, living fully up to his privileges, would be such a man as this—if he had, on one side, the opportunity to enjoy pleasure and, on the other side, a painful opportunity of honoring Christ—he would prefer to honor Christ rather than to enjoy himself. If, on the one hand, there were gain, even lawfully to be had, and on the other hand, Christ could be honored in a way that would bring no monetary gain, the man would prefer the glorifying of his Master to the obtaining of the advantage in cash which was held out to him. And if it comes to this, that by soft speeches he may get himself into good repute, but that by sternly speaking out and rebuking error he may honor his Master but bring much contempt upon himself—if he is a genuine Christian—he will always take the latter course! The first question he will ask will be, “How can I most honor my Lord? How can I best glorify Him?”  
It is clear that Christ is not first in every nominal Christian’s heart. No, alas, He is not first and He is not even second! He is very far down in the scale. Look at them—good honest trades people, perhaps, but from the first dawn of Monday morning to the putting up of the shutters on Saturday night, what is the main business of their life? It is only, “What shall we eat?” Or, “What shall we drink?” Or, “With what shall we be clothed?” Now, where is Christ in such a case as that? Look at others— with them the question is, “Where shall I invest such-and-such an amount of spare cash? How shall I best lay by such-and-such a sum? What field shall I buy next? What house shall I add to my estate?” As for the Lord Jesus, He is put off with the cheese-parings and the candleends—He gets a little, now and then, dropped into the offering box, but it is only a mere trifle compared with what He ought to receive. The man’s words are 999 for himself and, perhaps, not much more than half a one for Christ. Almost all his time goes to the world and not to his Lord—his whole self goes to himself, and not to the Savior to whom he professes to belong!  
This is not the case with the truly Christ-like man. With him, Christ is first, Christ is last, Christ is midst, Christ is All in All—and when he speaks about anything connected with Christ, his words come with such a solemn earnestness that men are impressed with what he says. And they turn round to him and ask, as the daughters of Jerusalem enquired of the spouse, “What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you do so charge us?”  
IV. Our last thought is this—if ever, through the Grace of God, we should possess such a character and bear such a testimony as we have been talking about, so that men shall ask us the question of the text—IT WILL BE WELL FOR US TO BE PREPARED TO ANSWER IT.  
This is an age in which the world asks many questions, but from some Christians it cannot get an answer. I will say one thing which some of you may not like to hear, perhaps, but I cannot help it. There are some of you who are Baptists—but why? Well, I suppose, because you happen to be one and you have followed me without carefully studying the teaching of the New Testament upon the question. I fear it is so with some of you. And there are others of you who are Wesleyans, or Independents, or church people, but the only reason you can give for being so is that your grandmother, or your mother happened to be of that denomination. This is an age in which people do not estimate the Truth of God as they should! A good earnest controversy seems to me to be a very healthy thing because it turns men’s attention somewhat more than usual to Divine things—but you know how it is—even with many professing Christian people—they think it would be wicked to read a novel, but if it is written upon a religious subject, then it is a very proper thing! There is hardly a weekly newspaper, nowadays, or even a penny magazine that can live without having a novel in it—and there must be a market for all this rubbish or it would not be supplied so plentifully! Why, Sirs, in Puritan times, men read solid books like John Owen’s, “On the Mortification of Sin.” They studied such works as Richard Gilpin’s, “On Satan’s Temptations,” or Stephen Charnock’s, “The Divine Attributes.” But in these days, people who ought to read these solid books so as to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them, are often wasting their time over poor stuff which only addles the brain and does the soul no good!  
I would to God that we could again see a race of sturdy Believers who would hold to nothing but what they had tested by the Word of God! Believers who would receive nothing merely because it was taught by their minister, or by their parents, or by any human authority, but who would accept with unquestioning faith everything that is revealed in the Inspired Book! Our motto should still be, “To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light of God in them.” We need to breed, again—and oh, may God give us Grace to do so—a race of men who shall be rooted and grounded in the faith and who, when they are asked for a reason for the hope that is in them, shall be able to give it—not with fear and trembling and hesitation—but with holy boldness and determination because they have tested and tried the matter for themselves!  
See how the spouse does—she does not pause a minute before she gives her reply. She is asked, “What is your Beloved more than another beloved?” And she has the answer, as we say, at her fingertips, and why was this? Why, because she had it in her heart! So she says, “My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand.” She does not say, “Wait a bit, I must read up on that question. I must get myself wellinstructed upon it.” It is such a vital point and one so dear to her, as it touches the Person of her Lord, that she answers at once, “Is my Beloved better than any other beloved? Certainly He is and here are the reasons.” She puts them together, one after another, without a pause, so that the daughters of Jerusalem must have been convinced. And I commend her example to you, also, my Beloved in Christ Jesus! Study the Word, that your faith may not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God!  
I beseech you, if I have taught you anything that is not revealed in the Scriptures, or if you have received anything only as by my authority, give it up until you have tested and tried it by the Word of the Lord! I am not afraid what the result will be, for if in anything I have erred, I pray the Lord to teach me and also to teach you, so that we may grow together in the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of the faith. Let us all seek to be taught of God and then, with a holy life added to this Divine instruction—and a clear testimony for Jesus Christ constantly borne by us—our witnessing will tell upon the age in which we live!  
Oh, that the Lord would send us times of true revival once again! Run your finger down the page of history till you come to the Reformation— what was there in Luther, in Calvin, in Zwingli—that they should have been able to shake the world any more than there is in men who are living nowadays? Nothing but this—that the Reformers believed what they believed and they spoke with an awful earnestness, like men who meant what they said—and straightway there arose a noble race of men—men who felt the power of faith and lived it out! And the world was made to feel that “there were giants in those days.” Then, again, in later times, when the Church had fallen into a fatal slumber, there came the age of Whitefield and Wesley. What was the power of the early Methodists? Why, simply the power of true sincerity combined with holiness! What if I say that it was the power of intruding religion upon men, of forcing men to hear God’s voice, of compelling a sleeping world to wake out of its slumbers?  
As I sat, last week, in the hall of the Free Church Assembly in Edinburgh, just beneath the Castle, I started in my seat! I thought the whole hall was going to fall, for at one o’clock the gun on the Castle was fired from Greenwich by electricity! It startled every one of us and I noticed that nearly everybody took out his watch to see whether it was right by the gun. I thought to myself, “That is just what the Christian Church ought to do. It ought, at the proper time, to give a loud, clear, thundering testimony for God and for Truth, so that every man might examine his own conscience and get himself put right where he is wrong.” Our testimony for Christ ought not to be like the ticking of an ordinary clock, or as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, but a mighty booming noise that commands and that demands a hearing! Let our soul be but linked with Heaven—let the Spirit of the Lord flash the message along the wires—and our life may be just as accurate and just as startling as that gun at Edinburgh! So, when men ask us, “What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you do so charge us?” we shall have an answer ready for them, which may God bless to them, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—386, 807, 802. EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**SONG OF SOLOMON 1.**

We will, this evening, read in the one Book of the Bible which is wholly given up to fellowship. I allude to the Book of Canticles. This Book stands like the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden and no man shall ever be able to pluck its fruit, and eat thereof, until first he has been brought by Christ past the sword of the cherubim, and led to rejoice in the love which has delivered him from death! The Song of Solomon is only to be comprehended by the men whose standing is within the veil. The outer-court worshippers and even those who only enter the court of the priests think the Book a very strange one, but they who some very near to Christ can often see in this Song of Solomon the only expression which their love to their Lord desires.

Verses 1-2. The song of songs, which is Solomon’s. Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine. The Person here alluded to is not named. This omission is very common and usual to all-absorbing love. The spouse is thinking so much of Christ Jesus her Lord that it is not necessary for her to name Him. She cannot make a mistake and she is so oblivious of all else that she does not think of them, nor of those who would ask, “Who is this of whom you speak?” The communion is so close between herself and her Lord that His name is left out—“Let Him kiss me.” By the kiss is to be understood that strange and blessed manifestation of love which Christ gives from Himself to His children. Inasmuch as the word, “kisses,” is in the plural, the spouse asks that she may have the favor multiplied. And inasmuch as she mentions the, “mouth,” of her Bridegroom, it is because she wishes to receive the kisses fresh and warm from His sacred Person. “For Your love is better than wine.” It is better in itself, for it is more costly. Did it not flow out in streams of blood from a better winepress than earth’s best wine has ever known? It is better, too, in its effects—more exhilarating, more strengthening—and it leaves no ill results.

3. Because of the savor of Your good ointments, Your name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love You. The spouse surveys all the attributes of Christ and she compares them to separate and precious ointments. Christ is anointed as Prophet, Priest and King, and in each of these anointings He is a source of sweetness and fragrance to His people. But as if jealous of herself for having talked of the “ointments” when she should have spoken of Him, she seems to say, “Your very name is as an alabaster box when it is opened, and the odor of the precious spikenard fills the room”—

*“Jesus, the very thought of You*

*With sweetness fills my breast.”*  
“Your name is as ointment poured forth” and the spouse adds, as a note of commendation, “therefore do the virgins love You.”

4. Draw me, we will run after You. She feels, perhaps, as you do now, beloved Brothers and Sisters, heavy of heart. She cannot fly, nor reach her Lord, but her heart longs after Him, so she cries, “Draw me, we will run after You.” While she prays the prayer, others feel it suitable to them, also, so they join with her. When Christ draws us, we do not walk, but “run” after Him! There is no heavy going, then! When Christ draws us, how swiftly do we fly, as the dove to the dovecote when Jesus’ Grace entices us! Running soon brings the spouse to her Lord, for notice the next clause—

4. The king has brought me into His chambers. It is done—“The King has brought me into His chambers.” Come to Him in prayer and, perhaps, while you are yet speaking, He will hear! While you are musing, the fire shall burn and you shall be able to say, “Yes, He has brought me near to Himself, to the retired chamber where I may be alone with Him, to the chamber of riches and delights, where I may feast with Him.”

4. We will be glad and rejoice in You. This is the sure result of getting into the inner chamber with Christ.  
4. We will remember Your love more than wine: the upright love You. Not only the just in heart—those pure and lowly ones who, wherever the Lamb leads, from His footsteps never depart—but the upright, those who love moral excellence and virtue! They must love Christ. Now the singer’s note changes—  
5. I am black. Ah, my Soul, how true is that of you! “I am black”—  
5. But comely. Oh, glorious faith, that can, through the blackness, still see the comeliness! We are comely when covered with the righteousness of Christ, though black in ourselves! “I am black, but comely”— 5. O you daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar. Smoke-dried, foul, filthy, poverty-stricken.  
5. As the curtains of Solomon. Bedecked with embroidery made with gold and silver threads and fit for a king’s tent, so strangely mixed is the nature of the Believer—“black but comely”…“as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.”

6. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me. Perhaps you are afraid, Beloved, that the Master should look at you, for you feel yourself so unworthy.

6. My mother’s children were angry with me. You have been persecuted until your spirit is broken.  
6. They made me the keeper of the vineyards. Perhaps you have been put to some ignoble work. You have toiled under the whip of the Law, but you have a worse sorrow than this, for you have to add—  
6. But my own vineyard have I not kept. You are conscious that you have restrained prayer, that you have neglected searching the Word, that you have not lived as near to God as you ought to have done—and all this seems to make you feel as if you could not come into close communion with Christ! Come, my Brother, my Sister—shake off your unbelief! May the Master shake it off from you! Then once again you can change the note, as the spouse does here—  
7. Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions? There are other shepherds, though they are false ones, and these pretend to be companions of Christ. But why should we turn aside to them? And yet we shall, O our Beloved One, unless You tell us where to follow You and how to abide close by Your side, or tell us where you make Your flock to rest at noon! Here comes the answer—  
8. If you know not, O you fairest among women. Just note that. She said that she was black, but Christ says that she is the fairest among women! In fact, there is a passage in the Song where He twice calls her fair. As Erskine puts it—  
*“Lo! You are fair! Lo! You are fair,  
Twice fair are you, I say.  
My Grace, My righteousness becomes  
Your doubly-bright array.”*

O you faithful ones, what joy is contained in this warm praise which your Lord gives to you!” If you know not, O you fairest among women—

8. Go your way forth by the footsteps of the flock and feed your kids beside the shepherds’ tents. There are two ways of finding Christ. First, follow after true Believers—most of you know some experienced Christians—follow their footsteps and you shall so find their God. Or else go to the shepherds’ tents—wait on the ministry of the Word—the Lord is often pleased to manifest Himself to His people when they are willing to hear what messages He sends through His ambassadors.

9. I have compared you, O My love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariots. True Believers are as strong, as noble, as beautiful as the horses in Pharaoh’s chariots which were renowned throughout all the world. Let us be like those horses—let us all pull together—let us draw the great chariot of our King behind us. Let us be content to wear His harness, that we may be partakers of His splendid triumph.

10. Your cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, your neck with chains of gold. Christ here praises His Church. Orientals were in the habit of wearing jewels in such abundance that their cheeks were covered with them, and then they multiplied the chains of gold upon their necks. And the Graces which Christ gives to His people, and especially the various parts of His own finished work become to them like rows of jewels and chains of gold.

11. We will make you borders of gold with studs of silver. As if Father, Son and Holy Spirit would all work together to make the Believer perfectly beautiful.

12-13. While the King sits at His table, my spikenard sends forth the smell thereof. A bundle of myrrh is my Well-Beloved to me. Not a sprig, mark you, but a bundle of myrrh.

13. He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. Christ, as a bundle of myrrh, shall always be near our hearts, so that every life-pulse shall come from Him.

14. My Beloved is to me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi. He is not, I say again, one sprig or spray of camphire, but a cluster of it. The spouse, you see, multiplies figures to describe her Bridegroom and even when she has done so, she cannot reach the height of His Glory—

*“Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,  
Nor Heaven, His full resemblance bears!  
His beauties we can never trace,  
Till we behold Him face to face.”*

16. Behold, you are fair, My love; behold, you are fair; you have doves’ eyes. So Christ speaks of His Church. She has the soft, mild, tender eyes of a dove. Besides, she has the discerning eyes by which the dove can distinguish between carrion and fit food. And then she has clear eyes like that of the dove. You know that the dove, or pigeon, when it is taken far away from home and wants to reach its cote, flies round and round till it gets up high and then it looks for miles, perhaps for hundreds of miles, till it tracks with unerring eyes its own resting place, or some familiar landmark, and then, with cutting wings it flies through the ether till it reaches its home! So, every Believer should have doves’ eyes—eyes that can see from earth to Heaven, and see Christ in His Glory, even when His cause is disowned by men!

16, 17. Behold, You are fair, my Beloved, yes, pleasant: also our bed is green. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir. We have the word, “rafters,” here, but it should be, “galleries.” The “bed” expresses the near fellowship which Christ has with His people. The “house” is a larger expression and, perhaps, denotes the whole Church. And the “galleries” signify the ordinances of Grace. You notice that these are made of strong wood, the one of cedar and the other of fir and truly, dear Friends, in closing our reading, we can say to our Lord—

*“No beams of cedar or of fir  
Can with Your courts on earth compare!  
And here we wait, until Your love  
Raise us to nobler seats above.”*

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.  
Sermon #1155 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Son 6.12

THE CHARIOTS OF AMMINADIB  
NO. 1155

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

**“Before I was even aware, my soul made me  
like the chariots of Amminadib.”  
Song of Solomon 6:12.**

WE cannot be quite sure at this date what these chariots of Amminadib were to which the Inspired poet here refers. Some suppose that he may have alluded to a person of that name who was renowned, like Jehu of old, for his furious driving. Therefore it might have been familiar at the time and afterwards have become proverbial to speak in metaphor of the chariots of Amminadib. The conjecture seems harmless, still it is only a conjecture, and cannot be verified. It is quite possible, however, that our translators may have retained as a proper name a conjunction of two words, which, taken separately, are capable of being interpreted.

You remember the word “Ammi” as it occurs in the prophet Hosea? “Say unto your brethren, Ammi,” which signifies “you are My people,” even as before He had said, “Call his name Loammi, for “you are not My people.” The one word Ammi, thus stands for “people,” and the other word, “Nadib,” means “willing,” so that the two united may be rendered “willing people”—“like the chariots of a willing people.” Or the words may be read, I think, more correctly, “The chariots of the princely people”—the princely chariots, the chariots of the prince.

Some have understood them to mean the chariots of God, of the people that surround the Great Prince, Himself, that is to say, the chariots of the angels, according as we read, “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.” In this case the figure would be a very striking one—“Before I was even aware, my soul made me like the chariots of the attendants upon the Great King. I was like the cherubim themselves, all aglow with consecrated fire.” In whatever way the critical point is deciphered, the practical solution appears to be this—the writer’s soul was quickened because full of life, full of energy, full of might, full of spirit and full of princely dignity, too. And not only stimulated to a high degree, but also elevated, lifted up from dullness, indifference, and apathy—“Before I was even aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.”

To whom does this text refer? Probably those of us who would never raise a doubt about the Song being a dialogue between Christ and the spouse—a matter we have no intention to canvass just now—as we take it for granted. We might find no small difficulty in determining to which of the two sacred personages this speech belongs, whether it was to Solomon or to Shulamite (the masculine or the feminine variety of the same name)—the Prince the husband, or the princess the spouse—whether, in a word, it was Christ or the Church. There is very much to be said for its

being Christ Himself that is speaking.

You will notice in this chapter that, from the fourth verse, He has been referring to His Church. “You are beautiful, O My love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me,” and so on. He is speaking of His Church on to the 10th verse. “Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?” Then the 11th verse proceeds, “I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine nourished, and the pomegranates budded. Before I was even aware, My soul made Me like the chariots of Amminadib.” May it not be the Lord Himself who is speaking here?

We may entertain the question for a moment without absolutely fixing upon this as its proper solution. If it refers to Christ, it means just this— that He had been, for a while, away from His people. They had grieved Him and He had hid His face from them. Out of very love and faithfulness He felt bound to chasten them, by hiding from them the brightness of His Countenance. But He began to think tenderly of His people—His heart turned towards His Church—and while He was thinking of her, He saw such beauties in her that His soul was melted with her charms. Oh, what an extraordinary thing that He should see loveliness in His poor imperfect Church!

And He saw such a loveliness about her, as her image rose up before His face, that He said, “You have ravished My heart, My Sister, My Spouse; you have ravished My heart with one of your eyes.” “Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.” And then, musing upon her, still, and coming into her garden and seeing the various Graces like plants and flowers in their different stages of development, His heart began to grow warm again towards her and all that concerned her. It had never really been cold—it only seemed so in the deviation of His accustomed manner. But, like Joseph before his brethren, He could not refrain any longer.

When He saw some of His people budding with desires, others bursting into the realization of those desires. When He saw some like ripe and mellow fruit upon the bough, ready for Heaven. When He saw others just commencing the Divine life, He was charmed to be in the garden of nuts— before He was even aware, He found He must be with His people—He must return in the fullness of His love to His Church! Not her beauties only, but the kindling of His own soul began to stir Him. His Free Grace sought free hope—His Infinite love became more than a match for the temporary prudence that had made Him hide His face, and, swift as the chariots of Amminadib, did He speed back to His people to let them see Him again—to let them enjoy His fellowship again.

There are other Scripture passages where the Savior is spoken of as being like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether, or division, because He is so willing to come to His people—so willing to make matters up with them—and end the days in which they mourn because the Bridegroom is absent. When He has hidden His face for a while out of love for them, and out of desire to reveal to them their faults—I say again, He is so willing to blot out their faults once more and to return to them again with mercies—that His return is compared for swiftness and irresistibleness to the motions of the chariots of Amminadab!

It is a delightful thought that if communion between our souls and Jesus is suspended, it is not because He takes pleasure therein. His delights are with the sons of men. He a thousand times invites His chosen to abide in Him, to continue in His love and to remain in His company. In this Song He cries again and again, “Come with Me, My Spouse.” This should encourage us to seek Him for renewed love-tokens, however serious may have been our departures from Him, and however dark our prospects under the hiding of His face. If He who is the aggrieved party is eager to be reconciled, the matter is easy and we may at once rise to the blessed condition from which our sin has cast us down. Jesus longs to embrace us! His arms are opened wide—do not our hearts warm at the sight? Do we not at once rush to His bosom and find a new Heaven in a fresh sense of His boundless love? Why hesitate? What possible cause can there be for abiding in darkness? Lord, we fall upon Your bosom and our joy returns!

Not that I intend to adopt that view as the groundwork of our present reflections. It appears to me that without the slightest degree of twisting the passage, or deviating from an honest interpretation, we may understand that this is the language of the Church concerning Christ. If so, Christ’s words conclude at the end of the 10th verse and it is the Church that speaks at the eleventh. There is not an instance in the whole Song, so far as I can remember, of the Prince, Himself, speaking in the first person singular. Therefore, this would be a solitary exception, or else, following the current plan, where the same pronoun is used, the Church is speaking to Christ and telling Him of herself.

“I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished and the pomegranates budded. Before I was even aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” Taking the text, then, as referring to the Church in particular, and more generally to the Lord’s people, there will be four observations which we would pointedly make and prayerfully meditate. May God bless us, now, in fulfilling this purpose!

I. Our first observation shall be this. What is most needed in all religious exercises is THE MOTION, THE EXERCISE OF THE SOUL. “Before I was even aware, my soul made me”—or my soul became—“like the chariots of Amminadib.” Soul-worship is the soul of worship and if you take away the soul from the worship, you have killed the worship—it becomes dead and barren. Let us turn over that well-known thought.

It may benefit us if we look at the many sides of it. There are professors in this world who are perfectly content if they have gone through the mechanical part of public devotion. If they have occupied their seats, joined in the hymns and the prayers, and listened to the preaching, they go away quite content and easy. They would not like to be absent from the solemn

assembly and their conscience would prick them if they neglected the outward ordinances. And having gone through them and complied with the accustomed form, they are perfectly content with themselves—and think they have done that which is lawful and right—comely and excellent.

Now, it is never so with the child of God. If his soul is awakened from the torpor of death, and his sensibilities quickened into the vigor of life, he will feel that unless in the song he has really praised God in strains of gratitude with emotions of thankfulness, he has rather mocked his heavenly Father than acceptably adored Him. He knows that in prayer, if it is not the soul that speaks with God, it is but the carcass of prayer, destitute of the sweet savor which can find acceptance with God, and of the sweet satisfaction that can bring refreshment to one’s own breast. When he hears the Word preached, he longs to feel it penetrate his heart, even as the rain soaks into the soil. And if he cannot so receive the Truth of the Gospel when it breaks on his ears as the engrafted Word that saves his soul, and so feed upon it as the Bread of Life which nourishes his soul, he goes away sad at heart, deploring that, while others were feasting at the banquet, he was there without appetite and had not the pleasure or the profit which they derived.

Beloved, in our public services we ought to account nothing truly and rightly done which is not done with the heart. That is one reason why in this Tabernacle we have tried to lay aside everything of outward show or external form which might distract the thoughts or disturb the simplicity of waiting on the Lord. As far as I can, I try to avoid the use of all symbols, except the two which Scripture has ordained—lest the symbol should tempt you to rest satisfied with itself, as I believe it generally does—and so prevent your reaching the Lord with your heart. We try to lay aside everything that would at all touch your senses in the worship—anything which appeals to the ear in the way of sweet music—anything of the aesthetic that would appeal to the eye.

If you do not worship God with your souls, I hope you will get tired of our fellowship. Yet, be it confessed, I painfully feel that it is almost as easy not to worship God with the bald plainness of Quakerism as it is not to worship God with the studied pomp of Ritualism! In any form, or without any form of worship, the amount of real devotion must be measured by the quantity of soul that is in it—provided the quality is pure, sincere, guileless. If the soul is there in the full exercise of its powers and passions, knowing what is revealed and feeling what is Inspired, I believe God is gracious to pity and forgive a thousand mistakes in outward fashion and skill of execution.

The preacher’s modulation may be faulty and the people’s singing may be ill-timed to barbarous tunes without peril of the unpardonable sin. But if the soul is lacking, though you should have worshipped according to the pattern given on the Mount and have never had a word uttered or a sound made but such as, in itself, would be accredited by men and acceptable with God had it been quickened by the Spirit, yet without that Divine Spirit, which alone can give force and fervor to the human soul, it is all null and void!

I think every genuine Christian knows it is so and feels it is so. He says, “My heart cries out for God, for the living God!” Nor can he be satisfied unless he finds God and draws near before Him. As in public worship, it is precisely the same in our own private and personal transactions with the Most High. The religious worldling will say a prayer when he wakes in the morning, and perhaps, unless he is out late, or too sleepy at home, he will have a bit of prayer at night, again, in the way of the repetition of some collect, or something which he has learned by rote. And very likely he has family prayer, too. It is not so much a custom as it was, but there are some who think they cannot go through the day unless they have what they call, “Prayers.”

But mark how the Christian prizes private prayers above everything that has to do with the ordering of his daily habits! And look how he esteems family prayer to be a necessity of every Christian household! At the same time he is not content because he prays for a few minutes unless he draws near to the Lord. He is not satisfied because he gathered his children together and read the Scriptures and prayed with them, if, on adding up the sum total of the day, he is compelled to say, “It was heartless worship. When I awoke it was heartless worship. When I gathered my children and my servants it was the same. And it was sleepy, heartless worship when I knelt by my bedside and professed to seek the Lord at nightfall.”

If it is heartless it is unacceptable! God cannot receive it. If we have not thrown our heart into it, depend upon it, God will never take it to His heart and be pleased with it. Only that prayer which comes from our heart can get to God’s heart. If we pray only from the lips, or from the throat, and not low down from the very heart of our nature, we shall never reach the heart of our Father who is in Heaven. Oh, that we may be more and more scrupulous and watchful in these things! In the diary of Oliver Heywood, one of the ejected ministers, he often says, “God helped me in prayer in my chamber and in the family.” And once he writes thus—“In my chamber this morning I met with more than ordinary incomings of Divine Grace and outgoings of heart to God.”

I am afraid we may get satisfied with ourselves, especially if we are regular in private Scripture reading, private prayer, family prayer and public prayer. Instead of being satisfied with these exercises we ought to be weeping over them and deploring the formal and heartless manner in which we are prone to discharge them. Be it always remembered that we do not pray at all unless the soul is drawn out in pleading and beseeching the Lord. Si nil curarem, nil orarem, said Melanchthon, “Were I without cares, I should be without prayers.”

Now, perhaps you may know a friend of yours who thinks himself a poet. He can make poetry at any time, all the year round! Just pull him by the sleeve and he will make you, very soon, a verse or two at the spur of the moment to show the readiness of his wit and the versatility of his talent. Yet I dare say you think that he is about as far off from being a poet as a sparrow is from being an eagle! You know if he were a poet he would not be able to command the glow of imagination at one time and at another time he would hardly be able to control it. He would sometimes have a Divine melting upon him, as some call it, and then noble thoughts in appropriate words would flow from his pen. Otherwise he would be just as dull and insipid as ordinary mortals. He would tell you indignantly that he could not write verses to order like those who scribble rhyme to advertise a tailor’s wares. Unless the inspiration comes upon me, he would say, I cannot compose a line!

In like manner, a man cannot always pray—and the man who pretends he can, only utters jargon! He never prays at all, as the other never makes poetry at all. Prayer is a Divine art. It is a thing which needs the Inspiration not of the muses, but of the Spirit of God, Himself, and it is when the Spirit comes upon us with Divine force and makes our soul like the chariots of Amminadib that we can pray! And at other times when that Spirit is not with us, we cannot pray as we did before. Every living child of God knows this. We must measure our prayers by the state of soul that we were in. Take another illustration from the painter. One person, who thinks himself a painter, can paint any day you like anything you ask him—a mountain, a river, a horse, an insect, or a flower—it is all the same to him. He takes a brush and soon produces something which ordinary people might think to be a picture.

But send that daub of his to the Royal Academy and they will tell you that it may do for a tea tray, but not for the walls of a gallery. But the man that can paint, how does he mix his colors? The great painter will tell you that he mixes his brains with his colors—and when he takes his brush and dips it into the paint, he lays it on with his soul. In a great picture, such as sometimes we have seen by a Titiens, or a Raphael, it is not the color, but the man’s heart that has got out onto the canvas. Somehow he has managed to drop his brush into his soul! That is real painting. And so it is with prayer. The most humble man that prays to God with his soul understands the fine art of prayer. But the man who chants a pompous liturgy, or repeats an extemporaneous effusion has not prayed. He has dashed off what he thinks to be a picture, but it is not a picture, it is not a prayer.

Had it been a prayer it would have had a palpable inspiration in its light and shade. A painting may consist of few lines, but you will see the painter’s hand in it. And a prayer may consist of only half a dozen words, but you can see the hand of God in it. The formality repels you in the one case—the vitality attracts you in the other. So we will come back to the proposition with which we started. We can only pray according to the proportion in which our soul puts forth its force and feeling. And it is the same with praise. We have praised God up to the amount of soul that was in the sense as well as in the sound—be it with an organ or without an organ—with good music or with groans that cannot be uttered. We may have praised God either way, but only if our soul has been in full swell. With every kind of religious exercise, the soul is the standard of the whole compass of worship.

II. We proceed to a second remark. SOMETIMES IT HAPPENS THAT THE HEART IS NOT IN THE BEST STATE FOR DEVOTION. If religion is a matter of soul, it cannot always be attended to with equal pleasure and advantage. You can always grind a barrel organ—it will invariably give you the same discordant noise which people call music—but the human voice will not admit of being wound up in the same fashion, nor will it, for the most part, discharge the same monotonous functions. The great singer finds that his voice changes and that he cannot always use it with the same freedom. If the voice is a delicate organ, how much more delicate is the soul! The soul is continually the subject of changes.

Ah, how often it changes because of its contact with the body! If we could be disembodied, oh, how we would praise God and pray to Him! “The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak.” I sat among some Brethren the other day who were devout, and I tried to be, but I had a splitting headache. I do not know whether you could pray under so grievous a disability—let me confess to you that I could not. At another time, not long ago, I was one of a solemn assembly, when various disturbances occurred in the room—somebody getting up and others coming in late, as some of you do—and I could not get into a right frame as I ought to have done. Little things will affect little minds and our minds, many of them, are little. In that case I could not pray because my mind was being distracted and my attention was being taken away.

Such distractions frequently happen and they bitterly remind us of our infirmities. The Apostles, themselves, fell to sleeping when they ought to have been praying. And under Paul’s preaching, Eutychus went to sleep, and Paul never blamed him. He died as the result of it, but he got raised again from the dead, so I suppose there was no fault in him. We may sometimes, without any willfulness on our part, as a necessary result of the weakness of our nature, or the stress of our toil and care, have brought ourselves into a condition in which we cannot feel like the chariots of Amminadab—and it is no use for us to attempt it! The body affects the soul materially and a thousand outside agencies will tell upon our mental susceptibilities.

I have known persons come into this Tabernacle who have, perhaps, been annoyed with somebody in their pew, or somebody outside. It ought not to be so, but it is so. A little fly buzzing about one’s face—as small a thing as that—will disturb one’s devotion so that you cannot pray as you would and as you desire. And then, alas, our sins are a much more serious hindrance to our devotion. A sense of guilt puts us into such a state that we cannot be bold in our faith and childlike in our confidence when we appear before God. Perhaps we have been angry. How can we come before the Lord calmly when our spirit has been just now tossed with tempest? Probably we have been seeking the world and going after it with all our might. How can we suddenly pull up and put all our strength into a vigorous seeking of the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in a moment?

It is possible, too, that there is a sick child at home, or a wife lying suffering, or serious losses and crosses about business and domestic affairs. Perhaps one has a very heavy heart to bring before the Lord. Now God’s Grace can help us to overcome all these things and can even make our souls like the chariots of Amminadab! We need Divine Grace for such emergencies. The soul, in its different phases and states, has need of help from the sanctuary to which it repairs. “Well,” perhaps one here will say, “I always do what I think right every Sunday in much the same manner. I always pray the same and I don’t know but what I can always sing God’s praises the same.” Yes, let me answer our good friend, I have no doubt of your thorough sameness, or of your habitual self-content.

If you were to ask one of the statues in St. Paul’s Cathedral how it felt, I have no doubt it would say that it always felt the same because it never had any feeling. Appeal to anything destitute of life and you will find that it has no change. But where there is life, and that which is intensely delicate—spiritual life—and where it is placed in circumstances so hostile to it as the circumstances which surround us here, there, I say, you will find that not only the revolutions of the seasons, but the variations of the temperature affect it. And every man who has this life in him experiences such changes. We have read of those who have no changes—and therefore they do not fear God. The fact that a Believer cannot, at all times, draw near to God as his spirit would desire, becomes accordingly the key which interprets to him the Grace and goodness whereby he sometimes gains access after a manner that surprises and delights his spirit.

III. This leads cheerfully up to our third observation—THERE ARE SEASONS WHEN OUR HEART IS SWEETLY MOVED TOWARDS GOD. “Before I was even aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” Have you not proved welcome opportunities when all your thoughts have been quickened, enlivened and stimulated to activity in the highest degree about your highest interests? We have ceased to moan—

*“Our souls, how heavily they go*

*To reach eternal joys,”*  
and we have been all wings, and could soar and mount aloft Like David! We could have danced before the ark of God for very joy! And if any had said to us that we might, ourselves, fall by our enthusiasm while we seemed vile by our hilarity, we should have replied that we purposed to be viler still!

All within us was awake—there was not a slumbering faculty. Our memory told us of the goodness of the Lord in days gone by and our hopes were regaled by the mercy which we had not tasted yet, but which was made sure to us by promise and brought near to us by faith. Our faith was active and bright of eye. Our love, especially, shed a clear light over all our prospects. Oh, we have had blessed times when our soul has been light and rapid as the chariots of Amminadib! And at such times we were conscious of great elevation. The chariots of Amminadib were those of a prince. And oh, we were no more mean and low, beggarly and groveling— we saw Christ!—and were made kings and princes and priests with Him!

Then we longed to crown His head. Then we could have performed martyrs’ deeds. Then we were no cowards, we were afraid of no foes. We sat down at the feet of Jesus and thought everything little compared with Him! Suffering for His sake would have been a gain! And reproach would have been an honor! We had princely thoughts, then—large, liberal, generous, capacious thoughts concerning Christ and His people, His cause and His conquests—our souls were like the chariots of Amminadab! At the same time they were full of power, for, when the chariots of Amminadib went forth, who could stop them? Who could lay his hand upon the reins and turn the coursers as they went onward in their mighty tramping? Such was our spirit! We laughed at thoughts of death and poured contempt upon the trials of life. We were “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” Oh, what splendid times we have had when God has been with us!

Do you remember when you had them? I remember, when newly converted, how full my spirit was of love and holy triumph, like the chariots of Amminadab! Yours, no doubt, were much like mine. The love of your espousals was upon you. With what pleasing rapture you embraced your Lord and said, “I will never let You go.” Stronger is love than death or Hell. You felt it to be so. You flamed and burned and glowed—and though in yourself you were like low brushwood—yet you were like the bush in the desert that burned with fire because God was in your soul! Do you remember that? Well, since then, in private prayer, you have sometimes had gracious access, and meditation has been added to prayer, and the love of Christ has come in upon you like a great flood tide and drowned everything in your soul except itself.

There have been periods when a sense of the eternal, immutable, neverending love of God—His electing sovereign favor, the love of God in giving His Son for you—have been upon your spirit with a mighty influence that has laid you prostrate for very joy! You could not speak because words were too poor to express the emotions of your soul! You had to feel the force of James Thomson’s hymn of the seasons—“Come, then, expressive silence, muse His praise,” for you could not speak it. You know it has been so with you. sometimes—and has not it been so, sometimes, under the Word, when you have been ready to stand up and clap your hands for joy?

Have not I seen gratitude and exultation reflected on your faces, sometimes, when the Lord has been present in the preaching of the Gospel? When the Truth of God has come to you like marrow and fatness from the King’s own hands till Dr. Watts has proved to be a faithful interpreter of the very scene and circumstance that ravished your heart?—

*“The King Himself draws near  
And feasts His saints today.  
Here we may sit and see Him here,  
And love, and praise, and pray.”*

Oh, yes, in God’s House you have known the days of Heaven upon earth! Might I speak for the rest of you I should pronounce the choicest periods of fellowship those we have found at the Lord’s Table. When the bread has been broken and the wine poured out down in the Lecture Hall, He has been with us in the breaking of bread! If ever we have come near to Christ, surely it has been in that blessed communion!

There are the windows of agate and the gates of carbuncle through which Christ comes to His people in the ordinances He has ordained. By His Grace we will never slight them! We cannot! The Master puts such reality and fullness of joy into them—apart from Him they are idols. But with Him, when He is there, when we have the real Presence—not the superstitious presence some speak about—but the real Presence which His own Spirit imparts and our waiting souls participate—ah, then we have said—

*“No beams of cedar or of fir  
Can with His courts on earth compare,  
As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,  
Such is a dying Christ to me.”*

Not infrequently, too, have I known that the Lord has appeared to His people and warmed their hearts when they have been working for Him. Some idle, indolent, sluggish professors who have used the ordinances have not found benefit in the ordinances because the Lord has intended to rebuke their sloth.

But when they have got up and gone forth among the poor. When they have gone forth to visit the sick, the sorrowful and the dying, they have heard such delightful expressions from the lips of holy, suffering men and women, or felt their hearts so kindled by a sight of Divine compassion in the midst of desperate poverty and gracious pardon for grievous sin, that a quickening has come over them! And whereas they did not seem to care, before, whether souls were lost or saved, they have gone out into the world with zeal to win fresh trophies for the Messiah! Their hearts have been, by His Grace, like the chariots of Amminadib through the benefits they have received from Christian service!

A great many Christian people never will be happy and never fully alive to the destinies that wait on their Redeemer till they get something to do to give them an interest in those mighty issues. The rule of the Christian life is, “If any man will not work, neither shall he eat.” If you will not serve God as Christians, you shall not feed upon the sweet things of the kingdom to your own soul’s comfort. A little more service and your soul would become like the chariots of Amminadib.

Beloved, there is no need that I should enlarge. I merely say this to bring up your grateful memories that you may thank God for what He has done. Remember whatever He has done in the past He will do again in the future. When the Lord has come once to His people, He says, “I will see you again, I will come to you again, and your hearts shall rejoice.” Of everything He has ever given you, He has got as much in store—and He is quite as able to give it to you now as He was before. You have never gone so high in joy but you may go higher yet! You have never drunk such draughts from the well of Bethlehem as left the well empty—you shall drink of it again.

Do not say, “I had those sweet times when I was young, I shall never have them again.” You shall have precious times again! Get back to your first love, dear Brother, dear Sister—go forward to a higher love than ever you had, for God will help you say, “I look back and think—

*“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill.”*

Thank God for that ache! Bless God for the aching void. If your soul aches for God, He will be to your relief before long. Whenever a soul puts up a flag of distress at the masthead, he may be sure that Christ is on the lookout for just such a soul. He has thrown up the windows of Heaven and wherever He sees a soul that does what is right and longs to find joy and reconciliation with God, He will come to it—and before long it shall be better for you than even the chariots of Amminadab—and more desirable.

IV. Our last observation is this—SOMETIMES THE SWEET SEASONS COME TO US WHEN WE DO NOT EXPECT THEM. “Before I was even aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” Some poor hearts do not reckon ever to have these joys again. They say, “No, no. They are all gone. The last leaf has blown from the tree. The last flower has faded in the garden. My summer is past. It is all over with me!” That is the bitter complaint and the hollow murmuring of unbelief. But the Lord for whom you wait can suddenly appear—and while you are saying hard things of yourself He can refute them with the beams of His Countenance.

Even at this very moment you may stand like Hannah, a woman of sorrowful spirit, feeling as if you would be sent away empty. Yes, and God’s servant, himself, may address you with rough words as Eli did her—and may even tell you that you are drunk when it is deep grief that enfeebles your steps and chokes your voice—and all the while the Lord may have in store for you such a blessing as you have never dreamed of! And He may say to you, “Go your way, My daughter. I have heard your petition, your soul shall have its desire.” Before I was even aware, while my unbelief led me to think such a thing impossible, You have made me like the chariots of Amminadab! “Before I was even aware,” as if it came upon me almost without my own consent. Glad enough I was when it did come, but it took me by surprise. It led me captive.

Now, is not that the way that the Lord dealt with you when you were not aware of it, when you had no reason to expect Him, when you found and felt yourself to be utterly lost, ruined, and undone? Did He not surprise you with His mercy and prevent you with His lovingkindness? Again, you are diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction and sorrow. There is nothing that leads you to expect a season of joy—you are just as empty and unworthy as you can well be. You feel as if your heart were of stone and you cannot stir it, and you are saying, “I only wish I could enjoy the freedom that my companions have, and keep the solemn feasts with their holy gladness. But, alas, for me! I am afraid I have got

to be a mere mechanical Christian without the lively instincts and lofty inspirations of spiritual worship.”

Thus you are writing bitter things against yourself. Oh, Beloved, the Lord is looking down upon you now as His son or daughter, as His own dear child! And He is about to surprise you with His infinite love! Let me give you one text to put into your mouth and take home with you. The Lord has said, concerning every one of His people, “You are all fair, My Love; there is no spot in you.” “Why, now, I am all covered over with spots and blemishes,” you say, “and no beauty!” But the Lord Jesus Christ has washed you with His blood and covered you with His righteousness! Do you think He can see any imperfection in that? You are members of His body, united to Him!

In Christ you are without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. You are all spots in yourself, but He sees you as He intends to make you before He has done with you—and He can discern unspeakable beauties in you. “Oh,” you say, “does He think that? Surely, then, I see unspeakable beauties in Him! His love to me opens my eyes to see how dear an one He must be. Is He enamored of me? Has He given His whole heart to me? Did He prove His love to me by bleeding on the Cross? Oh, then, I must love Him, if He will but let me! Shall such a poor worm as I am love Infinite Perfection? Oh, yes, I must, since Infinite Perfection deigns to love me! And since the Sun of Righteousness, in all His Glory deigns to shine on my soul!”

You are beginning to warm already, I see you are! Before you are aware, your soul is making you like the chariots of Amminadab! And if you keep on with these holy contemplations, you will leave off all misgivings about your love to Him, so deeply absorbed will you be in musing on His love to you! You will forget all the while about your sin, while you remember the blood that has put that sin away—the perfect righteousness that has made you accepted in the Beloved—and the Everlasting Covenant which, through Grace, has put your feet upon a rock and saved your eyes from tears and your feet from falling!

Engaged in such sweet soliloquies, before you are aware, your soul will make you like the chariots of Amminadab! The Lord make it so! God grant that surprising Grace may come likewise even to sinners, and lead them to Jesus, and constrain them to look to Jesus. Then, while looking, faith will breathe in their spirit so that they will sing—

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

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÷Son 6.13

“RETURN, RETURN, O SHULAMITE! RETURN, RETURN!”  
NO. 1794

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 10, 1884, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Return, return, O Shulamite! Return, return, that we may look upon you. What will you see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies?”  
Solomon’s Song 6:13.**

THE translation into the word, “Shulamite,” is unhappy—it is unmusical and misses the meaning. The Hebrew word is a feminine of, “Solomon.” “Solomon” may stand for the bridegroom’s name and then the wellbeloved bride takes her husband’s name in a feminine form of it, which is Shulamith, Salome, or perhaps, better, “Solyma.” The King has named his name upon her and, as Caius has his Caiia, so Solomon has his Solyma. He is the Prince of Peace and she is the Daughter of Peace. Earlier she was called, “the fairest among women,” but now she is espoused unto her Lord and has a fullness of peace. Therefore is she called the Peace-Laden, or the Peace-Crowned. You know how truly it is so with the justified in Christ Jesus. Because the sound is sweeter and the sense is clearer, permit me to read the text thus—“Return, return, O Solyma: return, return, that we may look upon you. What will you see in Solyma? As it were the company of two armies.” May the Holy Spirit, like a dove, rest upon us while we linger amid the verses of this Song of Loves.

A soul redeemed by blood and brought by the Holy Spirit into a loving, living, lasting union with the Well-Beloved, cannot remain unnoticed. Solomon is known all over the world. Solomon is sought after for his wisdom and, therefore, Solyma will shine with something of his brightness and she will be enquired after, also. In the Church of God no man lives unto himself, or travels through the world unwatched. If you are interested in Christ, Heaven and earth and Hell will be interested in you! Some men are but as a chip in the porridge—they have no savor in themselves and none comes from them. But the believing man, the Christcommuning man, is full of influences both repellent and attractive—and he may be sure that where he goes, he will be known and read.

As the house of Israel is among the nations like a burning torch in dry stubble, so, also, are the spiritual Israel. Voices will cry after the bride of Christ, “Return! Return! Return! Return!” A pilgrim bound for the Celestial City cannot go through the world, even through the worst part of it, such as Vanity Fair, without being noticed, questioned and sought after—and, if possible, ensnared. Do not think, you who have been made a living man by the quickening of the Holy Spirit, that you can but glide through this world as the spiritually dead do. They may be quietly borne along to the place of corruption—the life within you is too strange, too operative to be overlooked! You are a wonder to many and you may well be so, for God has worked great marvels in you and for you. Beloved, you are the Lord’s witnesses, and witnesses must not sulk away in the background or remain dumb! When they bear their honest witness, it is in open court where they will be heard and regarded by all who are concerned in the suit, whether pro or con. Oh, saints of God, you are never unobserved! You are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses and none of these witnesses are indifferent to you—they all watch you with steady gaze to see how you run your race. The good are intent that you should so run as to obtain, but there are evil ones who long for your defeat!

Solyma is addressed by urgent voices who plead with her to return to them. For good or evil, multitudes of tongues cry to her, “Return, return, O Solyma, return, return!” Will you kindly notice from the connection of my text what state Solyma was in when these calls came to her? She was in her glory and beauty! In admiration the question is asked, “Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners?” A Church or an individual Christian in a low state of Grace may escape observation. Who cares about a dead church? Who fights with a lukewarm people? But if Jesus Christ is in the Church, or in the heart, He will soon be seen! The Evangelist tells us, “He could not be hid.” You may slip down the street in the night without a candle and, like a thief, you may pass by unobserved, but if the Lord has lighted your candle and you carry it with you, the watchmen will notice you, the dogs will bark at you and others will spy you out! As fire reveals itself, so also will Grace. A bundle of lavender proclaims its own whereabouts by its fragrance—and so does the life of God in the soul. You may be sure that if the Lord of Hosts is with you and in you, you will assuredly awaken the animosity of some and the admiration of others. I pray that you and I may be in a bright, clear, forcible condition as the bride was in this part of the Canticle—then shall we be sought after and enquired about.

It appears that the Church in her beauty had gone down to attend to her work. “I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.” She did not sit down in the house to admire herself, nor go into the street to show herself—she went down into her Lord’s garden to attend to her proper work—and then it was that they cried, “Return, return!” Neither the world nor Christ, Himself, will call much after us if we go forth to make displays of our own excellences. “Come, see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts,” is a wretched piece of self-consciousness which disgusts more than it attracts. A diligent life is an attractive life. Do you, like an ant, work in your season, carrying your due burden to the anthill? If you do this for love of Jesus you do nobly. Plod on without courting approbation and rest content to do your utmost for the common welfare. In fellowship with your Lord, humbly do your day’s work in your day. Seek not great things for yourself. Ask not to rule in the court, but be willing to work in the field. Seek not to recline on the couch, but take your pruning knife and go forth among the vines to fulfill your office—and in that selfforgetting service, your beauty shall be manifested and voices shall salute you, crying, “Return, return!”

It appears, too, that while she was thus engaged, she was the subject of a great stir and emotion of heart. Perhaps she had felt dull and dreary till she entered into her work, but while she was busy with her pomegranates and her nuts, she cries, “Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” She felt that she could hasten like the chariots of a willing people who rush to the fight from love of their prince. She felt as if she could run after her Beloved—she could leap, she could fly! Like a chariot that is drawn by Pharaoh’s swiftest horses, her spirit left all behind her. Thus vigorous and active, she was watched by many eyes and soon she heard voices coming from the four quarters of the universe, crying, “Return, return, O Shulamite! Return, return!” I wish, dear Friends, that all Christians were what they should be. I am told, but I would not judge, that large numbers of professing people are only half alive and are altogether asleep! If it is so, I wonder not that they are so inconsiderable in their influence. If they are neither diligent in their Master’s business, nor fervent in spirit towards Him, they are justly despised by those about them.

If it is so with you, my Brothers and Sisters, you are losing the joy of Christian life when you might be filled with delight! You are povertystricken where you might be rich! You are as beggars in the city where you are entitled to take up an honorable lodging! May the Lord revive you! May He forgive your coldness and set your souls on fire with love to Jesus! If you have life, may you now have it more abundantly! Does not your Master desire that the feeblest of you may be as David, and David as the Angel of the Lord? I speak to you who are the Beloved of the Lord—to you who labor in holy service, who are quickened with a high degree of spiritual life—and feel your souls within you stirred with sacred enthusiasm! You are worth addressing! May the Holy Spirit make my address worthy of your attention!

Let us use our text in two ways—may each one be profitable! First, she hears the lower voices that cry, “Return, return, O Solyma! Return, return!” And she answers them with most conclusive negatives. Read the text another way, and in the second place, she hears voices from above, which cry, “Return, return, O Solyma! Return, return!” And she answers them by her actions as well as by her words.

I. Let us listen for a minute or two, but only with our ears, not with our hearts, to THE LOWER VOICES. Where do these voices come from? These are voices from the vast deep of sin and Hell, voices from the tombs which we have left, voices from the Egypt from which we have fled. They are always crying, like unquiet ghosts, “Return, return!” Especially do they call to young souls who are newly wedded to Jesus, in the hope that they have not as yet forgotten their own kindred and their father’s house. When we have gone a long way in the Divine Life, the world feels dubious of our return and almost gives us up, preferring rather to accuse than to invite. After many years of faithful service and of resolute nonconformity to the world, many temptations, by His Grace, which assaulted our youth are unknown to our maturity.

The devil is not altogether a fool, although he is great in that direction! And, therefore, he does not continue forever to use nets which have failed to entangle the birds. If he finds that flattery will not ensnare us, he leaves his old tactics and tries other methods. When, “Return, return,” will not woo us, he puts on his lion form and roars till the mountains shake. Upon young Believers, he very commonly uses very powerful inducements to go back. In the hope that he is dealing with Mr. Pliable, he exhibits the difficulty of godliness and the pleasantness of sin—and tries to convince the moral that they had better retrace their steps. To them he calls as sweetly as his cruel voice can tone itself, “Return, return, O Shulamite! Return, return!”

By old companions he does this. They say, “You have left us. We do not know why. You have turned into a fanatic—you have joined with gloomy Christian people and you are not half the good fellow you used to be! Are you not getting a little tired of those dreary ways? Are not the rules of Christ too precise and Puritanical? Are not the ways of God too selfdenying? Is not godliness too holy and too heavenly for poor fallible beings like ourselves? If so, the door is open—we will welcome you back! It is true you tore yourself away and said that you must go on pilgrimage to the Celestial City, but we will not throw this in your teeth if you will give up such nonsense! Come, be a good fellow with us once more. We have not drunk up all the wine, nor broken all the viols. We are still care-fornothings and we shall be glad to make you as light-hearted as ourselves! You were a jolly fellow before you took those blues and turned so squeamish—come, shake it off and be yourself, again.” How winningly they put it! How cleverly they mimic the tones of true friendship! One would think they sought our good and were anxious to be our guardian angels!

Sometimes the desires of Nature come to their help and the tender passion is enlisted on the side of evil. Bright eyes and gentle lips speak to the natural heart and plead with it to return. The tender love of women has thus played the tempter and so has the strong affection of men. Courtesy and amiability cry, “Why do you fight so shy of us? You know what happy times we used to have together. Come, you have tried these Christian people and their faith—you must have found it very moping and melancholy—return and be merry once more! Look how much more free we are than they—do not live by rule and order—return to the liberty of sin.” Thus do her former comrades cry, “Return, return, O Solyma!”

The old joys sometimes, in moments of weakness which will come upon us, revive the memory and attempt to mislead us. I have known the young Christian remember what he once thought were joys and, though he has clean left them and hates them, yet in the distance which lends enchantment, he does not notice so much of their shallowness, baseness and brevity. And he thinks to himself, “In those days I laughed away the hours right merrily; life was light as a feather; in its froth and foam I saw rainbows of delight. Shall I try these things again? Was I not too hasty in renouncing them?” All the while the voices cry enchantingly, like the songs of the Sirens, “Return, return, O Solyma! Return, return!” They bring out their most melodious music and omit all discordant passages from the sonnet of life. They would have us hark back to what was once our joy. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, ‘tis a wretched temptation and yet some fall before it!

Do you not know how the world will even call us back to our old cares? We used to fret and worry until, by God’s Grace, we were led to try walking by faith—and then the Lord helped us to rest in His love and wait patiently for Him. And now, perhaps, for years we have had no burdens, for we have cast them on the Lord. We have gone in the morning and told Him the fears of the day—and at night we have had little else to do but to bless Him for the mercy which has averted all those fears. We have lived in sweet contentment, rich in joyful expectation and not poor, even, in present happiness. But now, perhaps, the world says, “You have spent too much of your money on religion; why did you not save it? You wasted a mint of your time upon furthering a kingdom which is imaginary. Oh, if you had given up those energies to the world and stuck to your business, how much richer you might have been! Come now, quit those dreams! Shun those Prayer Meetings, leave that tiresome office in the Sunday school, give up philanthropic speculations and follow after your personal interests! Like a sensible man, you may get on, then—if you mind the main chance you may rise in the social scale.”

There are times when steady, sober people, for whom the temptations of gaiety and vice have no charm at all, stand spellbound by these more solid but equally degrading offers. Madame Bubble, as you know, offered to the pilgrim her person—and there are many who turn with loathing from so vile an offer! But then she also offered her purse—and there are men like Mr. Standfast who are as poor as an owlet—to whom that offer comes with dangerous force. Her voice has a shrill metallic ring, as she cries, “Return, return, O Solyma! Return, return! Return from generosity to selfishness, from holy zeal to worldliness and prudence! Seek that which all the nations of the world seek after! Seek that which you can see with yours eyes and enjoy with your mouth.” Many are these calls—I need not go into details—you will hear them soon enough. The Sirens are a numerous and ensnaring sisterhood.

When do these voices come? Their sound is heard full often. “Return, return, return, return”—four times, over, the text has it. They come so often that the word in the Epistle to the Hebrews is more than justified, “And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from where they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.” These opportunities are in our way everywhere and at all times. If you wish to leave off being a Christian; if you wish to follow the world in its pleasures or in its labors, the doors are always open! It is a wonderfully forgiving world if you will but quit your protest against it. If we run away from our old master and wish to return to his service, his yoke is always ready for our neck. He will never deny us employment, even though it is to feed swine! Only too glad is the devil to pardon runaways! He is not ashamed to return with seven others to the house which he before left. Often, often the child of God, in his early days, hears the entreaties of destroyers, as with all subtlety they plead, “Return, return, O bride of Solomon! Return, return!”

At times these voices come from quarters to which our hearts lie open. Many a man has been wooed from the ways of holiness by her that lay in his bosom. Samson had his Delilah. More often still, the professing Christian woman has been solicited to forsake her Lord by him who should have helped her in her noblest aspirations. Children have been misled by parents, friends by friends, for Satan has many slaves and many who do his bidding almost unwittingly. It is a fight to reach Heaven and there are few to help us in it! But the path to Hell is downward and multitudes thrust out their hands to urge us to the infernal deeps! These cries are borne to us by every gale, in tones both loud and gentle, “Return, return!”

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, we shall find that they solicit us in our best moments. I cannot fully account for the fact, but so it is, that I am most liable to speak unadvisedly with my lips when I have just enjoyed the raptures of high fellowship with God! Yonder shines the Mountain of Transfiguration in its unrivalled splendor, but lo, at the very foot of it the devil rages in the lunatic child! Our highest graces are not to be trusted, for, as the most venomous serpents lurk among the brightest flowers, so are temptations most abundant by our most spiritual and heavenly joys! Trust not yourself, O child of God, when you have seen the invisible; when you have stood within the circle of fire and spoken with God as only His favorites may! Think not yourself secure when you come down into your worldly business, though you have bathed your forehead in the serene light of communion! As pirates distinctly aim to attack the most heavilyladen galleons, so will Satan assail you when your vessel has just left the Gold Coast of meditation and prayer. Therefore, watch and pray always.

That detestable voice, which dared to ask the Master, Himself, to fall down and worship Satan, will come to you when you are most bright and shining with the glory of hallowed fellowship—and it will whisper to you, “Return, return! Come down from the mountain and break the commandments to shivers at its foot.” The fiend will call you Solyma, quoting your heavenly name—that name of peace and love—and yet he will dare to say, “Return, return!” He will flatter us for our virtues and yet tempt us to the worst of vices! Get you behind me, Satan! Depart, foul fiend! Even when repulsed, he will return to the charge, crouch at our feet and whine out, “Return, return!” The treasures of Egypt and the pleasures of sin are his bait and bribe. We cannot and will not return at his bidding, yet his frequent solicitation puts us to a standstill and makes us cry for help!

Notice that our text goes on to say why they wish us to return. “Return, return, that we may look upon you.” And is that all? Am I to be a traitor to my Lord and leave His holy ways—and forfeit Heaven—to be made a show of by you, O Satan? Or by you, O world? Is this a full reward for treachery—“that we may look upon you?” Why, their looks are daggers! As the eyes of dragons are the eyes of the ungodly world! As malignant stars that blast the soul! Whenever you long for ungodly men to see your piety, your piety will wither beneath their glance! Remember how that expression of looking upon Zion is sometimes used in Scripture? In Micah 4:11 we have it—“Now, also, many nations are gathered against you, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.” They wished to spy out her sorrows and weaknesses, that they might jest at her and grieve her. These enemies will do the same with you if you give them the opportunity. Trust a wolf at your throat sooner than worldly men in religious matters! They cannot mean you good, nor do you good should they mean it. They will draw you out and then expose you—they will entice you into sin and then report your faults. When the world loves the holy man, it is the love of the vulture for the sick lamb! Fear the worldling, even when he bears you gifts!

Now hear Solyma’s wise answer to her tempters. She says, “What will you see in Solyma?” Do you ask me, O world, to come back and show myself to be your friend? Do you promise me approbation? Do you vow to look upon me, admire me and take me for an example? What is there in me that you can approve of? What will you see in Solyma? What can the world see in a Believer? The world knows us not, because it knew not Christ. A blind man wants to see me—I need not go far to oblige him, for he will get but little out of it if I yield to his request. What a vain reason— “That we may look upon you”! They are so blind they cannot even see themselves, nor know that they are blind! What have you and I to do with them? No, let us walk in the Light of God and have fellowship with Him— and then our life shall be hid with Christ in God, only to be manifested when our Lord is manifested—and we shall be well content to have it so.

Listen, O blind world, while we tell you what you would see if we did come to you! “What will you see in Solyma?” You would see—we grieve to say it—a conflict within us. “As it were the company of two armies.” You would see two things in us and yet neither would give you satisfaction. There is sin in us, but inasmuch as it grieves us to have it there, we will not show it you. We do not wish to make mirth for the daughter of Babylon! And when her children ask us to make music for them by singing one of the songs of Zion, we answer, “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” If we must tell you what you would see in us, we will confess our faultiness, but warn you that out of this you would get but little joy.

You would see two armies, it is true, but neither of them would yield to you. You would see in us a nature like your own, but it is mortified, kept under and laid under condemnation. It would give you no great pleasure to see it, for we reckon it to be dead! The dead are poor company. There is in us, it is true, a capacity for all your worldly joys, but the world is crucified to us and we are crucified unto the world. There is in us a capacity for all your merriment, but if we were forced to be with you, we should be dreadful killjoys to you—you would wonder why we did not laugh when you laugh at sin and that we would not be as ready as you are to run into excess of riot. We would soon weary you, for the Lord has said, “I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people.” You would say, byand-by, “Leave these slow souls alone—they hinder our mirth.” If we came among you as we are, it would happen with us, before long, as it did with Israel, for, “Egypt was glad when they departed.” Our nature that is like your nature is put under restraint and dies daily—and its expiring groans would be sorry music in your ears!

Then, do you know we have another army in us? That is, there is a new life in us—that life is the indwelling Spirit of God, as it is written, “I will dwell in them and walk in them.” If we did return at your request—if we came in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ, with the Holy Spirit indwelling our bodies and making them His temples—you would not know what to make of us and, consequently, you would scoff at us, as Ishmael did at Isaac, or envy us as his brothers envied Joseph! You would be sure to ridicule us, for you would not understand us and, therefore, you would count us hypocrites and sanctimonious fools! As well might oxen commune with men as the wicked with the godly! We have a life beyond you and above you into which you cannot enter! We are sorry for you that you will not receive the heavenly life which is in Christ Jesus, but as you have it not, we cannot make you our confidants or associates. You would grieve us and we would provoke you and, therefore, we are best apart. You say, “Return, return, O Solyma! Return, return, that we may look upon you,” and our only answer must be, “What would you see in Solyma?” Nothing but that which would rebuke and anger you—you would see a company of two armies, both fighting against you!

Come, young Brothers and Sisters, you that have been tempted to go back—you cannot even tolerate the thought! You have burned your boats behind you and must conquer or die! Like one of old, you say, “I have opened my mouth unto the Lord and I cannot go back.” To go back were to call the Word of God a lie! It would be to call God, Himself, a liar—to tell the worldling that there are, after all, no pleasures in Christ like the pleasures of the world! It would be to spit in your Savior’s face, to play the Judas, to sell Christ for pieces of money, or for the filthy lusts of this present evil world. Go back? It were to renounce Heaven and all its glories! It were to choose a terrible deathbed, with a guilty conscience ringing the knell of your soul! It were to choose eternal banishment from the Presence of God and from the Glory of His power!

You cannot return! You cannot even look back. If you are a true Shulamite, you will not even deliberate for a moment about it, but, flinging yourself into the Beloved’s arms, you will cry, “Lord, to whom should I go? You have the words of eternal life.” God help you to do so, for Jesus’ sake. That is the first part of our subject.

II. Now we turn to listen, not with our ears, only, but with our hearts, to the call of THE HIGHER VOICES which cry, “Return, return!” Brothers and Sisters, to go to Heaven, to go to Christ, to go towards holiness is a return to God’s people, for God’s people are originally His children. Though they are prodigals and have gone into a far country, they always were His children. Even when they spent their substance in riotous living, they were still His sons and each of them could speak of, “My Father’s house.” To come to Christ, holiness, and Heaven is to return. Besides, all God’s people have a new life put into them. Where did that new life come from but from Heaven and God? Therefore to go towards God is for the quickened ones to return.

All God’s people are bound for Heaven—it is in their charter party that they should sail for Heaven and, therefore, to Heaven they must go. When the Israelites came out of Egypt to go to Canaan, they were not going to a strange land—they were returning to what had always been their inheritance according to the Covenant. They were going out of the house of bondage and they were returning to the land that flowed with milk and honey where their fathers had sojourned before them. Now, today, as a child of God, I can hear voices out of the great beyond, ringing out of Glory and crying to me, “Return, return!” My Father is in Heaven! My Savior is on the Throne of God! Many Brothers and Sisters have gone before— all my heart is with my treasure and, therefore, I hear the shining ones crying to me every day—“Return, return, O Solyma! Return, return!” Every harp in the heavenly choir is ringing out an invitation to all the Lord’s Beloved! Every palm-bearing hand is beckoning to us! Every glorified lip is calling us to come up higher!

To return, I think, means this—come nearer to Christ, nearer to God, nearer to holiness. You are saved—seek to be like your Savior. You enjoyed splendid days at first, in the love of your espousals—return to them—walk always in the light as God is in the light. You were once in the banqueting house and the banner over you was love—return to that house of fellowship! Every day seek to lose yourself more in Christ, to live more completely in Him, by Him, for Him, with Him! Return, return, to greater heights of holiness, to deeper self-denial, to braver service, to more intense love, to more burning zeal, to more of the God-like and the Christlike! Return, return! The holiest and the best call us that way. Every saint in Heaven cries, “Return!” Every child of God on earth who is full of the inner life entreats us to return! And chiefly, that dear voice which once, for us, cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” is always calling to us, “Return, return!” Oh, how sweetly does He use the name He, Himself, gave us—our marriage name! Hear Him beseech us, “O Solyma, My best Beloved, return, return, and come to Me!” These are the higher voices.

Notice that in the text that word, “return,” is put four times over. Is it not because it is of the highest importance that every child of God should keep returning and coming nearer to the Father’s house? Is it not because it is our highest joy, our strongest security, our best enrichment to be always coming to Christ as unto a living stone and getting into closer fellowship with Him? As He calls four times, is it not a hint that we are slow to come? We ought to come to Jesus not only at His first call, but even at the glance of His eyes when He looks as though He longed for our love! It ought to be our rapture to think only of Him and live wholly to Him! But as we fail to answer to first pleas, He cries four times, “Return, return, O Solyma! Return, return! Come to your Husband, your own loving Lord.”

He ceases not to entreat until we return. Do not the reduplications of this call hint at His strong desire after us, His condescending love for us? It seems so amazing to me that Christ should want our fellowship, but He does—He cannot be happy without us. He still sits down upon the well when He is thirsty and, looking across to Samaria’s fallen daughter, He says to her, “Give Me a drink.” His people are His fullness—He cannot be filled if they are away! I dared not have said this if the Holy Spirit had not declared it, but it is true! Without His people, Jesus would be a Head without a body—and that is a ghastly thought! A King without subjects— that would have been a wretched parody of royalty! A Shepherd without sheep—that would have been a dolorous office having many pains but no reward! Jesus must have us or He is a Bridegroom without a bride, bereaved and barren. Oh, how He loves us! How He longs for communion with us! Shall He stand and cry, “Return, return,” and will we not come to Him at once?

Hear Him, again, but in another way. He knocks at our door and He cries, “Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled, for My head is filled with dew and My locks with the drops of the night.” Will we not admit Him? If He seeks our company and, therefore, calls us to return, our spirit bursts her fetters! She is ashamed of the bonds that hold her on the right and on the left. She cries, “Let me go! I must be with my Lord. His voice compels me. My soul would leap out of my body rather than not come to Him who cries, ‘Return, return, return, return!’”

I have shown you why the call is so often repeated. Do you not think it is a very instructive call? Permit me to put it thus—“Return,” that is, to your first simple faith. If you have risen to greatness of conceit and pride of knowledge, return to your humble thoughts. Shrink to nothing, again, in the Presence of your God. Come to the Cross as you came at first, saying—

*“I the chief of sinners am,*

*But Jesus died for me.”*  
Return to your first loving communion with Christ, for then the days were only bright with His Presence, and the night watches were not weary while you could commune with Him. Return to the happy love of yours espousals, when you went after Him into the wilderness, for those were calm days. Return, return, to your first ardor in service. Nothing was too hot, or too heavy for you, then—you were passionately eager to be engaged in seeking His redeemed. You have grown lazy, now, and you think service for God too severe a strain upon you. Return to your first diligence in joyous service!

Return, also, to your eagerness for holy growth. Then you desired to have the best that God could give you—in those days you resolved to be a thorough Christian—not barely to live, but to live unto God in the highest degree. Return to that and aspire after more. If you have left the best form of consecration, return to it. Oh, sea, rise once more to high-water mark if you have turned to ebb! Oh, soul, come back to the highest you have ever attained or longed for! As the eagle cries, “higher!” As the river cries, “fuller!” As the day cries, “brighter!” So let it be with you. You are married to Him whose blood has bought you and He cannot, will not be in Heaven without you! Therefore, hasten to obey while He says to you, “Return, return!”

I beg you to observe what the spouse has to say to this when she is thus called upon to return to the Lord. The Lord says to her, “Return, return, that we may look upon you.” Is not that a reason for coming back? The Lord says, “That I may look upon you.” He desires your company and seems gently to hint that you have kept aloof from Him. He seems to say— “You have not been alone much with Me lately; you have neglected the reading of the Word of God and the hearing of it. I have scarcely seen your face—therefore return, that I may look upon you.” Cover your face and say, “Lord, why should You look on me? I am full of sin.” But then draw near to Him, that His look of love may bring you to repentance and cause your sin to pass away. Remember, He has power in His eyes to look you into purity and beauty. Come and say, “Look upon me, Lord. Search me, try me and know my ways.” Return, that with infinite pity your Beloved may see what ails you and then, with His dear pierced hands, may perform a Divine surgery upon you and make you well again.

“Return, that we may look upon you.” I think I may use the phrase to express, also, that intense satisfaction which Jesus has in every Believer. With what pleasure the mother looks upon her child—she remembers no more the pain, for joy that a man is born into the world! But with infinitely greater satisfaction does Christ see of the travail of His soul in every Believer. You ought to show yourselves to Jesus because you have cost Him so much—He has loved you even to the death and still loves you— you ought to abide with Him. Return to Him that He may look upon you!

And I think, too, when we live near to Him and get into fellowship with Him, Jesus feels a sweet complacency towards us. O dear parents, you know the pleasure you have in your loving children! If they have been away from you for years, what a satisfaction it is to see them, again, within your doors—there is no sight like it! Your Lord loves you so much that it gives Him profound pleasure! It swells His Heaven to the brim to see you living in His love! What must be His grief when you go fussing about the world and have no time to talk with Him—when you go out sporting and mixing with His enemies and say that you have no leisure to commune with Him! You give delight to Him who is Immanuel, God With Us, when you frequently approach Him, or constantly abide with Him! You make Him glad with your secret devotion, your heart’s affection, your holy boldness, your all-absorbing zeal. Oh, come to your Lord that He may look upon you!

Did I hear you bashfully say, “What will you see in Solyma? If Jesus looks on such a dead dog as I am, what will He see in me? I am so full of evil.” He will see in you that which delights Him! He will see His own work there! Yes, He will see Himself there! Did you ever see the sun reflected in a little splinter of glass? The mirror was scarcely an inch in diameter, yet you saw the heavens in it. Have you ever looked upon a bubble blown by a schoolboy’s pipe and seen a thousand rainbows in it? When the Lord looks on His people, He sees the reflection of Himself—He can see Himself in our eyes and, therefore, those eyes charm Him so that He cries, “You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse; you have ravished My heart with one of yours eyes, with one chain of your neck.”

The infinite love there is between Christ and us makes Him see no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel, but He looks until He exclaims, “You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you.” Be not ashamed to return to your Lord, for He lovingly urges you to do so. Let your heart and your flesh, like two armies, welcome Him. Let all your inward conflict aim at coming nearer to Him. Rest not till, like Jacob’s two bands, you are altogether under the blessing of the Covenant Angel.

I will turn my text about a little and give you another rendering which will suit the heart which is welcoming its Lord. Our Mahanaim, our meeting of hosts, shall not be for war, now that the Lord invites us, like Jacob, to return to the land of milk and honey. The companies shall be as musical as they are martial. There are within our experiences companies of singing soldiers, choirs of camps. The text exhibits the warring soul, triumphant in her Lord and meeting Him with timbrel and harp—

*“Spouse of Christ, in arms contending  
Though your battle-course must run;  
Yet with prayers for help ascending,  
Shout your praise for triumphs won.”*

Oh, if my Lord will come and meet me, He shall see in me whole choirs of songsters! My heart, like Miriam, shall take a timbrel and all my powers, like the daughters of Israel, shall follow, dancing and singing with glad accord. On the high-sounding cymbals my heart shall play, singing— “His own right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory. Glory! Glory! Where He comes, glory dwells.” When shall I come into His Presence and behold my God, my exceeding joy? Then will I praise Him with body and soul, with heart and with voice! His coming with all His perfections and my coming with all my desires, shall make a Mahanaim—and the two hosts, once met, shall encamp together, guarding the King’s pavilion which glitters in the midst! Then shall the warriors become minstrels and the soldiers shall be singers, as in the valley of Berachah, where all the people triumphed—and they returned to Jerusalem playing upon harps, psalteries and trumpets!

Here I leave you in the joyful Presence of the King! We cannot cease speaking at a higher point. The Lord keep us in His Presence for His love’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 21.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—917, 779, 853.  
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INWARD CONFLICTS  
NO. 593

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 9, 1864, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon you. What will you see in the Shulamite? As it were  
the company of two armies.  
Song of Solomon 6:13.**

THIS verse is not addressed to the Church in her doubting state, nor while seeking her absent Lord, but it refers to her in her very best condition—when she has lately come from the enjoyment of fellowship with her Divine spouse and when her soul, in consequence is like the chariots of Amminadib. Read the context and you will perceive that Believers who are rejoicing in the Lord may look upon this text as their own. Observe the title of the person addressed—it is a marriage name. She has been espoused to Solomon and she has taken his name and become Solyma, for such is the best rendering of the word rendered Shulamite. This name is appropriate to souls who are united to Christ, to those whom Christ has betrothed unto Himself in righteousness, who live in union with their Lord.

You who abide in the Lord Jesus are, by a mysterious bond, made one with Christ. And He has conferred upon you His own name—He is Solomon and you are Solyma. That is a remarkable expression in the book of Jeremiah—“This is her name whereby she shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness.” One would have thought that such a title was incommunicable. But yet so close is the union between Christ and His people that the Holy Spirit actually transfers that dignified expression, “Lord our Righteousness,” to His Israel—His Beloved.

The title Solyma also signifies both perfection and peace. There is perfection in every child of God, but not a perfection in the flesh. We are perfect in Christ Jesus! We are complete in Him—spotless, by being washed in His blood—glorious, by being robed in His righteousness. Every child of God is right sumptuously arrayed in the wedding dress of the Savior’s righteousness. We may truly say that, “Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” Every Believer stands in Christ perfectly accepted!

The sweet name, Solyma, also signifies peace—“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The true heir of Heaven is not at enmity with God, nor at war with his own conscience. The silver trumpet has proclaimed an everlasting peace. God’s sword has been sheathed in the Savior’s heart and Divine Justice is on the side of the chosen people. The request of the text next demands a moment’s consideration. It is repeated four times. “Return, return, O Solyma. Return, return, that we may look upon you.” Does not this request proceed from the daughters of Jerusalem who desire to behold her

beauty?

Souls that are anxious about their own state may well desire to understand the experience of the true child of God. You want to know whether you, also, are a Christian, therefore you want to know how Christians feel, how they think of Christ, how they are moved by His Spirit—what is their appearance when His love is shed abroad in their hearts. You anxiously desire to see the true Christian that you may measure yourselves and see whether there is the life of God in you. These daughters of Jerusalem also desire to look upon her for their own delight. For as to gaze upon beauty is exceedingly pleasant—so is it specially delightful to the pure in heart to have fellowship with the pure in heart—to see the fruits which the Spirit has brought forth. To behold the cleanness of the Believer’s walk and to know the savor of the Believer’s conversation.

No beauty equals the beauty of holiness! Nothing is so lovely as uprightness. And therefore we wonder not that four times the request is made. Perhaps, too, these daughters wanted to look at her as an example to themselves. Saints look upon the beauty of others that they may be enabled to emulate their excellencies. Let us read with affectionate attention the biographies of holy men that they may be a stimulus to ourselves, exciting us to exert ourselves in the Redeemer’s cause and may afford us some hope that the highest Christian attainments are not altogether beyond our reach. I think this is the reason why the daughters of Jerusalem said, “Return, return, O Solyma”—they would comfort themselves by seeing whether they are like she is.

They would delight themselves by beholding her perfections. They would also stir up their own souls by seeing her example. The rest of the text, you will observe, may be considered two ways—either the spouse asks the question, which is the most probable. She says, “What shall you see in Solyma?” She thinks that there is no beauty in her, nothing in her that anyone should delight, or fix his eyes upon her, or derive any profit from regarding her. “Why,” she says, “all that You will see in me is a company of two armies—a conflict between good and evil. If You look upon me You see nothing but good and evil fighting together, darkness and light contending. I am not worth Your looking at.”

And so she would gladly veil her face and go away if it were not for the earnest request which seems to hold her fast—or as some think, this question is asked by bystanders and is answered by the daughters of Jerusalem—“What shall you see in the Shulamite?” the giddy crowd enquires. And instructed Believers cry, “We shall see in her the concurrence of two triumphant armies returning as choristers with music and with dancing, from the field of battle! We shall see in her the King immortal, invisible, with all His hosts of Grace! We shall see in her the purified soul co-working with the glorious Savior! We shall see in the Christian Church the activity of sanctified manhood, combined with the majestic power of Deity residing within.”

This is what she might not say of herself. But what they would see in her. Observe, then, the two meanings and let us dismiss the second until another occasion. There is in every Christian a sweet composition of Christ’s power and of the activity of his own soul. There is the power of God and there is the creature himself made willing in the day of God’s power. There is in the Christian, God working in him to will and to do of His own good pleasure and the man himself working out his own salvation with fear and trembling. In the Christian Church there is man working for God and God working in man—and all this in such a joyful manner as to be rather resembling the triumph of returning conquerors than the going forth to fight of those who make war. What shall we see in Solyma? We shall see the blessed confluence of the two great armies of sanctified humanity and of God made flesh!

But we are now coming to take the text in the first sense—the Church blushingly declares that there is nothing to be seen in her except conflict, turmoil, the wrestling of two great powers—two mighty armies contending for the mastery. Upon this point may God give us light for the comfort of many who are passing through this stage of Christian experience.

I. We shall, at the outset, this morning, first call upon you who know the Lord to OBSERVE THE FACT OF THE TWO ARMIES IN EVERY CHRISTIAN. This is very evident, but to aid your reflections let me remind you throughout this very book you see traces of it. This Canticle is a marriage song—it therefore speaks less of the battlefield than some other portions of Scripture, for at the marriage feast allusions to trial and to warfare ought to be few.

Yet, that the Church is not altogether sanctified is clear if you note such passages as the fifth verse of the first chapter. “I am black,” she says, “but lovely, O you daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.” She is black—here is her natural state—here we have the manifestation of her continued depravity of heart. “I am black, but lovely”—here is her spiritual condition—the Spirit of God has clothed her with beauteous graces—Christ has washed her and made her fair in His sight. “I am like the tents of Kedar,” she says, “the smoke-dried curtains of those Arab wanderers who dwelt in this country set forth my sinfulness.”

And yet in Christ she compares herself to those embroidered curtains, heavy with gold and silver threads which hang about the throne of Solomon. In the third chapter she plainly proves that she is not always enjoying fellowship, but is in a mixed condition. “By night on my bed”—here is her slothfulness—“I sought Him whom my soul loves”—here is her activity. “I sought Him”—here is her desire—“but I found Him not”—here is her sad experience of His absence. Then in the fifth chapter, the second verse, there is a singular commixture. “I sleep”—I am sluggish, cold, dead, lethargic— “but my heart wakes”—the inward principle is still vital, still panting after something better.

We find her in the third verse making vain excuses for not opening to her Lord. But before long you come to the fifth verse and you find her opening to her Beloved, though her Beloved has withdrawn—refusing but soon complying. The two natures battling. The one fast closing the door and the other opening it and seeking the Beloved with tearful complaint. Throughout the Song there is always this mixture. But, as I have said, we cannot expect to find much of this in a nuptial ode.

Turn, therefore, to the great Book of battle songs, the book of Psalms, and here you have in almost every Psalm indications of the complexity of the Christian character. So strange are some of the Psalms that it has been well said they might have been written rather by two persons than by one. David will begin out of the very depths calling unto God and then he will end with all the jubilant notes of a conqueror leading captivity captive. I shall not have time to refer to many passages, but the forty-second Psalm will strike you where the one David seems to be reasoning with another David.

“Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him.” And the next Psalm is much to the same effect. Perhaps, however, the most eminent and striking paradox of the whole is the seventy-third Psalm, the twentysecond verse, There he says of himself, “So foolish was I and ignorant: I was as a beast before You.” He could not go further than that, surely, in a description of himself. “Nevertheless, I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand. You shall guide me with Your counsel and afterward receive me to Glory. Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.”

Heavy as a stone he lies embedded in the mire and yet all of a sudden he takes wings to himself and outstrips the eagle’s flight as he loses himself in the splendor of the Sun of Righteousness, mounting so high as to be entirely lost to all but God! David’s experience, as we find it pictured to us in the Psalms, is but our own, written out in large capital letters! And here we see what strange incongruities, what marvelous paradoxes are found in men. If we need still further instruction upon this matter, let me refer you to the Epistles of our Apostle Paul.

I read in your hearing just now that extraordinary passage in the seventh of Romans. How could there have been more graphically described than we have there, the war and the contention which is always going on between the old nature and the Divine life which God has implanted within us? To the like effect is the seventeenth verse of the fifth chapter of the Galatians, where he says, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would.”

We are carnal and yet spiritual—lost in self yet saved in Christ. We are all imperfections and yet perfect—incomplete in all things and yet complete in everything! Strange contradictions, but yet most strangely true! Another evidence of this matter is the concurrent experience of saved souls. I thought of just taking down at random biographies from my library shelves and writing out passages, but I had scarcely time for that. In truth you have but to read the truthful life of any Christian man and you soon find that he is not all Spirit but also flesh—not all renewed nature but still compassed with infirmity.

We have whole volumes upon this subject. There is “Bunyan’s Holy War,” describing God’s conquest of the town of Mansoul and its subsequent attacks by sins lurking within and foes storming without. Sable’s book, “The Soul’s Conflict,” contains a mass of experimental knowledge. But you will perhaps feel more pleased if I give you, instead of word prose, one or two expressions in the form of rhyme which will show you that our hymn-writers—they that should be among the more joyous of the Christian Church—have been compelled, sometimes, to sing paradoxes concerning themselves.

Ralph Erskine has left us that strange work, “The Believer’s Riddle,” the greatest riddle that was ever written, a perfect maze to all but those who have the clue within. He says*—*

*“My heart’s a mirror, dim and bright,  
A compound strange of day and night,  
Of dung and diamonds, dross and gold,*

*Of summer’s heat and winter’s cold.”*  
Hart, whose hymns come, indeed, from the heart—rightly named was he— in his hymn called “The Paradox,” says*—*

*“How strange is the course that a Christian must steer, How perplexed is the path he must tread. The hope of his happiness rises from fear, And his life he receives from the dead.  
His fairest pretensions must wholly be waved, And his best resolutions be crossed.  
Nor can he expect to be perfectly saved  
Till he finds himself utterly lost.  
When all this is done and his heart is assured, Of the total remission of sins  
When his pardon is signed and his peace is procured, From that moment his conflict begins.”*

We have that hymn of Newton’s, which you will find in your Rippon’s Selection*—  
“I would, but cannot sing,  
I would, but cannot pray,”*

and so on. Still more remarkable is that hymn *—  
“I asked the Lord that I might grow  
In faith and love and every Grace.  
Might more of His salvation know,  
And seek more earnestly His face.”*

But I need not repeat it, because you have it in your books.

You will there find that instead of God’s working in the way in which he expected, the singer was made to feel the hidden evils of his heart and so he was humbled and brought in true penitence nearer to God. Cowper thus sings of himself in a hymn which is also in your book—

*“The Lord will happiness Divine  
On contrite hearts bestow.  
Then tell me, gracious God, is mine  
A contrite heart or no?  
I sometimes think myself inclined  
To love You, if I could.  
But often feel another mind,  
Averse to all that’s good.  
My best desires are faint and few,  
I gladly would strive for more!  
But, when I cry,  
‘My strength renew,’  
Seem weaker than before.  
O make this heart rejoice or ache!  
Decide this doubt for me;  
And, if it is not broken, break,  
And heal it, if it be.”*

Thus, if time did not fail us, we might go through all those men who have at any time served the Church of God and say of them all that they have experienced, felt and confessed a struggle and a conflict between what God has implanted and what nature has left in them. Nor do I think, dear Friends, that we ought at all to wonder at this. It sounds strange in the carnal ear, but we ought not to marvel, for this is only according to the analogy of nature. If you look abroad, you will discern everywhere contending forces—and out of these contending forces the rule of nature comes.

See yonder orbs—moved by a mysterious impulse they seek to fly off into space—but the sun holds them by invisible bands. The bands of the sun’s attraction would draw them at once into his heat, but on the other hand the centrifugal force would drive them far away into distant space! Between these two they keep the circular orbit which God has at present appointed. So we have a corrupt nature within us which would drive us to sin and on the other hand the Divine power within would draw us into perfect conformity and union with Christ! Between those two forces the Christian life becomes much what it is.

Observe how in this word death and life are contending together. Death crowds his graves, but Life wins the victory. Death may toll the knell and this is his note of triumph. But every cry of every new-born infant is another shout of the battle of life in which Life still claims to be victorious! Look at your own persons and in your own bodies you see this duplex action. You breathe, but the same lungs which receive the fresh, pure air, give forth the noxious vapor. There is scarcely an organ of the body which is without an apparatus for the secretion of an injurious substance and its expulsion.

The brightest eye that ever swam in light casts forth some defilement. The skin, if it is healthful, has a part of its functions to throw off from us that which would certainly breed disease. There is going on in every human body a strange conflict between life and death. And every moment our life stands, as it were, in the center of two great armies who are contending whether we should be the prey of the worm, or should still continue to breathe!

Do you wonder, therefore, if the whole world of nature is, or has fallen into this state that man, the little world, should be the same? Wonder or not, certain it is that it is so. And let those who have been staggered because they have felt a battle within, from this time forth rather rejoice because this is the path which all the people of God have trod before!

II. Now concerning THE ORIGIN OF THIS CONFLICT. There is but a slight battle in an unrenewed man. There is a sort of conflict of a minor kind between conscience and his grosser passions. Even Ovid could speak of this and several heathen writers confess a war within. But there is no conflict to any high degree in the ungodly man because, while the armed strong man keeps his house, his goods are at peace.

While there is one master, a man may cheerfully serve him. But in the moment of regeneration, a new master comes into the house—a stronger than he has come and He will bind the strong man! And after many conflicts, He will cast him out forever and get that house to be in his own possession. The new nature which God implants in His people is directly the opposite of the old one. As the old nature comes of Satan, being defiled and depraved by the Fall, so the new nature comes direct from Heaven, pure and without spot.

As the old nature is sin, is essentially sin, so the new nature is essentially Divine Grace—it is a living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever—a seed which cannot sin because it is born of God. When these two, therefore, come into conflict, it is as when fire and water meet—either the one or the other must die. There can be no truce, no parley. The two are deadly foes. The life of the one is the death of the other. The strength of the one the weakness of the other.

Now the old nature has been there beforehand. It is like a tree well rooted—it has been there twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or sixty years according to the date of conversion—and it is not easily torn up by its roots. Even when Grace comes into the heart and makes sin fall, as Dagon did before the ark of God, yet is it true of sin as it was of Dagon—the stump is left and there is still enough vitality in that old stump to breed pain and confusion without limit. The reigning power of sin falls dead the moment a man is converted, but the struggling power of sin does not die until the man dies.

Bunyan said that unbelief had as many lives as a cat and sin has the same vitality. Until we are wrapped in our winding-sheets, we shall never have that black thread of depravity drawn out from us. It will, it must continue to be there till God shall sanctify us—spirit, soul and body—and take us Home. Remember how pure the new life is which God has given you! It is from God Himself—an emanation from His Spirit as pure as Deity! And think how sinful, on the other hand, is your corrupt nature! Can it be possible that these two should be at peace? Can two walk together except they are agreed?

Can these two principles, which are entirely opposed to one another, by any chance live at peace? It cannot be! And even if it could be, there are allies without who will never be quiet! There is Satan, who will never rest from stirring up our corruptions. And on the other hand there is the Holy Spirit, who will never pause in the putting forth of His Divine power till all evil is cast out, root and branch. Since these two must fight—the Spirit of God and the spirit of evil—so the two principles within which are their children must continue in conflict till our dying day.

Here, then, is the source of this conflict. O my dear Hearers, some of you do not know anything about this! Remember, you are in the gall of bitterness if you do not. If you are all one way, then you are all the wrong way. If there is in you no conflict, it is because there is no Divine power there to drive the Evil One out. The more of these wars and fights you feel, the more have you cause to thank God and take courage! The battle is not yours, but God’s. You are not alone in this warfare—you shall overcome, as thousands have done before you—through the blood of the Lamb!

III. This brings us to a third reflection. Let us for a moment consider THE REALITY OF THIS CONFLICT. The warfare in the Christian mind is not a thing of imagination, it is most true and real. If you want proof of it you must pass through it. Did you ever kneel down in an agony of spirit, resisting some furious temptation from within? Some of us know what it

is to feel the cold sweat running down our brows when we have to fight against ourselves in fearful struggles against black thoughts of unbelief.

Perhaps it may be that the base heart within has even doubted the existence of God and dared to prompt us to defy the Deity. And we have loathed that thought and hated it so much that our whole spirit was put to the utmost stretch of tension in order to win a victory over ourselves. You must, if you are at all subject to strong emotions, have felt that this struggle was a terrible fact. To you there could be no doubt about it, for your whole soul felt it—your heart was like a field which is torn up and soaked with blood by the fury of battle. There is a frightful reality in this conflict when we remember how some Christians fall during it and sin gets the mastery.

Remember, sin may win a battle, but it cannot win the campaign. What? Were there no corruptions in David? What do you think made him sin with Bathsheba? Was there no corrupt heart left in Noah when he was naked to his shame? Was there no corruption in Lot when he sinned in the cave? Why, those black things which have stained the character of these holy men throughout all time prove to us how dreadful must be the power of sin and how mighty must be the power which keeps sin down!

Remember what the joy of a Christian is when he feels that he has triumphed over sin. Ah, there is something real here! If the daughters of Jerusalem praised David when he came back with Goliath’s head, so do all our powers bless and praise God when he gives us the neck of our spiritual enemies. Like the songsters of old, we sing, “O my Soul, you have trod down strength.” These are no fictions or imaginations of a poetic and fevered brain—he that has once been along the road to Heaven knows that above all things the traveler has need to be on the watch against himself.

IV. In the fourth place, let us notice THE CHANGES WHICH TAKE PLACE IN THIS WARFARE. The conflict in a Christian is not always carried on with the same fury. There is always war, but there is not always battle. The flesh always hates the Spirit and the Spirit is always the opponent of the flesh. But they are not always fighting, and when they fight it is not always with the same fury. You ask why? Well, sometimes the flesh is not so powerful as at other times. There are moments when, if sin were in the Christian’s way, the flesh would not choose it.

I may not be able to tell you exactly why, but certain it is that partly from changes of body and also from certain phenomena of mind, there are seasons when the propensities to evil, though still as evil, are not so vigorous as they were—their strength is awful, but it sleeps. The young lion is ever a lion. But its claws are concealed and it plays like a lamb. The raging sea is not always in tempest, yet tempests sleep in its waves. Perhaps there is more to be dreaded in the quietness of our depravity than in the raging of it—for sometimes it is the treacherous calm which the Christian ought to fear more than the storm.

Again, it is quite certain that the Spirit’s work within us is not always equally active. The Spirit of God is always in a Christian—He dwells in the Believer as in a temple. “My Spirit will I not utterly take from him,” is true of every saint. But yet you must know that your faith is often weak—that your love is not always like a flame of fire. You cannot pray at all times as you wished, Ah, Brethren, we can sometimes dash along in service like the chariots of Amminadib, but at other times the wheels are taken off and we drag the chariots heavily like Pharaoh in the midst of the Red Sea! A change, then, in the flesh, or a change in the spirit, may produce a diversity in the present form of the conflict.

It is always there, but not always the same. I suppose that when it is most furious the reason of its fury may be sought for in the strength of both sides. I do not think that when the flesh is strong and the spirit is weak that there is much conflict—then, there is rather a speedy defeat. But when the Spirit of God is gloriously at work in our souls—when faith is vigorous, when hope is bright, when love is flaming, and when, at the same time the corrupt powers put forth all their might—then it is that the conflict is stern.

Some Christians do not enter into this state of strong conflict for two reasons—they are men of weak passions and Divine Grace in them is at a low ebb. But when a man is endowed with a strong mental nature and the Spirit is also vigorous within him, then there will be a contest something like the combat of two Samsons fighting and struggling together as to who shall get the victory. Ah, Brethren, these things may change, as I have said, but the war is never over! Do not any of you say, “I shall never be tempted again.”

Gray-headed Brethren, do not think that the old man in you is dead! If professors fall into grave sin and dishonor the Church, they are as often old men as young men. No, I think I may say that they are more often elder men than younger ones. It is sad it should be so, but it is so. And there is many a professor who has stood well for forty years, but makes a fool of himself at the last. And though he has been honored in God’s Church, yet he leaves a blot upon his name and the godly say in a whisper, “No doubt he was a child of God, but it is best that he should be dead, for in his old age he fell into sin.”

No, we shall never be out of gunshot of the devil till we have crossed the river of death. Our carnal minds are like a powder magazine—there only needs the spark. And ah, what an explosion there would be with any of us! May the Lord keep the sparks away. Let us be very vigilant and very careful. There is an enemy behind every hedge. There is a foe waiting for us at every step. And before this Sunday’s hallowed hours may be over, you and I may have slipped and have fallen into sin to our own perpetual hurt and hindrance, unless almighty Grace shall intervene.

V. A few words now upon THE EFFECTS OF THIS CONFLICT. Some will say, “But why does not God remove out of the Christian the old nature?” Some uninstructed Christians even think that in conversion the Lord turns the old nature into a new one, which is very far from the fact. The old nature remains in the Christian. It has received a blow which will ultimately be its death, but it still lives and the new nature in the Christian comes to struggle with it for the mastery.

But why is this? Well, we cannot tell you. Such a question reminds us of the Negro’s enquiry to the minister—“You say that God is Omnipotent and therefore He is greater than Satan?” “Yes.” Then why does not God kill the devil and have done with him?” We believe God to be as morally

Omnipotent as He is physically Omnipotent. And if He willed it, we do not doubt but that evil of every form and shape might disappear out of the universe. Why, then, does He permit it? Ah, why? But there we leave it. Be amazed at the mystery if you will, but do not question God nor cast the blame of sin upon His holy Character.

There it is, He suffers sin to remain in the universe and after all we can say, we observe the fact—but the reason we cannot tell. Still I think we may in some respects see how sin is overruled in the Christian. Sin remaining in the Believer drives him humbly to confess his own nothingness, excludes all boasting from his tongue, compels him to trust in his God, takes away from him his propensity to trust in himself, leads him to value the precious blood which cleanses him, to prize the Holy Spirit who sanctifies him, to rejoice in the faithfulness and patience and longsuffering of God who still continues to be gracious to him! And oh, what songs will the man of God sing when he gets to Heaven!

How much sweeter will be the music because of the conflict! How much more glorious the victory because of the warfare! If I could be totally delivered from sin, root and branch, I certainly would. But yet am I conscious that no Christian would glorify God so much in Heaven as he now does if there were not sin to be contended with. A creature that could not sin could scarcely show forth much of the praise of God by its holiness. But that the creature can sin, no, that there is a strong drawing towards sin and yet the Divine Grace keeps a man from it and sanctifies him even to perfection—why this will make the song come swelling up of, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!”

If no adversaries had been tolerated, then no victories could have been won. If there were no temptations for us to struggle with, then there would have been no elbow room for our faith, no power for the display of the bare arm of God. Doubtless it is best as it is and when the winding up of the chapter comes, perhaps we shall see that our committed sins have been made the means of saving us from other sins which would have been our ruin. Many Believers would have grown too proud to be borne with if some infirmity had not plucked the plume from their helmets and made them mourn with brokenness of heart before God.

God can bring good out of evil by His overruling Grace, while on the other hand our good works have often been the greatest curse we have ever had. Good works have puffed us up and so have led us into pride— while our sins, though pulling us down, have, through almighty Grace, led us to make men work for eternity.

VI. I want your attention to the last point, which is, THE CONCLUSION OF IT ALL. This contest—is it forever to continue? Shall we forever tremble in the balances? Will there be no valley of decision where our souls may take their rest? Yes, Brethren, the fight will soon be over and the victory is guaranteed and glorious! Yes, even at the present day, the Christian is making progress.

I do not admire the term “progressive sanctification,” for it is unwarranted by Scripture. But it is certain that the Christian does grow in Grace. And though his conflict may be as severe on the last day of his life as in the first moment of conversion, yet he does advance in Grace and all his imperfections and his conflicts within cannot prove that he has not made progress. Let me show you this. You know that at certain periods in your children’s history they pass through diseases incidental to childhood. Here is your babe of a month old and there is your child of three or four years.

This child of three or four years of age is suffering from some of those complaints incidental to infancy. It is not in such good health as your child of a month old. It is far weaker and its life seems far more in danger. Yet you will not say that there is no progress, for this child of three years old has passed through three years of its difficulties and hazards, which this little one, newly-born, has yet to encounter. We all know that there are certain growing pains which the lad feels when he is verging out into his manhood, but these pains do not prove a want of strength, but the very reverse—the muscles are being braced and the sinews are being strengthened.

Stand by the seashore when the tide is coming up. There rolled up a big wave. Just mark the place in the sand. For the next few minutes there is no wave that comes up so high as that—no, some waves that suck back the rest and you might even think the sea was retiring! Is there, therefore, no progress made? Why, Friend, you will see in a moment, if you will but wait! Another great wave will come sweeping up, far outstripping the one that we marked just now. And when you shall come back in an hour’s time and the sea has come to the fullness of its strength, you will see that the receding of any one individual wave is no mark of its retrogression. You have but to mark the whole sea and take time in which to examine it and then you discover there has been progress and that progress has been effected by alternate advance and retreat.

Along the coast of Essex the sea is greatly encroaching upon the land and every time we go to some of the watering places, we perceive that the cliff has fallen, hundreds or thousands of tons have been carried away. And yet if you are there at a tide which has gone far out, you will often think, “Why, surely the land is gaining on the sea! I never walked out so far as this before. I never saw these rocks exposed and dry before.” Well, it is a strangely low tide. But at the same time ask the old fisherman who has lived there all his days and he will tell you that his mother was married out in a Church which stood where that ship is floating, far out to sea and that all the intervening soil has been washed away!

He recollects when this place, which is now a footpath on the cliff’s brink, was a quarter of a mile inland—and then you understand that though on any one occasion the land may apparently have gained, yet, on the whole, there has been a progress in the sea. And so it is with spiritual life. There are times when it seems as if sin had gained upon you and you were going back in spiritual things. There is cause for alarm, but not despair! There is a cause for watchfulness, but not for terror—go to the Lord and pray to Him to send a mightier wave of His Irresistible Grace—that your soul may be filled with all the fullness of God.

The day is often gloomy at eleven o’clock, but that is no proof that you are not getting towards noon. Many a cold wind howls over the days of

March and April, colder than there might have been at Christmas—but that is no proof that you are not getting on to summer. There may come a frosty night in May, nipping the flowers, but that is no proof that the frost is all coming back again. So you may feel within yourself such things as cause you to bow your head in sorrow and to cry out to God in grief! But even these things shall but speed you on your way towards your desired haven. The battle will certainly end right.

Just anticipate for a moment the glory of the victory! You shall be free from sin one day! You shall be perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect! You shall wave the palm branch, and wave it the more joyously because you had to contend with flesh and blood and with spiritual wickedness! You shall join the eternal song and it shall roll up to the Throne of God all the more gloriously because you have—

*“To wrestle hard as we do now,  
With sins and doubts and fears.”*

Come, anticipate that triumph and pluck up courage! Go forth, all you servants of God, as Barak went against Sisera, and the day shall come when your foes shall be swept away! That river of death shall do for your enemies what the Kishon did for Jabin—it shall sweep them away forever! Standing by the Red Sea of the atoning sacrifice, you shall sing unto the Lord who has triumphed gloriously and cast the horse and the rider into the depths of the sea.

I have preached, this morning, especially for the comfort of those who are thus exercised and who are saying, “If it is so, why am I thus?” You will now see that instead of having cause for distress in all these conflicts, you have only a reason to come to Christ again. Come to Jesus again! Look up to Him once more and take Him today to be your Savior and your All. Put your case into His hands! Trust Him and you shall be more than conquerors through Him who loved you. Trust Him! Trust Him now and we will meet in Heaven at last to sing His praises forever! Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #984 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Son 6.4

THE CHURCH AS SHE SHOULD BE  
NO. 984

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

**“You are beautiful, O my love as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.”  
Song of Solomon 6:4.**

THERE are various estimates of the Christian Church. Some think everything of her. Some think nothing of her. And probably neither opinion is worth the breath which utters it. Neither Ritualists, who idolize their Church, nor skeptics, who vilify all churches have any such knowledge of the true spiritual Church of Jesus Christ as to be entitled to give an opinion. The king’s daughter is all glorious within with a beauty which they are quite unable to appreciate.

What is usually the most correct character which is obtainable of a woman? Shall we be guided by the praises of those neighbors who are on good terms with her, or by the scandal of those who make her the subject of ill-natured gossip? No. The most accurate judgment we are likely to get is that of her husband. Solomon says in the Proverbs concerning the virtuous woman, “Her husband also rises up, and he praises her.” Of that fairest among women, the Church of Christ, the same observation may be made. It is to her of small consequence to be judged of man’s judgment, but it is her honor and joy to stand well in the love and esteem of her royal spouse, the Prince Emmanuel.

Though the words before us are allegorical, and the whole song is crowded with metaphor and parable, yet the teaching is plain enough in this instance. It is evident that the Divine Bridegroom gives His bride a high place in His heart, and to Him, whatever she may be to others, she is fair, lovely, comely, beautiful—and in the eyes of His love—without a spot. Moreover, even to Him there is not only a beauty of a soft and gentle kind in her, but a majesty, a dignity in her holiness, in her earnestness, in her consecration, which makes even Him say of her that she is, “terrible as an army with banners”—“awful as a bannered army.”

She is every inch a queen—her aspect in the sight of her Beloved is majestic. Take, then, the words of our text as a tribute upon Christ’s Church, pronounced by Him who knows her best. He is best able to judge concerning her, and therefore you learn that to His discerning eye she is not weak, dishonorable, and despicable. No, she bears herself as one of highest rank—consciously, joyously—strong in her Lord’s strength.

On this occasion let us note, first of all, WHY IT IS THAT THE CHURCH OF GOD IS SAID TO BE AN ARMY WITH BANNERS. That she is an army is true enough, for the Church is not one, but many. She consists of men who march in order under a common Leader, with one design in view and that design a conflict and a victory. She is the Church militant here below—and both in suffering and in service she is made to prove that she is

in an enemy’s country.

She is contending for the Truth of God against error. For the Light against darkness. Till the day break and the shadows flee away she must maintain her sentinels and kindle her watch fires. For all around her there is cause to guard against the enemy, and to descend the royal treasure of Gospel Truth against its deadly foes.

But why an army with banners? Is not this, first of all, for distinction? How shall we know to which king an army belongs unless we can see the royal standard? In times of war the nationality of troops is often declared by their distinguishing regimentals. The gray coats of the Russians were well known in the Crimea. The white livery of the Austrians was a constant eyesore in bygone days to the natives of Lombardy.

No one mistook the Black Brunswickers for French Guards, or our own Hussars for Garibaldians. Quite as effectively, armies have been distinguished by the banners which they carried. As the knights of old were recognized by their plume and helmet, and escutcheon—so an army is known by its standard and the national colors. The tricolor of the French readily marked their troops as they fled before the terrible black and white of the German army.

The Church of Christ displays its banners for distinction’s sake. It desires not to be associated with other armies or to be mistaken for them. It is not of this world, and its weapons and its warfare are far other than those of the nations. God forbid that followers of Jesus should be mistaken for political partisans or ambitious adventurers! The Church unfurls her ensign to the breeze that all may know whose she is and whom she serves. This is of the utmost importance at this present time when crafty men are endeavoring to palm off their inventions.

Every Christian Church should know what it believes and publicly avow what it maintains. It is our duty to make a clear and distinct declaration of our principles so that our members may know to what intent they have come together, and that the world, also, may know what we stand for. Far be it from us to join with the Broad Church cry, and furl the banners upon which our distinctive colors are displaced.

We hear on all sides great outcries against creeds. Are these clamors justifiable? It seems to me that when properly analyzed most of the protests are not against creeds, but against Truth—for every man who believes anything must have a creed—whether he writes it down and prints it or not. Or if there is a man who believes nothing, or anything, or everything by turns, he is not a fit man to be set up as a model. Attacks are often made against creeds because they are a short, handy form by which the Christian mind gives expression to its belief. And those who hate creeds do so because they find them to be weapons as inconvenient as bayonets in the hands of British soldiers have been to our enemies.

They are weapons so destructive to theology that it protests against them. For this reason let us be slow to part with them. Let us lay hold of God’s Truth with an iron grip and never let it go! After all, there is a Protestantism still worth contending for! There is a Calvinism still worth proclaiming and a Gospel worth dying for! There is a Christianity distinctive and distinguished from Ritualism, Rationalism, and Legalism—and let us make it known that we believe in it!

Up with your banners, soldiers of the Cross! This is not the time to be frightened by the cries against conscientious convictions which are nowadays nicknamed sectarianism and bigotry. Believe in your hearts what you profess to believe! Proclaim openly and zealously what you know to be the Truth of God. Be not ashamed to say such-and-such things are true— and let men draw the inference that the opposite is false. Whatever the doctrines of the Gospel may be to the rest of mankind, let them be your glory and boast!

Display your banners! And let those banners be such as the Church of old carried. Unfurl the old primitive standard, the all-victorious standard of the Cross of Christ. In very deed and Truth—in hoc signo vinces—the Atonement is the conquering Truth. Let others believe as they may, or deny as they will—for you the Truth as it is in Jesus is the one thing that has won your heart and made you a soldier of the Cross!

Banners were carried, not merely for distinctiveness, but also to serve the purposes of discipline. An army with banners had one banner as a central standard, and then each regiment or battalion displayed its own particular flag. The hosts of God, which so gloriously marched through the wilderness, had their central standard. I suppose it was the very pole upon which Moses lifted up the bronze serpent (at any rate, our bronze serpent is the central ensign of the Church).

And then, besides that, each tribe of the twelve had its own particular banners. With these uplifted in the front, the tribes marched in order so that there was no confusion on the march. And in time of battle there was no difficulty in marshalling the armed men. It was believed by the later Jews that “the standard of the camp of Judah represented a lion. That of Reuben, a man. That of Joseph, an ox. And that of Dan, an eagle.

The Targumists, however, believe that the banners were distinguished by their colors, the color for each tribe being analogous to that of the precious stone for that tribe in the breastplate of the high priest. “And that the great standard of each of the four camps combined the three colors of the tribes which composed it.” So, Brethren, in the Church of God there must be discipline—the discipline not only of admission and of dismission in receiving the converts and rejecting the hypocrites—but the discipline of marshalling the troops to the service of Christ in the holy war in which we are engaged.

Every soldier should have his orders, every officer his troop, every troop its fixed place in the army, and the whole army a regularity such as is prescribed in the rule, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” As in the ranks each man has his place, and each rank has its particular phase in the battalion, so in every rightly constituted Church each man, each woman, will have, for himself or herself, his or her own particular form of service, and each form of service will link in with every other. And the whole combined will constitute a force which cannot be broken.

A Church is not a load of bricks, remember—it is a house built together. A Church is not a bundle of cuttings in the gardener’s hand—it is a vine, of which we are the branches. The true Church is an organized whole—and life, true spiritual life, wherever it is paramount in the

Church, without rules and rubrics—is quite sure to create order and arrangement. Order without life reminds us of the rows of graves in a cemetery—all numbered and entered in the register. Order with life reminds us of the long lines of fruit trees in Italy—festooned with fruitful vines.

Sunday school teachers, bear the banner of the folded Lamb! Sick visitors, follow the ensign of the open hand! Preachers, rally to the token of the uplifted bronze serpent! And all of you, according to your sacred calling, gather to the name of Jesus, armed for the war! An army with banners may be also taken to represent activity. When an army holds up its colors, the fight is begun.

Little is being done in military circles when the banners are put away. The troops are on furlough, or are resting in barracks. An army with banners is exercising, or marching, or fighting—probably it is in the middle of a campaign, it is marshaled for offense and defense—and there will be rough work before long. It is to be feared that some Churches have hung up their flags to rot in state, or have encased them in dull propriety. They do not desire to do great things, or to see great things. They do not expect many conversions. If many did happen, they would be alarmed and suspicious. They do not expect their pastor’s ministry to be with power. And if it were attended with manifest effect, they would be greatly disturbed and perhaps would complain that he created too much excitement.

The worst of it is, that do-nothing Churches are usually very jealous lest any should encroach on their domain. Our Churches sometime ago appeared to imagine that a whole district of this teeming city belonged to them to cultivate or neglect, as their monopolizing decree might be. If anybody attempted to raise a new interest, or even to build a preaching station within half a mile of them, they resented it as a most pernicious poaching upon their manor. They did nothing themselves, and were very much afraid lest anybody should supplant them.

Like the lawyers of old, who took away the key of knowledge—they entered not in themselves—and they that were entering in, they hindered. That day, it is to be hoped, has gone once and for all. Yet too much of the old spirit lingers in certain quarters. It is high time that each Church should feel that if it does not work, the sole reason for its existence is gone. The reason for a Church being a Church is its mutual edification and in the conversion of sinners. And if these two ends are not really answered by a Church—it is a mere name—a hindrance, an evil, a nuisance. Like the salt which has lost its savor, it is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill.

May we all, in our Church fellowship, be active in the energy of the Spirit of God. May none of us be dead members of the living body—mere impediments to the royal host—baggage to be dragged rather than warriors pushing on the war! May we, every one of us, be soldiers filled with vigor to the fullness of our manhood by the eternal power of the Holy Spirit. And may we be resolved that any portion of the Church which does not uplift its banner of service shall not long number us among its adherents. Be it ours to determine that whether others will or will not serve God and extend the kingdom of His dear Son, we will! In His name and strength let us contend even to the death.

Unsheathe your swords, you soldiers of the Cross! Arise from your slumber, you careless ones! Gird on your swords and prepare for the war! The Lord has redeemed you by His blood—not that you might sleep—but that you might fight for the glory of His name!

Does not the description, “an army with banners,” imply a degree of confidence? It is not an army retiring from the foe, and willing enough to hide its colors to complete its escape. An army that is afraid to venture out into the open keeps its banners out of the gleam of the sun. Banners uplifted are the sign of a fearlessness which rather courts than declines the conflict. Warriors of the Cross! Unfurl the Gospel’s ancient standard to the breeze! We will teach the enemy what strength there is in hands and hearts that rally to the Christ of God. Up with the standard, you brave men at arms!

Let all eyes see it! And if the enemy glares like lions on it, we “will call upon the Lion of the tribe of Judah to lead the van, and we will follow with His Word like a two-edged sword in our hands—

*“Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!  
You soldiers of the Cross!*

***Lift high His royal banner!  
It must not suffer loss—  
From victory unto victory  
His army shall He lead  
Till every foe is vanquished  
And Christ is Lord, indeed.”***

We cannot place too much reliance in the Gospel. Our weakness is that we are so diffident and so apt to look somewhere else for strength. We do not believe in the Gospel as to its power over the sons of men as we should believe in it. Too often we preach it with a coward’s voice.

Have I not heard sermons commencing with abject apologies for the preacher’s daring to open his mouth? Apologies for his youth? For his assertions? For his venturing to intrude upon men’s consciences, and I know not what else? Can God own ambassadors of this cowardly cringing breed who mistake fear of men for humility! Will our Captain honor such carpet knights who apologize for bearing arms?

I have heard that of old, the ambassadors of Holland, and some other states, when introduced to his celestial majesty, the brother of the son and cousin of the moon—the Emperor of China—were expected to come crawling on their hands and knees up to the throne! But when our ambassadors went to that flowery land, they declined to pay such humiliating homage to his impertinent majesty and informed him that they would stand upright in his presence—as free men should do—or else they would decline all dealings with him. And in all probability his majesty would hear from a cannon’s mouth far less gentle notes than he would care for.

Even thus, though we may well humble ourselves as men, yet as ambassadors of God we cannot crouch to the sons of men to ask them what message would suite them best. It must not, shall not be that we shall smooth our tongues and tone our doctrines to the taste of the age. The Gospel that we preach, although the worldly wise man despises it, is God’s Gospel for all that. “Ah,” he says, “there is nothing in it—science has overthrown it.” “And,” says another, “this Gospel is but so much

platitude—we have heard it over and over again.”

Ah, Sir, and though it is platitude to you, and you decree it to be contemptible, you shall hear it or nothing else from us! “For it is the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” In its simplicity lies its majesty and its power. “We are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.” “God forbid that we should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We will proclaim it again with confidence! We will bring forth once more the selfsame Truth as of old. And as the barley loaf smote the tent of Midian, so that it lay alone, so shall the Gospel overturn its adversaries.

The broken pitcher and the flaming torches, and the old war cry—“The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon”—shall yet fill the enemy with dismay! Let us be bold for Jesus and we shall see what His arm can do. The Gospel is the voice of the eternal God! It has in it the same power as that which brought the world out of nothing, and which shall raise the dead from their graves at the coming of the Son of Man. The Gospel, the Word of God, can no more return to Him void than can the snow go back to Heaven, or the raindrops climb again the path by which they descended from the clouds. Have faith in God’s Word, faith in the Presence of the Holy Spirit, faith in the reigning Savior, faith in the fulfillment of the everlasting purposes—and you will be full of confidence—and like an army with banners!

Once more, an army with banners may signify the constancy and perseverance in holding the Truth. We see before us not an army that has lost its banners or that has suffered its colors to be rent away from it. We see an army which bears aloft its ancient standard and still swears by it. Let us be very earnest to maintain the faith once delivered to the saints. Let us not give up this doctrine or that, at the dictates of policy or fashion. But whatever Jesus says to us, let us receive it as the Word of Life.

Great injury may be done to a Church before it knows it, if it shall tolerate error here and there. For false doctrine, like the little leaven, soon leavens the whole lump. If the Church is taught of the Spirit to know the voice of the Good Shepherd, it will not follow a stranger. For it knows not the voice of strangers. This is part of the education which Christ gives to His people—“All Your people shall be taught of the Lord.” They shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make them free!

May we, as a Church, hold fast the things which we have learned and have been taught of God. And may we be preserved from the philosophies and refining of these last days. If we give up the things which are truly believed among us we shall lose our power, and the enemy, alone, will be pleased. But if we maintain them—the maintenance of the old faith—by the Spirit of God shall make us strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Wrap the colors round you, you standard bearers in the day of danger and die sooner than give them up! Life is little compared with God’s loving kindness—and that is the sure heritage of the brave defender of the faith. Thus resolute for Truth, the Church becomes an army with banners.

II. Secondly, the Church is said to be TERRIBLE. To whom is she terrible? She should be amiable, and she is. May God grant that our Church may never be terrible to young converts by moroseness and uncharitableness. Whenever I hear of candidates being alarmed at coming before elders, or seeing the pastor, or making confession of faith before the Church, I wish I could say to them—“Dismiss your fears, beloved Ones. We shall be glad to see you, and you will find your conversation with us a pleasure rather than a trial.”

So far from wishing to repel you—if you really love the Savior—we shall be glad enough to welcome you! If we cannot see in you the evidence of a great change, we shall kindly point out to you our fears and shall be thrice happy to point you to the Savior. But be sure of this—if you have really believed in Jesus you shall not find the Church terrible to you. Harsh judgments are contrary to the spirit of Christ and the nature of the Gospel. Where they are the rule, the Church is despicable rather than terrible.

Bigotry and uncharitableness are indications of weakness, not of strength. To what and to whom is the Church terrible? I answer, first, in a certain sense she is terrible to all ungodly men. A true Church in her holiness and testimony is very terrible to sinners. The ungodly care not a rush about a mock Church, nor about sham Christians. But a really earnest Christian makes the ungodly ashamed. We have known some who could not use the foul language which they were accustomed to when they were in the presence of godly men and women, though these persons had no authority or position or rank.

Even in the most ribald company, when a Christian of known consistency of character has wisely spoken the word of reproof, a solemn shame comes over the majority of those present—their consciences have borne witness against them—and they have felt how awful goodness is. Not that we are ever to try and impress others with any dread of us—such an attempt would be ridiculed and end in deserved failure. The influence which we would describe flows naturally out of a godly light. Majesty of character never lies in affectation of demeanor, but in solidity of virtue. If there is real goodness in us—if we really, fervently, zealously love the right, and hate the evil—the outflow of our life almost without a word will judge the ungodly—and condemn them in their heart of hearts.

Holy living is the weightiest condemnation of sin. We have heard of an ungodly son who could not bear to live in the house where his departed father had, in his lifetime, so devoutly prayed. Every room and every piece of furniture reproved him for forsaking his father’s God. We have read of others who were likely to dread the sight of certain godly men whose holy lives held them more in check than the laws of the land. The bad part of this is that the terror of the ungodly suggests to them an unhallowed retort upon their reprovers and becomes the root out of which springs persecution.

Those whom the ungodly fear because they condemn them by their character, they try to put out of the world if they can, or to bespatter them with slander if they cannot smite them with the hand of cruelty. The martyrdom of saints is the result of the darkness hating the Light, because the Light makes manifest its evil deeds. There will be always in proportion to real holiness, earnestness, and Christ-likeness of a Church something terrible in it to the perverse generation in which it is placed. It will dread

it as it does the all-revealing Day of Judgment.

So is there something terrible in a living Church to all errorists. Just now two armies have encamped against the host of God—opposed to each other—but confederates against the Church of God. Ritualism, with its superstition, its priest-craft, its sacramental efficacy, its hatred of the doctrines of Grace—and on the other side Rationalism, with its sneering unbelief and absurd speculations. These, like Herod and Pilate, agree in nothing but in opposition to Christ. They have one common dread, although they may not confess it.

They do not dread those platform speeches in which they are so furiously denounced at public meetings, nor those philosophical discussions in which they are overthrown by argument. But they hate, they fear—and therefore abuse and pretend to despise—the prayerful, zealous, plain simple preaching of the Truth as it is in Jesus Christ. This is a weapon against which they cannot stand—the weapon of the old Gospel. In the days of Luther it did marvels. It worked wonders in the days of Whitfield and Wesley—it has often restored the Ark of the Lord to our land, and it will again. It has lost none of its ancient power and therefore is it the terror of the adversaries of Christ—

*“Your Gospel’s awful majesty  
Does strike Your foes with fear!  
As armies do when banners fly,  
And martial flags appear.  
How does Your armor, glittering bright,  
Their frightened spirits quell!  
The weapons of Your warlike might  
Defy the gates of Hell.”*

Even to Satan himself the Church of God is terrible. He might, he thinks, deal with individuals—but when these individuals strengthen each other by mutual conversation and prayer, when they are bound to each other in holy love, and make a temple in which Christ dwells—then is Satan hard put to it. O Brothers and Sisters, it is not every Church that is terrible! It is a Church of God in which there is the LIFE of God, and the LOVE of God—a Church in which there is the uplifted banner, the banner of the CROSS held high amid those various banners of truthful doctrine and spiritual Grace of which I have just now spoken.

III. We will take a third point. And that is, WHY IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST TERRIBLE AS AN ARMY WITH BANNERS? Why is it terrible because of its banners? The whole passage seems to say that the Church is terrible as an army, but that to the fullest degree she owes her terribleness to her banners. “Terrible as an army with banners.”

I believe the great Banner of the Christian Church to be the uplifted Savior. “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” Around Him, then, we gather. “Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” As the bronze serpent in the midst of the camp in the wilderness, so is the Savior lifted high, our Banner. The atoning Sacrifice of Christ is the great central standard of all really regenerate men—and this is the main source of dismay to Israel’s foes. But we shall take the thoughts in order.

The Church herself is terrible, and then terrible because of her banners. Brethren, the army itself is terrible. Why? First, because it consists of elect people. Remember how Haman’s wife enquired concerning Mordecai whether he belonged to the seed of the Jews? For if he did, then she foretold that her husband’s scheme would prove a failure. “If Mordecai is of the Seed of the Jews, before whom you have begun to fall, you shall not prevail against him, but shall surely fall before him.”

Now, the Church of God, as made up of men and women is nothing more than any other organization. Look at its exterior and you see in it few persons of great education and a great many of no education. Here and there a wealthy and powerful person, but hundreds who are poor and despised. It does not possess in itself, naturally, the elements of strength according to ordinary reckoning. Indeed, its own confession is that in itself it is perfect weakness, a flock of sheep among wolves.

But here lies its strength—that each of the true members of the Church are of the royal seed —they are God’s chosen ones—the seed of the woman ordained of old to break the head of Satan and all his serpent seed. They are the weakness of God, but they are stronger than men. He has determined with the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are. As the Canaanites feared the chosen race of Israel because the rumor of them had gone forth among the people, and the terror of Jehovah was upon them—so is it with the hosts of evil. They have dreamed their dreams, as the Midianite did, and valiant men like Gideon can hear them telling it. The barley cake shall fall upon the royal tent of Gideon and smite it till it lies alone.

The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon, shall rout the foe. The elect shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and none shall say them no. You are a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, a chosen generation. And in you the living God will gloriously declare His Sovereign Grace. The Church also consists of a praying people. Now prayer is that which links weakness with infinite strength. A people who can pray can never be overcome, because their reserve forces can never be exhausted. Go into battle, my Brother. And if you are vanquished with the strength you have, prayer shall call up another legion.

Yes, twenty legions of angels, and the foe shall marvel to see undefeated adversaries still holding the field! If ten thousand saints were burned tomorrow, their dying prayers would make the Church rise like a phoenix from her ashes. Who, therefore, can stand against a people whose prayers enlist God in their quarrel? “The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.” We cry unto the Lord, and He hears us. He breaks through the ranks of the enemy. He gives us triumph in the day of battle—therefore, terrible as an army with banners are those who wield the weapon of all-prayer.

Again, a true Church is based upon eternal Truth. I need not quote to you the old Latin Proverb which says that Truth is mighty and must prevail. Truth is, and Truth shall be. It alone is substance, and must outlast the lapse of ages. Falsehoods are soon swollen to their perfection of development. Like the bubbles with rainbow hues which children blow, they are dispersed as easily as they are fashioned. They are children of the hour, while Truth is the offspring and heir of eternity. Falsehood dies, pierced through the heart by the arrows of time, but Truth, in her impenetrable armor bids defiance to all foes.

Men who love the Truth are building with gold and silver, and precious stones. And though their architecture may progress but slowly, it is built for eternity. Ramparts of Truth may often be assailed, but they will never be carried by the foe. Establish a power among men of the most ostentatious and apparently stable kind, but rest assured that if lies are at the root of it, it will perish sooner or later. Only the Truth of God is invincible, eternal, supreme. The fear of the true Church and the dread of it falls upon the enemy because they have not wit enough to know that Truth has an abiding and indestructible power.

I was very much amused, the other day, to read a criticism by an eminent Infidel, whose name would be well known if I were to mention it, in which he speaks very highly of the exceeding great skill, wisdom, and common sense always exhibited in the arrangements of the Roman Catholic Church in opposition to Infidelity, and of the imbecility and childishness manifested by Christian ministers in assailing Rationalism with their dogmatism, etc. I was very glad to receive information so valuable, and I thought—

“I see, my Friend, what kind of warfare you like best! You admire the Roman Catholic kind of fighting, but you do not admire that which evangelical ministers have adopted! It is no aim of ours to please our enemies in our mode of warfare, but the reverse! And if we have discovered a weapon which galls you, we will use that same arm more freely than ever.”

There is a story of an officer who was rather awkward in his manners, and, upon some great occasion, almost fell over his sword in his haste. His majesty remarked, “Your sword seems to be very much in the way.” “So Your Majesty’s enemies have very often felt,” was the reply. So, when the enemies of the Truth of God are finding fault with our procedure, we accept their verdict when we have turned it the other way upwards. If they do not admire our mode of warfare, we think it is in all probability about the best method we could adopt. We would still, God granting us help, continue preaching the “foolishness” of the Gospel, and deliver again and again the old Truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Instead of lifting up a new banner (which would better please our adversaries) it shall be the old banner still—“None but Christ.” “By Grace are you saved through faith. And that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Salvation is by free favor, through the expiatory Sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are now to observe that the chief glory and majesty of the Church lies mainly in the banner which she carries. What cause for terror is there in the banner? We reply the enemies of Christ dread the Cross because they know what the Cross has done. Wherever the crucified Jesus has been preached, false systems have tottered to their fall. Dagon has always fallen before the Ark of the Lord. The most violent rage is excited by the doctrine of the Atonement—a rage in which the first cause for wrath is fear.

The terribleness of the Church lies in her banners because those banners put strength into her. Drawing near to the standard of the Cross the weakest soldier becomes strong—he who might have played the coward becomes a hero when the precious blood of Jesus is felt with power in his soul. Martyrs are born and nurtured at the Cross. It is the blood of Jesus which is the lifeblood of self-denial. We can die because our Savior died. The presence of Alexander made the Greeks more than giants—the Presence of our Redeemer makes Believers swifter than eagles, and stronger than lions.

Moreover, the powers of evil tremble at the old standard, because they have a prediction of its future complete triumph. It is decreed of God, and fixed by His predestinating purpose, that all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Jesus must reign. The Crucified One must conquer. The hands nailed to the wood must sway the scepter of all kingdoms. Like potters’ vessels dashed to pieces must all the might and majesty of men be that shall oppose the crown and scepter of Christ’s kingdom. In Christ preached lies the battle-ax and weapons of war with which the Lord will work out His everlasting decrees.

The Church with the name of Immanuel emblazoned on her banner— which it is her duty to keep well displayed and lifted high—is sure to be terrible to all the powers of darkness. We will close with one or two reflections. Will each one here say to himself—“An army, a company of warriors, am I one of them? Am I a soldier? I have entered the Church. I made a profession. But am I really a soldier? Do I fight? Do I endure hardness? Am I a mere carpet knight, a mere lie-a-bed soldier, one of those who are pleased to put on regimentals in order to adorn myself with a profession without ever going to the war?”—

*“Am I a soldier of the Cross,  
A follower of the Lamb?”*

Pass the question round, my dear Brothers and Sisters—Are you soldiers who engage in actual fighting for Jesus under His banner? Do you rally round it? Do you know the standard? Do you love it? Could you die in defense of it? Is the Person of Jesus dearest of all things to you? Do you value the doctrine of the atoning Substitution? Do you feel your own energy and power awakened in the defense of that—and for the love of that? Let not one go away without making the searching questions.

And then “terrible.” Am I in any way terrible through being Christian? Is there any power in my life that would condemn a sinner? Any holiness about me that would make a wicked man feel ill at ease in my company? Is there enough of Christ about my life to make me like a light in the midst of the darkness? Or is it very likely that if I were to live in a house the inhabitants would never see any difference between me and the ungodly? Oh, how many Christians there are who need to wear a label round their necks—you would never know that they were Christians without it!

They make long prayers and great pretences, but they are Christians in nothing but the name. May your life, and mine, never be thus despicable, but may we convince doubters that there is a power in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and make them confess that they, not having it, are losing a great blessing! One other thought. If I am not a soldier. If I am not a servant of Christ in very Truth, and yet I come to the place of worship where Christians meet, and where Christ is preached, the day will be when the Church of God will be very terrible to me.

I will suppose that there is a person listening to this sermon who has been hearing the preaching of the Word in this place now for many years. Imagine that the Last Day is come. You are brought before the great Judgment Seat, and this is the question—“Did this sinner hear the Gospel faithfully preached? He is ungodly, he has rejected Christ—does he deserve to be cast away? Did he really hear the Gospel, and did he reject it?” If I am asked to give my witness, I must say, “To the best of my ability, I tried to tell him the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

“Was this sinner prayed for by the Church?” There are many of the members of this Church who would feel bound to declare “Yes, Lord, we did pray for him.” Yes, and all of us should say, “If we did not pray for him by name, we included him in the general company of those who attended upon the means of Grace, for whom we made a constant intercession.” Is there any member of the Church who would be able to make an apology for the rejecter of Christ? He has willfully rejected the Savior! He knowingly continued in sin! Will anybody be an advocate for him?

Not one tongue would be able to excuse you at the Judgment, or to argue against the righteous sentence of God! When the great Judge condemns the sinner to be taken away to execution, the whole Church with whom that sinner has worshipped, and in whose presence that sinner has rejected Christ will become “terrible as an army with banners.” For all its voices will say, “Amen, Amen, Amen! You are righteous, O Lord!”

This is no picture drawn from fancy. Know you not that the saints shall judge the world? They shall sit as co-assessors with the Son of God at the last great assize, and shall say, “Amen!” to every verdict which proceeds from His mouth. O that the thought of this might be blessed of God’s Spirit so as to lead many of you to be reconciled to God! Jesus is still the loving Mediator, and a full surrender of yourselves to Him will assuredly save you. Whoever believes on Him is not condemned.

And this is to believe on Him—that you trust in Him, and know that God has given unto us eternal life—and this life is in His Son who suffered in the place of sinners, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. The Lord bless you, for the Lord Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[MR. SPURGEON has been laid aside by sickness for two Sundays, but is now recovering and hopes to be again in the pulpit next Lord’s-Day. He earnestly beg the prayers of loving friends that his frequent infirmities may be sanctified to the Glory of God and the profit of the Church. And then, if it is the Lord’s will, eventually removed.]

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OVERCOMING CHRIST  
NO. 2486

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 11, 1896.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 8, 1876.

**“Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.” Song of Solomon 6:5.**

THIS is the language of the Heavenly Bridegroom to His spouse. In great condescension, He speaks to her and bids her take note that her eyes have overcome Him. This morning, [Sermon #1317, Volume 22—Overcome

Evil with Good—read/download at http://www.spurgeongems.org ] our subject was

overcoming evil with good. We have a very different subject this evening, for we are to talk about overcoming Him who is Goodness itself, the perfection of everything that is excellent! Saints first learn the art of overcoming evil and then they learn the way to overcome goodness, too. But how different, dear Friends, are the weapons employed in these two battles, for while, this morning, as we spoke of overcoming evil, we saw that there was much for us to do—and I think that we all felt it was more than we could do apart from Divine Grace—yet here there is nothing to be done but just to give a look! The Heavenly Bridegroom confesses Himself to be overcome by the very look of the eyes of His spouse. She has but to gaze steadily upon Him and His heart is vanquished by the glances of her eyes!

Now, it must not be supposed because of the language of the text that there is any opposition between Christ and His people which has to be overcome. He loves His bride far too well to allow any division of feeling to separate them in heart from one another. Nor is it to be imagined that the spouse had to gain some blessing from an unwilling hand and, therefore, pleaded with her eyes as well as with her lips. Oh, no! There is a holy discipline in Christ’s house that sometimes withholds the coveted blessing till we have learned to pray in downright earnest, but the power that wins the victory in prayer has its real basis in the love of Christ, Himself! It is because He loves us so much that He permits our prayers to conquer Him—it is not so much because we love Him as because He loves us that He permits the look of our eyes to overcome His heart. This, then, is the subject for our meditation—the way in which God’s people overcome the heart of Jesus Christ and make Him say, “Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.”

I. First, dear Friends, let us notice that LOOKING ON HIS CHURCH HAS ALREADY OVERCOME THE HEART OF OUR HEAVENLY BRIDEGROOM.

It was so in the far-distant past, not when she looked at Him, but when He looked at her, that she overcame Him. Ages upon ages ago, before the earth was, Christ had conceived in His heart the purpose to redeem from among men a people that should be precious in His sight forever and ever. Through the glass of Divine foreknowledge, He looked at His people, He recognized every single one of them, He saw them all ruined in the Fall, all stained with sin, all contaminated in nature by our first parents’ disobedience and rebellion. As He looked at them with a steady resolve that He would rescue them, perfect them, lift them up to a level with Himself and make them into a race that would praise God forever in Heaven with hallelujahs and hosannas beyond all the harmonies of angels, His heart so moved towards them that He longed for the time when He would enter upon the great work of their redemption. Long ago, He said, “My delights were with the sons of men.” His heart was always projecting itself forward in anticipation of that happy, yet dreadful day, when He would be called upon to redeem His people.

Every time He thought of them, He was overcome with the very recollection of His great love towards them. And when the long-expected day did, at last, come—

*“Down from the shining seats above*

*With joyful haste He fled,”*  
and was found as a Babe in Bethlehem’s manger, lying among the oxen feeding in the stable of the village inn. Oh, marvelous mystery! that He, whom the Heaven of heavens could not contain, was not satisfied to be God Over All, blessed forever, but for our sakes He must also become Man! He was so overcome by the love He had for His chosen that He left His Father’s Throne of Light to become one flesh with His people and to be made a Man, like ourselves, so that He might be next of kin to us. Ah, gracious Savior, Your Church’s eyes did, indeed, overcome You when they brought You from amidst the royalties of Heaven down to the sins and sorrows of earth!

You know, too, when He lived down here among men, how often His inmost heart was stirred as He looked upon the people whom He loved. And especially do you remember the scene on that last night when their redemption price was about to be paid. He took the cup that He was to drink and sipped at it, but His holy soul revolted from it—and with the bloody sweat upon His face He cried, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” Then He went back and looked upon His people. Truly, there was not much to see in them—He had taken three specially privileged Apostles to be the representatives of all His chosen—and those three were asleep when He was in His terrible agony! Yet, somehow, the sight of them seemed to strengthen Him for the awful ordeal that He was enduring. Back and forth, three times, He ran to gaze upon them and they so overcame Him that He turned back and said to His Father, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.” And He went through with that tremendous work of laying down His life for His people—and drinking the cup of wrath that was their due. They had overcome Him as He had looked at them!

And, Beloved, now that our Lord is risen from the dead, He still feels the power of the sight of His redeemed. The great joy of Christ at this moment is found in gazing at His redeemed ones. Look at Him as Man, if you will, and what a wondrous Man He is! But remember, also, that God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name! And what does the glorified and exalted Christ think as He looks on the myriads in Heaven, all of whom would have been in Hell but for Him? Then He looks down to the saints on earth and sees the myriads who are all trusting in Him, all conquering sin by His might and all spared from going down to the Pit by the merit of His precious blood— and He seems, again, to say, “Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me,” as if Christ felt that a glance at His people brought almost too much joy to Him! What a day that will be when He shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God— when all His people, raised from the dead, or changed in the twinkling of an eye, shall admire Him—and He shall be admired in them!

And what will be the joy of His heart when the “great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues”—all redeemed by His blood—shall be gathered to Christ, to be the delight of His heart forever and ever! That will be a joy sufficient, even, for the immensity of His infinite heart as He sees in them the reward of His awful agonies, the rich return for the shedding of His precious blood! His benevolence—that great mainspring of all that He has done—will be gratified and satisfied as He looks on each one of His redeemed and sees the fruit of His travail in every individual child of His Grace, in each sinner reclaimed, in each saint preserved and perfected! I can well conceive of Him saying in that day, “Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.” The joy that Christ will feel in His own sight of His people and in the glances of the multitudes that He has saved, must be a delight beyond anything we can even imagine!

II. Now I must pass to a second point, which is this, that THE EYES OF CHRIST’S CHOSEN ONES STILL OVERCOME HIM. This is a practical point upon which we may profitably spend some little time—the eyes of Christ’s chosen ones still overcome Him.

And, first, the eyes of His chosen overcome Him when they look up in deep repentance, glancing at Him hopefully through their tears. Let me try to give you a picture of such a case. Here is a poor soul, conscious of having sinned, and sinned deeply. Once sin was thought to be only a trifle. Now it is seen to be a horrible evil, to be trembled at and hated. Once God was judged to be too severe in sending men to Hell, but now the convicted one has nothing to say against God’s Justice, for he is all taken up with speaking against himself and his sin. There stands this poor soul with red and weeping eyes, saying, “O God, I have sinned, and I am still sinning. And if You cast me into the abyss I dare not challenge Your Justice, yet have pity upon me, O Lord! God, be merciful to me a sinner!” When those tear-filled eyes are turned to the Lord Jesus and sin is confessed again and again with deep contrition and childlike repentance, it is not possible that He should long refuse to grant the pardon which we seek! He seems to say to the poor penitent, “Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me. I cannot bear to see you weeping and sorrowing so. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you, for I have loved you with an everlasting love. Go, and sin no more.” There is a wondrous power in the penitent eye, in the full confession that makes a clean breast of every sin before the face of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that when we have once repented, we do not leave off repenting, for penitence is a Grace that is as longlived as faith! And as long as we are capable of believing, we shall also necessarily need to repent, for we shall always be sinning. So, whenever the child of God feels that he has gone astray in any way, that, though he did live near to God, he has gone back and grown cold in heart, he has only to come to Christ, again, and cry after Him—and confess his folly in having left Him and his ingratitude in having been so indifferent to Him—and Christ will receive him back again! You cannot long mourn His absence and seek to return to Him, and feel that you will die if you do not get back the realization of His sweet love again—you cannot be long in that state before He will be vanquished by your weeping eyes and He will say to you, “Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.” And if a child of God who has not lost fellowship with his Lord, is, nevertheless, anxious lest he should do so—if his morning prayer is, “O my Lord, keep me from everything that would take me away from Your love.” And if at night He looks back over His conduct during the day and says, “Cleanse me from every secret fault, for—

*“‘I am anxious of my heart,*

*Lest it should once from You depart”—*  
if there is kept up this delightful tenderness of conscience towards Christ, so that our eyes, with weeping for very fear of sin, still look after Him, then shall we hold Him spellbound and the deep sorrow of our loving hearts shall vanquish Him! And He will bestow the blessing which our soul is seeking.

Another kind of glance that has great power with the Lord Jesus is when the soul looks to Christ for salvation. Then it is that the eyes vanquish the Savior. It is hard, at first, to look to Christ and believe that He can save you. I suppose some of you, dear Friends, have a distinct recollection of the first faith-glance you ever took at Christ. I well remember mine—it seemed so strangely simple and yet so sublime and wonderful, that I could scarcely think it true that there was life in a look at Him! I did but glance half furtively at first, as if I thought it could not mean that such a sinner as I was could receive mercy from Christ simply by looking at Him. Did He really mean me when He said, “Look to me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth”? I had long sought Him and I had prayed to Him—but I could not conquer Him, nor win mercy from Him by my seeking and my praying. But oh, when my eyes, already red with weeping, looked at Him with a steady glance which seemed to say—

*“I do believe, I will believe,*

*That you did die for me,”*  
then did He cry, “‘Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.’ ‘I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.’”

Many times since then, you and I have looked to Jesus Christ when a sense of sin has been very heavy upon us. I suppose all of you who are really children of God sometimes get into that state in which you begin to ask, “Was I ever truly converted? Did my sins ever roll from my shoulders and disappear in the tomb of Christ?” When these questions arise within your heart, go and stand, once more, at the foot of the Cross, and look at your suffering Lord. I have looked, and looked, and looked again, until I have seemed to look Him all over, and at last I have begun to sing—

*“Oh, ‘tis sweet to view the flowing  
Of my Savior’s precious blood,  
With Divine assurance knowing,  
He has made my peace with God.”*

While the eyes of faith are thus resting upon Jesus, He is overcome by them and He darts inexpressible joy into our hearts as He says to us, “Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.” His heart is carried by storm by the faith-looks of His children!

We also give another overcoming glance when we look to the Lord Jesus Christ for all things. Worldlings do not understand the terms on which we are linked with Christ. To them Christ is a somebody who lived 1800 years ago and then died. But to us He is alive! He is our familiar Friend! We are intimately acquainted with Him. We are in the habit of taking all our troubles to Him and asking Him for all that we need—and He removes our sorrows and grants us the desires of our hearts. There are times with all of us when we get into trouble of one sort or another and, blessed be His name, He has taught us, when we are in trouble, to lift up our eyes to the hills from where comes our help. Now, perhaps, dear Brothers and Sisters, you have, for a while, been looking to Christ and saying, “Lord, I believe You will help me. Did You die to save me from Hell and will You not supply me with bread and water while I am in the wilderness? Have you covered me with the robe of your perfect righteousness and will you not find me clothes to cover my nakedness and shield me from the weather? Have you done the greater, and will you not do the lesser?”

When another trouble comes, you keep on looking to Him! You will not believe that He can be unkind—you give Him credit for loving you, and caring for you, so look to Him—and as you look, submit to His will and say, “I will never distrust You, my Lord.” If He sends yet another rough Providence, you continue looking to Him and only say, “Show me why You contend with me. Though You slay me, yet will I trust in You. I have known You too long to doubt You now, my blessed Lord. You have done too much for me in the past for me to turn away and say, “I will not trust You.” My Lord and Master, You cannot make me believe that You do not love me, for I know You better. My inmost soul is assured that You do love me, so I look to You, still, and watch the movement of Your Countenance. And as I look, my heart says, “My Lord, I cannot tell why You strike Your servant again and again, yet, if it is Your love that makes You strike, strike on. Whatever is most for Your Glory, do with me as You will.” When your eyes are like that, full of submission, full of hope, full of trust—it cannot be long before the Lord will, somehow or other, deliver you, for He will say, “I cannot hold out against you any longer. ‘Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me. I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.’ I will bring you out of the furnace, for I only sit there as Refiner till I see My own image in you. And when I see My eyes in your eyes, and My heart in your heart, and My Character in your character, then will I bring you out of the furnace as gold seven times purified.” Blessed Spirit, give us such eyes as these, which shall overcome even the heart of Christ!

Again, there are the eyes of prayer which often overcome the Lord Jesus Christ, and this victory comes, sometimes, when we are praying for ourselves. You know what it is in prayer, to come to Him and say, “Lord, I am in great straits, and You have, Yourself, brought me there. It has not been through my folly, but it is by Your own act and deed that I am where I am. Now, Lord, You have promised that in six troubles You will deliver us, and in seven there shall no evil touch us. You have said, ‘Your shoes shall be iron and brass and, as your days, so shall your strength be.’ Now, Lord, You are God and You cannot lie, therefore will You not keep Your promise? Here, Lord, You see my difficulty and my trial, and Your inspired Apostle has said that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. Your servant David declared that ‘many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all.’ Now, Lord, I look to You to do this for me.”

It is one of the grandest things in all the world when a godly man, with the simplicity of a child, believes God and fully trusts Him for everything! It has come to be a matter of marvel, in this evil age, that a man can say that God grants him many mercies in answer to prayer. People hold up their hands and say, “Dear, dear, what a wonder!” A wonder that God hears prayer?! It would be a greater wonder if He did not hear it! Beloved, to me prayer is a matter of fact. For me to go and take a promise to God and ask Him to fulfill it, and to get it fulfilled, is as common and as usual and as much a matter of fact as it is for you who are in business to take checks and pass them across the counter at the bank and receive the cash for them. Do you think that God is a fiction? If He is, then all our religion is a farce! But if God is real, then prayer is real, too. Many of us know that it is real, for we have tried it and still try it every day we live! In every time of trouble, we bring the trouble to God’s feet and say, “Dear Lord, as You are true and faithful, You will help us through it.” And we find that He does help us through it! We speak what we know and testify what we have seen many a time. When a child of God, in deep distress, believes in his Father, and steadily looks to Him for deliverance, those eyes of his have mighty power and God seems to say to him, “Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.” You cannot look steadily to God and say, “Lord, I am sure about Your faithfulness, I am sure about Your promise and I cannot and will not doubt it,” but before long you shall see the hand of the Lord made bare for your deliverance—and you, also, shall be among the happy number who have to bear witness that, verily, there is a God in Israel! Thus does prayer prevail with God when we present it for ourselves.

So does it also overcome Him when we pray on behalf of others. Moses, you know, prayed for others and prevailed. Do you, dear children of God, know what it is to wrestle with the Lord for the souls of others? I am sure that many of you do. There are your dear children, kinsfolk, friends and neighbors whom you bring before the Lord. I will tell you when you will win the day, mother, when, with tears you say, “O God, You have given me these children; now give them to me according to the spirit as well as according to the flesh.” You will overcome the Lord, dear Father, when you spread your suit before Him and say, “Deny my children what You will, but save them—let them all be Yours in the day when You make up Your jewels.” You will succeed when, rising from your knees, you set those children a Christian example and, having pleaded with God for them, you go and plead with them for God—and feel as if your heart would break if you did not see your boys and girls converted! When, like Hannah, you even come to be a woman of a sorrowful spirit because you feel that you must have your children brought to God, then the Lord Jesus will look at you till He will say to Himself, “I cannot let that poor soul cry and sigh in vain. It is not in My heart—the heart of One who was born of a woman—to let that pleading woman’s prayer go without an answer.” And to you He will say, “Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me. Be it to you even as you will.”

And you, dear child of God, who are teaching in the Sunday school class, or you who are preaching in some small village station—when you get to feel inward grief of heart over those with whom you have to deal— when that grief increases till it comes to be a perfect agony and you cannot help crying out for anguish of soul. When you feel as if you must have them saved. When you feel as if you would give everything you had if they might but be brought to Christ. When you even wake at night to pray for them and, in the midst of your business cares you get distracted with the thought that some whom you love are perishing—at such times as that, your powerful eyes in prayer shall move the heart of Christ and overcome Him—and He shall give you those souls for your hire!

Brothers and Sisters, if we do not pray for sinners, for whom shall we pray? If we do not plead for the abandoned, if we do not offer supplications for those who are perverse in heart, we have omitted to pray for the very persons who most need our intercession! Let us bring these hard hearts beneath the almighty hammer! Let us, by prayer, bring these lepers beneath the healing touch of Him who, despite their loathsomeness, can say to them, “Be you clean!” Let no degree of natural or inherited depravity, or of depravity that has come from long continuance in sin, hinder us from praying for all the unsaved whom we know! “O God, have mercy upon these guilty ones!”

I will not further enlarge upon this point, for it is settled beyond all question that those who love the souls of men will not be hindered from prayer for them on any account whatever. I entreat you, who have prayed for husbands or children, or friends, do not leave off pleading for them! If you have prayed for twenty years, and they are not converted, pray twenty years more! And if they have grown more wicked while you have pleaded, still pray on! And if Heaven and earth and Hell seem to combine together to bid you cease your supplications, still pray on. As long as you live, make intercession for transgressors—and as long as they live, let your cries go up to God on their behalf. So shall you “overcome Heaven by prayer” as you plead for the ungodly.

Once again, there is another time when the eyes of the Believer seem to overcome the heart of Christ, and that is when we have turned right away from the world and looked to Him alone. I have known it so, again and again. Have you not, too, Beloved? In this world, at present, our Lord is somewhat concealed. He does not fully reveal Himself to His people. Here He says to us as He said to Mary, “Touch Me not.” He lets us wait till the veil shall be drawn up and then we shall see Him face to face, and shall be like He is. Here we have to live by faith rather than by sight, and it is expectation rather than enjoyment that makes up much of our present bliss. Yet, at times I have known my Lord come wonderfully near to His servants and lay bare His inmost heart to them. It seemed as if He could not help it—it has been at some such gathering as this, when we have gone right away from the world and have forgotten its cares and pleasures for a while—and we have sat down to think only of Him. Our soul has surveyed Him in His Godhead and His Manhood, as our Prophet, Priest, King and near Kinsman—living, dying, risen, ascended, soon to come—we have looked Him over and there has not been any part of His Character which we have not admired, nor one office in which we have not trusted Him, nor one deed for which we have not blessed Him! We have come to think, “He is altogether lovely,” and while we have been admiring Him in a perfect rapture, there has been added to it this sweet thought—He is all goodness, and He is all mine—from the crown of His head to the soles of His feet. “My Beloved is mine and I am His.”

We have not said much and we could not have said much just then. We have been quite quiet and alone with our Lord—and we have felt that silence was the only eloquence we could use as we looked at Him again, and again, and again. At such seasons, my soul has felt ready to swoon away in His Presence. You remember how John, in Patmos, when Jesus appeared to him, said, “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead”? And well He might, for He had a brighter vision of His Lord than you and I can have at present. But even faith’s view of Him is enough to transport us straight away into Heaven, itself! Well, Brothers and Sisters, whenever we are thus happily engaged in contemplation of our Lord, not only is He very near us, but He is greatly moved by our love and He says to us, “Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.” And, meanwhile, to prove how overcome He is, He begins to reveal Himself more fully to us!

You may, perhaps, have read in the life of holy Mr. Flavell the extraordinary instance he records of the love of Christ being poured into his soul. He says that he was riding a horse, going to some engagement, and he had such a sense of the love of Christ that he completely lost himself for several hours. And when he came to himself, again, he found his horse standing quite still and discovered that he had been sitting on horseback all those hours, utterly lost to everything but a special revelation of the wonderful love of Jesus! You may also have heard of Mr. Tennant, the mighty American preacher and friend of George Whitefield, who was found, lost and absorbed, in a forest to which he had retired. His friends had to call him back, as it were, from the sweet fellowship he had been enjoying with Christ. You may remember, too, John Welsh, the famous Scotch preacher who had to cry out, “Hold, Lord, hold! I am but an earthen vessel, and if I feel more of Your glorious love, I must even die! So stay Your hand a while.”

There are such experiences as these. I will not enquire whether you have ever known them, but if you have, I will tell you one thing—all the infidels in the world and all the devils in Hell will never make you doubt the truth of the Scriptures if you have once been face to face with Christ and have spoken with your Master as a man speaks with His friend! Such things have happened to those whose cloud-piercing eyes have been so fixed upon Christ that He, at last, has felt the mighty fascination of their loving and believing glances and has revealed Himself in still greater measure to them and made them even more blest than they were before!

Last of all, sometimes the eyes of Christians have great power in overcoming Christ when they long for His appearing. Have you ever seen the saints lie dying with such language as this on their lips, “Why are His chariots so long in coming? Why does He tarry?—

*“‘Hurry, my Beloved, fetch my soul  
Up to Your blessed abode!  
Fly, for my spirit longs to see  
My Savior and my God.’”*

I have heard them say, with evident regret, “I thought to have been in Heaven long before now.” I have seen them almost grieve when the doctor has said that they were better and that there was hope that they might last another month or two! They seemed to say, “Why should my banishment continue? Why should my release be postponed? These chains of clay which seem so hard to shake off, these fetters of brass—will they never drop from me? Must I still linger in this world of pain and sorrow, and sin and suffering? Why not let me go?” And they have been like a poor thrush which I have sometimes seen a boy try to keep upon a little bit of turf—it longed for the broad fields—and beat itself against the wires of its cage. So is it with our dear suffering friends, at times—yet they have learned patiently to wait till their change came. But often their eyes have been so fixed upon their Lord that they have said to Him, “Will You never come?” And, at last, Christ has looked out of Heaven so sweetly on those sick ones and He has said, “Your eyes have overcome Me. Come up higher.” And they have leaped out of their body into His bosom and the pierced hands have received their blood-washed spirits—and they have been “forever with the Lord!”

I am looking forward, and I trust we who are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are all looking forward to that day when God will let us languish into life! When we shall see the bars of the prison opened once and for all and we shall pass through them, and leave this dying world behind to go to the land of the living, the land of the hereafter, where we, too, shall be “forever with the Lord!” Keep your hearts always longing for that blessed hour! Keep your eyes always looking upward, Beloved. Set small store on anything here—and be always ready to depart and so, full often, shall Jesus say to you, as though He could no longer bear that you should gaze upon Him though, indeed, He loves it all the while, “Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.” God bless you all, Beloved, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**GENESIS 32:22-30; EXODUS 32:7-14; MARK 7:24-30.**

We shall read three short portions of Scripture, all illustrative of the great Truth that God has sometimes given Grace to His people to overcome Himself—the Almighty has condescended to be vanquished by man! First, let us read the story of Jacob in the Book of Genesis, the 32nd Chapter, at the 22nd verse—

Genesis 32:22-24. And he rose up that night and took his two wives, and his two women servants, and his 11 sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them and sent them over the brook, and sent over all that he had. And Jacob was left alone. He had made a quiet oratory for himself by sending everyone else of the company over to the other side of the brook—his own resolve being—

*“With You all night I mean to stay,  
And wrestle till the break of day.”*

24, 25. And there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day. And when He saw—When the wrestling Man, the Angel of the Covenant, saw—

25, 26. That He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, Let Me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let You go, except You bless me. When we come nearest to God, we must have a deep sense of our own personal weakness. It must never be supposed, if our suit prevails with Heaven, that there is anything in us, or anything in our prayers to account for our prevalence. Whatever power we have, must come from God’s Grace, alone, and, therefore, usually when we pray so as to prevail with the Lord there is at the same time a shrinking of the sinew, a consciousness of weakness, a sense of pain— yet it is just then that we are prevailing and, therefore, we may rest assured that our prayer will be answered. The Angel said, “Let Me go,” at the very time when Jacob felt the shrinking of the sinew—“He said, Let Me go, for the day breaks. And he (Jacob) said, I will not let You go, except You bless me.”

27-29. And He said to him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed. And Jacob asked Him, and said, Tell me, I pray You, Your name. And he said, Why is it that you ask about My name? Holy desires will be realized and believing prayers will be answered, but mere curiosity will not be gratified! Those who read the Scriptures with a view simply to find out novelties that may tickle their fancy, read in vain. The Covenant Angel will give you what you will if it is necessary for you, but He will not answer your idle questions. He said to Jacob, “Why is it that you ask about My name?”

29, 30. And He blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, “For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” Thus did Jacob the wrestler overcome his God! Now turn to the 32nd Chapter of the Book of Exodus, where we find a description of the sin of idolatry into which the Israelites fell while Moses was absent in communion with God upon the mountain. The people brought their golden earrings to Aaron and he made a calf, and they bowed before it, saying, “These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” While this wickedness was going on, Moses was on the mountaintop with God.

Exodus 32:7. And the LORD said to Moses, Go, get you down; for your people, which you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves! See how Jehovah will not acknowledge these idolaters as His people? He says to Moses, “Your people which you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.”

8-10. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These are your gods, O Israel, which have brought you up out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said to Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of you a great nation. What a great future was thus opened up before Moses! He might become another Abraham and in him should all the nations of the earth be blessed! But Moses loves the people, even the people who have vexed and provoked him so many years. He still loves them so much that, even before he begins to pray for them, God says, “Let Me alone,” as if He felt the force of Moses’ coming prayer and would not have him offer it! O wondrous power of intercession, that by it even God’s right hand is held back when it is lifted up to strike!

11. And Moses urged the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why does Your wrath wax hot against Your people, which You have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Moses will not have it that they are his people, nor that he brought them out of the land of Egypt. But he declares that they are God’s people, and that He brought them forth “with great power, and with a mighty hand.”

12-14. Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did He bring them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom you swore by Your own Self, and said to them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of Heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give to your seed, and they shall inherit it forever. And the LORD repented of the evil which He thought to do to His people. So a second time the mighty power of prayer was proven and the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man! In the seventh Chapter of the Gospel according to Mark, beginning at the 24th verse, is another story which you know well, which tells how the Lord Jesus was overcome by a woman’s mighty faith.

Mark 7:24-29. And from there He arose, and went to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet: the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she urged Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not good to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to the dogs. And she answered and said to Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs. And He said to her, For this saying go your way; the devil is gone out of your daughter. Christ capitulated at once! He yielded to the strong arms of conquering prayer and faith—and so the pleading woman had her will!

30. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.  
Sermon #1066 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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A CALL FOR REVIVAL  
NO. 1066

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 18, 1872, **BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Come my beloved, let us go forth into the field, let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grapes appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give you my loves. The  
mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved.” Song of Solomon 7:11-13.**

I REMEMBER to have heard it said that when a Church is in a right condition, all that it wants on the Sabbath is that the sermon should be like the orders given by a commanding officer to his troops—it need not be rhetorical or eloquent, it only need be clear and plain—a word of direction for the Lord’s servants. If the soldiers are prepared for action they will not look to be regaled with oratory, but having heard the words of command they will, with all their hearts, go about to obey them.

Assuredly the Church needs instructing, consoling and edifying, as well as directing, but this morning I feel that I have a word from the Captain of our salvation, addressed first to this particular regiment and next to those other portions of the Grand Army which are represented here this morning. I speak as unto wise men—judge what I say! Traveling along our island just now you see everywhere the sickle, or the reaping machine, in full work. Harvest whitens the plains! Everywhere the loaded wagons are bearing home the precious fruits of the earth. My spirit is stirred within me and my soul is on fire, for I see everywhere a harvest except in the Church of Christ.

Reapers are busy everywhere except in the fields of our Divine Boaz. All fields are ripe but those of Bethlehem! All barns are filling but those of the Great Husbandman! Christ Jesus has scarcely a sheaf ingathered of late. We hear of very few results from the sacred sowing of the Word of God. Here and there the Church, like Ruth, gathers an ear—a very precious ear, it is true—for who shall estimate the value of a single soul? But we have no wave-sheaves as in the days of Pentecost, or, if we have them, they are few and far between. And as for the harvest home which we have so long expected, our eyes fail in looking for it in vain.

As a Church constituting a part of the Master’s field, we have had, for years, one continued harvest but still never such an one as has satisfied our spirits, for our idea of our King is such that the largest increase to His Church would not content us—we should still feel that our Lord Jesus deserved far more! As He has not yet seen of the travail of His soul so as to be satisfied, so neither are we, His servants, content on His behalf, but we long, and cry, and pray for a larger harvest as His reward for the dread sowings in bloody sweat and streams of vital blood of Gethsemane and Golgotha!

The time when our Churches can operate extensively with the greatest convenience will soon be upon us. We do not usually look for any great things during the summer, when congregations are scattered at the seaside and workpeople are busy many hours in the day. The summer of Nature is the winter of the Church, and the earth’s winter is our harvest. These warm days will soon be gone and the long evenings will come—and with them abounding opportunities of doing good. Therefore, it seemed to me to be a seasonable thing to give the rallying cry this morning and bid our friends remember that the harvest of the Church comes on quickly!

I would urge you all to sharpen your sickles and with good hope and prayerful confidence prepare for the appointed weeks of our harvest! May God, by His Holy Spirit, inspire you with zeal for the work which awaits you and give you to walk in fellowship with Jesus in all that you do.

I. We shall, this morning, first of all, call your attention to the fact which is implied in the words of our text, that LOVE IS THE GREAT MOTIVE FOR ACTION IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST. All through these verses the spouse acts with reference to her beloved. It is for him that she goes forth into the field. For the sake of his company and the quiet enjoyment of his love she would lodge in the villages. And all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which are stored within her gates she declares to be laid up for her beloved. Love, then, is the fittest and most powerful motive to holy service. “The love of Christ constrains us.”

This love has about it certain marked peculiarities. It is first a love which realizes the person of the beloved. In the text the spouse speaks of “my beloved” as of a real person, whom she sees, upon whom she leans, and with whom she talks. Christ Jesus is to His Church no fiction, no myth, no imaginary hero. Throughout the song both the personages are most real to each other, so real that they both enter into graphic descriptions of each other’s beauties and present us with portraits drawn by the pencil of admiring love. Now a Church will always be strong when the Lord Jesus is real to her! By this, indeed, may her power be estimated. Jesus must be to us no historical Person who was once on earth, but is now dead and powerless—He must be an actual Person living still in our midst.

Imagine, my Brothers and Sisters, with what enthusiasm the present audience would be stirred if I should retire and in my place there should come forward the very Christ who was nailed to the Cross of Calvary! You would know Him by His hands and His feet—the sacred marks of His passion. Oh, how the sight of Him would stir your souls! You would be bowing your heads in adoration and grudging the closing of your eyes even for a second in prayer, for you would desire, without a pause, to drink in the blessed vision! And if the Crucified One should stand here, and say, “My Brethren, My blood-bought Ones for whom I laid down My life, there is yet much to be done to extend My kingdom. There are precious souls, Brothers and Sisters of yours who know not My name, who must be brought in. There are ignorant ones to be taught and sinful ones to be restored.”

And suppose He should then point with His hand to one of you, and say, “I send you there,” and to another, “I send you there.” Why you would feel at once anointed to the appointed work and go forth to do it with much earnestness, carefulness and joy! You would be right pleased to receive a commission from those dear honey-dropping lips! My Brethren, have you forgotten that you walk by faith and will you permit it to be thought that sight would have more power over you than faith? I trust you will not have it so! Then, remember, by faith you may realize and ought to realize this morning that Jesus walks among the golden candlesticks and is in His Church now, saying to every one of His people, “Go and serve Me! Seek My blood-bought ones! Help My feeble ones! Feed My sheep and My lambs!”

I pray you, let your faith, this morning sweeten your duties by the knowledge that they arise out of your Beloved’s personal commands! Execute His holy commands as if you had received them, as in very deed you have—directly from Himself! Let your heart go with mine, while I say— “Jesus, my Beloved, though I see You not, and must be content to behold You by faith, alone, yet my faith shall be more influential than my sight. I know that You are here and what You bid me do my soul shall perform with all her might, because You say it!”

Note next that the love here spoken of was well assured of the affection of its beloved. Note the verse which precedes our text, “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is towards me.” A Christian is never strong for service when he does not know whether Christ loves him or not. If that is a question, you have put out the fire by which alone the force can be generated which must work the machinery of your spirit. You must know beyond question that Jesus loves you and gave Himself for you! You must feel that He is loving you now, that His heart is looking out through those dear eyes which once wept over Jerusalem and that the meaning of His loving glance is, “Soul, I love you, I loved you so that I gave Myself for you and I have not repented of the gift. I love you still as much as I loved you upon Calvary’s bloody tree.”

It is strength to feel that still “His desire is toward me.” Oh, when you feel, “Jesus loves me, Jesus desires me to show my love to Him. Jesus at this moment thinks of me and takes a delight in me”—this will make you strong as a giant in the cause of your Beloved! Between the very jaws of death a man would venture who felt that the love of Christ was set upon him! Love to Jesus is the fountain of courage, the mother of self-denial and the nurse of constancy. Strive, then, for a well-assured sense of the Savior’s love. Be not content till you possess it, for it will be health to your spirit and marrow to your bones—it will be a belt of strength to your loins and a chain of honor about your neck.

Observe that the love of the spouse lived in fellowship with the wellbeloved. “Come, my beloved, let us go, let us lodge, let us get up, let us see.” “There will I give you my loves.” True love to Jesus grows stronger and stronger in proportion as it abides in Him. We are cold in our love because we live at a distance from Him. The angel who dwells in the sun has never to complain of an ice-bound heart, and he who lives in Christ and abides in Him will blaze and glow with a warmth of love comparable to that of Christ Himself. I do not think that the numbers of a Church will have so much to do with the work it accomplishes—that depends more upon the degree of love than upon the length of the Church roll!

A small Church inflamed with ardent affection for the Divine Lord will do more for Him than a great host eaten up by worldliness. Love burns its way by its own vehement flames. Coals of juniper are soon felt. The Enochs are the men—they walk with God and therefore they have power over their times. The Johns are the men—they lean on Jesus’ bosom and when they come forth to tell of what they have seen and heard, they speak with authority as sent by the Most High. The Lord give to us, as members of this Church, to abide in habitual fellowship with Jesus—not to have occasional spasms of delight in God—but one unbroken rest in Him!

We would not now and then look through the windows of agate and behold the King in His beauty, but we would continue “looking unto Jesus.” We would have His praise continually in our mouths and His love burning like the quenchless altar fire of the temple forever within our hearts. This is the one thing necessary to promote and sustain a revival in a Church. If we have abounding love to Jesus we can prosper under disadvantages, but if we have it not we have lost the great secret of success. Love to Jesus teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight. It sets us side by side with the conquering Immanuel and makes us share His victories. It yokes us with the strong Son of God and so makes our infirmities to be but opportunities for the display of His power.

This love leads the Church to hold all things in joint possession with Christ. Observe that word, “at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits.” Love to Jesus constrains us to make over all that we hold to Him, while faith appropriates all that Jesus has to itself. Love will not stand to have divided properties. Such was the love of Jesus that He gave all that He had to us. He could not bear to have anything, not even His Throne itself, that should be altogether to Himself. He stripped Himself to His last rag to clothe us and then gave us His breath to be our life, His blood to be our health! And now, today, if we love Him as we should, we are saying—

*“If I might make some reserve,  
And duty did not call;  
I’d love my God with zeal so great,  
That I would give Him all.”*

I like to think, in Church matters especially, that we are all Christ’s— that if we have any ability, it is Christ’s ability—to be laid at His feet. If we have any substance, it is Christ’s money—to be used in spreading His Church. Our Sunday school is Christ’s nursery and the little ones are Christ’s lambs. Our work out of doors in preaching at the corners of the streets is Christ’s mission—it is His trumpet that is blown when the Gospel is preached! Every form of agency is not ours—it is Christ’s. Or if ours, it is only because it is His. Oh, to have more and more all things common with our Lord, and no longer to speak of mine or yours! Beloved, we are joint heirs with Him! All that we have is His and all that He has is ours! When the Church believes and acts upon this, the hour of her success is close at hand.

Consider once more that the love which is the great motive to Christian action is a love which looks to Jesus for united operation. It is, “Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field, let us get up early to the vineyard.” Oh, it is glorious when Christ comes with the preacher, not the servant alone, but the Master looking through His servant’s eyes, and speaking with His servant’s tongue and pleading with His servant’s heart! Oh, it is good teaching in your Sunday school when Jesus sits there among the boys and girls and speaks to their hearts! It is good going into lodginghouses or calling at the people’s doors to tell them of the Savior when Jesus knocks as well as you and the Crucified goes with you among the fallen, the infidel and the profane!

All is well when the Redeemer leads the way. Be not afraid, Beloved, for you go in good Company. Who among us will be afraid to do anything or go anywhere if Jesus says, “I will go with you”? Such was the prayer the spouse put up, and doubtless she was led to pray for that which God will grant. Let us pray with her as she prayed. Come, Savior, come up with us to whatever we attempt for You! If there are any Brethren here who are working away for You in dark places in London, dear Savior carry the lantern with them—be their Light! If they are digging for You and quarrying amidst granite rocks which refuse to yield to their strokes, come Almighty One and wield Your hammer and straightway the stones shall be broken!

Come with us, Lord! This is the fellowship we desire of You—the fellowship of labor and of soul-winning. We would not only sit at Your feet to learn, but we would take up our cross and follow You! We would go with You where ever You go! We would fight, or labor, or suffer, or live, or die at Your bidding! Be this the fellowship You shall bestow upon us!

II. Secondly, LOVE LEADS US TO GO AFIELD IN THE SERVICE OF JESUS. “Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field.” A loving Church spontaneously puts herself upon widened service. She has a large heart towards her Lord and longs to see Him reign over all mankind. She does not wait to hear, again and again, the Macedonian’s cry, “Come over and help us,” but she is prompt in mission enterprise. She does not tarry till she is forced by persecution to go abroad everywhere preaching the Word, but she sends forth her champions far and wide. As sure as ever she loves her Lord she asks herself the question, “What more can I do for Him?”

When she looks over the plot of ground which she has been tilling, she says, “It is not large enough! The harvest I can get out of this will not suffice me for my dear Lord.” And she says to Him, “Let me go to the regions beyond to break up the fallow ground and cause the wilderness to blossom.” Now, beloved members of this Church, do you not feel some such desire this morning? It is upon my heart that we should be undertaking larger things for Christ. Keep up the old agencies by all manner of means—quicken them, strengthen them! But does not love suggest that as increasing years add increasing indebtedness to Christ—as we are always receiving fresh mercies, so we should make new and larger returns to our best Friend?

If by us, as a Church, nothing new may be ventured, yet cannot each individual have his own plan and branch out afresh? Will not each man say in his heart, “What can I do for Jesus today, over and above what I should have done if things had gone on in the ordinary course?” Enquire of Him you love and if your hearts are with Him, it will not be long before you will discover what He would have you do. The spouse, when she said, “Let us go forth into the field,” knew that the proposal would please her Lord for the nature of Christ is a large and loving one, and, therefore, He would bless the far-off ones. His is no narrow heart! His thoughts of love are far reaching and when the Church says, “Let us go forth into the field,” truly her Lord is not backward to accept the invitation!

The spouse does not guess at this, nor does she merely infer it from her Bridegroom’s nature, but she has it in express command from His own lips, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” There stand the orders! And when our largest enterprises shall have been fulfilled we shall not have exceeded them. There is no exclusion put upon any tribe or clan. No classes are laid under ban, no individuals are exempted. Therefore, Church of Christ, by the love you bear to your crucified Master, by His wounds and death for you and by His living love to you, seek out the lost and gather together the outcasts! You fishers of men, launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught! You sowers of holy seed, go abroad, and sow the untrodden wastes! You consecrated builders, break away from old foundations and lay fresh groundwork for a larger temple for your God and King! Surely the Spirit of love in a Church will suggest this.

Note that the spouse is evidently prepared for any discomfort that may come as the result of her labor. She must leave the fair palaces of her royal husband and lodge in rustic cottages. Poor lodging there for Solomon’s fair spouse, but what does she care? Any roof which covers her from the evening dew and shields her from the drops of the night shall quite suffice her. Yes, if he is there, the tents of Kedar shall be fair as the curtains of Solomon, for his sake. Brothers and Sisters, if you serve the Lord Christ in breaking up fresh ground you may have to meet difficulties and make sacrifices, but they will be as nothing to you—you will welcome them for His dear sake!

Am I stirring no hearts now? Has my finger touched no responsive strings? I think I feel in my own soul that some of you are responding! Some Brother, some Sister is here—I know not to whom the prophetic word is coming—who is saying, “Lord, I am Your spouse. I will go forth with You into the field and I will lodge with You in the villages if there I may but glorify Your name.” Observe, too, the spouse is quite ready to continue in this uncomfortable service. She says, “I will lodge in the villages.” There will she abide awhile, not paying a flying visit, but stopping until the good work is done for which her Lord and she went forth.

Oh, get out, you Christians, into the distant fields of labor! Many of you men—how often have I said it!—sit here Sunday after Sunday and hear many sermons when I believe you would be better engaged if you were yourselves preaching and winning souls for the Redeemer! I have often been glad to miss some of my dearest Brothers from our assemblies. Your presence gives me great pleasure but when I know you have been away, seeking after Christ’s blood-bought souls, I have had pleasure in your absence! Go, and the Lord go with you! Go, more of you! Yes, I say, go, more of you! Your empty seats will be occupied by sinners whom God will save, while you, dear Brothers, if you are fighting for my Master somewhere else, will do my Master much more service than you could have done by listening to me!

We must not allow a single talent to lie idle. We must not waste an hour of these blessed Sabbaths. We must get us away among the ignorant ones and carry them the light! We must hunt for precious souls. For our Master’s sake and in His strength and company we must compass sea and land for His redeemed ones! Only, if any of you go, do not try to go alone. Stop until you breathe the prayer, “My Beloved, let us go.” You go in vain when you go not with the Master, but when you have secured His company, then go and welcome, for you “shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you.”

Observe how the spouse says, “There will I give you my loves.” As much as to say, if Jesus will thus go with us into active service, then will we reveal to Him the love of our hearts. I suppose there may have been times in the Church when a hermit’s life would suitably reveal the heart’s love to Jesus but I am certain it is not so now. If there are any here who love contemplation and would gladly spend their whole lives in quiet retirement, I am persuaded that such a course would be injurious to their generation and to the cause of the Truth of God. Of course there may be exceptions and if you have no gifts but such as could be serviceable to Christ in solitude, use them in solitude. But from the most of us the times demand activity. So dark is the world we cannot afford to lose a glow-worm’s spark. Men are perishing, can we let them perish? Would we suffer a soul to be lost even though it were given to us in exchange to enjoy the highest fellowship with Christ?

Behold this day the sheep have gone astray and the wolves are howling after them—not even to enjoy the great Shepherd’s company can we, the under-shepherds, dare to leave you wanderers to perish! The Church today has her vocation which is not so much to eat the fat and drink the sweet as to light her candle and sweep her house and seek diligently till she find her lost piece of money. Think not that active service prevents fellowship—no, it is but another form of sitting at His feet—another shape of fellowship quite as true and because more called for at this era—even more acceptable! I know I have had as great fellowship with Christ in His service as ever I have had in quiet contemplation.

When I have met with a poor soul who has rejected the Lord I have felt my heart breaking over him like the heart of Christ over obstinate Jerusalem. When I have seen the tears flowing from a penitent’s eyes who could not, as yet, find the Savior, I have felt sympathy with Jesus when He has looked upon the like and had compassion upon them! And when I have seen the glow of joy when the sun of Christ’s countenance has shone at last upon the troubled heart, I have entered into the joy of the Lord when He rejoices over one sinner that repents!

Laziness never yet had communion with Christ. Those who walk with Christ must walk swiftly. Jesus is no idler or loiterer—He is about His Father’s business—and you must march with quick step if you would keep pace with Him. As vinegar to the teeth and as smoke to the eyes, are sluggards to active persons. Those who have much to do have no fellowship with gossips who drop in to while away the hours with chat. Jesus has no fellowship with you who care not for souls that are perishing. He is incessantly active and so must you be if you would know His love. There is a fierce furnace heat beating upon everything today—men are toiling hard to hold their own—and Jesus must not be served by slothful hearts.

I am sure that I err not, from His mind, when I say to you, Beloved, if you would know the Beloved fully you must get up early and go afield with Him to work with Him. Your joy shall be in spending and being spent for Him.

III. Thirdly, LOVE LABORS, ALSO, AT HOME. Nearer the palace there were vineyards and the spouse said, “Let us get up early to the vineyards.” Note, then, that the Church does her work at home as well as abroad. When she loves her Lord she works with zeal and she gets up early. All men in Holy Scripture who loved God much rose early to worship Him. We never read of one saint engaged upon sacred service who rose late. Abraham rose early. David rose early. Job rose early and so did they all.

It is put here as the very type and symbol of an earnest, vigorous service of Christ. Dear Brothers and Sisters, there is such a thing, you know, as keeping the Sunday school going and keeping the Tract Society going, and keeping the Evangelists’ Society going—and yet nobody is up early, but, after a fashion, everybody is nodding. I know these warm Sunday mornings it is not a very difficult thing for some of you, if you try hard, to go to sleep during a sermon. Well, that is a visible slumber and is soon over, but there is an invisible sleep which will come on Sunday afternoon when you are teaching which is neither so soon discovered nor so easily cured. You are talking, talking, addressing your class, or speaking to your men and women, or whatever else may be your calling, and all the while your soul is nodding.

Anybody can wake you up with a push in your side if only your body is sleeping, but when the soul is slumbering it is not so easy. I fear greatly that a large proportion of Christian workers are usually asleep. What a difference there is between what a man teaches when he is asleep and what he teaches when he is awake! You can see it in a minute. I could not describe the difference but it is apparent in tone and manner and in every other way. The man may say and do the same thing, but still it is a difent thing. The children soon perceive it if it is in your class. Your hearers soon perceive it if it is in your pulpit.

Oh that God would wake up this Church! I do not believe that success so much depends upon what the Church does as upon how she does it. You may take your hammer and go tinkering about and not fasten a tintack, but if your arm has muscle in it you will soon be driving the nails home to the very head and clinching them. May the Lord’s love so come upon you all, my Brothers and Sisters, that what you do you may do with all your might, plunging your whole soul into His service and never sparing force in anything.

Notice God’s people, when they are awake, first look well to the Church. “Let us see if the vine flourishes.” The Church is Christ’s vine. Let us take stock of it. Beloved, we ought to be, each one of us, in a measure, pastors of the Church. In so large a Church as this the pastoral office cannot be vested in one, or even in twenty. Each must look after his brother and thus you must be pastors of one another. Watch over one another, pray for one another. How wonderful is the power of prayer! We do not know what blessings come from our prayers. Ten thousand darts might long ago have pierced the Lord’s elect were it not that the prayers of the saints are a shield over their heads, defending the sacramental host from harm.

Then the Church looks after the little ones. “Let us see if the vine flourishes, whether the tender grape appear.” No earnest Church forgets the children of her Sunday school and every other agency for the young will be sure to be well minded. An active Church seeks to bring Jesus among the children to see if the tender grapes appear. She pays her visits and performs her services, but always in His dear company. Helpers in the Sunday school and workers for Christ, I salute you! The Lord be with you. The Lord give you to see many tender grapes appearing and may this Church have joy of you as hundreds shall be converted to God by your instrumentality!

Then the Church also takes notice of all enquiries. “Let us see whether the pomegranates bud forth.” If a Church is alive there will always be many to observe where the first tear of repentance is glistening. In this congregation every Sunday, thank God, some persons are pricked in the heart. Watch them, Brothers and Sisters! Those of you who occupy your seats and do not go afield can do the cause great service by watching at home. There is no need to leave those seats in order to be useful. Around you there are unconverted persons. Each Sunday, morning and evening there come in here strangers and it may be the Lord will deal with them, only be on the alert. Speak with them and try, if you can, to use the shorthanded claymore, that if my longer bladed sword may not have reached them, you who are near at hand may send a deadly wound into the very heart of their sins.

O my Brethren, words fail me to set before you the ways in which you may show your love to Jesus in the Church itself, but I am certain that there is no need for me to speak. Love, herself, will teach you! Mothers somehow bring up their children, though there are no colleges for mothers! Love, with its instincts makes them wise and so will Christians with their love to Jesus become wise to serve. I do believe the less rule and human direction there is in the Church, the better. I do not need to say, “Brother, do this, and do that.” If you love Christ you will know what to do better than anybody else can tell you. You will find your own places—the Lord will lead you to them.

I might put a square man into a round hole if I had the placing of you, but love always puts the man into the right position. It tells him what suits his qualifications and it puts him to his work. And what is more, it keeps him to it! I shall measure your love to Jesus and measure my own, not by the way in which we can talk, or the way in which we can criticize other workers, but by the way in which we shall henceforth labor for the Lord!

IV. The last point is this, that LOVE IN A CHURCH BRINGS FORTH ALL ITS STORES FOR THE BELOVED. The Church of God has, in herself, through the rich love of her Husband, all manner of pleasant fruits. This Church is a large one, but the same Truth of God will hold good of the smallest Church. The Lord never leaves His Church without a suitable measure of gifts and Divine Grace. If our spiritual nostrils and eyes could act this morning, we should discern all the fruits of the Paradise of God in this Church and we should smell the sweet savor of all pleasant things— for some Brethren here have the apples of faith, others bear the delicious pomegranates of love—and others yield the charming clusters of hope and joy.

There are all manner of pleasant fruits among us. One has one, another has another and in some hearts there are many fruits united. A Church of God, if well cultivated, is rich in multiform displays of the fruit of the Spirit of God. Some of these fruits are new, and oh, how full of savor they are! Our new converts, thank God for them—what a freshness and power there is about their love! Certain moldy old professors have lost their taste all together—they have passed beyond the time in which they were sweet—they have gotten into the sleepy pear state and are getting rotten. They are chips in the porridge—the taste has gone out of them—if they ever had any. Alas, some have acquired a nauseous flavor, they are very naughty figs, indeed! The new fruits may be sharp and have more pungency than mellowness about them, but for all that they are choice to the Lord Jesus whose Soul desires the first ripe fruits. I thank God for youthful zeal! It might, with advantage, have a little more knowledge mingled with it, yet the zeal is good and the fervent is good. May we never be without new-born souls!

Then there are old fruits, the experience of Believers who are ripening for Heaven—the well-developed confidence which has been tried in a thousand battles and the faith which has braved a lifetime of difficulties. These old fruits—the deep love of the matron to Christ, the firm assurance of the veteran Believer—there is a mellowness about them which the Lord delights in! All these choice things ought to be laid up. Every good thing in a Church is meant to be stored up, not to be despised and forgotten! And the point of all is that all in the Church ought to be laid up for our Beloved. And now is the time when I earnestly ask, in the name of the Lord Jesus, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, yes, by each sacred token of the love you bear your Master, that each one of you should bring forth his pleasant fruits whether they are new or whether they are old.

We do not bring them forth to buy His love, we know better—for though we should give all the substance of our house for love it would be utterly worthless! We do not bring forth these fruits to secure His love for the future, either—we know His is an everlasting love that never can be taken away from us. We do not bring them forth because we need to commend ourselves. Ah, no, any beauty we have does not lie in the fruits of our storehouses but in what He has put upon us and in what His love sees in us. Neither do we bring forth these pleasant fruits to feed on them ourselves. Old experiences are moldy things. Old manna breeds worms and stinks. And as for any fruits which we have brought forth we take no satisfaction in them ourselves. All we have belongs to Him and to Him alone and at His feet we would lay it all!

I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, if you have any love, pour it out upon Him! If you have any faith exercise it for Him! If you have any courage be bold for Him! If you have any endurance endure hardness for Him! If you have any Grace, any virtue, any gift of His Spirit—anything that is lovely and of good repute—use it for Him! Now is the day, now is the hour, now His love puts in her claim and serves you with her sacred writs. By the espousals which you have not forgotten, by the Covenant which you have oft repeated with Him, by the seals of His table, by your burial with Him in Baptism in days gone by, I beseech you now bring forth all your pleasant things for your Beloved! None for anyone else, but all for Him!

I fear we often forget to do all for Him. I know if I preach a sermon and have any recollection that such-and-such a passage might please a learned or wealthy hearer, I have failed to please God. If I have any consideration in my mind as to whether I shall gain esteem for excellence of speech I am weak. But if I preach for Jesus only, then whoever finds fault it doesn’t matter because my work is sweet to Him. And if you pray in the Prayer Meeting, or teach in the class, or give your contribution to the Lord’s work—if you feel you have done it for HIM—oh, then you know you have done right because that is the point which sweetens all! I believe that many have stolen up to the offering-box and dropped in what they could give for the Lord’s sake, and none have known it, and therefore Christ has accepted it—while others may have given large sums ostentatiously because others of their standing were giving as much, and therefore they were not accepted.

I need your aid for the College and the Orphanage, but do not give for my sake, but for my Lord’s sake! Put what you give into the pierced hands—make that your treasury! Jesus is your Master! No one else has bought you! No one else has died for you! No one else will receive you until His fond embrace at the last! No one else is preparing Heaven for you! No one else can say, “Well done good and faithful servant.” Serve Him, then, with both your hands, with all your heart, with every drop of blood in your veins and every breath in your lungs! Give Him yourself, your whole self, from the soles of your feet to the crown of your head—and when you have done that, if He spares you for another half century you will find that you have spent the best life for yourself—though that must not enter into your thoughts.

I have thus spoken to my own dear Friends and Brothers and Sisters in Christ, but let me remind those who are not in Christ that nothing of this has anything to do with them. I don’t bid you do anything for Christ. I cannot. Christ does not need His enemies to work in His vineyard. I do not ask you either to give to Jesus or to work for Him! Why should you? Till you love Him your services would be a mockery of Him. I hold up no standard to enlist under it men whose hearts are disloyal toward our Captain. Ah, no! And if your service is rejected, and you feel grieved at heart that it is so, let me whisper this word in your ear—your heart may yet be made right.

You may yet come and serve Him. Here is His message to you—“Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson they shall be as wool.” “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” There is the point for you, good Friend. You must begin with being, yourself, saved—and then when you are saved you can serve Christ. Christ will have no man work for Him with the view of saving himself—you must first be saved, and then you have not your own salvation to look to! When you have left that with Christ, you can then labor for Him.

A rich English merchant was requested by Queen Elizabeth to take up certain affairs of hers. “Your Majesty,” said he, “I am willing enough, but if I do your bidding my business will be ruined.” “Sir,” said the Queen, “You attend to my business, and I will attend to yours.” Now, Sirs, give the business of your soul’s salvation to Christ! Let Him save you and when that is done you can make it your business to serve Him and He will be glad of such a servant. The Lord bless you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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GOOD WORKS IN GOOD COMPANY  
NO. 605

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 18, 1864, BY C, H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Come, my Beloved, let us go forth to the field. Let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards. Let us see if the vine has budded, whether the grape blossoms are open and the pomegranates are in bloom. There will I give You my love. The mandrakes give off a fragrance, and at our gates are pleasant fruits, all manner new and old, which I have laid up for You, O my Beloved.” Song of Solomon 7:11-13.**

THE daughters of Jerusalem had been praising the Church as the fairest among women. They spoke of her with admiring appreciation, extolling her from head to foot. She wisely perceived that it was not easy to bear praise, and therefore she turned aside from the virgins to her Lord, making her boast not of her own loveliness, but of her being affianced to her beloved—“I am my Beloved’s and His desire is toward me.”

Solomon has said, in his Book of Proverbs, “As the fining pot for silver and the furnace for gold so is a man to his praise,” meaning to teach us that praise is a serious ordeal. Very many men can bear censure and abuse, for their spirit rises so superior to it all that they are even profited thereby. But to be flattered, or even duly honored, is not so easy a thing to endure. The sun’s warm beams made the traveler unbind his coat when the wind made him wrap it the more closely about him—the warmth of praise may make us relax our integrity—unless we are very watchful.

How many have been foolish enough, when standing upon a pinnacle, to look down and admire their own elevation and then their brain has reeled and they have fallen to their own shameful ruin? If we must at any time listen to the praises of our virtues. If we have served God so that the Church recognizes and rewards our usefulness, it is well for us to listen just as long as we are obliged to do, but no longer. And then let us turn aside at once to something more practical and more healthful to our own spirits.

The spouse seems abruptly to break off from listening to the song of the virgins and turns to her own husband-Lord, communion with whom is ever blessed and ever profitable. She says to Him, “Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field.” To lodge in communion with Christ is a certain cure for every ill. Whether it is the bitterness of woe, or the overindulgence of earthly delight, close fellowship with the Lord Jesus will take the gall from the one and the satiety from the other. Live near to Jesus, Christian, and it is matter of secondary importance whether you live on the mountain of honor or in the valley of humiliation.  
Live near to Jesus and the glowing coals of the furnace cannot consume you, nor the chill blasts of wintry affliction destroy you. Living near to Jesus you are covered with the wings of God and underneath you are the everlasting arms. If you read the three verses before us with attention, you will see that the Church all through anxiously desires fellowship with her Lord. It is, “Come with me,” “let us.” She will do nothing except as she is near to her beloved and in the enjoyment of His company.

I think she desires three things in her words. First, she desires to practice self-examination—she would go and see whether the vine flourishes and whether the tender grape blossoms appear. But it is self-examination with Him. She desires next to go into active service—it is to this end that she would lodge in the villages and go among the tender plants, that she may labor there, but it is with Him—“Let us go!” “Come with me!” In the third place, she has a store of fruits laid up for Him. Some things done and some things doing—things old and new—but they are all for Him and she will not mention them except for Him, much less bring them out for them to be enjoyed by a rival. “They are laid up for You, O my Beloved.”

Let us try to make a personal matter of the text, this morning, and may God hear the desire of our hearts that we may have true fellowship with His own dear Son.

I. First, then, IS THE MATTER OF SELF-EXAMINATION. This is a most desirable and important business, but every Believer should desire to have communion with Christ while he is attending to it. Self-examination is of the utmost importance. No trader who would wish to succeed would neglect to keep his books. No farmer who wishes to prosper would be careless as to the state of his fields. No flock-master who would see his herds abundantly increase would leave his servants to care for them and fail to tend them with a watchful eye. If you would have your business prosper, see to it carefully yourself.

In soul-business it is of no use taking anything for granted where there are so many temptations to self-deception in our own hearts—where so many around us are deceived and are willing to help us to be deceived, too. And where Satan sedulously and craftily seeks to cry to us, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace—it is of the first and last importance that we should search ourselves whether we are in the faith and whether, being in the faith, our graces are growing, our faith increasing, and our love deepening.

Well does the spouse suggest that she should see whether the vine flourishes, whether the tender grape blossoms have appeared and the pomegranates budded forth—our spiritual vineyard needs perpetual watchfulness. While you are attending to this important business, see to it at the same time that you keep up your communion with Christ, for you will never know so well the importance of self-examination as when you see Him! Mark Him there—fastened to the accursed tree—wearing the crown of thorns all set with ruby drops of His own blood! Look at His griefs—if repenting tears do not blind you! Behold His awful agonies! Gaze into that visage more marred than that of any man and stay awhile and listen to the heart-rending shriek, “Eloi! Eloi! Lama Sabachthani?” And did Christ suffer all this that souls might be saved?

Then surely, my Soul, it should be your chief business to see that you have an interest in Him. What? Shall I miss that which is purchased with such a price? When such a crimson stream from Christ’s own heart flows to cleanse away sin, shall I think it a matter of no account whether I am cleansed or not? When that head which once was reverenced by angels, is now crowned with the thorns of mockery and cruelty, shall I not use all the thoughts of my head and brain to find out whether I am one with Christ, and a partaker of His passion? That cannot be a little heritage which Christ has purchased with such agonies—let me fear lest I should lose it!

That cannot be a slight evil which cost my Savior such griefs—let me search myself to see whether I am delivered from it. I am sure, Beloved, you cannot have a better candle to look into the secret recesses of your soul than a candle lit at the fire of Jesus’ love. Know His love for you and all His griefs on your behalf and you will charge your own heart after this fashion—“See to it that you make sure work as to your interest in Jesus— that you are really one with Him. Be sure that your faith in Him is genuine and that you shall be found in Him in peace at the day of His appearing.”

Self-examination, however, is very laborious work—the text hints at it. It does not say, “Let us go,” but “Let us get up.” Self-examination is ever up-hill work. It is by no means a pleasant task. It is one from which flesh recoils, for the flesh cries, “Let well enough alone! You are easy and comfortable! You have a hope which affords you much solace—do not dig too deep—the house stands well enough just as it is! Be not too anxious about the foundation—rest assured that it is all right—you would not have all these joys and present comforts if you had built upon sand.”

We need to school ourselves to perform a duty so irksome. But, Beloved, if we attempt to examine this, feeling that Christ is with us and that we are having communion with Him, we shall forget all the labor of the deed. There I see Him in the garden, sweating great drops of blood in prayer! Can I view Him prostrate on that cold winter’s night (when the ground was hard with frost), so burning with His soul’s travail that huge clots of blood-red gore are falling upon the frozen earth? And shall I think any toil too great to make sure of my interest in Him?

Does He, when the cup is put to Him, say, “Not as I will, but as You will,” and drink it up with resignation? And shall the far less bitter cup of self-examination, which is so much for my good, be refused by me? No, Savior of the world, I have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin. But if it must be, if all my powers and members must be made to bleed, if my poor heart must be crushed as in a mortar, then let it be so that I may but be found one with You, washed in Your blood and covered with Your righteousness! Keep close to the Savior and the difficulties of selfexamination will vanish and the labor will become light.

Self-examination should always be very earnest work. The text says,

“Let us get up early.” It has been well observed that all men in Scripture who have done earnest work rose up early to do it. The dew of the morning, before the smoke and dust of the world’s business have tainted the atmosphere, is a choice and special season for all holy work. In this passage getting up early signifies that the Church felt she must give her best

hour to this necessary work. And as the work might be long, she gets up early that she may have a long day before her—that before the sun goes down she may have examined every vine and looked to every pomegranate and examined all the mandrakes of the garden.

So must we set to work earnestly about self-examination. This is not child’s play. If you would find out the trickery of your deceitful heart you must be very careful and watchful. If you would know on what foundation your hope is built, it is a laborer’s work to dig out the rubbish and to find out where the foundation is laid. He who has to prove the title-deeds of his estate does not always find it an easy business—there are many manuscripts through which he must wade and numerous title-deeds to be read, verified and collated before the case will be clear.

And so it must be with you. The great matter, “Do I believe in Jesus,” needs no hours of deliberation, for if I do not, I will now begin again. But to know the growing state of one’s graces is not so easy. After all, you may be deceived. Therefore come to it with a soul all glowing with zeal, saying, in earnest prayer, “Search me, O God and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there are any wicked ways in me and lead me in the way everlasting.” Now I think there is nothing which can make you do this earnest work so well as to say to your Master and your Lord, “Lord, come with me.” “While we examine ourselves, abide with us to help us in the work.”

I cannot be careless when I hear Christ say, “My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me.” I cannot be careless in my own Christian career when I see Him straining every nerve that He may run the race and win the crown for me! When I see Him sitting yonder, above all principalities and powers, pleading for my soul with never-ceasing intercession, I cannot be dull and sluggish! Wake up, you drowsy powers! Be stirred up, you sleeping passions, to examine yourselves anxiously and carefully, since Christ, for Zion’s sake does not hold His peace and for Jerusalem’s sake does not rest!

And yet again, self-examination, it seems to me (I may be wrong), is not the simple work that some people think, but is beset with difficulties. I do believe that the most of self-examinations go on a wrong principle. You take Moses with you when you examine yourself and consequently you fall into despair. He who looks at his own character and position from a legal point of view will not only despair when he comes to the end of his reckoning, but he will be a wise man if he despairs not at the beginning! If we are to be judged on the footing of the Law, there shall no flesh living be justified. The very brightest members of Christ’s family—those who wear the most of the Savior’s image and honor Him best among men—may well shrink from the place where even Moses did “exceedingly fear and quake.”

O Brothers and Sisters, remember to take Jesus with you and not Moses, lest you dishonor the Grace of God and harbor suspicion against the faithfulness of God when you ought rather to have suspected yourself! If I take Jesus with me, see on what different principles the examination is carried on! I do not ask, “Am I perfect?” That question Moses would suggest—“Am I perfect in myself?” But I ask, “Am I perfect in Christ Jesus?” That is a very different matter. I do not put it thus, “Am I without sin, naturally?” but thus—“Have I been washed in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness?”

It is not, “Am I in myself well-pleasing to God?” but it is, “Am I accepted in the Beloved?” The Christian man sometimes looks at his evidences and grows ashamed of them and alarmed concerning his own salvation. “Why,” says he, “my faith has unbelief in it! It is not able to save me!” Suppose he had looked at the Object of his faith instead of his faith? Then he would have said, “There is no failure in Him and therefore I am safe!” He looks at his hope—“Why,” he says, “my very hope is marred and dimmed by an anxious carefulness about present things! How can I be accepted?” Yes, but if he had looked at the ground of his hope he would have seen that the promises of God stand sure and that whatever our hope may be, that promise never fails!

Then he looks at his love—“Oh,” he says, “surely I am condemned, for my love is so cold!” But if he had looked at Christ’s love, he would have said “No, I shall never be condemned—for many waters cannot quench His love—neither can the floods drown it and, loving me as He does, He will never condemn me, nor cast me away.” I do not want you to look at Christ so as to think less of your sin, but to think more of it! You can never see sin to be so black as when you see the suffering which Christ endured on its behalf—and I do desire, dear Friends, that you never look at sin apart from the Savior. If you gaze at the disease and forget the remedy, you will be driven to despair. If you look at the gathering gangrene and forget the all-gracious Surgeon who is able to remove it, you may well lie down and die!

If you see your own emptiness and poverty and forget His fullness, you will never glorify His name. If you are lost in a sense of your own corruptions and forget the eternal glory which belongs to you in Christ, so that you are even now raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him—I say, if you forget this Grace-given brightness and only remember your native blackness—your spirit will turn aside from the path of faith and you will hang your harp upon the willows and fail to glorify your God.

Examine yourselves, but let it be in the light of Calvary—not by the blazing fires of Sinai’s lightning, but by the milder radiance of the Savior’s griefs. Am I resting upon You, Son of God? Are Your wounds my hiding place? Have Your nails nailed me to Your Cross? Has Your spear pierced my heart and broken it with grief for sin? And am I now crucified with You to the world, buried with You to the power of sin, risen with You to newness of life and, like Yourself, waiting for the day of manifestation when sin, death and Hell shall be trod under foot and You shall be All in All? Come, let us look to the vines and pomegranates, but let us make sure that our Crucified Lord accompanies us! Otherwise we shall do the work

amiss.

It appears, from the words of the spouse, that the work of selfexamination should be carried on in detail, if it is to be of real service. It is written, “Let us see if the vine has budded, whether the grape blossoms are opened and the pomegranates are in bloom.” We must not take a general view of the garden, but particularize and give special attention to each point. If a candle is guarded on all sides, if there is but one place left open, the wind will find it out and blow out the light. So in selfexamination, if we find ourselves right in many points, it is not enough— we must seek to be right in all points.

The main thing is your faith. Is that faith simple? Does it depend upon Jesus only? Is it real? Is it an active, living faith? Does it work by love? Does it purify the soul? When you have examined faith, you may possibly make a mistake. Therefore go on to see what your love is. Do you love the Savior? Can you truly say, “The very thought of You fills my breast with rapture”? Can you hear the music of His name without feeling your blood leap in your veins? Oh, if you can, I think, dear Friend, you have reason for grave questioning. Try your active graces—go from one to the other and search them all. The worm may be at the root just in that part of the soil where you have not upturned the sod.

One leak may sink a ship, therefore search well the vessel before you launch her upon the stormy deep. It is little by little that backsliders fall— even Judas does not betray his Master with a kiss at first. Men are schooled in the downward road. Let us be particularly anxious, therefore, that we do not fall little by little. And let us watch that we do not suffer small sins to get force and head, till, like little sparks, they have kindled a great fire!

If you wish to be exact in prying into every part and corner you cannot do better than take Jesus with you. Tempted in all points like we are, He will know all the points in which we are tempted. And, while we are earnestly examining, His gracious finger will point out the spots where our weakness may lie and we shall thus fulfill the prayer we have often prayed—“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there are any wicked ways in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”

When boys are at school and have to learn to write, every schoolmaster knows that at the first line they keep their eye upon the copy at the top. The next line they look at their own writing and their penmanship is not quite so good. And the next line they probably look at the last they have written and so they write worse and worse as they reach the bottom of the page because they have been imitating themselves and copying their own writing! It is well for the Christian if he does not fall into this mistake. He must keep his eyes upon his great Exemplar, not upon himself! He will be far more likely to see his own faults by looking to Christ than by looking at any of his own attainments.

What a delightfully white thing this snow is! When it has newly fallen, take the whitest linen you may have ever seen and put it down—you will find it looks positively yellow by the side of it. Take the fairest sheet of paper that ever came from the mill and compare it. It does not look white at all. There is no whiteness, that I know of, which can at all emulate the heavenly whiteness of snow. So, if I put my character side by side with another man’s, I may say of it, “It will bear comparison,” but if I put it by the side of Christ’s perfections—since His whole life is like the pure and spotless snow—I discover at once my own failures and spots.

Oh, to have our great Pattern ever before our eyes! Jesus should not be a Friend who calls upon us now and then, but one with whom we walk forevermore. You have a difficult road to travel—see, O traveler to Heaven, that you go not without your Guide. You have to pass through the fiery furnace—enter it not, unless like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, there is a fourth with you like unto the Son of Man! You have to storm the Jericho of your own deceptions—attempt not the scaling until, like Joshua, you have seen the Captain of the Lord’s host with his sword drawn in his hand.

You have to meet the Esau of your many temptations—meet him not until at Jabbok’s brook you have laid hold of the angel and wrestled with him and prevailed. In every case, in every condition, you need Jesus! But most of all, when you come to deal with your own heart’s eternal interests, O, keep close to Him! Lean your head upon His bosom! Ask to be refreshed with the spiced wine of His pomegranates and then there shall be no fear but that you shall be found of Him at the last, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing. Seeing you have lived with Him and lived in Him here, you shall live with Him forever.

II. THE CHURCH WAS ABOUT TO ENGAGE IN EARNEST LABOR and desires her Lord’s company. It is the business of God’s people to be trimmers of God’s vines. Like our first parents, we are put into the garden of the Lord for usefulness. Observe that the Church, when she is in her right mind, in all her many labors desires to retain and cheerfully to enjoy communion with Christ. Some persons imagine that one cannot serve Christ actively and yet have fellowship with Him. I think they are very much mistaken.

I confess it is very easy to get into Martha’s position and to be cumbered with much serving. You may have to preach here and there so many times a week—to attend committees, to visit sick people and to do so many other things that you may really, unless you are careful—fritter away your own inward life in outward exercises. You may have to complain with the spouse, “They made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.” I do not think, however, that there is any reason why this should be the case except through our own folly. Certain is it that a person may do nothing at all and yet grow quite as lifeless in spiritual things as those who are most busy.

Mary was not praised for sitting still. No, but for sitting still at Jesus’ feet! And so Christians are not to be praised if they neglect duties merely because they live in retirement and keep much at home—it is not sitting, I say, but sitting at Jesus’ feet. Had Martha been sitting still, or had Mary been sitting anywhere else, I doubt not that the Master would have given a word of rebuke! He would never have said that mere sitting still was

choosing the good part. Indeed, I know some of you who are none the better for doing nothing, but a great deal the worse! Those who do nothing grow sour and are always willing to find fault with the way in which others serve Christ.

Do not think, therefore, that mere activity is, in itself, an evil—I believe it is a blessing. Taking a survey of Christ’s Church you will find that those who have most fellowship with Christ are not the persons who are recluses or hermits—who have much time to spend with themselves—but they are the useful indefatigable laborers who are toiling for Jesus and who in their toil have Him side by side with them. They are workers together with God. Let me, then, try to press this lesson upon you—that when we as a Church and each of us as individuals have anything to do for Christ—we must do it in communion with Him.

We come up to His House and why do we come? It is said that among Church people the prayers are the main thing and among Dissenters the sermon. I believe that in both cases this would be a fault. Praying should not eclipse preaching! To preach or to listen to preaching is as true an act of worship as to pray. We never worship God better than when we hear His Word, reverently receive it and are moved thereby to love and gratitude. To hear preaching is, in a sense, praying, since the true effect of all preaching that is worth listening to draws us into a spirit of devotion and makes us ready for prayer and every other form of worship.

But why do we come here? I am afraid there are some who come merely because it is the time to come—because the hour of worship has come round. And others come only because a certain preacher happens to stand upon the platform. Ah, this is not how God’s own beloved ones come up to His House! They desire to meet with Him. Their prayer, as they tread the hallowed courts of God’s House will be, “My heart and my flesh cries out for the living God.” There is no hymn sung so well as when we really do praise Jesus in it. No prayer is so true as that prayer which really comes to the Mercy Seat and spreads itself before the All-Seeing God. There is no preaching like that which is full of Christ, which gives forth a savor of His good ointments.

Worship is not to be commended because of the glorious swell of a Gregorian chant, or because of the equally majestic volume of sound which this great assembly may send forth from that sweet instrument, the human voice. A service is not to be commended because of the eloquence of the preacher or because of the display of learning which he is able to make in expounding his discourse. No, to the Christian it is, “Was the Master there?” The question on Sunday morning is, “What do you think, will He come up to the feast?” Coming to the Lord’s Table, the child of God’s business is not so much with the bread and the wine, as with His blood and with His flesh. May I feed on Him? May I see Him? And if I get to Him, then it is well with me.

If I have then to serve God in the public engagements of His House, let me say, “Come, my Beloved, let us get up to the vineyards.” You have other service to do, dear Friends. This afternoon many of you will be occupied with your Sunday school classes. There will be a knot of lads or girls around you. You will, perhaps, be conducting classes of hundreds of young men and young women. This evening, again, many will be occupied in preaching, or you will be engaged at home with your own children. Oh, how blessed it is to go to the classes, or into the pulpit, having the Master with you! It sometimes happens to the preacher that he is like the butcher at the block—he has a cleaver in his hand and cuts off large pieces of meat as food for those present—but he himself gets none.

But it is otherwise with him when he has his Master with him! Then, whether the rest of the assembly are fed or not, certainly he himself is satisfied as with marrow and with fatness. After what a blessed sort the teacher can teach when the love of God is shed abroad in his heart! You will bear with the rudeness of those boys—you will put up with the inattention of those girls! You will not be angry at the folly of that youth—you will not forget to be in earnest with that poor wanderer—when Jesus Christ stands by your side!

A vision of the Crucified, my Brethren, is that which we want! When we are toiling in His harvest field and sit down to wipe the sweat from our brow, we grow very weary. The harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few—we feel that the edge of our sickle is growing very, very blunt and we wish we could lie down under the spreading tree from the heat of the sun and toil no longer. But just then we see the Crucified One coming forward with His mighty sickle and we mark the drops of blood streaming from His brow and see the nail prints in the hands with which He grasps the sickle.

We see how He toils and how He labors! With what an awful love He sacrifices Himself—He has stripped off His very garments—and in all the nakedness of self-denial He gives Himself up that He may save others while Himself He cannot save. Then we pluck up our hearts again and take our sickle in the hands which once did hang down, saying, “Jesus, I will never be weary, for You were not weary. And when I shall be faint awhile, I will see You, whose meat and drink it was to do Your Father’s will and I will make it my meat and my drink to serve You.” Surely you cannot do God’s work so well as when you have Jesus Christ with you!

But it is possible, dear Friends, that some of you may be engaged in the service of winning for God some one soul. I know those who have one soul laid upon their heart. Perhaps it is the most solemn work under Heaven to have to pray for one soul. I have so many to look after that I cannot but feel I may rightly excuse myself from any very sedulous attention to one. But there are some of you who have only one person to look after—one child, one friend, one soul. You tried to talk to that one person the other day—you burst into tears when you heard the answer you received. You have been praying for months, but instead of seeing any answer to your prayer the person prayed for is growing worse! You are sure that he is never more vile than when you are most earnest.

Friend, I should not wonder if Satan should whisper to you, “Give it up!” But let me, I pray you, urge you never to do so. And if you want something that will make you never to give up praying for that soul, see yonder, the eternal Son of God! He came into this world to save such a sinner as you yourself are! And you can never think you are doing anything too hard when trying to save your fellow man from destruction. O for a vision of the Savior’s face covered with the spittle! See Him marred and bruised by the rough Roman soldiers! Behold Him as His back smarts beneath the thongs of the cruel whips! See Him as Pilate brings Him forth and cries, “Ecce homo.”

Mark Him as He treads the Via Dolorosa! See Him while they lift Him up on high and dislocate His bones! Why, what is all that you can endure compared with this? When your soul swells with fearful grief you do not feel such grief as this! You do but sip at the cup which the Savior drained to the dregs! You do but feel a scratch from those nails which went right through His hands! You do not have but for a moment a flesh wound from that spear which pierced His heart! Courage, solitary laborer—let Christ’s griefs solace you. Come with me, my Beloved! Come with me, my Lord! And my toil shall be easy.

There are some Christians engaged in works of heroism, works of peculiar daring for Christ. I should not like to be misunderstood, but I really think that amid the gross darkness of the Popish Church there have been some who have caught the true idea of Christian life far better than the most of us. Let me tell you what I mean. There have been some who have denied themselves all the comforts of life and have lived in suffering and poverty out of love to Jesus and from a sincere desire to benefit their fellow men.

There have been produced in that Church men whose passionate love no labor or persecution could extinguish. They have fed the poor and nourished the sick. And women who have gone into the hospitals among diseases the most contagious and have risked life and lost life for the sake of nursing the sick. There are those living at this present moment upon the tops of such mountain passes as St. Bernard and the Simplon, spending the prime of their life in seclusion in inhospitable frost—where somebody must live—but where nobody ever would live if it were not for the sake of religion. They are there simply that they may serve the poor weary traveler when he comes wading through the snow, or is likely to be lost in a snow storm.

No man shall take precedence of me in my abhorrence of the thrice accursed doctrines of the harlot of Rome! But from our enemies it is right to learn—and I do learn and would teach this—that self-denial and consecration are among the highest of the Christian virtues. I would to God that our people had the spirit of self-consecration in proportion to the light which they enjoy. I would to God we had true Sisters of Mercy who devoted themselves to going from house to house among the sick. We have some—but we need more—more who would be hospital nurses and who would count it but a small sacrifice even if they gave up themselves for the good of others.

Missionaries we need who will face the malaria and deadly fever—our societies cry out for such—but very few are coming forward. We need men of substance who would take their substance and go out with it to a foreign land to evangelize. We need men who having prospered in business who would now count it an honor to spend the rest of their days in some new and special work of charity or piety. Oh, when I see the Savior in all His agonies doing so much for us I cannot but think that we as a Christian people do next to nothing for Him!

There are no stakes of Smithfield now, thank God. There are no dungeons of the Lollard’s Tower. No crowns of martyrdom for suffering brows—but there are still special spheres of labor where we could make the name of Christ illustrious. Let me hold up for your imitation some in modern times, who by works of faith and labors of love, have made us feel that the old spirit of Christianity is not dead. Our beloved friend, Mr. George Muller, of Bristol, for instance. There burns a holy devotedness, an intensity of faith, a fervor of perseverance which I would to God we all possessed! May we have more of this and so by keeping close to Jesus we shall produce better fruits, richer clusters and more luscious grapes than are commonly produced upon those vines which are in a less happy part of the vineyard.

III. And now let me close by remaking that according to the text, THE CHURCH DESIRES TO GIVE TO CHRIST ALL THAT SHE PRODUCES. She has “all manner of pleasant fruits,” both, “new and old,” and they are laid up for her Beloved. We have some new fruits. This morning I hope we feel new life, new joy, new gratitude—we wish to make new resolves and carry them out by new labors. Our heart goes up in new prayers and our soul is pledging herself to new efforts.

But we have some old things, too. There is our first love—a choice fruit that is! And Christ delights in it. There is our first faith—that simple faith by which, having nothing, we became possessors of all things! There is our joy when first we knew the Lord—let us revive it. How happy we were then, when the candle of the Lord shone round about us! Old things? Why we have the old remembrance of the promises. How faithful has God been! In that sickness of ours, how softly did He make our bed! In those deep waters, how placidly did He buoy us up! In that flaming furnace, how graciously did He deliver us so that not even the smell of fire passed upon us. Old fruits, indeed! We have many of them, for His mercies have been more than the hairs of our head.

Old sins we must regret, but then we have had repentances, which He has given us, by which we have wept our way to the Cross and learned the merit of His blood. We have fruits, this morning, both new and old. But here is the point—they are all to be for Christ. Do you not, after doing good service, detect yourself whispering, “I have done that well”? You intended that nobody should know it. You tried to do it as a secret act of devotion. You were half inclined to tell somebody when it was done, and though it came out, you say it was by accident. But you had a finger in that accident and you did not altogether regret that you had some of the honor of it.

Do you not find when you are really serving your Master that if somebody does not pat you on the back, you grow cold? I know some Sunday school teachers, who, if they are looked after and encouraged, can do well, but who, if they have no encouragement, could not keep on in their work.

Oh, it is so easy for us to preach when there are many souls being fed under us and the Master honors us in the eyes of men! Would it be quite as easy to serve Him without honor? I have known Brethren who have met with a little bad feeling among their people. Perhaps they have not always been able to keep their temper—and they have run away from their charge—left the sheep in the wilderness because in their inmost heart they were serving themselves, at least to a degree.

Truly, Beloved, those are the best and most acceptable services in which Christ is the solitary aim of the soul—and His Glory without any mixture whatever is the end of all our efforts. Let your many fruits be laid up only for your Beloved—bring them forth when He is with you—bless His name for them. Put jewels into His crown, but never say, “Unto me be honor and unto my name be praise,” but, “Sing unto Jesus, and to Jesus only be Glory while Heaven endures.” O that strangers to Jesus would believe our testimony concerning Him!

We are asked, sometimes for proofs of our religion. There is one proof which we defy anyone to contradict and this is the intense joy which the love of Christ gives to us. We are not fools, and I may add we are not dishonest—our witness is that there is a joy in love to Christ and in the enjoyment of His Presence! A joy which could not possibly have come to us from any but a Divine source!

We do not speak because we have not tried other joys—some of us have had our fill of them. We can say of some that their sweet is soon lost in bitterness. Of others that they stale upon our taste. But communion with Christ has no after-taste in it. It never grows stale. It is a sun without spots! It is a moon which never wanes! It is an ocean which never ebbs—it is a river which flows on forever—it is all Heaven and all bliss! Oh, if you did but know it you would never doubt again—your soul would rest implicitly upon Christ, whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin! And, remember, if you rest upon Him and trust Him, you are saved and shall be with Him, where He is, to behold His Glory forevermore! May God bless these words for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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÷Son 8.12

CHRIST’S LOVE FOR HIS VINEYARD  
NO. 2785

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JUNE 29, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A THURSDAY EVENING, DURING THE SUMMER OF 1860.

**“My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me: you, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep  
the fruit thereof two hundred.”  
Song of Solomon 8:12.**

You are aware that these Canticles are responsive songs—that one sentence is uttered by Solomon and the next by Solyma, his spouse. We believe that in this “Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s,” we also hear Christ speaking to His Church, His bride, and the Church responding to His words of love in tones which His love has suggested to her. The fact that it is a responsive song sometimes renders it the more difficult to understand because it is not easy, in every case, to discover whether it is Solomon or Solyma—Christ or His Church—who is speaking. The first sentence in our text is just of that character. It may be Christ who says, “My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me.” Or it may be His Church, who is saying, “My vineyard, which is mine, is before me.” With regard to the latter part of the verse, we have no difficulty, for we can see, upon the very face of it, that it is addressed by the spouse, the bride, to her Divine Bridegroom, to whom she says “You, O Solomon, must have a thousand.”

I. Let us look at the first sentence: “My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me.” We have no difficulty in understanding that this vineyard is Christ’s Church. She is not compared to a grove of trees—even of fruitbearing trees—because there are many trees which are valuable, not only for their fruit, but also for their timber. And should they bring forth no fruit, they would still be of some value. Not so is it with the members of Christ’s Church—they are like the vine, for the vine, if it brings forth no fruit, is fit for nothing, it cumbers the ground. The Lord said to the Prophet Ezekiel, “What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel: the fire devours both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work?” No, if it is fruitless, it is useless. It must bear fruit, or it is of no value whatever. Hence the Church is always compared to a vineyard because if she does not bring forth fruit to the Lord Jesus Christ, she is less useful even than an ordinary mercantile and commercial community. That mercantile community, or corporate body instituted for wise purposes, may further some useful design, but the Church is of no use whatever unless she brings forth the fruits of holiness and of gratitude to her Lord, her Divine Vinedresser. Better that she be not called a church at all than that she should pretend to be the Church of Christ and yet bring forth no fruit to His praise.

So we have no difficulty in understanding that the vineyard mentioned in the text is Christ’s Church because it is so significantly a symbol of the body of Believers banded together in love to their Savior—and known by the name of “the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.” We must, therefore, consider the opening sentence of our text as being, first, THE WORDS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. And here you see at once two things—first, that Christ claims a special property in His Church and, secondly, that He has special regard and care for her—“My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me.”

The Master here, then, claims a special property in His Church. Twice does He mention that claim—“My vineyard, which is Mine,” as if He meant to assert His rights and to maintain them against all comers, being ready to defend them in Heaven’s High Court of Chancery, or before all the hosts of His enemies who might seek to snatch His inheritance from Him. “Whatever is not Mine,” says the Divine Lover, “My Church is. She is so Mine that if I gave up Lebanon, if I should renounce Bashan and give up all the rest of My possessions, I must retain Zion, My vineyard, My best-beloved.” We know that the Church is Christ’s by special bonds—not simply by creation. It is true that the Lord Jesus has created all His people, but then He does not claim them merely upon that ground—because all men are His by creation. No, the very devils in Hell are His in that sense and, therefore, He does not claim His Church simply by the right of being her Creator. Nor does He claim her merely by the prerogatives of Providence, for, in that sense, the cattle on a thousand hills are His and the lions of the forest and the young ravens which cry to Him, for He supplies their needs. All things are His by Providence, from the stars of Heaven down to the gnat in the summer’s air, or the worm that conceals itself in the grass at eventide. But our Lord Jesus claims His Church by a far higher title than that of creation or Providence. Nor is the Church His merely by right of conquest. It is true that He has fought for His people and that they may be considered as the spoils that He has taken in war. He has rescued His people from the hand of him that was stronger than they—all of them, as He shall take them with Him into Heaven, may be looked upon as signs and wonders, trophies of what His strong arm has done in delivering them from their mighty and malignant foes. But, Beloved, Christ claims His Church by a better title even than this!

First, He claims the Church as His own by His Father’s gift. You know that the Church is the property of all the three Persons of the holy and blessed Trinity. She is the Father’s property by election. She is the Son’s property by donation, passing from the hand of the Father to that of the Mediator. And, then, the Church is the Spirit’s by His indwelling and inhabitation—so that all three of the Divine Persons have a right to the Church for some special office which they exercise towards her. So Christ claims His Church as His Father’s gift, a love-token, a reward, a sign of the Father’s favor and regard towards Him. He looks on His people as being dear, not only for their own sakes, but for the sake of Him who gave them to His Son, to be His forever and ever. They are His, then, by donation and, as such, since the Father gave them to Him, they are very, very precious in His sight!

Next, Christ’s Church is His by purchase. There are some who say that all men are Christ’s by purchase. But, Beloved, you and I do not believe in a sham redemption which does not redeem! We do not believe in a universal redemption which extends even to those who were in Hell before the Savior died and which includes the fallen angels as well as unrepentant men. We believe in an effectual redemption and can never agree with those who would teach us that Christ’s blood was shed in vain. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep. Christ loved His Church and gave Himself for it. He bought His own people with His blood. He purchased not the world’s wide wilderness, but the “spot enclosed by Grace,” the vineyard which His own right hand has planted! Dear, then, to the heart of Jesus is every vine, and every cluster of grapes in this vineyard, because He bought the whole of it with His blood! As Naboth, when asked to sell his vineyard to Ahab, answered the king, “The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto you,” and kept it even at the cost of his life! And do you think that our Lord Jesus will ever part with His vineyard which is not only His by inheritance from His Father, but also His by purchase—“not with corruptible things, as silver and gold”—but with His own most precious blood? On every leaf in that vineyard, His blood has fallen. The red juice that flows so freely from the clusters, when pressed, is but His blood in another form! If the soil of the vineyard is rich, it is because He has enriched it with His blood. If the vines bring forth plenteously, it is because of the care He has taken with them.

More than this, the Church is Christ’s by one other tie, which, perhaps, makes it still dearer to Him. She is His bride, His spouse. Now, whatever a man may not have a right to, he certainly has a right to his own wife! Whatever legal quibbles may be raised about a piece of earth, about a man’s title to his freehold property, to his own wife he certainly has a clear right and title. And Jesus looks into the eyes of His spouse, when He has redeemed her out of the hand of the enemy, and taken her unto Himself—when He has placed the jewels of His Grace about her neck, in her ears and on her hands, when He has adorned her with the robe of His own righteousness and made her beautiful in His beauty—He looks at her and He says, “You are Mine; you are Mine; and no one else can claim you. My spouse, you are no harlot, you shall not play the part of an adulteress with many lovers, for you are Mine, and no one but Myself can claim you. None but Myself shall partake of your embraces, none but Myself shall receive of the love of your heart.”

By these three ties, then, O Church of Christ, you are His special property—and by each of these you are endeared to Him! Jesus sees in you, O Church of God, the mark of His Father’s love-gift! He sees, too, the evidence of His own loving purchase and His espousal of you unto Himself, to be His forever and ever.

But we must pass on to notice that in the first sentence of our text, we are not only told about Christ’s special right to His Church, but also about His special care and observation of her—“My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me.”

The Church is “before” Christ in the sense that He so loves her that He never has her out of His Presence. The vineyard is so dear to the Vinedresser that He never leaves it! He may sometimes hide Himself among the vines, but He is always close at hand, watching how they progress and delighting Himself with their fragrance and fruitfulness. The Bridegroom is never absent from His spouse, for He loves her too much to be separated from her. Is it not a sweet thought that Believers are always under the eyes of Christ? He would not be happy unless He had them continually before Him. His Church may be willing to endure His absence for a while, but He loves her so much that He cannot bear to be away from her. She may grow so cold towards Him that His absence may seem, to her, to be but a small matter, but the decay of her love is not a little matter to Him. His love is strong as death and His jealousy is cruel as the grave, so He cannot bear to have her out of His sight even for a minute. He will always pour upon her the beams of His love and always fix upon her the affection of His whole heart.

The expression, “My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me,” may also mean that Jesus is always caring for it, as well as always loving it. There is never a moment when Christ ceases to care for His vineyard. He Himself said, “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” What? Water it every moment? Keep it night and day? Yes, He will never neglect it. His word to His Church is, “Lo, I am with you always”—not merely for half a day, or for an hour in the day, leaving His ministers to care for them at other times—but, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Jesus still walks among the golden candlesticks. He does not light the candles and then leave them to burn by themselves—He walks among them and so keeps them from going out. “My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me.” Christ is always in His Church, always caring for His Church, always bidding His Providence assist her agencies, always upholding her in her hours of trial, leading her into all Truth, instructing her sons and daughters, and making all her members “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

There is also in this expression, not only the sense of love and care, but also of knowledge—“My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me.” Christ knows every vine in the vineyard and He knows all the fruit that is on each vine, and how much there was last year and how much there will be in years to come. Before there was a vine in that vineyard, Christ knew how many plants would be planted, where they would be planted, of what sort they would be and how much fruit they would bring forth. He did not find out by degrees what His inheritance was to be—He knew all about it long before the worlds were formed! There is nothing in His Church that is new to Him—He foreknew, and foresaw, and foreordained every single particle of mold that lies in that vineyard, every stone that is in its walls and every vine growing within them! Yes, and every leaf. Yes, and every particle of blight or mildew that falls upon a leaf—all has been settled and ordained, or foreknown and prepared for by the great Proprietor.

“My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me.” There is a sweet thought here for all who love the Savior. You, as His Church, and each one of you who are His people, are especially preserved by Him. Then, “why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God?” I tell you, Soul, that He sees you as much as if there were no others for His eyes to look upon! And He cares for you as infinitely and with as undivided a heart as if you were the only soul that He ever bought with His blood! If you were His only elect one, His only redeemed one, His only loved one, He could not deal with you more tenderly and more lovingly than He is dealing with you now! If you are Christ’s, you are never behind His back—you are always before Him. He can always see you, though you cannot always see Him. When the eyes of your faith is dim, the eyes of His care is not. When your heart seems dead and cold, His heart is still hot with Infinite affection— and when you say, “My God has ceased to be gracious,” you belie Him and slander Him! He is really manifesting His graciousness in another fashion. He has changed the manifestation of His purpose of love and mercy, but His purpose is the same as ever—to drench you with floods of mercy, to wash you with streams of Grace and to fertilize you till you shall be like that Eshcol “branch with one cluster of grapes,” which was so large and weighty that “they bore it between two upon a staff!” No, more—till the great Vinedresser shall make of you such a vine as earth has scarcely seen as yet, and shall, therefore, have to transplant you to a better vineyard, even to the hill-top of Glory!

I think, then, if we regard the first sentence as the language of Christ, it is very sweet to hear Him say, “My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me.” My Brothers and Sisters, the deacons and elders of the church must always take comfort from this thought. If there is anything in the church that grieves us, we must feel, “It is His vineyard, not ours. It is before Him, so He will know what to do with it.” I am sure, dear Brothers, we would lay down our tasks if we had not our Master with us. I would not dare to be a minister and you would not dare to be church officers unless we felt that it was before Him. In your different districts, let the sick, the sorrowful, the backsliding all be carried before your God—and let all the members feel that although we are but feeble creatures to be the leaders of so great a host, yet that the church may grow and increase until we are not only fifteen hundred, but 15,000 if the Lord wills—and that the church would then be just as carefully looked after as it is now, for it would still be before Him! He who is the Vinedresser is just as able to care for His vines when they are most numerous as if there were only one—and that one had the whole of His attention!

II. Now, very briefly, I want you to regard this first sentence of our text as THE LANGUAGE OF THE CHURCH ITSELF.  
According to the 11th verse, “Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon. He let out the vineyard unto keepers—everyone, for the fruit thereof, was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.” So, dear Brothers and Sisters, everyone of us whom the Lord has brought to Himself, has a part of His vineyard to keep for Him. We do not sing, with Wesley—  
*“A charge to keep I have,  
A God to glorify,  
A never-dying soul to save,  
And fit it for the sky,”*  
because we do not believe anything of the kind! We leave the work of saving our souls in higher hands than our own—but after our souls are saved, then we have a charge to keep and that charge is to publish the name and fame of Jesus to the utmost of our power—to seek to bring others under the sound of the Gospel—and to tell them what they must do to be saved.  
There are a great many people who seem to forget that they have a vineyard of their own to keep. Or else if they remember it, they cannot say, “My vineyard, which is mine, is before me,” for they go about gazing on other people’s vineyards instead of keeping their eyes fixed upon their own. They say, “Look at So-and-So’s vineyard. I don’t think he trims his vines in the new style.” I usually notice that those persons who have such wonderful plans of their own and who are always finding fault with other people’s plans, never do anything except find fault. I like the deacons and elders of the church, and the teachers in the Sunday school to have no other plan than this—to do all the good they can and to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. When they are doing that, let other people not interfere with them, but themselves do all the good that they can. It is always well when a man has his work before him, knows what he is going to do and then goes straight at it. There are far too many people gadding about to see what others are doing and to find out their plans and methods of working. Let me tell you, Brothers and Sisters, that the best way to succeed is to have no plan but this—“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” When I see the members of a church laying down a multiplicity of rules, I know that they are getting themselves into a multiplicity of troubles. If they will but leave rules and regulations to come up when they are needed, they will find them when they need them. Let every man who has the Spirit of God within him, set about the work which he is called to do. Let him attend to the portion of the vineyard which is before him and try to get his thousand pieces of silver out of his own portion—and not out of another’s. There is always a set of grumblers about who think they could preach better and manage Sunday schools better than anybody else. They are the people who generally do nothing at all.  
I sometimes receive anonymous letters asking me to amend my style in this way or the other. I know where they come from—they are either from people who are very idle, to whom the penny post gives occupation for their idle hours—or from those who think they can bring themselves to our notice by their communications. I usually thrust all such letters into the fire. Now, if these people, instead of wasting their time in that way, would write a letter with good sound Gospel teaching in it to some poor sinner who wants to know the way of salvation. Or if, instead of wasting their pennies upon me—for I think I can do better without their advice than with it—they would bestow them upon some poor crossingsweeper, they would do more good! It is always the grumbling souls who are the idle souls—but the men who get the thousand pieces of silver out of their vineyard have their own work so constantly before them that they have no leisure to look upon the work of other people with the view of finding fault with it! They know right well that they have no right to interfere between other men and their Master and that, to their own Master, each one must stand or fall.  
I pray that this church, and every member of it, may always be able to say, in the words of our text, “My vineyard, which is mine, is before me.” I am not responsible for my brother, but I am responsible for myself. I will always keep my own work before my eyes. I will go about it and do what I have to do just as if there were nobody else in the world to do anything. I will work as hard as if I were the only Christian alive and, at the same time, I will always comfort myself with the thought that my feeble labors are not all that are being rendered to the Master, but that there are more than seventy thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal and who are serving the one living and true God! I will, while I am working, wish to every other worker greater success than I have myself. If I see any prospering more than I am, I will bless God for it, but I will still say, “My vineyard, which is mine, is before me.” However well my neighbor is getting on, that is no reason why I should slacken my efforts—and however badly another may succeed, that is no reason why I should neglect my own duty in order to chide him. “My vineyard, which is mine, is before me.”  
The next time you are tempted to complain of some Brother or Sister, check yourself and say, “It is my vineyard which is before me. There are some ugly thistles in it and some great nettles over there in the corner. I have not trimmed my vines this summer. I have not taken the little foxes which spoil the vines, but, from now on I will attend more diligently to ‘my vineyard, which is mine.”’ A blessed way of keeping from finding fault with other people is to look well to your own vineyard.  
III. I will now turn to the second part of our text which is THE LANGUAGE OF THE CHURCH TO HER GREAT PROPRIETOR LORD. “You, O Solomon, must have a thousand”—“must have a thousand.” Whatever others have, our Lord must have Solomon’s portion—“and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.” So, then, in the first place, the fruit of the vineyard belongs to Christ, but, in the second place, both Christ and His Church agree to reward the keepers of the vineyard and to let them have their two hundred.

First, then, all the fruit of the vineyard belongs to Christ and He must have it. Dwell on that word, “must,” and let each one of you feel the blessed necessity. There are some churches where if they have any fruit, they keep it to themselves. The Word has free course and is glorified— sinners are saved, saints are comforted—and then they take the honor and glory to themselves. Other churches there are which give all the glory to the minister. The work succeeds well, everything prospers and then the keeper of the vineyard has the thousand pieces of silver. There are other churches which give all the glory to the rich people in their midst. “Everything will go well,” they say, “while the squire attends with us, while Mr. So-and-So is one of our deacons and Mr. So-and-So is so generous a subscriber to our funds.” So that, there, also, the thousand pieces of silver are given to man. Ah, but that must not be, Brothers and Sisters. Stand back you intruders! We dare not give you so much as a farthing’s worth of the fruit of this vineyard! The vineyard is Christ’s. He purchased it with His own life’s blood, so the fruit is all His and He must have it all—none of it must be given to anyone else. Open wide your hand, O thief, and give up the fruit you have taken unto yourself! We demand it of you imperatively! Give it all up, Sir, for Jesus Christ must have it all, even as Solomon had the thousand pieces of silver.

But, Brothers and Sisters, it sometimes happens that in a church there is no glory at all. The church is so badly off, the congregation is so small, there is such an absence of zeal and so very feeble has the spirit of prayer become, that there is no glory to be given to anyone! What shall we say to such a church as that? “Brethren, do not rest satisfied with such a state of things as that. Do not say, ‘Solomon must be content with a hundred.’ No, He must have His thousand.” I want all the members of this church to feel that our Solomon, our Lord Jesus Christ, must have His thousand pieces of silver! We must not allow one year to go below the mark of the previous one. If Christ received Glory through us last year, He must have as much or more Glory through us this year. If we had a revival in years gone by, we must have a revival now. If Solomon had a thousand pieces of silver from us once, we must never let our tribute to Him be any less. Souls must still be brought to the Savior, even should—

*“The wide world esteem it strange,  
Gaze and admire, and hate the change.”*

The ministry must still be powerful, the Prayer Meetings must continue to be full of faith and fervor, the members must keep on striving together in love for the extension of Christ’s Kingdom. His Kingdom must come and His will must be done on earth as it is in Heaven! We will not put in an, “if,” or a, “perhaps”—it must be so and we will not be satisfied unless it is. “You, O Solomon, must have a thousand.”

Suppose, my Brothers and Sisters, in looking back upon the past year, we find that we have not had as much of the Master’s Presence, and have not done as much for Him as in years gone by? Shall we say that we will make it up next year? Oh, no! That will not do! Our Solomon must have His thousand this year! Shall He have less than the stipulated rental for His vineyard? Shall I contribute less, today, to my Lord’s honor than I did yesterday? Shall I be less zealous, less useful, less laborious? Shall the minister preach less than he did? Shall the elders visit less than they used to do? Will you, church members, pray less and serve Christ less? If you love Him less, you will do so. But, Brothers and Sisters, I trust that you do not love Him less and I am sure that you owe Him more—you are plunging deeper and deeper into debt to Him every day! He is continually revealing to you more and more of the heights and depths, and lengths and breadths of His love that passes knowledge! He is always leading you further and yet still further into the mysteries of His Kingdom and teaching you to know Himself which is much more than knowing mere doctrine.

So I ask you—Can you love Him less than you did in the years gone by? Will you pray to Him less earnestly and praise Him less fervently? No, Brothers and Sisters, I think that as Christians we shall unanimously cry, “As we come nearer to You, O Lord, make us more fruitful! And as years increase upon us, let it not be said that we do less for our Master at 50 than we did at twenty-five.” Let not people be able to say concerning any of us, “He ran well—what hindered him?” Let not the Spirit of God have to chide any of us and say, “You have left your first love.” Let us insist upon it that as we began, so we will continue, or, rather, that we will not simply go on as we began, but that we will seek to go “from strength to strength” until everyone of us shall appear in Zion before our God! I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the undiminished beauty and the undivided love of your Lord, that you love Him no less than you did in the day of your espousal to Him! O you keepers of the vineyard, my Brothers in the ministry, and you who go out from this church to preach the Word of God—if you gave Him glory last year. If you loved the souls of men. If you knew how to wrestle with the Angel of the Covenant in months gone by—you must do the same now! You must not do less than you used to do! You must not preach less earnestly, you must not pray less fervently—but rather you must love Him more and serve Him better! May the Spirit of God enable you to do so!

But, alas, there are some of you who never give our King Solomon anything! Perhaps you are the people of God—at least you profess to be so— but what are you doing for Him? I do not think there are many members of my own church of whom I have cause to complain, but there may be some. Perhaps you have been converted for years, yet you do not know that you were ever the means of bringing a soul to Jesus. You say that you love the Savior, but what are you doing for Him? It is not doing anything for Him merely to come here on the Sabbath or on week-nights, to listen to His Word—there are other and better ways of showing your love to the Savior than by simply coming to hear another man talk to you about Him. Oh, if I have one idle member in the church who talks of loving Christ, but does nothing for Him, I would look that member in the face if I knew which one it was and I would say that faith without works is dead—that the love which does not show itself in practical piety is a pretended love, a painted flame—and not the gift of Heaven!

I feel that I must also say that if we are all doing something for Christ, we are none of us doing enough for Him. I feel, sometimes, Beloved, as if I wished that I had a thousand tongues with which to tell the story of His Grace—and as if I longed that each day were a year and each year a century in which I could keep on telling of His love! Often, when the sermon is over, I chide myself because I seem to have spoken so coldly of the theme that demands a tongue of fire. I have painted so badly that lovely face which, if you could but see it, would so captivate your hearts that you would never want to see anything else. Yet I can honestly say, from my very heart, that I desire to give my Lord and Master His thousand pieces of silver—

*“I’ll praise my Maker with my breath,  
And when my voice is lost in death,  
Praise shall employ my nobler powers.”*

I cannot stop preaching, Brothers and Sisters, and you cannot cease praying—we cannot, any of us, if we truly love our Lord, give up working for Him! I am sure that if we should live to be so very old, and so very feeble, that we could hardly get outside our own door, we would still try to serve Him to the very last—we would find some means of praising Him even on our dying bed.

Now I will conclude with a few remarks upon the last words of the text—“and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred,” which means that the keepers of the vineyard are to receive a reward. Christ’s ministers are to receive the love, regard and esteem of His people for His sake. Joseph Irons put this thought very prettily. I forget His exact words, but they are to the effect that Christ’s ministers really do get their two hundred. They have 100 while they are preaching, in their own enjoyment of the sweetness of the mystery which they open up to others—and then they have another hundred in the success of their ministry—in the joy of seeing sinners saved, harlots reclaimed and drunks converted. Our Master is a blessed Paymaster, for He pays us while we are doing His work, in the work itself! He pays us when the work is done and then He says that He has only begun to pay us, for, when the whole of our work is over, here, we shall enter into His joy and receive the fullness of our reward!

I may, perhaps, have some members of country churches present who are not kind to their minister. I can speak plainly upon this point because my people are almost too kind to me. But I say to members of other churches—Take care of your minister, for you will never get a blessing unless you are kind to him whom God has set over you. If your minister does not have his two hundred—that is, if he has not your love and respect, and if you do not give him sufficient wages to keep him above his needs—you cannot expect the Spirit of God to work with you. I believe there are scores of churches in which no good is ever done for this very reason. God says, “You starve My minister, so I will starve you. You find fault with him and quarrel with him—then I will find fault with you and quarrel with you. There shall be no blessing upon you—you shall be like Gilboa—there shall be neither dew nor rain upon you.”

I sometimes hear sad stories of what is done in some churches to the minister of Christ. He is looked upon as the drudge and slave of the community. Some self-important, pompous man lords it over both pastor and people—and that poor man, even when he is preaching the everlasting Gospel, often has to wonder how he will get his next coat in which he is to appear in the pulpit. The one he has is nearly out at the elbows, but, if he were to hint that another is needed, he would receive notice to go elsewhere. They would tell him that he was a mere hireling, looking for loaves and fishes—as if there were either loaves or fishes to be gotten out of such people as they are! I have often heard it remarked that the minister has a certain sum paid to him, but the great mass of the people never think, “He is our pastor. We must try to cheer his heart and make glad his spirit.” This state of things ought not to be and until it is altered, the Lord will have a quarrel with those who act thus!

I will say no more upon that point, but repeat that our great Solomon must have His thousand. The minister will cry, even though he is starving, “Solomon must have His thousand.” I was once travelling through Hertfordshire and stayed the night at a certain place and the minister said to me, “Will you preach here this evening, Sir?” “Yes,” I replied, “I should like an opportunity of talking to your people if you will give them notice.” I went into the minister’s house and I found that they only gave him 13 shillings a week and I saw that his coat was threadbare. When I went into the pulpit, I thought,” I will give these people something”—and I did, too, I can assure you! And after that, I gave him something and they gave him something—and we just managed to contribute together enough to get him a new suit of livery, as he called it—and I do not think that Brother has been quite as low down in the depths of poverty as he was then!

There are scores of places in the country where ministers are treated as that poor man was, but it ought not to be so. The minister of Christ must have some regard, some esteem, some honor in his church, but, after all, our Lord Jesus Christ must have His thousand. My own people may take home to themselves the first part of my discourse, but you big farmer deacons must take the latter part to yourselves. Don’t you go to sleep tonight until you have thought, “What can we do for that poor dear man who is to preach for us next Sunday?” As for my own members, you can think about the first part. Let it be your joy to know that the vineyard is Christ’s vineyard and that it always lies before Him—and let each one of you seek to give to Jesus His thousand pieces of silver—all the honor, the glory, the praise, the love and the service that you can render to Him from the beginning of the year to the end!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 47.**

Verses 1-5. O clap your hands, all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible; He is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom He loved. Selah. God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

One of our sacred poets has written—  
*“All His work and warfare done,  
He into His Heaven is gone,  
And beside His Father’s Throne,  
Now is pleading for His own”*

—but, not merely is He “beside His Father’s Throne,” He is with Him sitting upon the throne—and waiting until His foes are made His footstool.

6-9. Sing praises to God, sing praises, sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing you praises with understanding. God reigns over the heathen: God sits upon the Throne of His holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: He is greatly exalted. There are some in these days who have, according to their own confession, cast off the God of Abraham. They do not believe in the Jehovah who is revealed in the Old Testament—they are like those of whom Moses said, “They sacrificed to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.” But as for us, we still delight to sing—

*“The God of Abraham praise  
Who reigns enthroned above  
Ancient of everlasting days,  
And God of love!  
Jehovah, great I AM!  
By earth and Heaven confess.  
I bow, and bless the sacred name  
Forever blest!”*

“But the God of Abraham is very stern,” says someone. Assuredly He is! He is terrible in the majesty of His justice! Yet we worship and adore Him for that very reason. No effeminate deity such as modern thought has invented, has even an atom of our admiration, much less of our adoration! But the glorious God of the Sinai thunders who is equally terrible as the God of Justice on Calvary—this God, who, nevertheless, is Love, our hearts adore and worship!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1716 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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THE BRIDEGROOM’S PARTING WORDS  
NO. 1716

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 15, 1883, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“You that dwells in the gardens, the companions hearken to your voice: cause Me to hear it.”  
Song of Solomon 8:13.**

THE Song is almost ended—the bride and Bridegroom have come to their last stanzas—and they are about to part for a while. They utter their adieus and the Bridegroom says to His beloved, “You that dwells in the gardens, the companions hearken to your voice: cause Me to hear it.” In other words, when I am far away from you, fill this garden with My name and let your heart commune with Me. She promptly replies, and it is her last word till He comes, “Make haste, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.” These farewell words of the Well-Beloved are very precious to His chosen bride. Last words are always noticed—the last words of those who loved us dearly are much valued— the last words of one who loved us to the death are worthy of a deathless memory.

The last words of the Lord in this canticle remind me of the commission which the Master gave to His disciples right before He was taken up, when He said to them, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Then, scattering benedictions with both His hands, He ascended into Glory and, “a cloud received Him out of their sight.” As the sermon progresses you will see why I say this and you will detect a striking likeness between the commission connected with the Ascension and the present adieu, in which the spiritual Solomon says to His espoused Solyma, “You that dwells in the gardens, the companions hearken to your voice: cause Me to hear it.”

I. We will get to our text at once, without further preface, and we notice in it, first of all, AN APPOINTED RESIDENCE. The Bridegroom, speaking of His bride, says, “You that dwells in the gardens.” The Hebrew is in the feminine and, therefore, we are bound to regard it as the word of the Bridegroom to His bride. It is the mystical word of the Church’s Lord to His elect one! He calls her “Inhabitress of the gardens”—that is the word. So then, dear Friends, we who make up the Church of God are here addressed, this morning, under that term, “You that inhabits the gardens.”

This title is given to Believers here on earth, first, by way of distinction—distinction from the Lord, Himself. He whom we love dwells in the ivory palaces in which they make Him glad. He is gone up to His Father’s Throne and has left these gardens down below. He came down awhile that He might look upon His garden, that He might see how the vines flourished and gather lilies. But He has now returned to His Father and our Father. He watered the soil of His garden with His bloody sweat in Gethsemane and made it to bear fruit unto life by being Himself laid to sleep in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea—but all this lowly work is now over.

He does not dwell in the gardens as to His corporeal Presence. His dwelling place is on the Throne of God. Jesus has not taken us up with Him—He will come another time to do that—but now He leaves us among the seeds and flowers and growing plants to do the King’s work until He comes. He was a visitor here and the visit cost Him dearly. But He has gone back unto the place from where He came, having finished the work which His Father gave Him. Our lifework is not finished and, therefore, we must tarry a while below and be known as inhabitants of the gardens. It is expedient that we should be here, even as it is expedient that He should not be here.

God’s Glory is to come of our sojourn here, otherwise He would have taken us away long ago. He said to His Father, “I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One.” He Himself is an inhabitant of the palaces, for there He best accomplishes the eternal purposes of love. But His Church is the inhabitress of the gardens, for there she best fulfils the decrees of the Most High. Here she must abide, awhile, until all the will of the Lord shall be accomplished in her and by her—and then she, also, shall be taken up and shall dwell with her Lord above. The title is given by way of distinction and marks the difference between her condition and that of her Lord.

Next, it is given by way of enjoyment. She dwells in the gardens, which are places of delight. Once you and I pined in the wilderness and sighed after God from a barren land. We trusted in man, made flesh our arm and then we were like the heath in the desert which sees not when good comes. All around us was the wilderness of this world, a howling wilderness of danger, need and disorder! We said of the world at its very best, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Do you remember how you roamed, seeking rest and finding none? Your way was the path of darkness which leads to death! Then you were poor and needy—and sought water and there was none—and your tongue cleaved unto the roof of your mouth for thirst.

Then came the Lord that bought you and He sought you until He brought you into the gardens of His love where He satisfied you with the river of the Water of Life, and filled you with the fruits of His Spirit! And now you dwell in a goodly land—“The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew.” Your portion is with the Lord’s saints, yes, with Himself! And what can be a better portion? Is it not as the gardens of the Lord? You dwell where the great Husbandman spends His care upon you and takes a pleasure in you. You dwell where the infinite skill and tenderness and wisdom of God manifest themselves in the training of the plants which His own right hand has planted. You dwell in the Church of God which is laid out, in due order, and hedged about and guarded by heavenly power! And you are, therefore, most fitly said to dwell in the gardens.

Be thankful! It is a place of enjoyment for you! Awake and sing, for the lines have fallen unto you in pleasant places. Just as Adam was put into the Garden of Eden for his own happiness, so are you put into the garden of the Church for your comfort. It is not a perfect paradise of bliss, but it has many points of likeness to Paradise—for God Himself walks there, the river of God waters it, and the Tree of Life is there unguarded by the flaming sword! Is it not written, “I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day”? See, Beloved, although you are distinguished from your Lord by being here while He is there, yet you are made partakers of His joy and are not as those who are banished into a salt land to die in desolation! The Lord’s joy is in His people and you are made to have a joy in them, also—the excellent of the earth, in who is all your delight, are made to be the comrades of your sojourning!

The title is also used by way of employment as well as enjoyment. Adam was not put in the garden that he might simply walk through its borders, admire its flowers and taste its fruits. He was placed there to keep it and to dress it. There was sufficient work to be done to prevent his stagnating from lack of occupation. He had not to toil sufficiently to make him wipe the sweat from his brow, for that came of the curse—“In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread”—but still, he was not permitted to be idle, for that might have been a worse curse. Even for a perfect man, unbroken leisure would not be a blessing. It is essential, even, to an unfallen creature that he should have work to do—fit work and honorable—seeing it is done by a creature for the great Benefactor who had created him.

If we had not our daily tasks to fulfill, rest would corrode into rust and recreation would soon gender corruption. You and I are set in the garden of the Church because there is work for us to do which will be beneficial to others and to ourselves. Some have to take the broad axe and hew down mighty trees of error. Others of a feebler sort can, with a child’s hand, train the tendril of a climbing plant, or drop into its place a tiny seed. One may plant and another may water—one may sow and another gather fruit. One may cut up weeds and another prune vines. God has work in His Church for us all to do and He has left us here that we may do it! Our Lord Jesus would not keep a single saint out of Heaven if there were not a necessity for his being here in the lowlands, to trim these gardens of herbs and watch these beds of spices. Would He deny His wellbeloved the palm branch and the crown if it were not better for us to be holding the pruning-hook and the spade?

A schoolbook with which to teach the little children may be, for a while, more to our true advantage than a golden harp. To turn over the pages of Scripture with which to instruct the people of God may be more profitable to us than to hear the song of seraphim. I say, the Master’s love to His own which prompted Him to pray, “I will that they, also, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory,” would long ago have drawn all the blood-bought up to Himself, had it not been the fact that it is, in infinite wisdom, seen to be better that they should abide in the flesh. You are the lights of the world, you are the salt of the earth! Shall the light and the salt be at once withdrawn? You are to be as a dew from the Lord in this dry and thirsty land! Would you be at once exhaled?

Brothers, have you found out what you have to do in these gardens? Sisters, have you found out the plants for which you are to care? If not, awaken yourselves and let not a moment pass till you have discovered your duty and your place! Speak unto Him who is the Lord of all true servants and say to Him, “Show me what You would have me do. Point out, I pray You, the place in which I may serve You.” Would you have it said of you that you were a wicked and slothful servant? Shall it be told that you dwelt in the gardens and allowed the grass to grow up to your ankles, and suffered the thorns and the thistles to multiply until your land became as the sluggard’s vineyard, pointed at as a disgrace and a warning to all that passed by? “O you that dwells in the gardens!” The title sets forth constant and engrossing employment.

Dear Friends, it means, also, eminence. I know many Christian people who do not feel that they dwell in the gardens. They reside in a certain town or village where the Gospel may be preached, but not in demonstration of the Spirit and in power. A little Gospel is made to go a long way with some preachers. In some ministries there is no life or power, no unction or savor. The people who meet under such preaching are cold of heart and dull in spirit. The Prayer Meetings are forgotten; communion of saints has well-near died out and there is a general deadness as to Christian effort. Believe me, it is a dreadful thing when Christian people have almost to dread their Sabbath days! And I have known this to be the case. When you are called to hard toil through the six days of the week you need a good spiritual meal on the Sabbath, and if you get it, you find a blessed compensation and refreshment. Is it not a heavenly joy to sit still on the one day of rest and to be fed with the finest of the wheat?

I have known men made capable of bearing great trials—personal, relative, pecuniary and the like—because they have looked backward upon one Sabbatic feast and then forward to another! They have said in their hour of trouble—“Patience, my heart! The Lord’s Day is coming, when I shall drink and forget my misery. I shall go and sit with God’s people and I shall have fellowship with the Father and with the Son. And my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness till I praise the Lord with joyful lips.” But what a sorry case to dread Sunday and to mutter, “I shall get nothing next Sunday any more than I did last Sunday except some dry, philosophical essay, or a heap of the childish toys and fireworks of oratory—or the same dull mumbling of a mechanical orthodoxy.” Oh, Brothers and Sisters, my text is scarcely meant for those who dwell in such deserts, but it speaks with emphasis to those who dwell where sweet spiritual fruits are plentiful, where odors and perfumes load the air, where the land flows with milk and honey!

If any of you happen to dwell where Christ is set forth evidently crucified among you and where your hearts leap for very joy because the King, Himself, comes near to feast His saints and make them glad in His Presence, then it is to you that my text has a voice and a call—“You that dwells in the gardens, in the choicest places of all Immanuel’s land, let Me hear your voice.” Yet one more word. The title here employed is not only for eminence but for permanence. “O you that dwells in the gardens.” If you are only permitted to enjoy sound Gospel teaching, now and then, and then are forced to cry, “It may be another 12 months before I shall be again fed on royal dainties,” then you are in a trying case and you need to cry to God for help! But blessed are those who dwell in the good land and daily fill their homers with heavenly manna. “Blessed are they that dwell in Your house: they will be still praising You.”

No spot on earth is so dear to the Christian as that whereon he meets His Lord. I can understand why the Jew asked of a certain town that was recommended to him as good for business, “Is there a synagogue there?” Being a devout man, and finding that there was no synagogue, he said he would rather remain where trade was dull, but where he could go with his brethren to worship. Is it not so with us? How my heart has longed for these blessed assemblies! Give me a crust and a full Gospel rather than all riches and a barren ministry! The profitable hearing of the Word of God is the greatest enjoyment upon earth to godly men! It would be banishment to go where every week’s business turned into a mint of money if one were also compelled to be a member of an unhappy, quarrelsome, or inactive Church!

Our greatest joy is in you, O Jerusalem! Let our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth if we prefer you not above our greatest joy!— *“How charming is the place  
Where my Redeemer God  
Unveils the beauties of His face,  
And sheds His love abroad!  
Not the fair palaces,  
To which the great resort,  
Are once to be compared with this,  
Where Jesus holds His court.”*

Beloved, if you dwell in the gardens you have a double privilege, not only of being found in a fat and fertile place, but in living there continually! You might well forego a thousand comforts for the sake of this one delight, for under the Gospel your soul is made to drink of wines on the lees well refined. This, then, is my first head—appointed residence—“You that dwells in the gardens.” Is not this a choice abode for the Lord’s beloved? I leave you to judge how far this describes yourselves. If it is your case, then listen to what the Bridegroom has to say to you.

II. Secondly, let us note the RECORDED CONVERSATION—“You that dwells in the gardens, the companions hearken to your voice.” She was in the gardens, but she was not quiet there and why should she be? God gives us tongues on purpose that they should be used. As He made birds to sing, stars to shine and rivers to flow, so has He made men and women to converse with one another to His Glory. Our tongue is the glory of our frame and there would be no glory in its being forever dumb. The monks of La Trappe, who maintain perpetual silence, do no more than the rocks among which they labor! When God makes bells, He means to ring them! It may be thought to be a desirable thing that some should speak less, but it is still more desirable that they should speak better. When the tongue indites a good matter, it is no fault if it is nimble as the pen of a ready writer. It is not the quantity, it is the quality of what we say that ought to be considered.

Now, observe that evidently the spouse held frequent conversations with her companions—“The companions hearken to your voice.” She frequently conversed with them. I hope it is so among those of you who dwell in this part of Christ’s garden. It should be so—“Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another”—they had not, now and then, a crack; now and then the passing of the time of day, but they held frequent fellowship! Heaven will consist largely in the communion of saints, and if we would enjoy Heaven, below, we must carry out the words of the creed in our practice—“I believe in the communion of saints.” Let us show that we believe in it! Some persons sit still in their pews till the time to go—and then walk down the aisle in majestic isolation, as if they were animated statues! Do children thus come in and out of their father’s house with never a word for their brothers and sisters? I know professors who float through life like icebergs from whom it is safest to keep clear—surely these partake not of the spirit of Christ! It is well when such icebergs are drawn into the Gulf Stream of Divine Love and melt away into Christ and His people!

There should be among those who are children of the common Father a mutual love! And they should show this by frequent commerce in their precious things, making a sacred barter with one another. I like to hear them making sacred exchanges—one mentioning his trials—another quoting his deliverances! One telling how God has answered prayer and another recording how the Word of God has come to him with power. Such conversation ought to be as usual as the talk of children of one family.

And next, it should be willing and influential, for if you notice, it is put here—“You that dwells in the gardens, the companions hearken to your voice.” They do not merely hear it, and say to themselves, “I wish she would be quiet,” but they listen—they lend an ear, they listen gladly! I know some Christians whose lips feed many. I could mention Brothers and Sisters who drop pearls from their lips whenever they speak. We still have among us Chrysostoms, or men of golden mouths—you cannot be with them for half an hour without being enriched! Their anointing is manifest, for it spreads to all around them. When the Spirit of God makes our communications sweet, then the more of them the better! I like to get, sometimes, under the shadow of God’s best people, the fathers in Israel, and to hear what they have to say to the honor of the name of the Lord. We who are young men feel gladdened by the testimonies of the ancients! And as for the babes in Grace, they look up to the gray-beards and gather strength from their words of experience and Grace.

If there are any here whose language is such that others delight to listen to it, it is to such that my text is especially addressed—and when I come to open up the later part of it, I want you that have the honeyed tongues—I want you who are listened to with pleasure, to notice how the Beloved says to you—“The companions hearken to your voice: cause Me to hear it.” Give your Lord a share of your sweet utterances! Let your Savior’s ears be charmed as well as your companions ears! Come, speak to Him as well as to your Brothers and Sisters, and if there is music in your voice, let that music be for the Well-Beloved as well as for your fellow servants!

This is the very heart of the matter! I cannot help alluding to it even before we have fairly reached that part of the text. The conversation of the bride in the gardens was constant and it was greatly esteemed by those who enjoyed it. I gather from the text, rather by implication, than otherwise, that the conversation was commendable, for the Bridegroom does not say to the spouse, “You that dwells in the gardens, your companions hear too much of your voice.” No! He evidently mentions the fact with approval because He draws an argument from it why He should also hear that same voice! Brothers and Sisters, I leave it to yourselves to judge whether your communications with one another are always such as they should be. Are they always worthy of you?

What communications have you had this morning? Can I make a guess? “Nice and fresh this morning.” “Quite a change in the weather.” Is not this the style? How often we instruct each other about what we already know! When it rains so as to soak our garments, we gravely tell each other that it is very wet! Yes, and if the sun shines, we are all eager to communicate the wonderful information that it is warm! Dear me, what instructors of our generation we are! Could we not contrive to change the subject? Is it because we have nothing to say of love, Grace and the Truth of God that we meet and part without learning or teaching anything? Perhaps so. I wish we had a little more small change of heavenly conversation—we have our crowns and sovereigns for the pulpit—we need silver and pence for common talk, all stamped with the image and superscription of the King of Heaven!

O Holy Spirit, enrich us after this sort! May our communications be such that if Jesus were near, we might not be ashamed for Him to hear our voices! Brothers and Sisters, make your conversation such that it may be commended by Christ Himself! These conversations were, no doubt, very beneficial. As iron sharpens iron, so does a man’s countenance his friend. Oh, what a comfort it is to drop in upon a cheerful person when you, yourself, are heavy! What a ballast it puts into your ship, when you are a little too merry, to meet with one in sore travail who bids you share his burden and emulate his faith. We are all the better, believe me, when our Lord can praise us because our companions listen to our voices! In fact, our communications with one another ought to be preparatory to still higher communications! The conversation of saints on earth should be a rehearsal of their everlasting communion in Heaven. We should begin, here, to be to one another what we hope to be to one another world without end.

And is it not pleasant to rise from communion with your Brothers and Sisters into communion with the Bridegroom?—to have such talk with one another that, at last, we perceive that truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ? We thought that we only communed with our Brothers and Sisters, but we see that the Lord, Himself, is here! Do not our hearts burn within us? We two are talking of Him and now we see that He, Himself, is here, opening to us the Scriptures, and opening our hearts to receive those Scriptures in the power of them! Beloved, let us try, if we cannot make it so, that as we dwell together as Church members and work together in one common vineyard, we may be always making our fellowship with each other a grand staircase of fellowship with the King, Himself! Let us so talk that we may expect to meet Jesus while we are talking!

How sweet to hear and see the Master in the servant, the Bridegroom in the Bridegroom’s friend, the Head in the members, the Shepherd in the sheep, the Christ in every Christian! Thus may we rise upon the wings of hallowed communion with holy ones to yet more hallowed communion with the Holy One of Israel! Thus have we meditated upon two things—we have noted the appointed residence and the recorded conversation. We know what we are talking about!

III. Now comes the pith of the text—INVITED FELLOWSHIP—“The companions hear your voice: cause Me to hear it.” It is beautiful to hear the Beloved say in effect, “I am going away from you and you shall see Me no more; but I shall see you: do not forget Me. Though you will not hear My voice with your bodily ears, I shall hear your voices: therefore speak to Me. Unseen I shall feed among the lilies; unperceived I shall walk the garden in the cool of the day: when you are talking to others do not forget Me. Sometimes turns aside and when you have shut the door, and no eye can see, nor ear can hear, then let Me hear your voice: it has music in it to My heart, for I died to give you life. Let Me hear the voice of your prayers and praise and love.”

Now, I note concerning this invitation, first of all, that it is very loving and condescending to us that the Lord should wish to hear our voice! I do not wonder that some of you love to hear my voice, because the Holy Spirit has blessed it to your conversion—but what good has Jesus ever derived from any of us? Is it not marvelous that He, the infinitely blessed, should want to hear our voices when all that He has heard from us has been begging, sighing and a few poor broken hymns? You do not want to hear a beggar’s voice, do you? I expect if the man you have helped a score of times should be, tomorrow morning, at your door, you would say, “Dear, dear; there is that man again.” Might not the Well-Beloved say the same of you? “There she is again: come on the same errand. Come to confess some new faults, or to ask fresh favors.”

But instead of being tired of us, our Lord says, “Let Me hear your voice.” O loving Bridegroom! Must He not love us very truly to ask us to speak with Him? Look, He asks as though He begged it of us as a favor, “Let Me hear your voice. Your companions listen—let Me take a share in their communion—they find your voice pleasant, let it be a pleasure, also, to Me. Come, do not deny Me, your heart’s best Beloved! Do not be silent unto Me! Come, speak to Me with your own sweet mouth.” It is condescending and gracious and yet how natural it is! How like Christ! Love always seeks the company of that which it loves! What would a husband say if his wife were seen to be chatty and cheerful to everybody else, but never spoke to him? I cannot suppose such a case! It would make too sorrowful a household. I should pity the poor, broken-hearted man who should be forced to say, “My Beloved, others hear your voice and admire it; will you not speak to me, your husband?”

O Believer, will you let the Lord Jesus, as it were, with tears in His eyes, say to you, “You talk to everybody but to Me! You lay yourself out to please everybody but Me! You are a charming companion to everybody but to Me”? Oh, our Beloved, how ill have we treated You! How much have we slighted You! In looking back, I fear there are many of us who must feel as if this gentle Word of the Lord had also a sharp side to it. I remember my faults this day. The text goes like a dagger to my soul, for I have spoken all day long to others and have had scarcely a word for Him whom my soul loves! Let us mend our conversation and from now on show our Lord a truer love. We may truly add that this invitation to fellowship is a blessed and profitable request. We shall find it so if we carry it out, especially those of us who are called by God to use our voices for Him among the crowds of our companions.

I address some Brothers and Sisters, here, who are preachers and teachers. What a relief it is, when you have been letting the companions hear your voice, to stop a bit and let Jesus hear it! What a rest to leave the congregation for the closet, to get away from where they criticize you to One who delights in you! What a relief, I say! And what a help to our hearts! Jesus gives us sweet returns if we commune with Him—and such as speakers greatly need. The Apostles said that they would give themselves to the Word of God and to prayer. Yes, we must put those two things together. We shall never totally handle the Word of God without prayer. When we pray, we are taught how to speak the Word of God to others.

Salvation and supplication are a blessed pair. Put the two together so that, when you speak to others about salvation, you do it after having baptized your own soul into supplication! “The companions hear your voice: cause Me to hear it. Before you speak with them, speak to Me. While you are still speaking with them, speak with Me. And when your speaking to men is done, return unto your rest and again speak with Me.” This invitation is a many-sided one, for when the Bridegroom says, “Cause Me to hear it,” He means that she should speak to Him in all sorts of ways. Frequently we should be heard in praise. If you have been praising the Lord in the audience of others, turn aside and praise Him to His face! Sing your song to your Beloved, Himself! Get into a quiet place and sing where only He can hear. I wish we had more of that kind of music which does not care for any other audience than God.

Oh, my God, my heart shall find You and every string shall have its attribute to sing while my whole being shall extol You, my Lord! The blessed Virgin had none with her but Elizabeth when she sang, “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit does rejoice in God, my Savior.” Oh, let the Lord hear your voice! Get up early to be alone with Him. So let it be with all your complaints and petitions—let them be for Jesus only. Too often we fill our follow creature’s ears with the sad tale of all our cares. Why not tell the Lord about it and have done with it? We would employ our time far more profitably if, instead of murmuring in the tent, we enquired in the Temple. Speak with Jesus Christ, dear Friends, in little broken sentences, by way of frequent pleas!

The best of Christian fellowship may be carried on in single syllables! When in the middle of business you can whisper, “My Lord and my God!” You can dart a glance upward, heave a sigh, or let fall a tear—and so will Jesus hear your voice! When nobody observes the motion of your lips, you may be saying, “My Beloved, be near me now!” This is the kind of fellowship which your Savior asks of you! He says, “The companions hear your voice: cause Me to hear it. Be sure that when you speak with others, you also speak with Me.” This is such a blessed invitation that I think, dear Friends, we ought to avail ourselves of it at once! Come, what do you say? The best Beloved asks us to speak with Him—what shall we say? Think for an instant! What shall I say? Perhaps I have the advantage because I have my words ready! Here they are—“Make haste, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.”

“Why,” you say, “that is what the Church said in the last verse of the Song!” Exactly so, and that is what we may wisely say at this moment. We cannot improve upon it! “Come quickly; even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.” Often and often, then, when you are about your business, say, “Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly! “It is a sweet frame of mind to be in to be willing to invite Christ to come—and whenever you cannot do so, let it be a warning to you that you are in dangerous waters! I can imagine a man in business calling himself a Christian about to engage in a doubtful transaction—how is he to discern the danger? Let him ask the Lord Jesus Christ to come while he is doing it! “Oh dear, no,” cries one, “I had rather He should not come until that matter is finished and forgotten!”

Then be you sure that you are moving in the wrong direction! Suppose you think of going to a certain place of amusement about which you have a question? It is easy to decide it thus—When you take your seat, your first thing should be to bow your head and ask for a blessing. And then say, “Lord, here I sit waiting for Your appearing.” “Oh,” you say, “I should not want the Lord to come there.” Of course you would not! Then do not go where you could not wish your Lord to find you! My text may thus be a monitor to you, to keep you from the paths of the Destroyer. Jesus says, “Let Me hear your voice,” and let your voice utter these desires—“Even so, come quickly; come, Lord Jesus!” Alas, time reproves me! I must hurry on.

IV. I have a fourth head which shall be very briefly handled. I find according to the Hebrew that the text has in it a REQUESTED TESTIMONY. According to learned interpreters, the Hebrew runs thus, “cause to hear Me.” Now, that may mean what I have said, “Cause Me to hear,” but it may also mean, “Cause them to hear Me.” Now listen, you that are in Christ’s garden—make those who dwell in that garden with you to hear from you much about HIM! In the Church everyone has a right to talk about the Head of the Church. Some of our Brothers and Sisters in this Tabernacle kindly undertake to speak to individuals about their souls and, now and then, they receive very sharp rebuffs. “What right has he to put such a question? How dare he intrude with personal remarks? What? Is the man poaching?”

No, these are the Lord’s preserves, and the Lord’s gamekeepers have a right to do as they are bid by Him. They are not poaching in this place, for they are on the Master’s own land! Anywhere inside these four walls you may speak to anybody about Christ and no man may forbid you! Speak lovingly and tenderly and prudently, but certainly the law of the house is that here we may speak about the Lord of the House! There are some other things you may not talk about, but about the Lord Jesus you may speak as much as you will. In the garden, at any rate, if not in the wilderness, let the Rose of Sharon be sweetly spoken of! Let His name be as an ointment poured forth in all the Church of God.

Again, you, according to the text, are one that can make people hear, so that, “the companions hearken to your voice.” Then make them hear of Jesus! You have the gift of speech—use it for Christ Crucified! I always feel regret when a powerful speaker espouses any other cause but that of my Lord. Time was when I used to wish that Milton had been a preacher and, instead of writing a poem, had proclaimed the Gospel to the multitude. I know better, now, for I perceive that God does not use learning and eloquence so much as knowledge of Christ and plain speech. But still, I am jealous of any man who can speak well, that he should not give my Lord the use of his tongue. Well-trained tongues are rare things, and they should be all consecrated to Christ’s Glory! If you can speak to the companions—make them hear about Christ! If you can speak well, make them hear attractive words about Christ!

If you do not speak about Christ to strangers, do speak to your companions. They will listen to you! Therefore let them listen to the Word of the Lord. I have heard of men who called themselves Christians, yet who never spoke to their children about their souls; never spoke to their servants nor to their work people about Jesus and His love! This is to murder souls! If tongues can bless and do not, then they, in effect, curse men by their silence! If you have a voice, make the name of Jesus to be sounded out all around you. Many are the voices that strike upon the ear—the world is full of noise even to distraction, yet the name which is above all other names is scarcely heard! I pray you, my Brethren, you that are like silver bells, ring out that name over hill and dale! As with a clarion, trumpet forth the saving name of Jesus till the deaf hear the sound!

Whatever is left out of your testimony, be sure that Christ Crucified is first and last in it. Love Christ and live Christ! Think of Christ and speak of Christ! When people go away from hearing you preach, may they have to say, “He kept to his subject—he knew nothing but Jesus.” It is ill when a man has to say of preachers, “They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him!” Yet in certain sermons you meet with a little about everything except the one thing. They offer us what we do not need and the need of the soul is not supplied. Oh, my Brothers, cause Christ to be heard! Hammer on that anvil always! If you make no music but that of the harmonious blacksmith, it will suffice. Ring it out with sturdy blows—“Jesus, Jesus, Jesus Crucified!” Hammer away at that!

“Now you are on the right string, man,” said the Duke of Argyle, when the preacher came to speak upon the Lord Jesus. It needed no duke to certify that! Harp on that string! Make Jesus to be as commonly known as now He is commonly unknown! So may God bless you as long as you dwell in these gardens, till the day breaks and the shadows flee away. Amen.

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÷Son 8.14

COME, MY BELOVED!  
NO. 2360

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, MAY 13, 1984. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 4, 1888.

**“Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.”  
Song of Solomon 8:14.**

THE Song of Songs describes the love of Jesus Christ to His people and it ends with an intense desire on the part of the Church that the Lord Jesus should come back to her. The last word of the lover to the Beloved One is, “Speed Your return; make haste and come back.” Is it not somewhat singular that, as the last verse of the Book of Love has this note in it, so the last verses of the whole Book of God, which I may also call the Book of Love, have that same thought in them? At the 20th verse of the last chapter of the Revelation, we read, “He which testifies these things says, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” The Song of Love and the Book of Love end in almost the same way—with a strong desire for Christ’s speedy return.

Are your hearts, dear Friends, in tune with that desire? They ought to be, yet have not some of you almost forgotten that Jesus is to come a second time? Refresh your memories. Others of you, who know that He will come—have you not thought of it as a doctrine that might be laid on the shelf? Have you not been without any desire for His glorious appearing? Is this right? That Song of Solomon is the central Book of the Bible. It is the innermost shrine of Divine Revelation, the Holy of Holies of Scripture. And if you are living in communion with God, you will love that Book, you will catch its spirit and you will be inclined to cry with the spouse, “Make haste, my Beloved.” If you have no longings for Christ’s appearance, no desires for His speedy return, surely your heart is sick and your love is faint! I fear that you are getting into a lukewarm state. I believe that our relationship to the Second Advent of Christ may be used as a thermometer with which to tell the degree of our spiritual heat. If we have strong desires, longing desires, burning desires for the coming of the Lord, we may hope that it is well with us! But if we have no such desires, I think, at best, we must be somewhat careless, perhaps, to take the worst view of our case—we are sadly declining in Divine Grace.

I. Well now, to come to our text, I want you to notice, first, WHAT THE CHURCH, HERE, CALLS HER LORD—“Make haste, my Beloved.”  
I will have only a few words upon this point. I am hardly going to preach, tonight, but just to talk familiarly to you, and I want you to let your hearts talk. Observe, the spouse first calls her Lord, “Beloved,” and secondly, “my Beloved.”  
Christ is our “Beloved.” This is a word of affection and our Lord Jesus Christ is the object of affection to us. If you read the Bible, especially if you read the New Testament and study the life of Christ and yet you only admire it, and say to yourself, “Jesus Christ was a wonderful Being,” you do not yet know Him! You have but a very indistinct idea of Him. If, after reading that life, you sit down and dissect it, and say to yourself, coolly, calmly, deliberately, “So far as is practicable, I will try and imitate Christ,” you do not yet know Him—you have not come near to the real Christ as of yet. If any man should say, “I am near the fire,” and yet he is not warm, I would question the truth of his words, and though he might say, “I can see the fire. I can tell you the appearance of the coals. I can describe the bright flames that play about the stove,” yet if he were not warmed at all, I would still think that he was mistaken, or that there was some medium that interposed between him and the fire at which he said he was looking.  
But when you really come to see Jesus and to say, “I love Him! My heart yearns toward Him. My delight is in Him. He has won my love and holds it in His own heart,” then you begin to know Him! Brothers and Sisters, true religion has many sides to it. True religion is practical. It is also contemplative, but it is not true religion at all if it is not full of love and affection. Jesus must reign in your heart or else, though you may give Him what place you like in your head, you have not truly received Him. To Jesus, beyond all others, is applicable this title of the Beloved, for they who know Him love Him. Yes, if ever love had emphasis in it, it is the love which true Believers give to Christ! We do well when we sing— *“I love You because You have first loved me, And purchased my pardon on Calvary’s tree. I love You for wearing the thorns on Your brow— If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ‘tis now.  
I will love You in life, I will love You in death And praise You as long as You lend me breath! And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow, If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ‘tis now.”*  
We may also go beyond that point, as the hymn does, and say— *“In mansions of glory and endless delight, I’ll ever adore You in Heaven so bright;  
I’ll sing with the glittering crown on my brow; If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ‘tis now.”*  
Our love to Jesus begins with trust. We experience His goodness and then we love Him in return. “We love Him because He first loved us.” They say that love is blind. I should think it is, from what I have seen of it in some people, but love to Christ might have ten thousand eyes and yet be justified in loving Him. The more you see Him, the more you know Him! The more you live with Him, the more reason will you have for loving Him. There will never come a time in which you will have to question whether you were right to surrender your heart to Him, but even throughout the eternal ages you shall, in the happinesses of His blessed company, feel that you were, in fact, more than justified in calling Him your Beloved!  
That is the first part of the name the spouse gives to her Lord—no, not the first—the first part of the name is, “my.” She calls Him, “my Beloved.”  
Brothers and Sisters, this signifies appropriation, so that the two words together mean affection and appropriation—“My Beloved.” If nobody else loves Him, I do. This is a distinguishing affection and I love Him because He belongs to me! He is mine, He has given Himself to me and I have chosen Him because He first chose me. He is “my Beloved.” I am not ashamed to put Him in front of all others and when men say, “What is your Beloved more than another beloved?” I can tell them that “My Beloved” is more than all the earthly beloveds put together! It is a delightful thing to get hold of Christ with both hands, as Thomas did when he said, “My Lord and my God.” There he held Him with a doublehanded grip and would not let Him go. It is sweet and saving even to come into contact with Him, as the woman did who touched the fringe of His garment, but, oh, to take Him up in your arms! To hold Him with both hands and say, “This Christ is mine. By a daring faith, warranted by the Word of God, I take this Christ to be mine, to have and to hold, for better or worse, and neither life nor death shall ever part me from Him who is ‘my Beloved!’”  
Now, there is a sweet name for the Lord Jesus Christ. My dear Hearers, can you speak of Jesus in that way, “my Beloved”? One who can, by the Spirit of God, say this, has uttered two words that have more eloquence in them than there is in all the orations of Demosthenes! He who cannot truly say this, though he may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, yet, since he has not this charity, this Divine Love in his heart, it profits him nothing! Oh, that every one of you could say, “My Beloved! My Beloved!”  
Do you all really know what saving faith is? It is the appropriation to one’s own self of Christ in His true and proper Character as God has revealed Him. Can you make this appropriation? “Oh,” says one, “I am afraid I would be stealing salvation if I did!” Listen! So long as you can get Christ anyway, you may have Him. There is never any stealing of that which is freely given! The difficulty is not about any rights that you have, for you have no rights whatever in this matter, but come and take what God gives to you, though you have no claim to it. Soul, take Christ, tonight, and if you take Him, you shall never lose Him! I was going to say, if you do even steal Him, so long as you do but take Him to yourself, He will never withdraw Himself from your grasp. It is written, “Him that comes to Me , I will in no wise cast out.” Some come properly and Christ does not cast them out. But there are some who come improperly—they come, as it were, limping on a wooden leg, or perhaps only creeping or crawling. It does not matter how you come to Christ, as long as you really come to Him—He will never cast you out! Get to Him anyway you can and, if you once come to Him, you may plead that blessed promise of His, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”  
I have told you, before, that some years ago I felt a great depression of spirit. I knew whom I had believed, but somehow, I could not get the comfort out of the Truths of God I preached. I even began to wonder whether I was really saved and, having a holiday, and being away from home, I went to a Wesleyan Chapel. A local preacher occupied the pulpit that morning. While he preached a sermon full of the Gospel, the tears flowed from my eyes and I was in such a perfect delirium of joy on hearing the Gospel, which I so seldom have an opportunity of doing, that I said, “Oh, yes, there is spiritual life within me, for the Gospel can touch my heart and stir my soul.” When I went to thank the good man for his sermon, he looked at me and he could hardly believe his eyes. He said, “Are you not Mr. Spurgeon? “I replied, “Yes.” “Dear, dear,” said he, “why, that is your sermon that I preached this morning!” Yes, I knew it was, and that was one reason why I was so comforted by it, because I felt that I could take my own medicine, and I said to myself, “There now, that which I have seen to have a certain effect upon others has had the same effect upon me.” I asked the preacher to my inn to dinner and we rejoiced together to think that he should have been led to give the people one of my sermons so that I should be fed out of my own cupboard. I know this, that whatever I may be, there is nothing that moves me like the Gospel of Christ! Do not many of you feel just as I do?  
II. Now I will lead you on to the second division of my subject. I have shown you what the Church calls her Lord. Now, in the second place, I will tell you WHENCE SHE CALLS HIM—“Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.” What does that mean? She cries to Him to come from the place where He now is, which she calls, “the mountains of spices.”  
Readers of Solomon’s Song know that there are four mountains spoken of in the Song. The first set of mountains is mentioned in the 17th verse of the second chapter of the Song where we read of the mountains of division—“Until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether,” or, the mountains of division, the divided crags, or the mountains that divide. Well now, Beloved, this was Christ’s first coming! There were mountains of division—our sins and God’s justice—like great mountains, divided us. How could God’s love ever come to us, or how could we get to it? There were mountains of division and, as we looked at them, we said, “They are impassable! Nobody can ever climb those lofty crags, or scale those awful precipices, or cross those dread abysses! These mountains effectually separate a guilty soul from a holy God and, my Brothers and Sisters, there was no way over those hills till Jesus came like a roe or a young hart! Roes and harts can stand on crags where men’s heads turn giddy and they fall—and our Divine Master was able to stand where we could not. He came leaping over the mountains of our sins and over the hills of Divine Justice, and He came even to us and opened up a way over the mountains of Bether, the mountains of division, by which God comes to us and we come to God. And now, instead of division, there is a sacred union!  
That was Christ’s first coming, over the mountains of division.  
But there were other mountains beside those—which you read of a little further on in the Song—these were the mountains of the leopards, the dens of the lions. Turn to the fourth chapter, at the eighth verse—“Come with Me from Lebanon, My spouse, with Me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions’ dens, from the mountains of the leopards.” When Christ came the first time, He met with fierce opposition from sin, and death, and Hell. These were the lions—these were the leopards—and our great Champion had to go hunting them and they hunted Him. You know how these grim lions met Him and how they tore Him—they rent His hands and His feet, and His side. Do you not remember how that great lion of the Pit came leaping upon Him—how He received him upon His breast, like a greater Samson—and though He fell in the death-struggle, He tore that lion asunder, as though he had been a kid and cast him down? As for His other enemies, He could truly say, “O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory? “Our Well-Beloved came to us over the mountains of the leopards and the dens of the lions, more than conqueror through the greatness of His love! Do you not see Him as He comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of His strength, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save? In spite of all opposition, He finished the work of our redemption!  
So Jesus came to us over the mountains of separation, and over the mountains of the leopards.  
But there is a third mountain mentioned in this wonderful poetical Book, and that is, the mountain of myrrh. In the sixth chapter at the second verse, it says, “My Beloved is gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.” It is called a garden, but in the sixth verse of the fourth chapter it is called a mountain— “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, I will get Me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.” You know the story well. After Jesus had come over the mountains of our sins. After He had killed the lions and the leopards that stood in our way, He gave up His soul into His Father’s hands and loving friends took His body, and wrapped it in white linen, and Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus brought myrrh and aloes to preserve His blessed body, that matchless case of a perfect Soul and, having wrapped Him, they laid Him in a new tomb, which thus became the garden or mountain of myrrh. A bitter thing was that grave wherein He buried all our sin, that grave out of which He came victorious over death, that grave out of which He rose that He might justify His people!  
That was the mountain of myrrh to which Jesus went for a very brief season. Scarcely three days was He there, but I think I can hear His Church standing at the tomb and saying, “Make haste, my Beloved! Be like a roe, or

a young hart, and come quickly from Your sleep with the dead in the mountains of myrrh.” It was but a short time that He was there, even as He said to His disciples, “A little while and you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me.” Soon was that slumber over and when He woke, as Samson carried away the gate of Gaza, so Christ arose and took up the gates of Death—posts and bar and all—and carried them away and neither death nor Hell can ever bring them back again! By the Resurrection of Christ, the tomb is opened, never to be closed again!  
The “mountain of myrrh” is the third that is mentioned in the Song, but our text refers to “the mountains of spices.” I am not stretching this passage, or drawing a lesson where there is none—the mountains of spices are those places where Jesus dwells at this very moment at the right hand of God. It is from there that we now call Him with the spouse when she said, “Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.  
What are these spices? Are they not Christ’s infinite merits which perfume Heaven and earth? The foul corruption of our sins is not perceptible because of the mountains of spices! One single sin would be vile enough to pollute a universe— what, then, were all our sins put together? Behold this wondrous sanitary power of Divine Grace! These mountains of spices more than nullify the foulness of our sins! Christ’s merit is perpetually before the eyes of His Father so that no longer does He perceive our sins!  
What shall I say next of these mountains of spices? Are they not our Lord’s perpetual and prevailing prayers? He intercedes for the people before the Throne of God. He is that great Angel from whose swinging censer there goes up, continually, the incense of intercession. The prayers of saints are presented by Him to His Father with all His own merit added to them. These are the mountains of spices—Christ’s infinite merits and His ceaseless prayers, His undying supplications to the great Father on behalf of all His people!  
In consequence of this, I think I may say that the praises of His glorified people, the sweet music of the harps of the redeemed, the everlasting symphonies of the spirits of just men made perfect and cleansed by His atoning blood—are not these as sweet spices before God? Yes, all Heaven is perfumed with everything that is precious and acceptable, full of a sweet savor unto God and a delightful fragrance to all His people! Now, this is where Jesus is now—not here in this foul, polluted world, but up yonder He rests in the mountains of spices! And the prayer of His Church is continually, “Come, my Beloved! Make haste, my Beloved! Be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.”  
III. That brings me to what is really the gist, the main point, the arrowhead of the text. We have noticed what the Church calls her Lord, and whence she calls Him. Now, thirdly, note HOW SHE CALLS HIM. She says, “Make haste, my Beloved, make haste.”  
Why is it that all the Church of God and each individual Christian in particular, should be found anxious for the speedy coming of our Lord Jesus Christ? I think, surely, that this is the result of true love. Does not love always wish to see the object on which its heart is fixed? When your dearest one parts from you for a while, do you not always wish for a speedy return? The parting is painful—it were bitter, indeed, if you did not expect to meet again. So you say, “Be no longer absent than you are forced to be. Come home as speedily as you can.” Where there is great love, there gets to be great longing, and that longing sometimes becomes so vehement as to be well-near impatient. May not the Church that mourns her absent Lord sigh and cry till He returns? Is not this the very language of intense love, “Make haste, my Beloved, and return to me”? If we love our Lord, we shall long for His appearing, you can be sure of that—it is the natural result of ardent affection.  
But, notwithstanding this, Beloved, we sometimes need certain incentives to stir up our souls to cry for our Lord’s return. One reason that ought to make the Believer long for Christ’s coming is that it will end this conflict. Our lot is cast in a wretched time, when many things are said and done that grieve and vex God’s Holy Spirit and all who are in sympathy with Him. Sometimes it is false doctrine that is proclaimed—and if you preach the Truth of God, they smite you on the mouth and then you say to yourself, “Would God the Lord would come!” At other times, it is sheer blasphemy that is uttered, when men say, “The Lord delays His coming,” or when they talk as if He were not Lord, as if His Gospel were no Gospel and His salvation were worn out. Then we say, “Make no tarrying, O our God! Come, Lord, and tarry not!” We grow almost impatient, then, for His coming.  
And, dear Friend, when you see the oppression of the poor, when you hear the cry of the needy, when you know that many of them are ground down to bitter poverty and yet are struggling hard to earn a bare pittance, you say, “Lord, will this state of things always exist? Shall not these wrongs be righted? Oh, that He would come who will judge the people righteously, and vindicate the cause of the poor and the oppressed!”  
Then we look on the professing Church and we see how lukewarm it is, how honeycombed it is with heresy and worldliness, and how often the Church that ought to honor Christ insults Him and He is wounded in the house of His friends. We say, “Will not this evil soon be at an end? Will not the conflict speedily be over?” Oh, how have I stood in the midst of the battle, when the deadly shafts have flown about me on the right hand and on the left and, wounded full sore, I have cried, “Will not the King, Himself, soon come, and shall I not, before long, hear the sound of those blessed feet whose every step means victory, and whose Presence is eternal life?” “Come, Lord! Make haste, my Beloved! Come to the rescue of Your weak and feeble servants! Come, come, come, we beseech You!” Put yourself into this great fight for the faith and if you have to bear the brunt of the battle, you will soon be as eager as I am that Jesus should make haste and come to your relief. You, also, will cry, “Make haste, my Beloved,” when you think what wonders He will work at His coming!  
What will Christ do at His coming? He will raise the dead. My eyes shall see Him in that day. “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” When Christ shall come the second time and that blast, of which we sang just now, “the loudest and the last,” shall ring through earth and Heaven, then shall the dead men arise! There are newly made graves. The mourners’ tears are not yet wiped away. There are the graves of many who have gone Home long ago and we remember them, and we say, “Would God that Christ would come and spoil death of those precious relics! Oh, that He would reanimate those bodies and call together the dry bones and bid them live!” Come, Lord! Come, Lord! Make no tarrying, we beseech You!  
And when He comes, Beloved, remember that then shall be the time of the glory of His people—“Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.” Slander will be rolled away in the day when Christ comes. The wicked shall awake to everlasting contempt, but the righteous to an everlasting justification. They shall be clear of every accusation in that day and then shall they sit on the Throne of God with their Lord. They were with Him in His humiliation—they shall be with Him in His Glory! They, too, were despised and rejected of men as He was, but in that day, none shall dare to despise them, for every saint shall be seen to be a king and a son of the King! Oh, the glory that awaits His people in the day of His coming! “It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He; for we shall see Him as He is.” Well may the child of God say, “Make haste, my Beloved!” Oh, for the sheathing of the sword and the waving of the palm! Oh, for the drying of the tear and the handling of the harp of gold! Oh, for the ending of the doubt and the trouble and the beginning of the everlasting enjoyment and the eternal serenity at the right hand of the EverBlessed One!  
Still, there is another reason why we say, “Make haste, my Beloved.” It is this. We desire to share in Christ’s Glory, but our chief desire is that our Lord may be glorified. I believe I shall have the support of every Christian heart when I say that we would a thousand times rather that Christ were glorified than that we should be honored. Many years ago, after the Surrey Music Hall accident, I well-near lost my reason through distress of heart. I was broken down in spirit and thought that, perhaps, I might never preach again. I was but a young man and it was a great burden that crushed me into the dust through that terrible accident. But one passage of Scripture brought me recovery in a moment. I was alone and as I was thinking, this text came to my mind, “Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior,” and I said to myself, “Is that so? Is Jesus Christ exalted? Then I do not care if I die in a ditch! If Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, that is enough for me.”  
I distinctly recollect remembering what is recorded of some of Napoleon’s soldiers who were well-near cut to pieces—lying dying, bleeding, suffering, agonizing on the battlefield—but when the Emperor rode by, every man lifted himself up as best he could, some resting on the only arm that was left, just to look at him once more and shout, “Vive l’Empereur!” The Emperor had come along. He was all right and that was enough for his faithful followers! I think that I felt just like that— whatever happened to me, it was true of Christ, “Him has God exalted.” Never mind what becomes of the man—the King lives and reigns! Jesus Christ is glorified and so long as that is the case, what matters it what becomes of us? I think I can say for you, as well as for myself, that if there is anything in this world that will glorify Christ, you will make no hesitation about the bargain. If it will glorify Christ, you say, let it come. Though your name should be cast out as evil and your body should be left unburied, to be gnawed of dogs, what matters it, so long as He who loved us and gave Himself for us, should ride on conquering and to conquer in the midst of the sons of men?  
To every loyal soldier of King Jesus, this is the best thought in connection with His Second Advent, that when He comes, it will be to be admired in His saints and to be glorified in all them that believe! Then shall there be universal acclamations to Him and His enemies shall hide their heads in shame and dismay. Oh, what will they do, then? What will they do in that day of His appearing? They, also, will live again and what will they do in that day? Judas, where are you? Come here, man! Sell your Lord, again, for 30 pieces of silver! What does he say? Why, he flees and wishes that he could again go out and destroy himself, but that is impossible. Now Pilate, vacillating Pilate, wash your hands in water and say, “I am innocent of the blood of this just Person.” There is no water for him to wash his hands, and he dares not, again, perform that wicked farce! And now, you who cried, “Crucify Him, crucify Him,” lift up your voices, again, if you dare!  
Not a dog moves his tongue, but listen, they have found their tongues and what do they say? They are imploring the hills to fall upon them! They are calling on the rocks to hide them! The King has not put His hand upon His sword, He has not sent forth His lightning to scatter you—why do you flee, you cowards? Hear their bitter wail! “Oh, rocks and hills, hide us from the face, from the face, from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne!” It is the face of Jesus which they were bid to look upon, that they might live, but now, in another state, they dare not look upon that face of placid love which, in that day, shall be more stern than the frowning brow of vengeance, itself! Yes, they flee, they flee!  
But you who have trusted Christ, you whom He has saved—you will draw near to Him, you will shout His praises, you will delight in Him! It shall be your Heaven to bless Him forever and ever! Oh, yes, great Master, “Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices” and all His saints, with one voice and heart, will say, “Amen.”  
Oh, that you who have never trusted Him, would trust Him, now! And if you trust Him, you shall live with Him forever and ever. God grant it! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **REVELATION 22.**

Verse 1 . And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb. There is no other “water of life” except that which springs from a Sovereign God and a substitutionary Sacrifice—“a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb.” This sets forth the blessings of salvation that come to us through the Sovereign Grace of God by the precious blood of Jesus.

2. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bore twelve manner of fruit, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. When Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, he was cast out of Eden, lest he should also eat of the tree of life, but our new “tree of life” yields us both medicine and food. Blessed are they that eat of it—they shall find a Divine variety of mercies—“twelve manner of fruits.” They shall find a constant succession of blessings—“and yielded her fruit every month.” And there shall be an ever-present power of healing—“the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

3. And there shall be no more curse: but the Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him. Happy servants, to be permitted so to do! Here, dear Friends, we are hindered in our service, but I think that it will be Heaven enough for some of us to be permitted to serve the Lord forever in Glory—“His servants shall serve Him.”

4. And they shall see His face. Oh, to keep up communion with the Lord while you are at work for Him! To serve Him and to see His face! This is a double joy! This is to be like Martha and Mary in one person— “His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face.”

4. And His name shall be on their foreheads. They will acknowledge Him and He will acknowledge them. They are glad to wear His name on their foreheads, but who wrote it there? He, Himself, engraved it, as the seal and token that they were His! Happy, happy people, thus to be acknowledged of God as His peculiar people while they acknowledge Him as their only Lord!

5. And there shall be no night there. Here, there are nights of ignorance, of sorrow, of sin and of fear, but, “there shall be no night there.”  
6. And they need no candles, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light. He puts aside the use of means. While we are here, we need candles and suns. It seems curious, does it not, to put candles and suns in the same sentence? “They need no candle, neither light of the sun.” But, after all, compared with God, candles and suns are very much the same thing! Great lights and little lights are all limited, all less than nothing in comparison with the boundless, infinite God, who is Light, and the Source of all light that exists in Heaven above, or on the earth beneath.

6. And they shall reign forever and ever. It must be a wonderful city in which every inhabitant is a king—and not a dethroned king, either, for, “they shall reign.” Every redeemed one in Heaven has also an everlasting kingdom—“They shall reign forever and ever.” I hope our friends who are always cutting down the meaning of the word, “everlasting,” will be good enough, at least, to let us have an everlasting Heaven! Whether they do so, or not, we believe that the saints shall reign “forever and ever.”

6, 7. And He said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy Prophets sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly. Or, “I am coming quickly.”

7. Blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this Book. Our Lord is on the road! He may arrive, tonight, while we are sitting here. Happy would be our communion service if, for the last time, we should be doing as He commanded us in expectation of His coming—and that He should come even while we were commemorating His death!

8, 9. And I, John, saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then said he unto me, See you do it not: for I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the Prophet, and of them which keep the sayings of this Book: worship God. John made a mistake—he mistook the messenger for the Master and I am not surprised that he did so, for the heavenly beings are like their Lord when they see Him as He is! John was quickly set right and his error was soon corrected. He was bidden to pay no kind of homage to one who, however bright and holy, was only his fellow servant. No worship of angels, no worship of angelic men must be tolerated among us. “Worship God,” is the command to us as it was to John.

10. And he said unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this Book: for the time is at hand. There was no need to seal the prophecy, as though it only related to those who would live in distant ages—“The time is at hand.”

11. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. This is what will be said when Christ comes to judgment, when we get into that future state. Today the voice of Jesus says, “Repent, Repent, Repent,” but once cross the narrow stream of death and pass out of the dispensation of mercy—and then character is fixed—and fixed forever.

12. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according to his work shall be. What reward will some of you get? Christ will “give every man according as his work shall be.”

13-15. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For outside are dogs. Men of a quarrelsome and filthy spirit.

15. And sorcerers. Such as pretend to have dealings with spirits and who intermeddle with the mysterious things of the unknown world.  
15. And whoremongers. All such as indulge their evil passions.  
15. And murderers, and idolaters, and whoever loves and makes a lie. Whether it is a lie about things on earth or things in Heaven, a falsehood spoken or a false doctrine taught.  
16-18. I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the Rock and the Offering of David, and the bright and morning afar. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears, say, come. And let him that is thirsty, come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify unto every man that hears the Words of the prophecy of this Book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book. The Book is finished. Not another line of Inspiration may any man dare to put to it on peril that God shall add to him every plague of which the Book speaks!  
19. And if any man shall take away from the Words of the Book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this Book. The Book is perfect. You cannot take a line from it without spoiling it if you were to cut from it a solitary text. It would be misused and the Book should be marred. You would do this at your peril, for God threatens to take away, out of the Book of Life, the name of anyone who takes anything from “the words of the Book of this prophecy.”  
20. He which testifies these thing says, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Thus we sang just now—  
**“Come, You, the soul of all our joys  
You, the desire of nations, come!”**  
21. The Grace of our lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. The whole Inspired Volume thus closes with a benediction—“The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—346, 350, 349.  
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LEANING ON OUR BELOVED  
NO. 877

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 20, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?” Song of Solomon 8:5.**

CAREFUL readers will have noticed that in the verses which precede my text, the spouse had been particularly anxious that her communion with her Lord might not be disturbed. Her language is intensely earnest, “I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, until He please.” She valued much the fellowship with which her Beloved solaced her. She was jealously alarmed lest she should endanger the continuance of it, lest any sin on her part or on the part of her companions should cause the Beloved to withdraw Himself in anger.

Now it is a very striking fact that immediately after we read a verse so full of solicitous care concerning the maintenance of communion, we immediately fall upon another verse in which the upward progress of that same spouse is the theme of admiration. She who would not have her beloved disturbed is the same bride who comes up from the wilderness, leaning herself upon Him, from which it is clear that there is a most intimate connection between communion with Christ and progress in Divine Grace. Therefore the more careful we are to maintain fellowship with our Lord, the more successful shall we be in going from strength to strength in all those holy Graces which are landmarks on the road to Glory.

The wellhead and fountain of growth in Grace is well-sustained communion and manifest oneness with Christ. We may strive after moral virtue if we will, but we shall be like those foolish children who pluck flowers and thrust them into their little gardens without roots. But if we strive after increasing faith in Jesus, we shall be as wise men who plant choice bulbs and living seeds, from which shall, in due time, rise up the golden cups or the azure bells of lovely flowers—emblems of things that are lovely and of good repute. To live near to Christ is the one thing necessary! To keep up that nearness and never to suffer our fellowship to be interrupted should be our one great business here below, and all other things, this being sought after in the first place, will be added to us.

We shall come up from the wilderness when we are anxious that our Beloved’s fellowship with us shall not be disturbed. That preface strikes the keynote of this morning’s discourse. Our real theme, whatever may be the form our meditation shall take, will be communion with Christ as the source of spiritual progress.

I. We shall, without further prefatory remarks, come at once to the consideration of the text and we shall notice THE HEAVENLY PILGRIM AND HER DEAR COMPANION. “Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved”? Every soul that journeys towards Heaven has Christ for its Associate. Jesus suffers no pilgrim to the New Jerusalem to travel unattended. He is with us in sympathy. He has trod every step of the way before us. Whatever our temptations, He has been so tempted. Whatever our afflictions, He has been so afflicted. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having been tempted in all points like as we are.

Nor is Jesus near us in sympathy alone—He is with us to render practical assistance. When we least perceive Him, He is often closest to us. When the howling tempest drowns His voice and the darkness of the night hides His Person, still He is there and we need not be afraid. It is no fiction, no dream, no piece of imagination that Christ is really with His people. “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world,” is true of all His saints. And, “Fear not for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God,” is no meaningless assertion, but to be understood as a certain Truth of God and a practical truth. In every step of this pilgrimage, from the wicket-gate of repentance up to the pearly gate which admits the perfect into Paradise, Jesus Christ, in sympathy of heart and in actual Presence of help, is very near to His people. Be this the pilgrim’s encouragement this morning.

Dear Friends, who among us would not undertake a journey in such company? If He were here today and said, “My Child, I call you to go on pilgrimage,” perhaps you would start back with dark forebodings of the way. But if He added, “But I will be with you where ever you go,” we should each one reply, “Through floods, or flames, if You lead, we will follow You where You go. Lead the van, O Crucified and we will follow You. Let us but see your footprints on the road and whether the path winds up the Hill of Difficulty, or descends into the Valley of Humiliation, it shall be the best road that ever mortal footsteps trod if it is but marked with the tokens of Your most blessed Presence.” Courage, then, you wayfarers who traverse the vale of tears—you come up from the wilderness in dear company, for One like unto the Son of God is at your side.

Note the title that is given to the companion of the spouse. “ Her Beloved.” Indeed, He of whom the song here speaks is beloved above all others. He was the beloved of His Father before the earth was. He was declared to be the Lord’s Beloved in the waters of Jordan and at other times, when out of the excellent Glory there came the voice, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Beloved of His Father now, our Jesus sits forever glorious at God’s right hand. Jesus is the Beloved of every angel and of all the bright seraphic spirits that crowd around the Throne of His august majesty, casting their crowns before His feet and lifting up their ceaseless hymns. They are not merely servants who obey because they must, but reverent admirers who serve because they love.

He is the Beloved of every being of pure heart and holy mind. The hosts triumphant, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, sing that word, “Beloved,” with an emphasis which our colder hearts as yet have failed to reach, but still is He Beloved of the militant band this side the Jordan. Yes, Lord, with all that we have to confess of hardness and indifference, we do love You and You know it—

*“Would not our heart pour forth its blood, In honor of Your name,  
And challenge the cold hand of Death  
To quench the immortal flame?”*

The adamant is softer than our hearts by nature and yet the love we bear You, O divine Redeemer, stimulated by the love which You have manifested to us, has made our soul to melt in Your Presence—

*“Yes, we love You and adore.  
O for Grace to love You more.”*

Note well that the sweetest word of the name is, “leaning on her Beloved.” That Jesus is beloved is most true, but is He my Beloved? Ah, if this is true, there is a Heaven wrapped up in it! Say, you who are listening to the Word this morning, is Jesus your Beloved? Do you love Him? Can you put forth the finger of your timid faith and touch the hem of His garment and receive the virtue which goes out of Him? Do you dare to say, “He is all my salvation and all my desire. Other refuge have I none, my soul hangs in her utter helplessness entirely upon Him”? Then is He your Beloved, and the more you can foster the well-grounded belief that Jesus is yours, the more you can roll that Truth of God under your tongue as a sweet morsel and the happier and holier will you be!

Realize the fact that Jesus is as actually and truly yours as is your husband, your wife, your child, your mother, or your own self—then will peace and love reign within your spirit. The spouse could not have leaned on Jesus as the Beloved, she could only find rest in Him as her Beloved. Till you get a sense of His being yours you do not dare to lean, but when you come to know that Christ is yours by an act of appropriating faith, then comes the after-result of faith in the consecrated repose which the soul feels in the power and love of Him on whom she relies. Thus, O pilgrim to the skies, you are reminded that you have with you a Companion whose name to you is, “my Beloved.”

Pause awhile and look about you! Do you not see Him? Can you perceive the marks of His Presence? Then rejoice that you are found in such company and take care to enjoy the honors and privileges which such society secures you!

II. We now pass on to something deeper. We have said that the pilgrim has a dear Companion, but that much of the blessedness of the text lies in HER POSTURE TOWARDS HIM. “Who is this that comes up from the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved?” Her posture, then, is that of “leaning.” His relation to her is that of a Divine support. What does this leaning mean? Why, first of all, there can be no leaning on another unless we believe in that other’s presence and nearness. A man does not lean on a staff which is not in his hand, nor on a friend of whose presence he is not aware.

The instincts which lead us to preserve our uprightness would not permit us to lean on a shadow or on a nothing. It behooves you then, Christian, if you would be like this wondrous woman in the text, to seek to be conscious of the Presence of Christ. It is true your senses cannot perceive Him, but your senses are less to be relied upon than your faith, for senses may be mistaken, but the faith of God’s elect errs not. God makes that which faith depends upon to be more real than anything which the senses can perceive. Christ Jesus is with you. Though you hear not His voice and see not His face—He is with you. Try to grasp that Truth of God and to realize it clearly, for you will never lean until you do.

Leaning also implies nearness. We cannot lean on that which is far off and unapproachable. Now, it is a delightful help to us in believing repose if we can understand that Christ is not only with us, but to an intense degree near us. I love that hymn we sang just now [“Condescending Love,” No. 784, in Our Own Hymn-Book.] concerning our Lord’s coming near to us and making His name a common word among us. The Christ of a great many professors is only fit to occupy a niche on the Church wall, as a dead, inactive, but revered person. Jesus is not a real Christ to many, he is not a Christ who can really befriend them in the hour of grief. He is not a Brother born for adversity, not a condescending Companion.

But the Christ of the well-taught Christian is one that lives and was dead and is alive forevermore—a sympathizing, practical Friend who is actually near, entering into our sorrows, sharing in our crosses and taking a part with us in all the battle of life. Come, child of God, see that it is thus with you. Realize Christ, first, and then believe that He is nearer to you than friend or kinsman can be, for He pours His counsels right into your heart—being so near that at times when your secret trouble cannot be shared by any mortal—it is shared by Him. He is so near that when your heart’s inmost recesses must necessarily be locked up to all other sympathy, those recesses are all open to His tenderness. He is so near to you that you abide in Him and He abides in you! A sacred unity exists between you and Him, so that you drink of His cup and are baptized with His baptism and in all your sorrows and your afflictions He Himself does take His share.

These two things being attended to, leaning now becomes easy. To lean implies the throwing of one’s weight from one’s self on to another and this is the Christian’s life. The first act that made him a Christian at all was when the whole weight of his sin was laid on Christ. When by faith the sinner ceased to carry his own burden, but laid that burden on the great Substitute’s shoulder, it was that leaning which made him a Christian. In proportion as he learns this lesson of casting all his burden upon his Lord, he will be more and more a Christian—and when he shall have completely unloaded himself and cast all his matters upon his God and shall live in the power and strength of God and not in his own—then shall he have attained to the fullness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

To lean, I say, is to throw your weight off of yourself on to another— being fatigued, to make another fatigued if he can be. Being wearied, to make another take your weariness and so yourself to proceed with your load transferred to a substitute. Yes, I repeat it, this is the true Christian life—to leave everything that troubles me with Him who loves me better than I love myself! To leave all that depresses me with Him whose wisdom and whose power are more than a match for all emergencies. Herein is wisdom, never to try to stand alone by my own strength, never to trust to creatures, for they will fail me if I rest upon them—but to make my ever blessed Lord Christ, in His Manhood and in his Godhead, the leaning place of my whole soul—casting every burden upon Him who is able to bear it.

This is what I think is meant in the text by leaning. One would imagine that there must have been of late years a society for the improvement of texts of Scripture. And if so I cannot congratulate that honorable company upon its success. This text has been a favorite object of the society’s care, for I think I never heard it quoted correctly in my life. It is generally quoted, “Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon the arm of her Beloved?” But it is not so in the text at all. There is no distinct reference to an arm at all. There is an arm, here, undoubtedly, but there is a great deal more—there is a whole Person—and the text speaks of leaning upon the whole Person of “her Beloved.”

Observe, then, that the Christian leans upon Christ in His personality and completeness—not merely upon the arm of His strength, as that altered text would have it—but upon the whole Christ. The leaning place of a Christian is, first of all, Christ’s Person. We depend upon the Lord Jesus as God and as Man. As God, He must be able to perform every promise and to achieve every Covenant engagement. We lean upon that Divinity which bears up the pillars of the universe. Our dependence is upon the Almighty God, Incarnate in human form, by whom all things were created and by whom all things consist.

We lean also upon Christ as Man—we depend upon His generous human sympathies. Of a woman born, He is partaker of our flesh. He enters into our sicknesses and infirmities with a pitiful compassion which He could not have felt if He had not been the Son of Man. We depend upon the love of His Humanity as well as upon the potency of His Deity. We lean upon our Beloved as God and Man. Ah, I have known times when I have felt that none but God could bear me up. There are other seasons when, under a sense of sin, I have started back from God and felt that none but the Man Christ Jesus could minister peace to my anguished heart. Taking Christ in the double Nature as God and Man, He becomes, then, a suitable leaning place for our spirit, whatever may happen to be the state in which our mind is found.

Beloved, we lean upon Christ Himself in all His offices. We lean upon Him as Priest. We expect our offerings and our praises and our prayers to be received because they are presented through Him. Our leaning for acceptance is on Him. We lean upon Him as our Prophet. We do not profess to know or to be able to discover Truths of God of ourselves, but we sit at His feet and what He teaches, that we receive as certainty. We lean upon Him as our King. He shall fight our battles for us and manage all the affairs of our heavenly citizenship. We have no hope of victory but in the strength of Him who is the Son of David and the King of kings.

We lean upon Christ in all His attributes. Sometimes it is His wisdom— in our dilemmas He directs us. At other times it is His faithfulness—in our strong temptations He abides the same. At one time His power gleams out like a golden pillar and we rest on it, and at another moment His tenderness becomes conspicuous and we lean on that. There is not a trait of His Character, there is not a mark of His Person, whether Human or Divine, but what we feel it safe to lean upon because He is as a whole Christ— Perfection’s own self, lovely and excellent beyond all description! We lean our entire weight upon HIM, not on His arm—not on any part of His Person—but upon HIM!

Beloved, there is no part of the pilgrimage of a saint in which he can afford to walk in any other way but in the way of leaning. He comes up at the first and he comes up at the last, still leaning, still leaning upon Christ Jesus. Yes, and leaning more and more heavily upon Christ the older he gets. The stronger the Believer becomes, the more conscious he is of his personal weakness. Therefore, the more fully does he cast himself upon his Lord and lean with greater force on Him. Beloved, it is a blessed thing to keep to this posture in all we do. Oh, it is good preaching when you lean on the Beloved as you preach and feel, “He will help me. He will give me thoughts and words. He will bless the message. He will fill the hungry with good things and make the Sabbath to be a delight to His people.”

Oh, it is blessed praying when you can lean on the Beloved! You feel, then, that you cannot be denied. You have come into the King’s court and brought your Advocate with you and you lay your prayer at the foot of the Throne, the Prince Himself putting His own sign manual and seal and stamp of love upon your desires! This is the sweet way to endure and suffer with content. Who would not suffer when Jesus makes the bed of our sickness and props us up and gives us tokens of His love? This is the Divine method of working. Believe me, no sacred work can long be continued with energy except in this spirit, for flesh flags and even the spirit languishes except there is the constant leaning upon the Beloved.

As for you men of business, you with your families and with your shops and with your fields, and your enterprises—you will find it poor living unless you evermore lean on your Beloved in all things. If you can bring your daily cares, your domestic troubles, your family sicknesses, your personal infirmities, your losses and your crosses—if you can bring all things to Jesus, it will be easy and happy living! Even the furnace itself, when the coals glow most, is cool and comfortable as a royal chamber spread for banqueting with the king when the soul reclines on the bosom of Divine Love! O you saints, strive after more of this!

We are such lovers of caring for ourselves. We so want to set up on our own account. We pine to run alone while our legs are too weak. We aspire to stand alone when the only result can be a fall. Oh, to give up this willfulness which is our weakness and like a babe to lie in the mother’s bosom, conscious that our strength is not in ourselves, but in that dear bosom which bears us up! I would gladly encourage the heir of Heaven who is in trouble, to lean! I can encourage you from experience. The Lord has laid on me many burdens in connection with much serving in His Church and I sometimes grow very weary. But whenever I bring myself, or rather the Holy Spirit brings me to the point that it is clear that I cannot do anything of myself—and do not mean to try, but will just be God’s obedient servant and ready instrument, and will leave every care with Him— then it is that peace returns, thought becomes free and vigorous, and the soul once more, having cast aside its burden, runs without weariness and walks without fainting!

I am sure, my dear fellow servants, life will break you down—this London life especially—unless you learn the habit of leaning on Jesus! Be not afraid to lean too much. There was never yet a saint blamed for possessing too much faith! There was never such a thing known as a child of God who was scolded by the Divine Father for having placed too implicit reliance upon His promise. The Lord has said, “As, your day your strength shall be.” He has promised, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” He has told you that the birds of the air neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns and yet are fed. He has assured you that the lilies of the field toil not, neither do they spin and yet your heavenly Father makes them more beautiful than Solomon in all his glory. Why do you not cast your care on Him who cares for ravens and for flowers of the field? Why are you not assured that He will also care for you?

Thus much upon the leaning. “Who is this that comes up from the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved?”  
III. Our third point shall be, HER REASONS FOR THUS LEANING. She was a pilgrim and she leaned on her Beloved—was she justified in such leaning? Every confidence is not wise. There are refuges of lies and helpers of no value. Ahithophel are a numerous race. He that eats bread with us does lift up his heel against us. Friends who seemed to be strong and faithful turn out to be as broken reeds, or as sharp spears to pierce us to our hurt. Did she do well, then, in leaning on her Beloved? What were her reasons?  
She did well and her reasons were, some of them, as follows. She leaned on her Beloved because she was weak. Strength will not lean— conscious strength scorns dependence. My Soul, do you know anything of your weakness? It is a sorrowful lesson to learn, but oh, it is a blessed and profitable lesson which not only must be learned, but which it were well for you to pray to learn more and more, for there is no leaning upon Christ except in proportion as you feel you must. I believe that as long as we have a grain of self-sufficiency, we never trust in the All-Sufficient. While there is anything of self left we prefer to feed on it and only when, at last, the moldy bread becomes too sour for eating and even the husks that the swine eat are such as cannot fill our belly—it is only then that we humbly ask for the Bread of Heaven to satisfy us. My Soul, learn to hate every thought of self-sufficiency.  
Brothers and Sisters, do you not find yourselves tempted at times, especially if you have had a happy week and have been free from trials, to think, “Now, I am really better than a great many. I think I am now growing to be an old experienced saint. I have now escaped the power of ordinary temptations and have become so advanced in Divine Grace that there is no likelihood of my sinning in those directions in which new converts show their weakness”? There is your weak point! Set a double guard where you think you are strongest! Just when you are most afraid, and say to yourself, “O that I might be kept from such a sin—I know that is my besetment and I am afraid I shall be led into it,” you are less likely to sin there than anywhere. Your weakness is your strength, your strength is your weakness. Be nothing, for only so can you be anything. Be poor in spirit, for only so can you be rich towards God. The spouse leaned because she was weak.  
Brother, Sister, is not this good argument for you? For me? Are we not also weak? Come then, let us lean wholly upon Him who is not weak, but to whom all power belongs to bear all His people safely through. She leaned, again, on her Beloved, because the way was long. She had been going through the wilderness. It was a long journey and she began to weaken, and therefore she leaned. And the way is long with us—we have been converted to God, now, some of us these 20 years. Others these 40— and there are some in this house who have known the Lord more than 60 years and this is a long time in which to be tempted and tried.  
Sin is mighty and flesh is weak. If one good spurt would win the race, the most of us would strain every nerve. But to tug on at the weary oar year after year when the novelty has gone and when there comes another sort of novelty—fresh temptations and new allurements which we knew not of before—O Soul, to win the crown by pressing on and on and on, till we hear the Master’s plaudit is no mean labor! If we can lean, we shall hold on, but no way else. Faith, casting herself upon the power of her Lord, never grows exhausted. She is like the eagle when it renews its youth. She drinks from the fountainhead of all vitality and her lost vigor comes back to her. Such a soul would be strong evermore though she had to live the life of a Methuselah! Myriads of years would not exhaust her, for she has learned to cast that which exhausts upon Him who is inexhaustible and therefore keeps on the even tenor of her way! She leaned because the road was long. Aged friends, here is good argument for you. And young men and maidens, who have lately set out on pilgrimage, since the way may be long for you, here, also, is good reason for your leaning at the beginning and leaning on to the end. She leaned again, because the road was perilous. Did you notice, she came up from the wilderness! The wilderness is not at all a safe place for a pilgrim. Here it is where the lion prowls and the howl of the wolf is heard—but she leaned on her Beloved and she was safe. If the sheep fears the wolf, he had better keep close to the shepherd, for then the shepherd’s rod and staff will drive the wolf away.  
There is no safety for us except in close communion with Christ. Every step you get away from Jesus your danger doubles—and when you have lost the sense of His sacred Presence—your peril is at the maximum. Come back, come back, you Wanderer, and get close to your Great Helper and then you may laugh to scorn the fiends of Hell, the temptations of life, and even the pangs of death—for he is blessedly safe who leans all on Christ! The careful are not safe, the fretful are not safe, the anxious are not safe—they are tossed to and fro in a frail boat upon a sea whose waves are too strong for them—but those who leave their cares to the great Caring One, those who cast their anxieties upon Him who never forgets—these are always safe.  
“Trust in the Lord and do good, so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed.” “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” There may come a famine, notwithstanding all your industry. You may rise up weary and set up late and eat the bread of carefulness and yet have no prosperity. You may keep the city and the watchman may pass along the walls each hour of the night and yet it may be taken by assault. But blessed is he that trusts in the Lord, for neither shall his city be destroyed, nor shall famine come to his land. Or, if so, in famine he shall be fed and in the days of peril the angels shall keep watch and ward about him. Lean, then, upon the Beloved, because the way is perilous. This is good reasoning for all of us, for we are in danger and tempted on all sides—liable to sin for a thousand causes. O my Brethren, in this age of temptation, lean on the Beloved—He is your only safety!  
Again, she leaned on the Beloved because her route was ascending. Did you notice it? “Coming up.” The Christian’s way is up—never content with past attainments, but up—not satisfied with Graces to which he has reached, but up. He is not good who does not desire to be better. He is not gracious who would not be more gracious. You know not the light if you do not desire more light. The heavenly way is upward, upward, upward, upward! This is the way to Heaven. The tendency of man’s nature is downward. How soon we descend and how prone is our soul, from her most elevated condition, to sink back into the dull dead level of her natural estate! If we are to go up, we must lean. Christ is higher than we are— if we lean, we shall rise the more readily to His elevation. He comes down to us that we, leaning upon Him, may go up to Him.  
The more we lean, the more truly we cast the weight of our spiritual wrestling, spiritual struggling, spiritual growth upon Him—the more surely shall we gain the wrestling, the struggling and the growth. Depend as much for growth in Grace upon Christ as for the pardon of sin. He is made of God unto you sanctification as well as redemption. Look for sanctification through the blood, for it is a purifier as well as a pardoner. The same blood which puts away the guilt of sin is, by the Holy Spirit, applied as a blood of sprinkling to put away from us the reigning power of sin. O that we knew more about this, this going up! But I am afraid we do not go up because we do not lean. If there is here, this morning, a poor child of God who cries, “I am the chief of sinners, and my only hope is in my blessed Lord! I do not feel that I grow in the least. I sometimes think I get worse and worse, but one thing I do know, I trust Him more than I ever did and feel my need of Him more.”  
Dear Heart, you are the very one who is going up! I know you are, for you are leaning. But if there is another who boasts, “I believe I have made distinct advances in the Divine life and I feel that I am growing strong and vigorous and I believe that one of these days I shall have reached to perfection,” I think it is very likely that this Brother is going down! At any rate, I would recommend to him this prayer—“Hold You me up and I shall be safe”—and this caution, “Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”  
Yet I must detain you another moment to observe that the spouse leaned on her Beloved because her walk was daily separating her more and more from the whole host of her other companions. The Church is in the wilderness, but this traveler was coming up from the wilderness. She was getting away from the band marching through the desert, getting more and more alone. It is so and you will find it so—the nearer you get to Christ, the more lonely you must necessarily be in certain respects. The sinner is in the broad way, where thousands walk. The Christian is in the narrow way—there are fewer in this way—and if the Believer keeps in the center of the narrow way and if he presses on with vigor, he will find his companions to be fewer and fewer. I mean the companions of his own stature—those of his own size and his own attainments.  
And if he continues in rapid advances, he will at last get to such a position that he will see no man except Jesus only, and then he will be sure to lean more heavily than ever, since he will have discovered that all men are vanity and all confidences in an arm of flesh are but lies and deceit! The spouse leaned upon her Beloved because she felt sure that He was strong enough to bear her weight. He upon whom she leaned was no other than God over all blessed forever, who cannot fail, nor be discouraged. She leaned yet again, because He was her Beloved. She would have felt it unwise to lean if He were not mighty. She would have been afraid to lean if He had not been dear to her. So is it, the more you love the more you trust, and the more you trust the more you love.  
These twin Graces of faith and hope live and flourish together. In proportion as that dear crucified Savior reigns in your soul and His beauties ravish your heart—in that proportion you feel that all is safe because it is in His hands. And then, on the other hand, in proportion as you trust all to Him and have not a suspicion or a doubt, in that proportion your soul will be knit to Him in affection. I appeal to any here who are the servants of Christ, but have fallen out of the habit of leaning, whether it would not be well to return to it! Was not it better with you when you did lean than it is now? Before you set up for yourselves, were you not happier and better than now? Before you let that wicked pride of yours get the upper hand, you were apt to take every daily trouble and burden to your Lord. But at last you thought you were wise enough to manage for yourselves.  
I ask you, have you not from that very day met with many sorrows and defeats and down-castings? And there is this pang about all untrustful living—if a man gets into any troubles through his own wisdom—then he has to blame himself for it. But if any trial comes upon us directly from God, then we feel we cannot blame ourselves—it belongs to our God to do as He wills. And since He cannot err, we expect that He will justify His own proceedings. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes. Wait only upon God and let your expectations be from Him, and He shall bring forth your judgment as the light and your righteousness as the noonday. And in the day when the wicked shall be confounded and they that trusted in themselves shall be melted away as the fat of rams, you shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of your Father!  
IV. And now let us close. The last point is this—THE PERSON AND THE PEDIGREE of her who leaned upon her Beloved. The text says, “Who is this?” What made them enquire, “Who is this?” It was because they were so astonished to see her looking so happy and so little wearied. Nothing amazes worldlings more than genuine Christian joy. Holy peace in disturbing times is a puzzle to the ungodly. When they hear the righteous sing, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore we will not fear though the earth is removed and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea,” they say to one another, “Where did these men learn that tune? They are men of like passions with ourselves, how is it they have learned, thus, to bear trials?”  
Therefore they enquire, “Who is this? Who is this?” What fine a thing it would be if we all so leaned upon Christ in all respects as to enjoy unbroken serenity, so that our kinsfolk and neighbors would be led to enquire, “Who is this?” Then might we have an opportunity of telling them concerning our Well-Beloved, who is the stay of our peace and the source of our comfort. Who, then, is this that leans on her Beloved? I will tell you. Her name was once called, “outcast,” whom no man seeks after, but according to this old Book her name is now Hephzibah, for the Lord delights in her. The name of the soul that trusts in God and finds peace in so doing, was by nature a name of shame and sin. We were afar off from God even as others—and if any soul is brought to trust in Christ, it is not from any natural goodness in it, or any innate propensity towards such trusting—it is because Divine Grace has worked a wondrous transformation and God the Holy Spirit has made those who were not a people to be called the people of God.  
Good news is this for any of you who feel your guilt this morning! You have been, up to now, serving Satan, but mercy can yet bring you to lean upon the Beloved. Divine Grace can bring you up from the wilderness instead of permitting you to go down into the Pit. She who today joyously trusts in her God was once a weeping Hannah, a woman of a sorrowful spirit—but now her soul rejoices in the Lord, for He has remembered her low estate. She was once a sinful Rahab, dwelling in a city doomed to destruction, but she has hung the scarlet line of faith in the precious blood in her window—and if all others perish, she shall be secure in the day of destruction.  
She who is here spoken of is a Ruth. She came from afar as an idolatress—she left the land of her nativity and she has entered into union with the Lord and His people. Her cry is, “Where you dwell I will dwell. Your people shall be my people, your God shall be my God.” She was once a stranger, but she is now an Israelite, indeed. She was once accursed, but she is now blessed. She was once foul, but now washed—once lost, but now found again. In a word, the soul that leans upon Christ habitually every day and casts her care upon Him, is one of a princely race! She has been begotten into the family of God! The blood imperial flows within her veins and in the day when the crowns of princes and of emperors shall melt into the common dust to which they belong, the crown jewels and the diadems of these believing souls shall glitter with immortal splendor in the kingdom of God!  
My dear Hearer, do you trust Jesus? Has the Holy Spirit move you to begin to trust Him today? If so, though your journey is in a wilderness of trouble, you shall come up out of it to a paradise of bliss and your peace and your comfort shall all spring from leaning on the Well-Beloved. The Lord bless us and teach us that sacred art of dependence on the Beloved for Christ’s sake. Amen.

*PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Psalm 63 and John 15:1-11.*  
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Sermon #3516 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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LOVE AND JEALOUSY  
NO. 3516

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY JUNE 15, 1916.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave.” Song of Solomon 8:6.

TAKEN in its most natural sense, this is certainly true of creature love. It is a mighty, all-constraining, irresistible passion. Even the love of friendship occasionally has proved itself to be “strong as death.” “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend.” There have been those who were willing to sacrifice their lives for their friends. Filial affection has sometimes proven to be more than a match for the terrors of the grave. Some pleasing instances are on record worthy to be written among the golden deeds of manhood in which brothers and sisters have seemed to contend with each other who should die first, if perchance a brother’s precious life might, by such a sacrifice, be preserved. What a mighty instinct of love glows in the mother’s heart! You recollect that famous story of the mother whose child was taken from her by a Jesuit missionary to be trained separate and apart from its parents—how she swam through rivers and passed through what seemed to be impenetrable forests, guided only by the midnight star—till she arrived at the place where her offspring was—braving death in a thousand shapes from wild beasts and venomous serpents, from floods and jungles, from fierce men and relentless persecutors, might she but reach her child! Have there not been instances where, in the stormy blasts of winter, a mother has wrapped her garments about her infant and, exposing herself to the fury of the elements, has sacrificed her own life that the little one might live? Love has, indeed, often proved itself to be strong as death! When merely the common passion which burns in the breast of ordinary men and women towards each other, it has asserted its strength in a fond devotion which reckoned no consequences, spared itself no pain and fixed no limit to endurance, not counting life, itself, too dear to be parted with on so high a service.

Nor do we lack painful proofs of the converse proposition as it is stated in the second clause of our text. Jealousy has often proved itself “cruel as the grave.” You have only to recall the most appalling murders that have been committed within your memory, or, if you please, those you have read of in the history of nations, and you will find that jealousy has instigated those that were most vindictive and relentless. When jealousy begins to turn its sharp tooth upon a man’s heart, his reason fails him. Madness takes possession of his faculties. A determined purpose, which he would not have dared to contemplate under the influence of a wellbalanced judgment, prompts, plans and performs almost without premeditation, an atrocious crime, when jealousy rules the cruel hour! We believe it and we deplore it! No revenge has ever been found too bitter, too malicious, too lawless for jealousy to inflict. Relentless as the grave, it spares not youth nor beauty, respects not fame nor fortune, but accounts all comers for its prey!

Not that these things, a phenomena of Nature, much concern the Christian minister. He has to handle these themes because they concern you as men. It is to men he speaks. He has to tell them of the salvation of Jesus Christ! It is rather the business of the mental philosopher than the faithful Evangelist to take up these phenomena of the human mind. Our business is to understand these things spiritually. This Song of Songs is spiritual, or else it has no claim on our attention—its very Inspiration were incredible. We cannot imagine the Holy Spirit giving us this song merely for the purpose of entertaining us with the figures and metaphors of Eastern allegory! There must be a deep and hidden meaning in it.

Now we believe it will be fair to say that there are two high spiritual forms of love and jealousy and that our text is lucid in its description of both—first, the love and jealousy of the saints with regard to Christ. And secondly, the love and jealousy of Christ with regard to His saints. We will begin with—

I. THE LOVE AND JEALOUSY OF THE SAINTS WITH REGARD TO CHRIST.  
The saints love their Lord and Master, or else they could not be saints. Love is the fountain of their saintship. They are sanctified by love. It is the love of Jesus Christ which compels them to hate sin and which leads them forward in the path of holiness. The Holy Spirit uses the same passion of love to work in us the purging of ourselves from every unhallowed thing and to inflame our desire after everything that is agreeable to the mind of Christ. The saints have received, by the Holy Spirit, a love to Christ which is “strong as death.” And how strong is death? Think for a moment how strong Death is! He is so strong that the armies which lay encamped upon the field just now, and could tread an empire beneath their feet, yield to his imperial sway, and are, themselves, trod beneath the feet of Death. Xerxes, as he sat on his golden throne, wept at the thought that death should so soon mow down the myriads of his Persian hosts. Over all the multitudes which have been born into the world, with but two exceptions, Death has swayed his scepter. So strong is he, that he has up to now reigned as an Universal Monarch. Nor will he ever resign his scepter until He shall come whose Kingdom shall have no end— He who is, “death of death, and Hell’s destruction.” The monarchy of death is not only universal, but its behests are imperious and instantaneously obeyed! When, at God’s command, death seizes the body, it has no power to resist. The vital energy at once ceases, the tongue of music is dumb and the hand of skill is motionless forever! Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God, who gave it. In vain the physician’s skill—it cannot avert the stroke of death. No long siege is necessary—it requires not years, nor months, nor weeks to scale the ramparts of man’s citadel of bodily strength! As Death knocks at the door, it flies open. The arrest must be made. Willing or unwilling, the prisoner must go with the officer. The demand is peremptory and the obedience passive. Seems it not as if Nature had no parallel for this strong irresistible force of Death?  
Behold the love of our Lord Jesus Christ! Mark you, it is as strong as death! It can and it does overcome all adversaries—yes, even death itself! My Brothers and Sisters, it may, perhaps, strengthen your courage if I remind you that some of your comrades have tried their love in competition with death. They have “resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” They have met with death in the most cruel forms. They were stoned! They were sawn in sunder! They were burned at the stake. They were dragged at the heels of wild horses. Think of Marcus of Arethusa, stung to death by wasps, or of holy Mr. Samuel, starved to death in his dungeon with but a mouthful of bread and a drop of water given him each day—only just enough to continue his lingering existence! And yet these persons who thus met death with no downy pillow to lean their heads upon and with no voice of friendship to comfort them, never wavered in their attachment to their Master! They suffered persecution, nakedness, peril and the sword—nothing could separate them from the love of God which was in Christ Jesus the Lord! Some of them met with death in the most gloomy forms as well as in the most cruel shapes. They were cast into lonely dungeons where it was almost literally true that “the moss grew upon their eyelids.” Think of our brethren in Holland, persecuted alike by Protestants and Romanists! They have been despised of all men and have suffered death in deep desertion! They have been thrown into dungeons and left there till the slimy snails crawled over them, till the toads gathered about them, till their emaciated frames absolutely rotted and decayed in the nauseous places of their confinement! Not that they desired to escape, or sought liberty at the expense of conscience—rather did they account it a joy that they had fallen into divers trials for the sake of Christ! With none to cheer them, with no Brother’s voice to help them to raise a tune, with no hymn to chant them on their way to public martyrdom—without an eye to look upon them, except the eyes of the Master—their love verily proved itself to have been “strong as death.” Still worse, I think, to bear—some of them met death in the most lingering manner. Many a man could stand upon the burning firewood, endure with heroism his hour of torture and then ascend in the chariot of Elijah up to Heaven! But to be roasted before a slow fire, to be starved by a low regimen, to be crushed by a vicious atmosphere—for the martyrdom to extend over a week, a month, or a year—how shall this be endured? The Supernatural Grace of God has made a bed of spikes to be a bed of roses to some of the martyrs. Amidst the flames they have even leaped and sung for very joy! That was a grand saying of one of the martyr of Bloody Mary’s time, who, when he was told by Bonner that his life would be spared if he would recant, said, “Look here, Bishop, if I had as many lives as I have hairs on my body, I would burn as many times as that before I would bend myself down before the superstitions of Rome!” Another of the martyrs, when his finger was put into the flame of a candle that he might feel what kind of peril he was about to encounter, told his persecutors if he had as much agony in all his body as he then had in his finger, he would not give up the faith which he had received from God, to adopt any of the traditions of men! Death has thus come piecemeal to a man—he has had to “die daily”—in deaths often like the Apostle Paul, continually having to face the grim fiend. The love which Jesus Christ has kindled in the souls of His people has been undiminished in quantity and undimmed in brightness. In fact, I think that the love which Christians have for Christ seems to flame the more vehemently, the more troubles that they have to endure! Have you never seen a chemist, when illustrating a lecture, take a small piece of solid matter, put it in some water, and the moment it touches the water it has begun to burn? In ordinary cases, contact with water extinguishes fire, but this substance touches the water and burns there, as it burns nowhere else! So seems it to be with the Christian. The best and most brilliant part of the Christian’s love comes out under some overwhelming trouble. He triumphed when the opportunity arose that put him to the test. “Love is strong as death.”  
Although you and I are not born in an age in which we are likely to attain to the distinguished honor of wearing the ruby crown of martyrdom, their example may excite our ambitions. Have you, dear young Friend, been subjected to a litt1e jeering and sneering in the workshop, or to a little harsh treatment at home? Maybe you have begun to falter and flag. Consider for a moment, then, what part have you in that love which is strong as death if it cannot bear this? If any of you have been sorely tempted to do an unholy thing to get out of your pecuniary embarrassments, ask yourselves, “Where is the love which is strong in death,” and will you dare to stoop? If you do not maintain your integrity, you have not a drop of martyr’s blood in you! And if you have not the spirit of Christ, you are none of His! When I see professors turn pale at a laugh of the thoughtless, or look terrified when some article in a newspaper or a magazine thrusts hard at their principles, I wonder how they would have behaved themselves in the grand old times of Luther? Or had they belonged to the school of which Calvin was the great exponent? Or might it have been their lot to encounter the struggles, political and social, with which such bold reformers as Wickliffe and Hugh Latimer were mixed up with? Let not worthy sons of valiant sires pander to cowardly fears! Rather, let that love which is as strong as death brace your nerves and replenish you with a Divine inspiration! Doubtless, Brothers and Sisters, we shall have an opportunity of testing this love, though not at the ignominious stake, perhaps, nor yet in the desolate prison. The average trials and troubles of life, the peculiar contingencies of each individual’s career, the special besetments and temptations that pertain to a child of God—all these make it momentous to live—to live as becomes godliness! And what do you think? Can it be child’s play to die? To finish one’s course—to know that alterations and corrections cannot be made? Our flesh creeps at the prospect of the grave—but our soul trembles at the outlook and the judgment!  
Our faith must be firm and our fellowship unwavering—then our love will be strong—yes, as strong as death! You should not lose your confidence when you lose your health. The animal spirits may sink, but you are not dependent upon anything so contingent as they are on the atmosphere. The spirit that sustains you is Divine! With decay comes depression—they are both the fruit of disease or of infirmity. Faith can survive—love can triumph over both—  
*“Jesus can make a dying bed  
Feel soft as downy pillows are,  
While on His breast you lean your head  
And softly breathe your life out there.”*  
This is what Christ can do! Do you ask what He will do? If you live to His praise and rest in His love, you shall find that that love is strong as death! Instead of its growing cooler and weaker when the outward man decays, that love of yours shall get to the land of Beulah and you shall sit upon the banks of Jordan, expecting the coming of the Master and singing happy canticles and blessed love songs, even in the prospect of your departure! Love is strong as death!  
I wish every Christian would think it over in his own mind, whether his love to Christ is not very poor and flat, compared with what it should be? It seems to me that there is a notion abroad that a Christian may be expected to betray weakness on other points. Is it not a fact that evangelical or orthodox books are far the most part written in a feeble style? How many devout ministers preach sound Gospel like simple twaddle? If you want strong commonsense, you often get more of it in secular than in religious periodicals! The ready pen and the forcible tongue are frequently employed on the wrong side. I think the idea prevails among pious people that everything we do for Christ ought to be done in a quiet, gentle, soft, milk-sop fashion—that we must pray in a very smooth tone of voice, speak in a whisper and sing so as not to shock anybody’s nerves! This seems to me to be totally inconsistent and utterly alien to the spirit of genuine Christianity! When you espouse godliness you need not renounce manliness! If anything is fitted to develop all the energies of a man’s nature and call forth all the powers and faculties of his being, it should be his enlisting on the side of King Jesus! My Master calls you to serve Him, not with a timid, vacillating, fitful service, but He demands that you be bold and brave, valiant and venturesome in His service. He provides you with strength—He may well require your diligence! ‘Tis meet that you serve Him with all your powers of body, soul and spirit. The love we bear to Christ should not be a mere complacency, bland and gentle, a matter for well-bred reticence, rather than for blind avowal. No, let it be a mighty, all-constraining potion that gets hold of a man like a whirlwind, and carries him along! Ah, I think this love of Jesus should be dearer to the heart than light to the eyes! It should throb with every pulse of life! It should warm one’s blood as it circulates through the veins. It should inflame the heart with zeal and mold the constitution of one’s soul! The cold, quiet man, or the passive, lukewarm man, are alike unfit to engage in our Master’s service! Should not the love of disciples to their Lord be stronger than the love of the husband to his wife, of the mother to her child, or of friend to friend—a love compared with which there is no love on earth to be found—a love that is strong as death? Connected with this love and as a result of it, jealousy is brought under our notice. “Jealousy is cruel as the grave.” Whenever love absorbs the heart, jealousy will guard the object of affection. Only let a provocation occur, something of jealousy is sure to appear! Your love to Christ especially lacks the genuine stamp if it is never awakened to jealousy by the malice of foes and the faithlessness of professed friends of our Lord. Many Christians, nowadays, have a kind of love which is too fond of ease and too full of compromise to kindle any jealousy in their breasts. The saints of olden times—how sensitive they were! How quickly their hot indignation was kindled! When Baal, the abomination of Moab, was worshipped in Israel, Moses said to the judges, “Slay, everyone, his men who were joined unto Baal Peor.” So, too, at the time that the golden calf was made in the wilderness, you will remember that Moses’ anger waxed hot and he stood at the gate of the camp and said, “Who is on the Lord’s side, let him come unto me,” and all the sons of Levi gathered themselves unto him. At his bidding, by the word of the Lord, they took, every man, his sword, and went in and out from gate to gate to slay every man—his brother, his companion and his neighbor! There fell of the people that day about 3,000 men! Their love to Jehovah gave them a jealousy which was cruel as the grave in avenging idolatry! You remember how it was accounted to Phineas, the son of Eleazar, for righteousness, that he rose against Zimri, a prince among the Simeonites, and thrust him through with a javelin when he was caught in sin with a Midianite woman. Such jealousy was cruel as the grave! Men like Elijah did not say, in gentle accents, “Comprehensive charity is better than Covenant Truth. Give us full liberty to worship Jehovah and you shall have perfect liberty to worship Baal.” No! He contested the question with the idolatrous priests. The verdict came by fire from Heaven! The frightened multitude saw it and cried out, “Jehovah, He is the God.” Then said Elijah, “Take the prophets of Baal—let not one of them escape.” This was the voice of a man who loved the Lord! Who was jealous for His name—and these excited in him a holy anger and a righteous enmity against the worshippers of idols!  
Now, under the Christian dispensation, we can have no such anger against individuals! Our Lord has taught us, by His example, that they are rather to be pitied than hated by us. But, on the other hand, in zeal for the Lord of Hosts and in hatred of every false way, a Christian walking in the light of the Gospel should excel the most devout Jew under the old dispensation! Persecution is unprincipled. It violates the law of love to which we owe a supreme allegiance. But true faith never can hold fellowship with infidelity! Vital godliness must be at hostility with all unrighteousness of men. Do we seem to speak bitterly? I suppose it never will be a very sweet thing to tell people of their faults. We should like to know whether Luther did not speak bitterly. What kind of honey did he use? Did Calvin declaim in soft and silvery tones? Did Hugh Latimer, when he encountered Popery, line his mouth with velvet and deliver himself in delicate phrases?  
What do you think, Brothers and Sisters? Did ever patriot stand upon maudlin civilities when he saw conspirators plotting against his country? Did any noble-minded philanthropist cringe with misgivings, or apologize for interfering with the miscreant libertines who defile the

outh and beauty, or debauch the homes of the people? And can it be possible that any lover of God, and valiant defender of the faith ever did, or ever shall, buckle to those damnable heresies which are alike insulting to the Lord, who bought us, and destructive to the souls of men whose redemption is inestimably precious in His sight? No, but they only cared to clear themselves of the blood of souls against the Last Great Day. What I long to see in every Church is not a breach of charity between man and man, but the utter destruction of that pseudo charity which is now the curse of the Christian Church! If you have a partiality towards what Christ hates. If you have pity for Agag, whom God abhors. If you have a wish to tolerate that which exalts human pride, though it is utterly derogatory to your Master, truly, then, you are a traitor, however unintentionally to your Master! You do not show any wise and discriminating love to Him, for if your love were vehement, you would be jealous of His crown jewels and you would not suffer any other to be recognized as the Head of the Church but your Lord. If you love Him, you will be jealous of His Atonement, and you will not allow that anything else can cleanse from sin but that blood He shed for our remission. If you love Him, you will become jealous of His Spirit and you will not be willing that the new birth which comes of His operations should be set down to any mere ceremony! If you love Jesus Christ, you will be jealous of His Deity and you will not be party to bits of bread and drops of wine being adored as the body and blood of Christ—when you know that He is in the body up above, dwelling before the Eternal Throne of God! You will feel that error, instead of being stared at as an object of scientific interest, is a thing to be shuddered at as a malignant disease—and to be guarded against as an epidemic! With Jezebel, you can have no peace while she loves her vicious unions. You will contend against every faction which conspires to tarnish the Redeemer’s Glory and cast Him down from His excellence.  
“Jealousy is cruel as the grave.” “Hard” is the word. “Jealousy is hard as the grave.” Truly the grave is hard. It has not the slightest compunction. It holds fast the prey that is taken by its master. As Christians we are, and we must be, lovers of mankind. Men we love—men we would at all times help and serve. No clime nor caste, no geographical line or national character can define the boundary of our heart’s yearning for the welfare of humanity while we act on the commission to preach the Gospel to every creature. But error we must expose and cry out against—and rest not day nor night till the arm of God has torn it up, root and branch! This seems to me to be a natural consequence of loving Christ much. If you love Christ but little, you will hate error but little. If you do not love the Truth of God at all, you will not hate error at all. You will say, “Oh, what does it matter? It is a mere theologian’s dispute—let it be left to the schools to wrangle over.” Not so! When you once begin to think, “Suchand-such a Truth of God is precious to me as my life! It is identified with my being and my well-being”—from that very moment you will be filled with a jealousy which is hard as the grave! Turning now from our love and jealousy for our Savior, let us speak a little of—  
II. THE SAVIOR’S LOVE AND JEALOUSY TOWARDS US.  
Our Lord Jesus Christ, we know, has a love for us that passes all understanding and, however it may seem to grate upon the ear, it is equally true that He has a jealousy over His people which watches them with incessant care. I need not prove to you that the love of Jesus Christ for us is as strong as death—He verified that when He tasted death in all its bitterness—forsaken, not only by men, but, worst of all, forsaken by His God. “Eli, Eli, lama, Sabachthani,” was the concentration of all griefs! Such was His cry upon the accursed tree. Death never made Him flinch. He faced and felt its extreme agonies, and loved us then, as He loved us before, and as He still loves us with Infinite tenacity! The fact that His love is strong as death admits of no question. But here is the point I am coming to—His jealousy is cruel, or hard as the grave. He is never cruel towards His people, but He is very hard on foe or rival that would come between His people and Himself—yes, hard as the grave!  
Consider this, my beloved Friends. You and I once cherished a selfrighteousness that stood in the way of our receiving Christ. We would not look to Him, nor trust Him, but we loved our own works. We thought ourselves at least as good as others and we rested there. Now how relentless the Lord was in cutting down that self-righteousness of ours! He never gave it any quarter. How He denounced it, doomed it and utterly destroyed it! We thought so much of it that we would have harbored it, but He would not tolerate a bit of it. He turned our beauty into ashes and our glory into confusion of face—for He loathed our self-righteousness more than we ever loathed our uncleanness and impiety! He accounted it neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill. How He then dealt with us in severity! What cuts and wounds we had! We were killed, some of us, by His Law. We cried out of the depths to Him, but still He apparently had no pity and no mercy! We seemed to sink deeper and deeper into the mire, till, as we read the Book of Job, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah, we felt that the expressions we found there had been written on purpose for us! We tried to pray, but our prayers came back from the brazen sky reverberating in our ears in notes of despair! We went to the House of God, but we found no comfort there. We turned to the Bible, but not a promise cheered us, for the Lord Jesus was jealous of our selfrighteousness and He would not give us a comfortable word, nor so much as one kind look till that self-righteousness was wholly gone! When that was turned out of us, oh, the love passages, the blessed Revelations of His Divine Grace that He then gave us! But He would not give us so much as a glance of kindness, or a sentence of cheer until first He had got rid of the unholy things that provoked His jealousy!  
Since then we have had many visits from Him, yet He has not ceased to be jealous. I have held interviews today with a goodly number of those who have lately found Christ, and I observed among them many who were brought to seek His face by the death of a husband, or a child and, in some cases it was not only the loss of one child, but of another and another. I have frequently met with instances where a woman has been bereaved both of her child and of her husband before she yielded up her heart to Jesus. He has had to be “cruel as the grave” before He got rid of the object of His jealousy! She was wrapped up in the affections of earth—she had given herself up wholly to earthly things and so one gourd must wither, and then another, till there was nothing earthly left to shelter her—and then the poor weeping eyes were turned to the Cross—and only then did consolation come. Christ’s jealousy is thus “cruel,” but oh, what a blessed cruelty it is! It is better to enter into life halt and maimed, and having only one hand, than having two eyes and all our friends and kinsfolk about us, to be cast into the fires of Hell! It is better that we should suffer from cruel Providences, here, than that we should be permitted to go wafting along streams of pleasure down to the gulf of everlasting ruin! Blessed cruelty that makes us love the Savior by revealing the Savior’s inextinguishable love for us!  
And since the day of our conversion, how many times have you and I cherished tastes and habits which we preferred before Christ and the walk of faith with Him? It is so easy to let the creature come in and usurp the place of the Beloved—thus to live half for God and half for our friends! But that will not do, for God will have us all love and serve Him with all our heart, and soul, and strength. Our dearest friends, the partners of our every joy and sorrow, every hope and fear of our mortal lives, if they take away our hearts from Christ, will either prove a bane to us, or else they will be taken away from us! I recollect the story of a Christian woman who had made a great idol of her child. He was her only son, and she lost him. Nothing then could console her, till at length one day she went into a Quakers’ meeting. She sat there a long time, and not a word was spoken. Presently one of the members rose up and simply said, “Verily I perceive your children are idols.” Not another word was uttered during the whole of the meeting. That word, however, was sent, by the Providence of God, and fastened like a nail in a right place! It had done its work—the mother’s heart was comforted. She saw the reason of her loss and submitted her soul to the discipline. Now it is not only for children which we make idols. There are 20 other things. Twenty, did I say? Why, the world swarms with idols! Man is such an idolater that if he cannot idolize anything else, he will idolize himself and set himself up, and bow down and worship himself! But the Lord Jesus will never tolerate idolatry in any heart which belongs to Him! If He did not love you, you might do as you liked—but if He loves you, and has chosen you— and your heart then goes after idols—He will chasten you, vindicating His affection as well as His authority by the rod! What would it matter to me what your children did, in comparison with the responsibility I feel for my own? Whatever mischief they might do in the street, I might not feel called upon to interfere. You and I, alike, feel that we are each accountable to punish our own children when they are disobedient. And so is it with God. If you were not His children, you might live as you like and enjoy a measure of immunity for a while. But if you are His people, you are not your own masters and you will have a cross, if not a curse, come into your house! The spell of the idol will spoil your blessing. “Jealousy is cruel as the grave.”  
Yet, let me say it again, this is blessed cruelty. We are very apt to think that a surgeon must have a hard heart and a cruel nature when we take a shallow view of the operations he performs and the nerve with which he performs them. A better judgment might convince you that the surgeon’s knife is dictated by necessity, wielded with skill, careful to spare pain and designed to restore health. “Oh,” you say, “only amputation will save his life—my child’s leg must be taken off! It festers. It mortifies. I could not touch it. I could not do it—it cannot be done!” And when you hear that the surgeon has cut through the flesh and the bone, you are apt to think, “What a cold heart he must have! Ah, but which is the more profitable—that love of yours that would let the child die rather than do violence to its feeling, or that which would cut off its leg, in spite of all entreaties—to save its life? Oh, thank God for the surgeon! His deep incisions are tender mercies! His misgiving would be our undoing! And has not our God thus to deal with us when He takes those things from us which tend to be fatal issues and might otherwise prove our destruction?  
A fable has been sometimes told of a little plant which grew under a big tree and was thereby shielded from the storm—and kept tranquil and happy. The little plant prayed that it might grow into a tree, and its prayer was heard. The woodman came along and cut down the tree. Then the poor plant was exposed to the rain and the wind, and the snow and the frost—and it said, “Alas, for me, I am left in a pitiful condition!” But the angel of the tree told it that was the only way by which it could ever grow into a tree. So, dear Friends, when you lost your property, when the bank went bankrupt, when you lost your friend, when your mother died, when you lost, perhaps, your reputation through a slander which was abroad—it was only the taking down of the tree that the plant might grow—which could not have grown otherwise! You may think the discipline of Nature is harsh and cruel. Ah, well, the Lord lets you think as you like, and misjudge Him if you please, for He knows that time will soon correct your judgment! And then you will think very differently as you see the end from the beginning. You will judge more wisely when your faith is brought into active exercise. You yourself will then begin to abhor idolatry as Christ does, and you will marvel as much with thankfulness as thoughtfulness that it is taken away. I have been reminded by this of what Rutherford said to Lady Erskine when she had lost her husband. “Well, your Ladyship,” he said, “the Lord Jesus Christ sets great store by your love, for it is clear that He will have it all. He has taken away those who might have had a part of it and He has said, ‘I will have it all! I have bought it, and I will have it.’” Perhaps the Master has been doing the same, or will do the same with some of us, so that He may get all our hearts to Himself.  
Now for our practical conclusion. Let our jealousy towards Christ now be cruel as the grave. Is there anything which keeps our heart from perfectly loving Christ? Let us have done with it at once! Have you got into any habit which keeps you from living near to Jesus? Is there any favorite sin which mars your communion with Him? Have you any little practice which, in itself, may be excusable, but which, in its tendency, may be injurious? Give it all up! He who is poor for Christ’s sake is richer than the richest of men! And he who gives up a pleasure for the sake of Christ has more enjoyment in so doing than he would ever have had in the pleasure itself! It may be that you have been for some time trifling with a conviction which you would have embraced as a Truth of God, only it would have involved a sacrifice—and, therefore, you have halted and wittingly overlooked it. I know there are very many Christians just now who are in a position which they cannot justify, but they say they cannot see their way out of it. They apologize for themselves with questions like these—“How am I to get right? What shall I do?” Now, dear Friends, ask yourselves, Does not the Lord Jesus Christ deserve to have from you simple, absolute, unhesitating obedience? “Yes,” you say. Then yield it to Him and ask for Grace, that from this day forth you may look with holy jealousy upon the most pleasant things that in any form or disguise come between you and your Lord and Master! Oh, what a happy life! What a blessed life you would lead! Yours will be a path of separation! You may have to journey over a rough road, nevertheless, let your love be strong as death and your jealousy cruel as the grave—and you will enjoy a communion with Christ dearer than life, and a Sabbath of peace that is like the days of Heaven upon earth!  
Well, my dear Hearers, there are some of you who have no part nor lot in the inheritance that we esteem beyond all other possessions. May God give you a share in it! Oh, if you have no love to Christ in this life, what can there be for you in the next but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation?! But trust in Jesus, trust in Jesus and you shall be saved! Being saved, you shall love Him and, loving Him, you shall be jealous of everything that comes in the way to divide you from Him. You shall be with Him at last in the land where doubts and fears can never enter, and where jealousy can no longer intrude. Thus you shall be forever with the Lord! Amen.

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #364 New Park Street Pulpit 1

THE SHULAMITE’S CHOICE PRAYER  
NO. 364

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 24, 1861, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET, SOUTHWARK.

**“Set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which has a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.” Song of Solomon 8:6, 7.**

THIS is the prayer of one who has the present enjoyment of fellowship with Christ. But being apprehensive lest this communion should be interrupted, she avails herself of the opportunity now afforded her to plead for a something which shall be as the abiding token of a covenant between her and her Beloved when His visible presence shall be withdrawn. You will notice that this is not the cry of a soul that is longing for fellowship, for that cry is—“Tell me O You whom my soul loves, where You feed.” It is not even the cry of the soul that has some fellowship and needs more, for then it would say, “Oh that You were as my brother!”

Nor is it the cry of a soul that has had fellowship but has lost it for that is, “Saw You Him, whom my soul loves?” And she goes “about the streets and in the broad ways” saying, “I will seek Him.” But this is the prayer of the spouse when she has been coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon His bosom. The thought strikes her, that He that has sustained her is about to go from her, to depart and leave her for a season, because it is expedient and more useful for her and she prays that since He is no more on the earth, but has entered into the ivory palaces where her God dwells, that He would be pleased to make a covenant with her never to forget her and that He would give her some sign and mark by which she might be assured that she is very near to His heart and still written upon His arm.

I take it to be the prayer of the Church at the present day, now that Christ is before the Father’s Throne. The Bridegroom is not with us. He has left us. He has gone to prepare a place for us and He is coming again. We are longing for His coming. We are saying in the language of the last verse of this Song of Songs, “Make haste, my Beloved and be You like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.” Yet before He went, it seemed as if His Church did pray unto Him, “Set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm.” And this is the cry of the Church tonight and I trust your cry, too, that while He is not present but is absent from you, you may be near to Him and have a sweet consciousness of

that blessed fact.

Now without further preface, let me first notice, the prayer and secondly, the reasoning with which the spouse argues her suit. The prayer is, “Set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm.” The argument is four-fold. She pleads thus, “Love is strong as death.” She waxes bolder— “Jealousy is cruel as the grave.” She wrestles again—“The coals thereof are coals of fire, which has a most vehement flame.” And once again she brings forth her choice words, “Set me as a seal upon Your heart, for many waters cannot quench Your love, neither can the floods drown it.”

I. THE PRAYER, you will notice, is two-fold, although it is so really and essentially one—“Set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm.”

Now I think I can perhaps explain this text best by a reference to the high priest of old. You know that when he put on his holy garments— those robes of glory and beauty—he wore the breastplate of cunning work in which four rows of precious stones were set. If you will turn to Exodus, the 39th chapter and 14th verse, you will read, “And the stones were according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, everyone with his name, according to the twelve tribes.”

How suggestive of this prayer!—“Set me as a seal or as an engraved signet, as a precious stone that has been carved—set my name upon Your breast.” Let it be always glittering there. But beside this breastplate, there was the ephod and we are told that, “they made shoulder pieces for it, to couple it together by the two edges was it coupled together.” Then in the sixth verse we read, “And they wrought onyx stones enclosed in settings of gold, graven, as signets are graven, with the names of the children of Israel. And he put them on the shoulders of the ephod, that they should be stones for a memorial to the children of Israel. As the Lord commanded Moses.”

So that it was set as a signet upon his shoulder, or upon his arm, as well as upon his heart. I think these were to indicate that the high priest loved the people, for he bore them on his heart. And that he served the people as a consequence of that love, therefore he bore them upon his shoulders. And I think the prayer of the spouse is just this—she would know once and for all that Christ’s heart is entirely hers. That He loves her with the intensity and the very vitality of His Being. That His inmost heart, the life-spring of His soul belongs to her.

And she would also know that that love moves His arm. She longs to see herself as supported, sustained, strengthened, defended, preserved and kept by that same strong arm which put Orion in its place in the sky and holds the Pleiades that they should give their light for evermore. She longs that she may know the love of His heart and that she may experience the power of His arm. Can we not, each of us, join the spouse in this prayer tonight? Oh, Lord, let me know that my name is engraved on Your heart, not only let it be there, but let me know it. Write my name not only in Your heart, but may it be as a signet on Your heart that I may see it.

Doubtless there are the names of very many written upon Christ’s heart who have not yet been able to see their names there—they are there but not written as on a signet. Christ has loved them from all eternity. His heart has been set on them from everlasting, but as yet they have never seen the signet. They have never had the seal of the Spirit to witness within that they are born of God. While their names may be in His heart, they have not seen them there as a seal upon His heart. And no doubt there are multitudes for whom Christ has fought and conquered and whom He daily keeps and preserves, who have never seen their names written as a seal upon His arm.

Their prayer is that they may see Christ’s love visibly, that they may discover it in their experience, that it may be beyond a question and no more a matter of doubt—that His hand and His heart are engaged for their eternal salvation. I repeat it, you can all join in this prayer, you people of God—it is a cry that you would put up now and continue to put up till it is fully answered. Oh, let me know, my Lord, that I am Yours, bound to Your heart and let me know that I am Yours, protected and preserved by Your arm. This is the prayer. I shall not say more upon it because I wish to speak more at length upon the arguments with which it is here pleaded.

II. The spouse argues with her Lord thus—It is to my advantage that you should thus write my name upon Your hand and heart for I know this concerning Your love, that it is strong. That it is firm. That it has a wondrous intensity and that it is sure and unquenchable. With these four pleas she backs up her suit.

1. She pleads that He would show her His love, because of the strength of it. “Your love is strong as death.” Some expositors think that this means the Church’s love. Others say, “No, it means the love of Christ to His Church.” I will not try to determine which it means for they are extremely like each other. Christ’s love to His Church is the magnificent image—the affection which His people bear to Him is the beautiful miniature. They are not alike in degree and measure, for the Church never loves Christ so much as Christ loves her, but they are as much alike as the father in his strength is to the babe in weakness.  
There is the same image and superscription. The love of the Church to

Christ is the child of Christ’s love to the Church and consequently there is something of the same attribute in both. And while it is true that Christ’s love to us is so strong that He did defy and endure death for us, it is also true that the love of the Church to Him is as strong as death. Her chosen sons and daughters have endured the pangs of the rack and the pains of the sword and have gone through a thousand deaths sooner than be turned aside from their chaste fidelity to their Lord.

I shall, however, keep to the first idea that this is the love of Christ and shall use it thus as being the plea of His Church that because His love is strong she desires to be certified of her interest in it and to see most visibly the signet and seal of her being really in His heart. “Love as strong as death.” What a well-chosen emblem this is! What beside love is so strong as death! With steadfast foot Death marches over the world. No mountains can restrain the invasion of this all-conquering king. There is no chalet on the mountain Alp so high that his foot cannot climb to hunt the inhabitant. There is no valley so fair that he does not intrude and stalk—a grim skeleton across the plain.

Everywhere and in every place beneath the moon have you sway, O Death! The lordly lion bows his neck to you. Leviathan yields up his corpse which floats many a crucifix upon the briny waves. You are the great fisher. You have put your hook into his jaw and dragged him from the sea. Master of all are you! You have dominion given unto you. You wear an iron crown and you dash in pieces as though they were but potter’s vessels the strongest of the sons of men.

None among the sons of Adam can withstand Death’s insidious advances. When his hour is come, none can bid him delay. The most clamorous prayers cannot move the flinty heart of Death. Insatiable and not to be appeased, he devours and devours forever. That scythe is never blunted, that hourglass never ceases to flow. Mightiest among the mighty are you O Death. But Christ’s love is strong as death. It, too can climb the mountain and lay hold upon the mountaineer far removed from the sound of the ministration of the Gospel. It, too, can march into the valley. And though Popery with all its clouds of darkness should cover it, yet the love of Christ can win its glorious way. What can stand against the love of Christ? The stoutest must yield to it and adamantine hearts are dashed to shivers by one blow of its golden hammer.

As the sun dissolves the chains of frost and bids the wind rush on in freedom—though once bound as if it were stone—so does this love of Christ wherever it comes, give life and joy and liberty, snap the bonds and win its way, never being retarded, never being hindered, because it is written. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Who can measure the strength of Christ’s love?

Men have defied it but their defiance has been overcome. They have resisted long but they have been compelled to throw down their weapons. They have crossed it but they have found it hard to kick against the pricks. They have gone on caring for none of these things, but thus the eternal Counsel has decreed it—Christ must—He shall have that redeemed man and He has had him. Jesus Christ’s love is strong as death. Sooner might a man live, after God’s will had decreed that he should die, than a sinner remain impenitent one hour after God’s love had decreed to melt his heart. Sooner might you defy the grave and hurl back upon his haunches the pale horse of Death than turn back the Holy Spirit when He comes in His divine omnipotence to lay hold upon the heart and soul of man.

As all the owls and bats with all their hoots could not scare back the sun when once its hour to rise has come—so all the sins and fears and troubles of man cannot turn back the light of love when God decrees that it should shine upon the heart. Stronger than death His love is found. Death is but weakness itself when compared with the love of Christ. What a sweet reason why I should have a share in it! What a blessed argument for me to use before the Throne of God! Lord, if Your love is so strong and my heart is so hard and myself so powerless to break it, oh, let me know Your love, that it may overcome me, that it may enchain me with its sure but soft fetters and that I may be Your willing captive evermore.

But let us notice here that when the spouse says that Christ’s love is strong as death, you must remember that she may in faith have foreseen that it would one day be tried which was the stronger. You know, do you not, that these two once entered into the lists to try their strength. And it was a struggle upon which angels gazed. Jesus—I mean incarnate Love— at the first seemed to shrink before Death. “He sweat as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground.”

You cannot see the brow of His antagonist, but could you have perceived it, Death—the invader—was trembling more than Christ—the Invaded. Christ had the prophecy of victory, but Death—the fates were against it. Do you remember that story of how the Savior’s back was plowed, His hands pierced and His side opened? Death—methinks I see the flush that crossed his pale face as he thought that he had gained the victory—but Jesus triumphed. Love reigned while Death lays prostrate at His feet.

Strong as Death indeed was Jesus’ love, for Jesus swallowed up Death in victory. Not merely overcame it, but seemed to devour it, to make nothing of it and put it away once and for all. “O Death,” said Love, “I will be your plague! O grave, I will be your destruction!” And Love has kept its

word and proved itself to be “strong as Death.”

Well, Beloved, we may add to these few remarks this word. Rest assured that as Death will not give up its prey, so neither will Love. How hard and firm does Death hold its captives! Till that resurrection trumpet shall make him loose their bonds, none shall go free. Their ashes he preserves as carefully as a king keeps the jewels of his crown. He will not suffer one of them to escape. As did Israel out of the land of Pharaoh, in the house of bondage, there they must lie.

And is not Christ’s love as strong as this? He shall keep His own. Those who are His He never will let go. No, when the archangel’s trumpet shall dissolve the grasp of death, then shall be heard the cry, “Father, I will that they also whom You have given Me be with Me where I am.” And when Death itself is dead, Love shall prove its eternal strength by taking its captives home. Love, then, is strong as Death. Lord Jesus, let me feel that love. Let me see Your arm nerved with it and Your heart affected by this strong love which all my enemies cannot defeat, which all my sins cannot overturn, which all my weakness cannot deny.

I think this is a most sweet and powerful argument to lead you to pray the prayer, “Set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm: for love is strong as death” when you are pleading before God.

2. Let us now turn to the second plea—“Jealousy is cruel as the grave.” Krummacher, in a sermon upon this passage, following the translation of Luther quotes it as though it ran thus—“Jealousy is firm as Hell.” And I believe that such is the proper translation, at least quite as correct as the present one. “Jealousy is firm as Hell.” Those of you who have Bibles with the margins in them, (and the margins are generally like fine gold, ,will perceive the words in the corner, “Hebrew, ‘hard’ ”—“Jealousy is hard as the grave,” which is just the idea of firmness, it is as firm as the grave.

Sheol , I believe the word is here for grave, otherwise we translate it “Hades”—or as Luther translates it—“Hell.” “Jealousy is hard as Hell.” The idea is just this—that the love of Christ in the form of jealousy is as hard and as sternly relentless as is the grave and Hell. Now Hell never looses one of its bond-slaves. Once let the iron gate be shut upon the soul and there is no escape. When the ring of fire has once girdled the immortal spirit, none can dash through the flaming battlements. The dungeon is locked. The key is dashed into the abyss of destiny and never can be found—

*“Fixed is their everlasting state,  
Could they repent ‘tis now too late.”*

“Escape for your life, look not behind you,” is a cry which may be uttered on earth but which can never be heard in Hell. They who are once there are there forever and forever. That modern doctrine of the restoration of damned souls has no foundation in the Word of God. It is a dream and they shall find it so who once go into that place. “Where their worm dies not and where their fire is not quenched”—a more perfect picture of an unrelenting seizure could not be found anywhere. The firmness and hardness of the grave and Hell are without abatement. When once they have got their hands upon their prey they hold it with a tenacity which defies resistance.

Well, but such is the love of Christ. If just now we had to speak of its strength, we have now to speak of its tenacity, its hardness, its attachment to those whom it has chosen. You may sooner unlock Hades and let loose the spirits that are in prison there than you could ever snatch one from the right hand of Christ. You may sooner rob death of its prey, than Jesus of His purchased ones. You may spoil the lion’s den, but shall the lion of the tribe of Judah be spoiled? Shall the prey be taken from the mighty and the lawful captive delivered? Before one child of God shall be lost you shall go first and make Death relax his grasp and then next you shall make Hell with all its fury give up its prey. As soon as ever it can be proved that one child of God perishes, it can be proved that the fires of Hell can be put out—but until then there shall never be a shadow of a fear of that.

As certainly as ever lost souls are lost, so certainly believing souls are saved. Oh, little do they know the love of Christ who think that He loves today and hates tomorrow. He is no such lover as that. Even earthly worms would despise such affection. Is Christ’s affection a play of fast and loose? Does He choose and then refuse? Does He justify and then condemn? Does He press to His bosom and afterwards reject with distaste? It is not so.

Some mighty imagination might conceive Niagara Falls staying in its course and made to ascend and climb the hills instead of leaping downwards in its strength. But even then no imagination can conceive the love of Christ retracing its eternal pathway. The Divine fury which is in it drives it on and on it must go as it has begun. The love of Christ is like an arrow which had been shot from the bow of destiny. It flies, it flies and Heaven itself cannot change its course. Christ has decreed it—such men shall be His and His they shall be. Nor will He turn away one of them or make a new election, or plan a new redemption, or bring those to Heaven whom He never intended to bring or lose those whom He ordained to save.

He has said and He will do it. He has commanded His Covenant forever and it shall stand fast. He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion and He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. You have then, here, another reason why you should pray that your name may be upon Christ and upon His arm—once there, it is there forever. So

surely there, so jealously there, so hardly there, so fixedly there that it can never be removed come what may. Christ is jealous of His people. He will not let another have His spouse. He will not sit still and see the Prince of Darkness walking off with her whom He espoused unto Himself in the eternal ages.

The supposition is absurd. That cruel jealousy of His would make Him start up from His heavenly repose to snatch His chosen spouse from him who would seek to lead her to the hellish altar. She shall not be divorced from Him. She must not be married to another—

*“Stronger His love than death or Hell,  
Its riches are unsearchable;  
The first-born sons of light  
Desire in vain its depths to see,  
They cannot reach the mystery,  
The length, the breadth, the height.”*

3. The love of Christ is strong as death. It is such that it can never be moved from its object, yet the question still arises, “May not the love itself die out? Even should it abide the same in its purpose, yet may not its intensity be diminished?” “No,” says the Shulamite, “it is an attribute of Christ’s love that the coals thereof are coals of fire which have a most vehement flame.” More forcible is the language of the original—“The coals thereof are the coals of God”—a Hebrew idiom to express the most glowing of all flames—“the coals of God”! As though it were no earthly flame, but something far superior to the most vehement affection among men.

Some who look carefully at it think there is an allusion in this sentence to the fire which always burnt at the altar and which never went out. You remember there were coals of fire which were always kept burning under the Levitical dispensation. The flame was originally kindled by fire from Heaven and it was the business of the priest perpetually to feed it with the sacred fuel. You will remember, too, that one of the cherubim flew and took a live coal from off this very altar and said to Isaiah, “Lo, this has touched your lips.”

Now the love of Christ is like the coals upon the altar which never went out. But the spouse has brought out a fuller idea than this. She seems to say, “Its vehemence never decreases. It is always burning to its utmost intensity.” Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace was heated seven times hotter but no doubt it grew cool. Christ’s love is like the furnace, but it is always at the seven-fold heat and it always has within itself its own fuel. It is not like fire merely, but like coals of fire, always having that within itself which supports it. Why did Christ love the spouse? What lit the fire at first? He kindled it Himself. There was no reason whatever why Christ should love any of us, except the love of His own heart.

And what is the fuel that feeds the fire? Your works and mine? No, Brethren, no, no, a thousand times no! All the fuel comes from the same place. It is all from His heart. Now, if the flame of Christ’s love depended upon anything we did—if it were fed with our fuel—it would either die out, or else it would sometimes dwindle as the smoking flax and then again it might kindle to a vehement heat. But since it depends on itself and has the pure attributes of divinity, it is a self-existent love, absolute and independent of the creature. Well, then, may we understand that it never shall grow less but always be as a vehement flame.

Now I do not want to preach about this, but I wish you would think of it a little. Christian, turn it over in your mind—Christ loves you. Not a little—not a little as a man may love his friend. Not even as a mother may love her child for she may forget the infant of her womb. He loves you with the highest degree of love that is possible. And what more can I say, except I add, He loves you with a degree of love that is utterly impossible to man. No finite mind could, if it should seek to measure it, get any idea whatever of the love of Christ towards us. You know, when we come to measure a drop with an ocean, there is a comparison. A comparison I say there is, though we should hardly be able to get at it.

But when you attempt to measure our love with Christ’s—the finite with the infinite—there is no comparison at all. Though we loved Christ ten thousand times as well as we do, there would even then be no comparison between our love to Him and His love to us. Can you believe this now—“Jesus, loves me”? Why to be loved by others here often brings the tear to one’s eye. It is sweet to have the affection of one’s fellow. But to be loved of God and to be loved—so loved that you have to leave it as a mystery the soul cannot fathom—you cannot tell how much! Be silent, O my Soul and be you silent, too, before your God and lift up your soul in prayer thus—“Jesus, take me into this sea of love and let me be ravished by a sweet and heavenly contentment in a sure confidence that You have loved me and given Yourself for me.”

4. We shall now turn to the last argument of this choice prayer, which is equally precious. It is the unquenchable eternity of this love. There is that in its very essence which defies any opposite quality to extinguish it. The argument seems to me to run thus—“Yes, but if Christ’s love does not die out of itself—if it has such intensity that it never would of itself fail, yet may not you and I put it out?” No, says the text, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.”

Christ has endured many waters already—the waters of bodily affliction, the waters of soul travail, the waters of spiritual desertion. Christ was in this world like Noah’s ark—the depths that came up from beneath Hell troubled Him. The great floods came from above. It pleased the Father to bruise Him. The cataracts leaped on Him from either side. He was betrayed by His friends. He was hunted by His foes. But the many waters could no more destroy His love than it could drown the ark of gopher wood. Just as that ark mounted higher and higher and higher the more the floods prevailed—so then that love of Christ seemed to rise higher and higher and higher—just in proportion to the floods of agony which sought to put it out.

Fixed and resolved to bring His ransomed people home, the Captain of our salvation becomes perfect through suffering, plunges into the thick of the battle and comes out of it more than Conqueror. And oh, since then, my Beloved, what floods has Christ’s love endured! There have been the floods of our sins. The many waters of our blasphemy and ungodliness. Since conversion there have been the many waters of our backslidings and the floods of our unbelief. What crime on crime—what transgression on transgression have we been guilty of! Yet He has never failed us up to this moment.

“By the grace of God we are what we are. And we are persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor height, nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” What if we should be tried in circumstances? “Neither famine, nor persecution, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword shall separate from the love of Christ.” What if we backslide and wander from His ways? “Though we believe not, He abides faithful.” And what if in the last black hour we should have bitter sufferings on the dying bed? Still He shall be with us in the last moment, for it is written, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death.”

So you see Death is to be destroyed and we are to be victors over him. Gather up, then, all the thoughts of how we have tried and how we shall try the Master and let us set to our seal tonight our own solemn, “Yes and Amen” to this most precious declaration of the Shulamite—“Many waters cannot quench love neither can the floods drown it.” Then, Lord, write my name on Your heart, engrave my name as a signet on Your arm that I may have a share in this unfailing and undying affection and be Yours now and forever!

Poor Sinner! I know you have been saying while I have been preaching thus—“I wish I had a share in that love.” Well, this prayer you may pray tonight—“Set me, Lord—set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm. Love me, Lord. Help me, Lord. Let Your heart move towards me. Let Your arm move for me, too. Think of me, Lord. Set me on Your heart. Lord, set me on Your arm. Lord, I long to have Your love, for I hear it is strong as death and You know I am chained by Satan and I am his bondslave. Come and deliver me—You are more than a match for my cruel tyrant. Come with Your strong love and set me free.

“I hear that Your love is firm, too, as Hell itself. Lord that is such a love as I want. Though I know I shall vex You and wander from You, come and love me with a love that is firm and everlasting. O Lord, I feel there is nothing in me that can make You love me. Come and love me, then, with that love which finds its own fuel. Love me with those coals of fire which have a vehement flame. And since many waters cannot quench Your love, prove that in me. Lord there are many waters of sin in me. But Lord, help me to believe that Your love is not quenched by them. There are many corruptions in me. But Lord, love me with that love which my corruptions cannot quench. Here, Lord, I give myself away—take me. Make me what You would have me to be and keep and preserve me even to the end.”

May the Lord help you to pray that prayer and then may He answer it for His mercy’s sake.  
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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2466 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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UNPURCHASABLE LOVE  
NO. 2466

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MAY 24, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 6, 1872.

**“If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly despised.”  
Song of Solomon 8:7.**

THAT is a general truth, applying to all forms of real love—you cannot purchase love. If it is true love, it will not run on rails of gold. Many a marriage would have been a very happy one if there had been a tithe as much love as there was wealth and, sometimes, love will come in at the cottage door and make the home bright and blest, when it refuses to recline on the downy pillows of the palace. Men may give all the substance of their house and form a marriage bond—the bond may be there, but not that which will make it sweet to wear. “If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly despised.”

Who, for instance, could purchase a mother’s love? She loves her own child, especially because it is her own. She watches over it with sedulous care. She denies her eyes the necessary sleep at night if her baby is sick and she would be ready to part with her own life sooner than it should die. Bring her another person’s child and endow her with wealth to induce her to love it, and you shall find that it is not in her power to transfer her affection to the son or daughter of a stranger! Her own child is exceedingly precious to her and another infant, who to an unprejudiced eye might be thought to be a far more comely baby, shall receive tenderness from her—for the woman is compassionate—but it can never receive the love that belongs to her own offspring.

Take, again, even the love of friends. I only mention that to show how true our text is in relation to all forms of love. Damon loved Pythias—the two friends were so bound together that their names became household words and their conduct towards one another grew into a proverb. Yet Damon never purchased the heart of Pythias and neither did Pythias think to pay a yearly stipend for the love of Damon. The introduction of the question of cost would have spoiled it all! The very thought of anything mercenary, anything like payment on the one side or receipt upon the other, would have been a death blow to their friendship. No, if a man should give all the substance of his house even for human love, for the common love that exists between man and man, it would be utterly despised!

Rest assured that this is pre-eminently true when we get into higher regions—when we come to think of the love of Jesus and when we think of that love which springs up in the human breast towards Jesus when the Spirit of God has renewed the heart—and shed abroad the love of God within the soul. Neither Christ’s love to us nor our love to Him can be purchased. Neither of those could be bartered for gold, or rubies, or diamonds, or the most precious crystal. If a man should offer to give all the substance of his house for either of these forms of love, it would be utterly despised.

I. We will begin at the highest manifestation of love and commune together upon it. So let me say, first, that THE LOVE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS ALTOGETHER UNPURCHASABLE.

This fact will be clear to us if we give it a moment’s careful thought. Indeed, so clear is it that I scarcely like to multiply words upon it, and I do so only that you may dive the deeper into this glorious Truth of God! It must be quite impossible to purchase the love of Christ because it is inconceivable that He could ever be mercenary. It would be profane! Surely it would amount to blasphemy and a very high degree of it, to suppose that the love of His heart could be bought with gold, or silver, or earthly stores. No, if He loves, it must be all free, like His own royal Self! If He deigns to cast His eyes so far downward as to view the creatures of an hour and to set His love upon them so that His delights are with the sons of men, it is not possible that He could gain anything from them! No, were we angels, we could not think that He could love us because of some service we could render, or some price we could pay to Him!

The bare idea runs cross and counter to all we know of Jesus. It is a flat contradiction of all our beliefs and all our knowledge concerning Him. He loves us because He pities us, but not because there is a fee when He comes to us as the Great Physician. He instructs us because He grieves over our ignorance and because He knows the sorrow of it—and would have us learn of Him—but His instructions are not given in order that we may, each one, bring our school pence to Him. He labors, it is true, but none shall say that He labors for hire, though if He asked all worlds for His hire, He might well claim them for such labors as those which He has performed!

The feats attributed to Hercules are nothing compared with the wonders worked by Christ. He has cleansed stables far more filthy than the Augean and slain monsters far more terrible than the hydra-headed demons of the ancient fables. True, “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” There was a joy that was set before Him, for which He endured the Cross, despising the shame. Yet the love that lay at the bottom of it all was love unbought, love unsought and love in which not so much as a single atom of anything like selfishness could ever be discovered! The pure stream of His love leaps like the crystal brook and there is no sediment that can be found in it. It is altogether unmixed love to us.

Besides, Brothers and Sisters, there is another point that renders this idea of purchasing Christ’s love as impossible as the first thought shows it to be incredible—for all things are already Christ’s. Therefore, what can be given to Him wherewith His love could be purchased? If He were poor, we might enrich Him, but all things are His! “He was rich,” says the Apostle. “He is rich,” we may also reply! He could say to us, at this moment, if we were so foolish as to attempt to bribe Him to win the love of His heart, “I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he-goats out of your folds. For every beast of the forest is Mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountain and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof.”

All things are Christ’s, not only on this speck of a world, but throughout the universe! The things that are soon by us are as nothing compared with the things that we have not seen—yet all belong to Christ and He has the power to create ten thousand times more than as yet has been formed by Him! There is nothing which He conceives in His infinite mind but He could at once fashion it by His almighty power! There is nothing He might desire but He could, in an instant, command it to appear before Him. “Let it be,” He might say, and it would be even as He had said! Therefore, how could you bribe Him and where is the substance of your houses that you would give in exchange for His Divine love? O you who dwell in houses of clay, where is the substance which you could bring to Him who is Lord of Heaven and earth? Our substance? It is but a shadow! Our wealth? It is a child’s plaything in His sight—it is nothing compared with His boundless riches!

Let us also note that if Christ’s love could be won by us by something we could bring to Him or do for Him, it would suppose that there was something of ours that was of equal merit and of equal value with His love, or, at any rate, something which He was willing to accept as bearing some proportion to His love. But, indeed, there is nothing of the sort! Gold and silver—I scarcely like to mention them in the same sentence with the love of Christ! I am sure our poet was right when he said—

*“Jewels to You are gaudy toys*

*And gold is sordid dust.”*  
Think of the difference between gold and the love of Christ in the hour of pain, in the hour of depression of spirit—what can the strongboxes of the merchant do for man, then? But one drop of the love of Christ helps him to bear up, however fast the heart may palpitate, or however much the spirits may have been cast down! What is the use of earthly riches when one comes to die? One laid his money bags close to his heart, to see if they could make a plaster that would give him rest, but they were hard and cold! But the love of Jesus, like the touch of the king’s hand in the old superstition, heals even the disease of death, itself, and makes it no longer death to die!

There is nothing, then, by way of treasure that could be compared with the love of Christ. I will say it, and every Believer here will agree with me, that there is no emotion we have ever felt in our most sanctified moments—there is no holy desire that has ever flashed through our soul in our most hallowed times, there is no seraphic longing that has ever been begotten in us when the Spirit of God has been most operative in our hearts—that we should dare to put side by side with the love of Christ and say that it was at all fit to be reckoned as a fair price for it! Our best is not one-thousandth part as good as Christ’s worst! Our gold is not equal to His clay. There is nothing that can be found in us, or that ever will be in us, that we should dare to say could, for a moment, stand in comparison with His love!

Well, then, since there is no coin of metal, or emotion of mental condition, or power of spiritual Grace that could be counted out or weighed as the purchase price of Christ’s love, we will not dream of having anything of the kind, for there comes, at the back of this thought, the consciousness that even if we do possess anything that is really valuable, if there is something about us, now, that is commendable, pure and acceptable, yet it all already belongs to Christ. We have nothing with which we can buy anything of Him because all we have belongs to Him! Under the righteous Law of God, all the good of which we are capable is already due to our Creator! His command is, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” Very comprehensive, very sweeping are the demands of the Law of the Lord. You must not imagine that there is the slightest truth in the idea that man may come to do more for Christ than it is his duty to do—this cannot be, for all that is possible for us to do is already Christ’s! “You are not your own,” and yet you talk about giving yourself to Him? You belong to Him, now, you Christians, doubly so. And all men are under obligation to Christ even for the temporal favors He has bestowed upon them. You, Believer, cannot say, “Now I am going to do for Christ something more than, I think, might absolutely be claimed by Him.” Why, if you are really what you claim to be, you are His, already—body, soul and spirit! All your time, all your money, all your faculties, all the possibilities that are in you, are all His right now and, therefore, how shall you come to purchase His love? No, it cannot be purchased! That is certain for many other reasons besides these which I have given you.

But what a blessing it is that we have the love of Christ, though we could not purchase it! The Son of God has loved us! He has bestowed upon us what He never would have sold us and He has given it to us freely, “without money and without price.” And, Beloved, this love is no new thing. He loved us long before we were born! When His foreknowledge sketched us in His mind’s eye, He beheld us in love! He proved His love, too. It was not merely contemplative love, but it was practical love, for He died for us before we knew anything of Him, or were even here to learn about Him! His love is of such a wondrous kind that He always will love us. When Heaven and earth have passed away and, like a scroll, the universe shall be rolled up, or be put away like a worn-out vesture, He will still love us as He loved us at the first. The greatest wonder to me is that this unpurchasable love, this unending love is mine! And you, my Brothers and Sisters, can always say, each one of you, if you have been regenerated, “This love is mine! The Lord Jesus Christ loves me with a love I never could have purchased.”

Perhaps someone is saying just now, “I wish I could say that.” Do you really wish it? Then let the text serve to guide you as to the way by which you may yet know Christ’s love to you. Do not try to purchase it— abandon that idea at once! Perhaps you say, “I never thought of buying it with money.” Possibly not, but the mass of mankind think of purchasing it in some way or other. They hear from their priests of certain ceremonies and they attach great importance to them—and offer them as a bribe to Christ. But these things will never buy His love! They then resort to prayers—not prayers from the heart, but prayers said as a sort of punishment. And it is thought by many that surely, these will procure His love—but they never will! We have even known some who have punished themselves, tortured themselves, thinking they would get Christ’s love in that fashion! Now, if I knew anybody who tried to win my love by making himself miserable, I would say to him, “My good Fellow, you will never make me love you in that way! Be as happy as you can—that method is a great deal more likely to touch my heart than the other.” I don’t believe that penance and mortification afford any pleasure to God! I think He would be more likely to say, “Poor silly creatures! When I make gnats, I teach them to dance in the summer sunshine. When I make the fish of the sea, they leap up from the waves with intense delight. And when I make birds, I show them how to sing.” God has no delight in the miseries of His creatures and the flagellations that fools give to themselves when they think they deserve them, but they certainly bring no pleasure to the heart of God! It is vain to think of purchasing the love of Christ in such a way!

“But surely, surely, we may do something. We will give up this vice, we will renounce that bad habit, we will be strict in our religiousness, we will be attentive to all moral duties.” So you should! But when you have done all that, do you think you have done enough to win His love? Is the servant who has only done what He ought to have done, entitled to the love of His master’s heart because of that? You shall not win Christ’s love! So, if you have His love shed abroad in your heart, you have infinitely more than you have ever earned. Suppose some person here were to say, “I feel so resolved to be saved that I will give all I have in this world to some good cause! And then I will give myself to go abroad into foreign lands, to some fever-stricken place to die in the service of God?” Ah, should you do all that, you would be utterly despised if you thought that would purchase the love of God! Will He be bartered with? Will He put up His heart to be sold in the market—He whose very Temple was defiled by the presence of buyers and sellers? It cannot be! Go and haggle and bid, and barter with your fellow men—even they will disdain you if you think that love is thus to be procured! But dream not that you are thus to deal with your God! I say again, it cannot be!

The text does not merely say that the price would be refused, but, “it would be utterly despised.” Love would open her bright eyes and look at the man—and then she would frown and say, “How can you insult me so? Take back your gold and be gone!” And God’s great love, even when His pity was in the ascendant, would but weep a tear and then reply, “I pity you, for you know not what you are doing. And I despise the price you bring to Me. How could you think that I was such an one as yourself and that My love could be purchased with paltry pelf that you bring?”

We cannot spare more time for this point, but it is one that you may think over for many a day—and your heart may be charmed with it till you love and bless your Savior with all your heart, mind, soul and strength!

II. My second remark is that IN OUR CASE, NOTHING CAN EVER SERVE AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR LOVE.  
If Christ has loved us, or if we are desirous of realizing that He has done so, the one thing necessary and essential is that we have true love to Him. God’s demand of each one who professes to be His child is, “My son, give Me your heart.” There are many who would like to be thought to be His sons and, therefore, every morning they wickedly say, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” though God is not their Father! If they were to say, “Our Father,” to Him who is their father, they would pray to the devil, for God is no father of theirs! Alas, there are many who want to be thought to be God’s children and they will come and bring to Him anything but love. Sad, sorrowful truth!  
If God would but say to men, “I will accept unspiritual service,” He might be the God of the whole earth at once! Or rather, let me more truly say that He would be the demon of the whole earth, for men do not care what the religion is externally as long as it does not trouble their hearts! The last thing some people will do is to think. “Give you a guinea? Oh, certainly! Excellent is the charity for which you are pleading. A guinea for the hospital? Certainly! Five guineas for a new place of worship? Certainly! When I have money, I am always glad to give it, but don’t come and bother me with any of your doctrines, for I don’t want to hear about them! You religious people are so divided into sects and parties—and you are always controverting and contradicting one another, so I do not want to think about these things.” That is a very poor excuse, is it not? Because this seems to be a matter which requires a great deal of thought, therefore this person will not give it any consideration at all! And because those who do think about it do not exactly agree on all points, therefore this man says, “I shall not think of it at all.” Because all the charts of an intricate portion of the ocean may not happen to be exactly alike, therefore this man will not even study that part of the sea over which his own vessel must go, although there all the charts do agree! He makes an excuse upon some trivial matter to neglect altogether the steering of his vessel. He will strike upon a rock, one day, and he will have no one to blame for it but himself.  
“Oh,” says another person, “I don’t mind saying prayers. Or I will go to church and listen to the reading of prayers. I don’t mind hearing sermons, but don’t come and tell me that I have to repent of my sins. I cannot do it! I do not understand what you mean. I join in ‘the General Confession’ every Sunday. I say that I am a miserable sinner though I don’t know that I am particularly miserable and I don’t know that I am particularly a sinner, either. But still, I always say that and I don’t mind saying it. Yet if you were to come to me, saying, ‘Repent’—I cannot do that.” Men will offer to God anything but that which has to do with the heart. You may call upon them to torment their bodies, as the priests of false religions have done, and they will not object to that. The fakir in Hindustan will pierce himself with knives, or lie upon a bed of spikes, or swing himself up by a hook in his back and hang there by the hour, together, in all but mortal agony! A man will do almost anything except bow his heart before his God! He will not confess that Jehovah is Lord of all and that he, himself, is a poor sinful creature who deserves to be punished. He will not obey a law that is spiritual and demands the allegiance of the secret thoughts and intents of his heart. And he will not accept a faith which is so superlatively pure that it demands that sin be given up and tells him that even when given up it must be washed in the precious blood of Jesus—and that a man must exercise repentance towards God and faith in the Savior or he cannot be saved.  
The most unpopular Truth in the world is this sentence which fell from the lips of Christ, “You must be born again” and, consequently, there are all sorts of inventions to get the Truth of God out of those words! “Oh, yes,” say some, “you must be born again, but that means the application of aqueous fluid to an infant’s brow!” As God is true, that teaching is a lie! There is no grain or shade of the Truth of God within it! “Except a man be born again” (from above), “He cannot see the Kingdom of God.” No operation that can be performed by man can ever regenerate the soul! It is only the work of God, the Holy Spirit, who creates us anew in Christ Jesus! Men do not like that Truth of God. The spiritual displeases the natural man. They will profess to worship God in Jerusalem or at Gerizim—and fight about the place where He ought to be worshipped. To show how little good their religion has done them! They will not speak to each other! The Jew will have no dealings with the Samaritan—to prove how unlike he is to the God who makes His sun shine both on the just and on the unjust! And when you utter this message, “God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth,” both Jew and Samaritan are offended and turn away!  
Still the Truth holds good, whatever men think of it. If you give not to God your heart, you have given Him nothing! If you give not to God your soul, if you love Him not, if you serve Him, not because you love Him, if you come not to Him and surrender to Him your inner self, you may have been baptized—immersed or sprinkled—you may have come to the Communion Table, you may have bowed your knees till your knees have grown calloused, you may have prayed till you are hoarse and wept till the fountains of your eyes are dry. You may have given all your gold and lacerated every member of your body with mortifications and starved yourself to a skeleton—but you have truly done nothing towards obtaining love to Christ! The substance of your house is utterly despised if you offer it to the Lord in place of the love of your heart! Love He must have! This is His lawful demand! His people delight to render it and if you do not, then you are none of His!  
III. This takes us to a third Truth of God, which is that THE SAINTS’ LOVE IS NOT PURCHASED BY CHRIST’S GIFTS.  
The love of saints to their Lord is not given to Christ because of His gifts to them. I must explain what I mean, lest at the very outset I am mistaken or misunderstood. We love our Lord and we love Him all the more because of the many gifts He bestows upon us—but His gifts do not win our love. I will show you why. All that He has given me, today, He gave me many years ago. The Covenant of Grace was always mine. I heard the preacher talk about it. He told how Christ had died for me, that He had loved me and given Himself for me. Truly, He had done so— He had poured out His blood for my redemption. I would not believe it to be so, or, believing it, I did not think it was of any consequence. Then the preacher spread out the rare gifts of Christ before me and I saw that He had given these to such as believed in Him—but I did not think them worth examining and I turned away from them. I would never have loved Him if He had not given me much more than the substance of His house. I needed His blessed Spirit to show me the value of the substance of His house and, above all, to show me that for which this day I love my Savior best of all, namely, Himself—HIMSELF!  
Oh, it is “Jesus Christ, Himself,” who wins the love of our hearts! If He had not given us Himself, we would never have given ourselves to Him. All else that may be supposed to be of the substance of His house would not have won His people’s hearts until, at last, they learned this Truth, and the Spirit of God made them feel the force of it—“He loved me, and gave Himself for me.”  
“My Beloved is mine, and I am His,” is now one of the sweetest stanzas in love’s canticle! The spouse does not say, “His crown is mine, His throne is mine, His breastplate is mine, His staff is mine.” She delights in everything that Christ has as a King, Priest and Shepherd—but, above all else, that which wins and charms her heart is this—“He, Himself, is mine, and I am His.”  
But I meant mainly to say, under this head, that there are some of Christ’s gifts that do not win our hearts, that is to say, our hearts do not depend upon them. And they are, first, His temporal gifts. I am very thankful and I trust that all God’s people are, also, for health and strength. I have lost these, sometimes, but I did not love my Lord any the less. Neither do I love Christ this day because I am free from pain. If I were not free from pain, I would still love Him. Christ has given to some of you a retirement—you have all you need for this world. But is that why you love Christ? Oh, no, Beloved! If He were to take it all away, I know that you would love Him in your poverty! The devil was a liar when he said of Job, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have not You made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand, now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face!”  
We do not love God altogether for what He gives us in this world—ours is not such poor cupboard love as that! We love Him because He first loved us and we do not pretend to have climbed to that high state of disinterested love in which there is no gratitude mingled with it. We always must be grateful to Him and love Him for that reason, but still, temporal things never win our heart’s love to God. There are numbers of you who have health, wealth and many other things that so many desire, but they never make you love God—and they never will! You love them and make idols of them very readily, but they do not lead you to love the Lord. The children of God who love their dear Savior can tell you that they do not love Him because of what He gives them, for if He takes from them, they love Him all the same! With Job, they say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” They do not love Him simply because He caresses them, for if He chastens them, they still love Him and kiss the rod with which He strikes them!  
I meant also to say that we do not love Christ because of His temporary indulgence of us in spiritual things. You know, Beloved, our Savior very frequently favors us with manifestations of His Presence. We are overjoyed when He comes very near to us and permits us to put our fingers into the prints of the nails. We have our high days and festivals when the Bridegroom is with us—emphatically with us! He takes all the clouds out of our sky and gives us the bright shining of the sun. Or He opens the lattices and shows Himself to us in a way only second to that in which we shall see Him when we behold Him face to face! And oh, how we love Him, then! But, thank God, when He draws the lattice back, again, and hides His face, we do not leave off loving Him because of that.  
Our love to our Lord does not depend upon the weather. True, our love is not manifested to Him so sweetly when we are in the dark as when He cheers us with His smile. But still, it is there, all the while. We could not let Him go. “Though He slays me”—though He slays me! He who loves me—though He turns to be my enemy and slays me—“yet will I trust in Him.” We will hold to Him, still, and love Him, still, not because of the substance of His house, but because of what He, Himself, is! There are times when we are half inclined to say with the elder brother, “These many years have I been with You, privileged to serve You, and yet You have not given me so much as a kid that I might make merry with my friends.” Perhaps we have been long without the light of His Countenance and have had no love-tokens from Him. But for all that, we will remain, by His Grace, in His service and abide in His house. And even if our Father should answer us roughly, we will tell Him that He is still our Father!  
We do not love Him merely for the substance of His house, but for Himself, and because His Spirit has made love to Him to be an instinct of our new nature and has put within us such a principle that we cannot help loving Him! Even if we should be called to pass through terrible trials and adversities—and should have to walk a long time in clouds and darkness—yet we would still love and rejoice in Him!  
IV. The last observation I shall have to make upon our text is this— THE LOVE OF SAINTS CANNOT BE BOUGHT OFF FROM CHRIST AT ANY PRICE.  
The love of some persons to religion is very cheaply bought and very speedily sold. It is very lamentable to notice the great numbers of persons who are quite content to go and worship God with Christian Brothers and Sisters, and to hear the Gospel preached while they are, themselves, poor, or in middling circumstances—but who find, as soon as they have accumulated a little wealth, that the world has a church of its own and they must go there, “because, you see, everybody goes there! And if you are cut off from Society, where are you?” I have been asked that question, sometimes, and I have replied, “Where are you? Why, where Christ would have you to be—‘outside the camp, bearing His reproach.’” But that place of separation, “outside the camp,” is a position which is not always taken up cheerfully by professedly Christian people! It is very sorrowful to see how, because God has entrusted them with wealth, they get drawn away from the Gospel and from the Church of God—and though they are troubled a little, at first, they soon get rid of one scruple after another and subside altogether into worldliness!  
Well, now, I am not altogether sorry that there is this test in the world. Every good farmer keeps a winnowing fan. Of course, he that is foolish, when he sees a great heap lying on the barn floor, says, “All this is my wheat that I have brought in.” He does not want to have it diminished, for it is the result of his labor—but if he is a wise farmer, he says, “Though I have brought in a great heap, I know that there is chaff with it,” and he is glad to have the winnowing fan used, and the corn tossed up, that the fresh breeze may blow through it. If the mere professors go, let them go! “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.”  
There are some who go away from Christ’s people and renounce religion and love to Christ because of business. It will pay better in certain lines not to be religious and, therefore, as the main thing with them is to get money—religiously, if they can, but irreligiously if necessary— therefore, by-and-by they are offended and they sell Christ Jesus! I am pained to see the numbers of persons who go and live in the suburbs of London and who make that an opportunity for selling their religion, such as it is! It is not long ago that I stood at a dying bed and a part of what I heard there was, “O Sir, ten years ago we used to be members of such a church! We came to live out here, but there was no place of worship, handy, so we have not been anywhere.” That person was dying without hope, after selling Christ for love of a little country air! That was about all it was, and little more was to be gained by it.  
“Oh, but,” asks someone, “do saints sell Christ like that?” No, not they—these are only the professors who have mingled with the saints! These are like the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with the children of Israel—howbeit they are not all Israel that are of Israel! The saints sell Christ? No, they are too much like their Master to do that! You remember how Satan took their Master to the top of a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said, “All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me”? Wicked thief! It was not His to give! Yet He tempted Christ in that way, but Jesus answered, “Get you from Me, Satan: for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.” If any of Christ’s followers are tempted in the same fashion, let them give the same reply!  
All the substance of the devil’s house could not win the love of that man who has set His affection on Jesus. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” The cruel Romanists have taken the martyrs into the lone dungeon of the Inquisition and tormented them, there, in such a way that it pains us even to read or hear of what they suffered! But did they give up Christ? No, not they! They never would. At other times they have taken the Christians into a palace and said, “We will clothe you in scarlet and fine linen. You shall fare sumptuously every day—but you must give up Christ.” Yet they would not! All the substance of this world has been laid at the feet of holy men and women and they have rejected the price with scorn!  
I know men, today, and rejoice to know them, who have sacrificed honor and position among men. Who have borne abuse and scorn and have been glad to bear it! They have counted it their privilege that they were not only permitted to have Christ as their Savior, but also that they were allowed to suffer for His sake! Brothers and Sisters, may the Lord so clothe us with the whole armor of righteousness that no temptation may ever be able to wound our love to Jesus! Let us feel, “We can let all else go, but we can never let Him go.”—  
*“If on my face for His dear name,  
Shame and reproaches be,*  
there let them be for His sake! Give me but a vision of the Crucified! Let me see that thorn-crowned brow. Let me but gaze into His dear languid eyes so full of love for me and I will then say, “My Master, through floods or flames, if You shall lead, I’ll follow where You go! When the many turn aside, I will still cling to You and witness that You have the living Word, and that there is none upon earth that I desire beside You. I will give up the treasures of Egypt, for I have respect to the recompense of the reward! I will let the ingots of gold go, every one of them, I will cast them into the sea without regret!  
“But if You will abide in the vessel, my soul shall be content. Bind me to Your altar, for I am but flesh and blood, and may start aside in the hour of trial. Cast the links of Your love about me—chain me to Yourself—yes, crucify me! Nail me to Your Cross and let me be dead to the world, for then the world will leave off tempting a corpse. Let me be dead with You, for then the world, that cast You out, may cast me out, too, and have done with me. And it were well, then, to be counted as the offscouring of all things for Your dear sake, my Lord!”  
If a man should give all the substance of his house to bribe the saints to sell their Lord, it would be utterly despised. By this test shall we prove you, O professors! By this trial shall it be known whether you can stand firm in the evil day. God grant that you may, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—792, 811, 808. EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LUKE 20:9-16.**

Verse 9. Then He began to speak to the people this parable, A certain man planted a vineyard, and leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time. It is a long time since Jesus left us and He has not yet returned. Many say that He is coming back very soon. Others say, “The Lord delays His coming.”

10-11. And at the season he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard, but the vinedressers beat him and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him, also, and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. They grow bolder and more wicked, you see! First beating, and then adding shameful treatment to their former cruelty. Men do not come to ridicule religion and persecute its advocates all at once—this is an art which Satan teaches by degrees.

12. And again he sent a third: and they wounded him, also, and cast him out. They are more violent this time. It comes to actual wounding and to casting out the servant.

13. Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? A strange thing happens when the Lord, Himself, comes to a pass and says, “What shall I do?” Here is infinite Wisdom, as it were, at a non-plus. And in that extremity, this is the Lord’s last expedient—

13-15. I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. You know the story how this beloved Son of the Highest was all love and pity and yet, with cruel hands, men cast Him out of God’s ancient vineyard and crucified Him, hoping that they would be allowed to remain lords of God’s heritage.

15. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do to them? What punishment can be sufficient to expiate such a crime? What vengeance will be poured out upon those who have killed Him who came to do them good?

16. He shall come and destroy these vinedressers, and shall give the vineyard to others. And He did so! He scattered abroad the Jews and gave the Kingdom, for a while, at least, to the Gentiles. And they heard the Gospel which the Jews refused.

16. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. That is exactly what you and I would say, for we, too, have ill-treated the blessed Lord of the vineyard and His beloved Son! Lest we should have the heritage taken from us, let us yield up the fruit to Him who has the best right to it all.

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